

The four curses

Once upon a time, the day that had been 100 years in the making began to arrive. Four cities were suffering from a curse, and to break it, every 100 years a contest was held in which four rulers fought for their lives.

Legend has it that the king, once poor as a churchwarden, visited a witch. The witch gave him wealth and pride, but in return he wanted to become ruler of Lübeck. The king immediately ran away at the story. The witch, however, put a curse on the four towns. The king begged the sorcerer to lift the curse, but the sorcerer answered him: 'I would be careful with the pickles in Lübeck if I were you, for if you eat them you will become a pickle yourself.' In Riga, on the other hand, don't wear green, or you'll turn into a toad. In Tallinn, I wouldn't recommend touching the water with your toe, otherwise you'll just steam away, and in Wismar, don't look at the starry sky at night, otherwise you'll just get hit on the head by the moon. As a consolation, every 100 years there is a contest where four rulers fight for their lives to break a curse. Only the best of the best will win their city free of the curse."

After that, no one has seen the king or the witch.

Once again, 100 years had passed and the day had come when the four rulers - Priit, Tõnis, Märt and Vidrik - had gathered in the middle of the fairground. Both peasants and merchants had come to watch this show of strength. A man in striped trousers and a plaid shirt stepped out from behind the salt bed and said: "Whoever gets the first boat from Lübeck to Riga is the winner."

The rulers rushed into the boats at a run and immediately set off. It took Priidu a little longer because he ran past the boat at the start.

When they had been sailing for three days, the pirates spotted them and attacked their boats. The pirates got hold of the boats of Priidu, Tõnis and Märd. Vidrik escaped with his life and soon Riga began to shine.

In the harbour, he saw the king from the legend sitting at a table drinking tea. When Vidrik arrived, he looked as if he had just come from war. He began to cheer and said: "I can't believe that my city will be free of this curse." The king coughed and began to laugh out loud. Vidrik asked: "What's so funny?" The king answered: "Look, the truth is that there is no curse. The joke is that the curse is not true.

Otter's mouth dropped open. "Are you kidding? I was fighting for my life."

The king said: "Now you're exaggerating. You don't even know what fighting for your life means, but let's get going."

Vidrik got angry and he left the king there at the top of the hill.

Legend has it that he has never come down from the top of that hill.

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