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POLAND – TRADITIONAL TALE

THE BASILISK

Scene 1:

Recalling the former urban landscape, yard, Melchior's workshop, swords stand by it, a house, a basement in a tenement house, stalls, a mirror, a room, a table, and chairs in the corner.

(Stalls, Shoemaker with shoes and laces, Potter with pots and other clay products, Market wife sells corals and mirrors, The Onion Seller hung with wreaths of onions) is walking between the stalls)

Potter: Pots! I sell pots!

Shoemaker: Shoes! Shoes! I sell shoes! Only my shoes are like that!

Market wife: To mirrors! To mirrors! Ladies, ladies, buy the mirrors!

(The Onion Seller walks up to Market wife)

The Onion Seller: Did you hear that the monster has attacked again?

Market wife: Impossible! Such a tragedy!

The Onion Seller: Unfortunately... Worst of all; no one can beat him...

Market wife: Just wait until we hear about the next victim...

The Onion Seller: Let's not ...

SCENE 2:

(Yard at Mlechior's workshop, Mlechior works, children play)

Mlechior: How are you, my children?

Maciek: Good Daddy.

Halszka: Yes, but it's a bit boring. We do the same every day.

Mlechior: Jugglers came to our town. You can go to the market to see their dances, but you mustn't come close to the tenement on Crooked Circle. People say it is haunted.

Children: We promise you Father, we will not go there!

SCENE 3:

(Children towards the market, there they meet their friend, Waldek)

Waldek: Hi!

Maciek: Hallo Waldek!

Halszka: Hi, what's up?

Fight: It's fine. And what about you?

Maciek: We're fine too. We're going to see the jugglers.

Halszka (whispering to Maciek): Why are you telling him? You know, he's a famous urchin and he'll come up with something soon!

Maciek (also whispering): Don't mind, it can be fun!

Waldek: Wait, I'll show you something.

Children: What?

Waldek: Let's go to Crooked Circle! Nobody will know. There is a magnificent treasure in this old tenement. Will be rich!!

Halszka: What are you talking about, Waldek? How is it possible, even as a joke, to talk about it. This tenement is haunted!!

Waldek: Eh! Haunted, haunted..... Fairy tales with these fears! And I tell you that there are enchanted treasures. I looked into the basement yesterday at noon and something shone so brightly when the sun peeked in, that my eyes hurt. It must have been gold.

Maciek (wondering): Waldek, it's impossible!! You let us in, as usual.

Fight: You do not believe? Then come and check!

Maciek: Halszka, how about that? If there's a treasure, then we'll take it for our Dad.

Halszka (upset and worried): No way, I will not go anywhere!

Waldek: So you are a coward! Do not go if you don't want to. I and Maciek will go.

Halszka (begins to cry): I will not leave you, my brother!

Waldek: And good. You will not regret it!

Scene 4

(Basement: dark, terrifying)

Waldek (goes and sings): Look, Halszka, there is nothing to be afraid of! It's only dark here, but you'll see something wonderful soon.

Halszka (in horror): Let's get out of here as soon as possible!!

Waldek: This is just the beginning.

Maciek: I think it's great! Don't snivel, if you are so afraid, give me your hand.

(Waldek overtakes his siblings and suddenly falls to the ground)

(Maciek and Halszka saw a terrible monster. He was a bit like a dragon and a bit like a rooster. It had a rooster's head with a huge purple crest in the shape of a crown, a long and thin serpent neck, a humped body, with raised black feathers and hairy long legs, with sharp paws. But the scariest thing was the monster's eyes: bulging, round, like owl's eyes, glowing red and yellow. These eyes, fortunately, did not see Maciek and Halszka, because they were stuck in the body of dead Walus lying on the ground...)

Maciek (with trembling voice): Basilisk! It's the basilisk, my little sister, let's hide, let's hide quickly.

(The children, holding hands, on tiptoe moved towards the wall and slipped in behind the big door)

Maciek (whispering): This is the basilisk! I heard about him from our Daddy. Scary monster! Who he will look at - he will kill them with his eyesight! That's how Waluś was killed. Let's stand here quietly, Halszka, let's stand quietly...

Halszka: (sobbing) Oh God, my God! What will it be? What will happen to us? Why did we come here? What did we come here for? I want to go home!

Maciek: Calm down, little sister. We will return home, if God allows; but now the thing is that the basilisk will notice us, because if it looks at us all will be gone, we will die.

(the voice is heard in the background)

Agata: Maaaaciek! Maaaaciek! Haaaalszka! Haluuusia! Where are you? Answer me! Dinner is ready! Dinner is ready!

(The children recognized the nanny's voice, but did not budge. The basilisk turned his head, he raised his feathers even more horribly and looked at the stairs towards Agata.

Agata: Here they went down, they came down here for sure, they had to get lost in the underground.

(Agata goes down to the basement and after a while there was a scream, the basilisk's flaming gaze hit the unfortunate woman and she died)

Halszka: What will happen now, what will happen to us!? No one can save us anymore!

Maciek: Don't cry, we must be quiet, because the monster will see us.

Scene 5:

(Room at Melchior's house, Melchior and his wife are sitting at the table)

Wife (with anxiety): Where are our children? Where is Agata? They should have come back a long time ago!

Melchior: You are right, but maybe they met and watch the jugglers together...

Wife: I don't know, I'm becoming so worried. Maybe we'll go and look for them?

Melchior: Okay, let's go.

Scene 6

(They moved towards the market, they reached the tenement house on Crooked Circle, the watchman Walenty approached them)

Watchman: Are you looking for children and a nanny?

Melchior: Yes.

Wife: Did you see them?

Watchman: Yes, they're in the basement. Do not go there. Only misfortune is going to meet you.

Wife: (despairs) So how to save our children? I will not leave them there! What a tragedy!

Melchior: Calm down dear wife. Surely something can be done!

Watchman: Before you decide to go there, go to the Seizure Plot. He will find the advice. Everyone in this town respects him. He lives in Piwna Street.

Wife: Yes, let's go quickly!

Melchior: Thank you!

(They moved towards Piwna Street)

Scene 7:

(On Piwna Street, on the fourth floor, the well-known and learned Dr. Fabula lived under the roof of a high corner house. His house was full of books about darkness)

Seizure Plot (looking from behind the book): What brings you here?

Melchior: Our children, Halszka and Maciek, are missing. The guard saw them and their nanny in the basement of the haunted tenement on Crooked Circle.

Seizure Plot: It's very bad that you have seen them there lately.

Wife (crying): Yes, but can we save them? Help us!

Seizure Plot: I know well what caused the loss of children. I just read in one of my books about similar cases. Here, we have, no less or more, the monster which is the most dangerous and harmless on earth. He is called the basilisk.

Married couple: The basilisk!? It's all for nothing, futile!

Seizure Plot: From your reaction, I bring that the nature of this animal is known to you, that he is killing all living creatures with his eyes. But you have to hope up to the end. And even if the children have already died, they still have to be taken out of the basement to bury them. Basilisk must be killed, because more than one victim will be killed with his stare. As long as the beast is damned alive, Warsaw will not be safe!

Melchior: How to do it? How to kill a monster?

Science Plot: There is a way, but it is so difficult and dangerous that I do not know if anyone dares.

Wife: Tell me what we need to do!

Science Plot: Basilisk kills with his eyes. If we find a brave soul who will show the monster a mirror, the basilisk will die when he sees his own reflection, and so we will free Warsaw from monster. And save your children, I hope.

Melchior: It's a great way, but how to find this daredevil who dares to enter the basement?

(The Science Plot desponded)

Science Plot: I have an idea. Come with me.

Scene 8:

(They went out into the street and the Science Plot told them to wait)

Science Plot: Soon the convicts will pass this way. Among them is Jan Ślęzak, a man of great courage, but he is doomed to be killed for the murder of his companion. With the consent of the mayor, I will make him a proposal.

(The Science Plot stops the prisoner and approaches the guards)

Science Plot: Firstly, I order, on behalf of the noble mayor of the city of Warsaw, to stop the execution!

Secondly: Immediately set the culprit free!

Thirdly: get closer, Janie Ślęzak! I am asking you, Jan Ślęzak, who is condemned to death and nothing can change it: Do you agree to enter the basement of the tenement on Crooked Circle to kill the basilisk? If you do it, you will be free! The noble mayor promises you through my lips.

Jan Ślęzak (shocked): I agree, the more I swear to God, I'm innocent!

(A moment later, the prisoner goes to Crooked Circle, hung up with mirrors, and goes down to the basement. The guards, Science Plot, Melchior and his wife stay upstairs. Jan boldly goes towards the light, suddenly there is a terrible scream)

Jan (with joy): Killed! The basilisk is killed! He looked into the mirror and killed himself with his poisonous eyes!!

Melchior and wife: Great! But where are our children?

(Maciek and Halszka leave the basement and fall in the arms of their parents)

Scene 9:

(The narrator comes out on the stage)

Narrator: This is how the adventure with the basilisk ended. It was paid by the lives of many people, including disobedient Waluś and the old, good-natured Agata. Their corpses, taken from the basement, were buried solemnly, and the Melchior family never forgot about them. As for the courageous Jan Ślęzak, it turned out that he was not really guilty of the murder of his companion; for he appeared soon in Warsaw and explained that he had been lost and the woodcutters directed him to Warsaw. No other basilisk has ever shown itself in the city.

And the story teaches us that disobedience can have tragic consequences. What's more, it is worth to believe in every person and give them a chance. But above all, the story tells us that good always prevails.

