Images was the fastest. He darted around the world collecting moments – a smile, a sunset over the sea, the pattern of frost on a window pane. He carried a sack full of raw data, fleeting and beautiful, but without context. 'Look' he would often exclaim, throwing a handful of glittering images into the air and disappearing again before anyocould ask, 'Why?'

Insights was the silence. She sat in a darkened room and looked at the images that Images brought her. She was slow, thoughtful, and looked for connections. She saw the smile and the sunset and recognised the longing behind them. She saw the frost and understood the physics of cold. Insights was the 'aha!' moment, the spark that connected two separate images into one idea. She took the cold data from Images and gave it warmth.

But both felt incomplete. The images were beautiful but silent. The insights were brilliant but abstract. Then came Stories.

Stories was the weaver. He took the vivid images and the deep insights and wove them into a tapestry.

He took the image of the smile, the insight of longing, and wove the story of a sailor returning home. He took the image of the

frost, the insight into physics, and told the story of a child discovering winter for the first time.

One day, all three met in a clearing. Images threw an image of a broken bird's egg on the ground. Insights looked at it and said,

'This is not just destruction. It is also the beginning of something new, a sacrifice for survival.'

Both looked at Stories, Stories smiled.

He took the image of the broken egg and the insight of a new beginning and began to speak: 'Once upon a time, there was a phoenix who knew that his time had come...'

Images provided the colour, Insights gave the meaning, but it was Stories who turned it into something that could be felt, shared and remembered. And so they realised that, although they were different, only together could they truly change the world.

IMAGES, INSIGHTS and STORIES

IMAGES, INSIGHTS & STORIES It's the story that completes the picture.

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IMAGES, INSIGHTS & STORIES



FROM SIGHT TO INSIGHT

,,IF YOU ONLY SEE WHAT IS OBVIOUS, YOU WILL SEE NOTHING.

Ruth Bernhard (1905 - 2006), German-born American photographer

as its wider story in different contexts. The picture stories enables the viewers to immerse themselves in the picture and take a closer look at it, in order to visualise the beauty and diversity of the world. I wish you many interesting insights.

The stories were created jointly by resuimages and Gemini AI.

Enjoy reading.

The illustrated book offers IMAGES, INSIGHTS & STORIES and tempts the reader to take a closer look. The viewer can take in the picture as well

Reiner Sutter



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5



PETER AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Freshwater Bay was not only a picturesque place during the Second World War, but also an important military zone. Its proximity to the French coast made the Isle of Wight a frontline area, and Freshwater Bay witnessed dramatic events. A boy named Peter, who lived with his grandparents, spent his days scanning the sky for aeroplanes. In 1941, on the day of the Battle of Britain, he and his friend saw a large number of German bombers on the horizon. A deep roar filled the air and the boys knew they were in danger. They ran for cover, but soon the familiar sound of British Spitfires and Hurricanes could be heard. The British pilots surrounded the enemy aircraft and eventually drove them away over the English Channel. Peter later described the sight as extraordinary and unforgettable. The area around Freshwater was frequently the scene of dogfights. Many aircraft crashed, some of them in the fields near Farringford Farm and on the Tennyson Downs. To prevent enemy aircraft from landing, soldiers had dug long trenches in the Downs. Peter also saw pilots who were able to parachute out of their crashing planes. Sometimes British airmen were shot at by the Germans as they floated to the ground. Freshwater Bay also witnessed tragedy at sea. In April 1943, two Royal Navy landing craft sank here during a severe storm. Many sailors and Royal Marines drowned in the rough seas. The history of Freshwater Bay during the Second World War is not only about military decisions, but also about the experiences of ordinary people who lived through the horrors of war.

MOSQUEE HASSAN-II - SECOND LARGEST MOSQUE IN THE WORLD

In the beginning, it was just a vision: a monumental building that would reflect the soul of Morocco. King Hassan II wanted to give Casablanca such a spiritual and cultural landmark, and in 1980 he declared that he wanted to build a mosque that stood 'on the water' because 'God's throne was above the water'. This marked the beginning of an unprecedented mobilisation of the Moroccan people. Millions of Moroccans – farmers, merchants and ordinary citizens – donated to finance the ambitious project. With these public donations and under the direction of French architect Michel Pinseau, construction of the mosque began in 1986. The construction site, built on a specially designed site on the Atlantic coast, was a masterpiece of engineering and craftsmanship. More than 10,000 craftsmen from all over the country worked tirelessly. They carved cedar wood, moulded stucco and assembled millions of mosaic tiles into intricate patterns that showcased Moroccan craftsmanship. Traditional techniques were combined with state-of-the-art technology: The mosque was built to be earthquake-proof and was given a retractable roof that allows prayers to be performed in the open air. In 1993, after seven years of construction, the mosque was inaugurated. It stood majestically above the sea, its 210-metre-high minaret, once the tallest in the world, towering into the sky. At night, a laser beam shone from its top towards Mecca. For many Moroccans, the building became a powerful symbol of their faith, their craftsmanship and their national pride. It was not only the work of a king, but a true monument to the people.





THE ARCHITECTURAL GENIUS ANTONI GAUDÍ

The air was warm and thick with the scents of the Mediterranean as the young Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) wandered through the Catalan countryside as a child. His bones often ached with rheumatism, preventing him from playing with the other children. Instead, he immersed himself in nature, his eternal teacher. He studied how the wind bent the branches of the pine trees, how the sun danced through the foliage, and how the water in the streams splashed over pebbles. He understood that there were no straight lines in nature, only elegant curves and perfect geometries that were in harmony. Later, as an architect in Barcelona, he remembered these lessons. While his contemporaries adhered to rigid, linear building plans. Gaudí shaped his buildings like living organisms. He used the spiral shape of snail shells, the structure of honeycombs and the arches of tree trunks to create his bold designs. His houses breathed, his chimneys resembled sentinels, his facades shimmered like the scales of a dragon. But while the world admired his masterpieces, Gaudí himself became increasingly modest and reclusive. He devoted his life to building the Sagrada Familia basilica, a monumental work reflecting his deep religious faith. One afternoon, lost in thought on his way to church, he overlooked a tram. In his simple, worn clothes, he was mistaken for a beggar and did not immediately receive the necessary help. Three days later, after his death, thousands of people flocked to his funeral to pay their last respects to a genius. But Gaudí's spirit lived on in his unfinished cathedral. His unshakeable conviction that 'originality is a return to the source' continues to inspire architects and artists worldwide, reminding them to seek the truest and most beautiful forms in nature.

THE KILLING FIELDS

Vanna still remembered the laughter in Phnom Penh. It was April 1975, the Cambodian New Year, but the celebrations were overshadowed by fear. Then they came. Men and women, almost still children, dressed in identical black pyjamas and red krama scarves. The Khmer Rouge. They didn't look like liberators. They looked like the end. 'The Americans are going to bomb!' they shouted. 'Everyone must leave the city! Immediately! Just for three days.' Vanna's family joined the endless stream of people pouring out of the capital. It was the beginning of 'Year Zero'. The leader they never saw, but whose name was whispered like a curse - Pol Pot - had decided that society must return to its roots. No cities, no books, no glasses, no family. Only 'Angkar,' the faceless organisation, and the rice fields. Vanna's father had been a teacher. That made him an enemy. When they saw him drawing the alphabet in the dust for his daughter, they dragged him away. Vanna never saw him again. They were forced into a collective. Seventeen hours a day, they worked barefoot in the mud, hunger a constant, gnawing pain. There was only watery rice soup. The 'old people,' the farmers, were allowed to monitor and punish the 'new people,' the city dwellers. Paranoia was like the air they breathed. A child could denounce his parents for stealing a mango. One wrong word, one memory of the 'old life,' meant death. At night, people were taken away. They were told they were being 're-educated' or taken to a new job. They never came back. One evening, as the sun set blood red, Vanna had to dig pits with others. She didn't know what for. Until the truck came. The Khmer Rouge soldiers herded dozens of emaciated figures to the pits. They were the intellectuals, the monks, the bespectacled. To drown out the screams, the guards blasted loud revolutionary music from loudspeakers. Vanna hid in the tall grass, trembling, while the dull sound of shovels hitting skulls echoed around her. They were saving ammunition. This was not a field for rice. It was a field of death. When the soldiers were gone, under cover of darkness, Vanna crawled away. She didn't know where to go, just away from the smell of blood and earth. Years later, long after Pol Pot's fall, Vanna stood in that field again. The pits had been opened, the skulls piled up into macabre memorials. The world called them 'The Killing Fields'. For Vanna, it was the place where the music stopped and the silence began.





MONKS ON THEIR WAY TO WAT PHRA KAEO

The scent of jasmine and fried chicken hung heavy in the humid morning air of Bangkok. Despite the early hour, the city was already pulsating. Scooters buzzed like bees, and vendors shouted out their wares. Luang Por Sombat, an old monk with a gentle smile that carved deep wrinkles into his face, adjusted his pace to match that of his novice, young Niran. Their saffron-yellow robes glowed in the early light, a warm contrast to the grey asphalt. They had finished their alms rounds and their bowls were filled with rice, bananas and curry. Their destination that day was Wat Phra Kaeo, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the spiritual heart of Thailand. 'Niran,' said Luang Por Sombat, his voice as gentle as the fluttering of a flag, 'remember why we are walking this path. We are not walking to see the gold, or the jewels, or the tourists. We are walking to renew our reverence for the Phra Kaeo Morakot.' Niran nodded, concentration in his eyes, He was excited. He had only seen the great temple on postcards. As they approached the Grand Palace, the atmosphere changed. The streets grew wider, the sounds more subdued. Above the tall white walls, the spires of the temples rose into the deep blue sky - golden, mosaic-covered towers that exploded like fireworks in the sunlight. At the gate, the guards bowed and let them pass. The interior of the grounds was breathtakingly guiet. Only the soft murmur of visitors from all over the world could be heard. Finally, they stood in front of the Ubosot, the chapel. Shoes were removed, and they stepped into the cool room. There, high on a throne, he sat enthroned: the Emerald Buddha. He was much smaller than Niran had expected, but his presence was immense. Carved from a single block of jasper (mistakenly called emerald), the small, meditative figure radiated a profound calm. Luang Por Sombat and Niran sank into the kneeling posture of worship. They closed their eyes and chanted their suttas, the sound of their voices mingling with those of the praying pilgrims. At that moment, surrounded by architectural splendour and historical significance, Niran was no longer just a young novice on an excursion. He was part of an ancient chain connecting this sacred place to the deepest Buddhist tradition. As they left the temple and the noise of the city tugged at their ears again, Niran carried not only the filled alms bowl, but also the image of the small, powerful statue in his heart - a reminder of the silence at the centre of the world.

CASSAVA

In the small village of Ban Klang, nestled between green rice fields and the rolling hills of southern Laos, lived Grandmother Mae Boun. Her face was weathered by the sun and bore the marks of eighty monsoon seasons. Mae Boun's extended family lived mainly on rice, the heart of Laotian cuisine. But in some years, when the clouds failed or the floods were too severe, there was only cassava. The cassava plant (or manioc) was not just food to them; it was a promise. It grew where the delicate rice withered. Its gnarled, brown roots dug deep into the poor soil and were not deterred by drought or poverty. When Mae Boun's grandson, young Kham, was impatient one day after a particularly hard harvest season, he complained, "Grandmother, rice tastes better. Cassava is so tough and tastes bitter if you don't prepare it properly.' Mae Boun smiled, her smile betraying no fatigue. She rubbed one of the large, starchy roots. 'Kham,' she said, her voice as gentle as the murmur of a nearby river, 'rice is our feast. But cassava is our survival." She explained to him the true significance of the plant in Laos:

The essence of life: Cassava is reliable. When all else fails – war, drought, poverty – farmers in Laos can count on this root. It grows guickly and is resistant.

A gift of necessity: To remove the cyanide from raw cassava, you have to laboriously peel, grate, soak and cook it. 'This work,' she said, 'teaches us patience and respect for food. It teaches us that life takes effort.'

Versatility: They showed him how to process it into starch (tapioca), how to make sweet cakes out of it (Khao Niao Ma Muang with cassava flour) and how to cook the leaves as a vegetable. Cassava is the all-purpose weapon of Laotian cuisine and agriculture, even if it is sometimes 'just' animal feed.

Later that evening, they sat around the fire. Mae Boun baked cassava fritters in coconut milk, her favourite dish. 'Always remember, Kham,' she whispered as she handed him the warm fritters. 'Cassava is like the family and the land itself. It's not always fancy or sweet, but it's strong, it keeps us alive, and it's always there for us.' Kham took a bite of the pancake. It was sweet and unexpectedly filling. He understood. The unassuming, resilient root was a quiet symbol of Laotian endurance and self-sufficiency.





LOTHAR MEMORIAL

The Lothar Monument commemorates a dramatic natural event that occurred on Boxing Day 1999: Hurricane Lothar. The Christmas holidays in 1999 were marked by festive tranquillity in the Black Forest and large parts of southern Germany. But on 26 December, Hurricane Lothar swept across Central Europe with wind speeds never before measured. Speeds of up to 151 km/h were measured in the lowlands, and up to 200 km/h in higher elevations. Within a few hours, the storm left a trail of destruction in its wake. It was a disaster for the forestry industry: in Baden-Württemberg alone, the hurricane knocked down more than 30 million trees and turned huge areas of forest (around 40,000 hectares) into wasteland. Entire swathes of the forests were torn apart; the trees snapped like matchsticks. Tragically, 13 people lost their lives in Baden-Württemberg in the two hours during which the storm raged. The Lothar Memorial was later erected in memory of this violent natural disaster and as a sign of hope and reconstruction. A well-known Lothar Memorial, created by the artist Norbert Feger, is located on the Siedigkopf near the Moosturm, on the boundary between Gengenbach and Nordrach. It was erected on Boxing Day 2005, six years after the hurricane. The artwork serves as a reminder of the destruction of 1999. At the same time, it stands in an area that was changed by the hurricane but now also shows new and interesting aspects of the Black Forest landscape. It is a place of remembrance of the power of nature and human resilience in the face of destruction.

THE OLD TREE WON'T GIVE UP

At Gengenbach, near the town of Eisingen, an old tree continues to fight for its survival. Wild thorn bushes, rose hips and other parasitic climbing plants entwine an almost crushed, dead tree. A branch stretches upwards like an arm, as if the tree is saying, "You haven't defeated me yet." Despite its overgrowth and apparent decline, the old tree shows signs of life. Small green shoots sprout from its bark, a silent testimony to its perseverance and strength. The villagers, who have known the tree for generations, regard it with reverence and a touch of mysticism. They tell stories of its past, how it once provided shelter from storms and served as a meeting place for couples in love. One day, a young artist from the town decides to immortalise the tree in a painting. He sits down next to the tree with his easel and begins to transfer its shapes and colours onto the canvas. As he paints, he feels a deep connection to the tree, as if it were whispering its life story to him. The painting is finished, and it shows not only the raw beauty of the tree, but also its unwavering willpower. People come from far and wide to see the work of art and hear the legend of the old tree. And so the tree lives on, not only in the physical world, but also in the hearts and memories of the people who honour its memory.





DURDLE DOOR ARCH

The old lady, who called herself simply 'Limestone', had seen it all. She wasn't made of stone, she was the stone. She was the Dorset coast. For thousands of years, she had watched the waters of the English Channel work against her. And in her flank, where the chalk layer was softer and the Portland stone layer was more brittle, lay her greatest jewel; Durdle Door. The locals, the fishermen and shepherds, never called it by its modern name. To them, it was simply The Door, A gigantic, perfectly formed arch that the sea itself had carved into the rock, a stone opening between sky and water. Over ten thousand years ago, when the last ice age ended and sea levels rose, the coastline struggled. The sea ate into the soft layers behind a hard limestone ridge, creating the bay and the small, sheltered cove. Where the limestone ridge finally gave way, the roof of a small cave collapsed, and Durdle Door was born. One sunny afternoon in midsummer, a young painter named Finn sat on the cliff above the arch. He had been trying all day to capture the colour of the water from deep blue to turquoise, depending on how the light fell through the arch. He sighed. 'You are beautiful, but you don't move,' he thought. Suddenly, he heard a soft, crackling voice speaking to him in the wind. 'Move? Oh, my boy, I move all the time. But on a timescale that your short years cannot comprehend.' Finn looked around. Only the seagulls and the rock, 'Every year,' whispered the voice, the limestone, 'the sea takes a small grain of sand from me. Every storm gnaws at the base. I am getting wider and higher. I am the guardian of the land, but also the prisoner of time.' 'You mean you'll collapse someday?' Finn asked quietly, almost reverently. 'All doors close eventually,' replied the limestone with a melancholic rumble. 'But that's not the end. When I fall, the end of this arch will become a new rock needle - an isolated. watchful pillar looking out over what was once my gate.' Finn understood. Durdle Door was not just an arch that was. It was an arch that will be. It was a fleeting moment in geological eternity. The painter put away his brushes and began not to paint the scene, but to paint its story. He painted the light shining through the arch not as an end, but as a transition as a constantly open gateway leading from the past to the future. He knew that as long as the arch stood, it was the purest form of maritime wonder – a monument created by the silent, unstoppable hands of the ocean.

PICTURESQUE BRUGES

Once upon a time, in the late Middle Ages, the canals of Bruges glistened in the golden light of the setting sun. The large market square, in the shadow of the majestic belfry, was teeming with life. Merchants from all over Europe were doing business with Flemish traders, buying precious cloth and spices that were transported by ship via the Zwin Canal to the North Sea. A young weaver named Willem looked down from the window of his workshop onto the bustling streets. He was a master of his craft, but the guild imposed strict limits on the price of his fabrics. One evening, he was sitting with his beloved Elodie on the bank of a canal when they suddenly sensed the city's demise. The Zwin Canal, which had made Bruges so rich, was rapidly silting up. It became increasingly difficult for large merchant ships to reach the harbour. Over the years, Bruges transformed from a glamorous metropolis into a sleepy town. Willem, now an old man, saw the old canals become quiet and empty. The merchants moved away and the traders closed their shops. Bruges became a 'dead city', as it was later described in a famous novel. But the silence preserved what the hustle and bustle had almost destroyed: the beauty of the medieval facades and the romance of the canals. When the first tourists visited the city in the late 19th century, they recognised its preserved beauty. Bruges was awakened from its slumber and shone in new splendour – no longer as a powerful trading city, but as an enchanting open-air museum whose history echoes in the canals and on the cobblestones. Willem would certainly have been pleased.





GILDED TEMPLE FIGURES IN THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE PREY NOB

Even during Buddha's lifetime, the first images and statues depicted his life. For example, following the earnest request of a Sinhalese princess, Buddha sent her his own image painted on cloth. When Buddha travelled to the distant Trayatrimsha Heaven of the 33 Gods to give liberating teachings to his mother who had been reborn there, King Udayana of the then kingdom of Kaushambi made a replica of Buddha out of sandalwood to pay his respects. After the Buddha returned to the monastery, he said to the statue that had approached him to greet him, "Return to your seat. After I have entered Parinirvana, you will serve as a pattern for the four classes of my disciples." Thereupon the statue returned to its seat. This was the first of all Buddha images to be copied in the time that followed. According to this story, Buddha only did not allow the statue to be worshipped during his lifetime at that time, but already gave instructions that it should serve as a pattern for all further Buddha images after his death. On another occasion, Buddha allowed King Bimbisara to have an image made of him. This image was inserted into the so-called Wheel of Life, which expresses the central teachings of Buddha, and given as an extraordinary gift to a neighbouring king. Buddha explicitly confirmed the very beneficial effect of this image.

GIGANTIC SCULPTURES

The Caucasus Mountains, a wall of stone and legends, were home to Merab Piranishvili, a man with a soul of rock and hands that shaped history. In his native village of Sno, at the foot of majestic peaks, he saw more than just stones scattered across the landscape. He saw the faces of those who had made Georgia what it is today. Since 1984, the year of victory over the communist regime, he began to erect one stone head sculpture after another, hand in hand with the country he loved. His art was more than just shaping stone; it was an act of remembrance. He carved the faces of poets such as Shota Rustaveli and Ilia Chavchavadze, of thinkers and leaders who lived in the hearts of Georgians. Each of these heads was a mosaic piece of history, a stone witness to the past, but also a reminder for the future. Merab had a dream of creating an open-air museum with 500 such heads to transform the Caucasus into an open-air gallery. He needed helpers to transport the heavy stones from the Dariali Gorge, but he was the leader of this movement. He found new ways to shape the stone and new ideas to honour the past. He hoped that the sculptures would attract tourists to Sno and show the world a different side of Georgia. In the end, as the wind blew over the stone heads, Merab said that he was not just making art, but carving a message into the stone. And so, in the heart of the Caucasus, an open-air museum was created, a place of remembrance, a place of hope.





FLOATING ORANGE TREE

A hint of sea salt and history wafted through the narrow, cobbled streets of Jaffa when Ran Morin had a vision in 1993. He saw not only the ancient walls, but also the loss that the modern world had brought with it: the loss of nature, of origins, of connection to the earth. There, in a small courtyard, he decided to create something that would challenge the laws of gravity and modern alienation. He found an orange tree, an offshoot of the famous Jaffa orange that once symbolised the region's wealth before the era of high-tech agriculture began and the groves disappeared. With the help of ropes and the expertise of the Volcani Institute for Agriculture, Morin managed to suspend a mature tree in a massive, egg-shaped terracotta pot one metre above the ground. Instead of rooting in the earth, the tree was nourished by a hidden drip irrigation system, an ironic tribute to the Israeli invention that once made the land so fertile. The tree sprouted from a crack in the urn, as if to free itself from its roots, but at the same time to show that it could continue to live and bear fruit despite all adversities. The sculpture immediately became a talking point and a symbol open to many interpretations. The sculpture has become an integral part of Jaffa's rich history. The floating orange is not only a work of art, but also a place for reflection on the past, present and future. Its simple but powerful statement reminds us that even in limbo, new life can emerge.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE IN ENGLAND

The fishing village of Mousehole (pronounced Mau-zl) clung to the granite coast of Cornwall, its houses looking as if they had been carved directly out of the rock. It was late December, and an icy wind whipped the spray over the high harbour wall. In Morwenna's small parlour, the fire flickered wearily. Outside, the sea was wild, and the harbour was empty. The fishermen had not been out to sea for over a week, and food was running low. Morwenna looked at her two grandchildren, who were staring hungrily at the wooden floor. She thought of the legend of the Christmas star and how little light had come to the village this year. The most fearless fisherman in Mousehole was Tom Bawcock. He was a man with a beard as salty as the sea and eves that could foresee the tides. He knew that the villagers could not wait much longer. On 23 December, when the storm subsided slightly, Tom made a lonely decision. He hugged his wife and said, 'I have to go out. The sea won't kill us, but hunger will.' He steered his small boat out into the raging waves. The whole village stood on the harbour wall and watched as his yellow sail disappeared into the grey sea. It was a desperate, reckless undertaking. Seven anxious hours passed. The sun began to set, and hope faded. Morwenna lit her last oil lantern and placed it in her window, a tiny spot of warmth against the looming darkness. Suddenly, in the twilight, a loud cry rang out from the sea. Tom Bawcock was back. And his boat was not empty. It was filled to the brim with fish, mainly sole and herring. He had found a shoal in the deep waters where the storm had not swept it away. The joy was immeasurable. That night, the villagers celebrated with a spontaneous feast. They baked all the fish together with potatoes and eggs under a pastry crust in a single giant pie - the Stargazy Pie. The fish heads protruded from the pastry as if they were looking up at the sky. It was a dish that symbolised salvation from adversity. Every year since then, on 23 December, Mousehole has celebrated Tom Bawcock's Eve. They bake the Stargazy Pie to honour his boldness. And every year, during Advent, when the village puts up its famous Christmas lights depicting fish, whales and boats, Morwenna remembers. She smiles because she knows that the true beauty of Mousehole lies not in its streets or houses, but in the spirit of its inhabitants - and in Tom Bawcock's tiny but life-saving lantern, which brought courage and sustenance out of the darkest storm.





BUDDHA ON THE WAY TO NIRVANA

Prince Siddhartha Gautama had left his golden cage. He had left behind the palace, the jewels and his family to answer the big question that tormented him: Why is there suffering? He spent years as an ascetic. He fasted until his ribs protruded like a cage and meditated with unbearable rigour. But enlightenment did not come. He realised that neither absolute luxury nor absolute deprivation led to the truth. The path lay in the middle, Exhausted and disillusioned, Siddhartha accepted a bowl of rice porridge from a peasant girl named Sujata. The refreshment helped him gather the courage to begin his final meditation. He sought out a quiet place on the banks of the Niranjana River. There, under a large, spreading bodhi tree (tree of enlightenment), he sat down. He vowed not to get up until he had realised the deepest truth of life. As dusk fell, he felt resistance. The mythical figure Mara, the lord of illusion and desire, appeared to lead him astray. Mara began with temptation. He sent his beautiful daughters to beguile Siddhartha. Siddhartha remained unmoved. Mara tried fear. He summoned armies of demons who threw spears and fire at him. But the spears turned into petals before they reached him. Mara's last attempt was doubt. 'Who are you that you deserve to sit under this tree? Who is your witness?' Siddhartha opened his eyes. He raised his right hand and touched the earth. This was the Bhumisparsha Mudra - the gesture that called the earth as witness. He said with firm, inner calm: "This earth is my witness. My deeds are my witness. I strive for the deepest truth for the benefit of all living beings." With this final rejection of illusion, Mara's power was broken. Siddhartha sank deeper into meditation. He saw the causes of suffering and realised the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering (desire), the end of suffering, and the path to the end (the Eightfold Path). As the morning star rose in the sky, Siddhartha broke through the veils of ignorance. He attained nirvana - a state beyond death and rebirth, free from greed, hatred and delusion. Siddhartha was no longer just a man. He was the Buddha - the Awakened One. He rose, not to disappear, but to teach for 45 years the truth he had found in that single night under the Bodhi tree.

THE CHARLES BRIDGE IN PRAGUE

In 1357, when Prague was the centre of the Holy Roman Empire, Emperor Charles IV laid the foundation stone for something that would make his city immortal: the Charles Bridge (Karlův most). But the emperor was not only a visionary, he was also a little superstitious. According to legend, he carefully chose the time for laying the foundation stone based on numerical symmetry: 5:31 a.m. on 9 July 1357. This sequence of numbers - 1-3-5-7-9-7-5-3-1 - was supposed to give the bridge eternal strength. To make it even stronger, it is said that the builders mixed eggs and milk into the mortar to solidify it. Legend has it that people from all over the kingdom brought eggs, but the inhabitants of one village accidentally sent boiled eggs - a mistake that did not detract from the bridge's strength. Centuries passed. The bridge, 516 metres long and supported by 16 massive arches, was populated not only by horse-drawn carriages but also by stories. In the 17th century, it became an open-air gallery. Thirty majestic Baroque statues lined its path, transforming the crossing over the VItava River into a solemn procession of saints. The most famous of these statues is that of Saint John of Nepomuk. He was the gueen's priest and, according to legend, was thrown from the bridge into the Vltava by King Wenceslas IV because he refused to break the seal of confession. Beneath his statue, a small, shiny brass cross is embedded in the railing. Legend has it that anyone who touches this cross and the five stars on it will return to Prague and have their wishes come true. Thousands of tourists did this every day, their hands polishing the metal to a mirror finish over the years. On a foggy winter morning, the violinist Eliška stood on the bridge. She was not a tourist, but a Prague native who earned her living here every day. There was no one around her yet, only the crackling of the fog and the soft murmur of the Vltava River. She began to play. Her music, pure and melancholic, seemed to rise from the stones and the history itself. She knew that the bridge was more than just a structure. It was a bridge between time - a line connecting the past (the kings and saints) with the present (the artists and lovers). As the first rays of sunlight pierced the fog and illuminated the brass cross of Nepomuk, Eliška took a deep breath. Charles Bridge was not just a connection between the Old Town and the Lesser Town. It was the soul of Prague, built on superstition, strengthened by eggs and cemented for eternity by music and legends.





THE COLOSSEUM IN THE HEART OF ROME

Flavius felt the breeze blowing through the broken arches. He was not Emperor Vespasian, who had the Colosseum built in 72 AD, nor was he Titus, who inaugurated it eight years later. Flavius was just a simple bricklayer in modern Rome, but he knew the stones better than any historian. For him, the Colosseum - the Amphitheatrum Flavium - was more than a ruin. It was the heartbeat of Rome, a stone witness to human extremes. He closed his eyes. He did not hear the noise of modern Vespas and tourists, but the echo of 50,000 throats roaring with excitement. He did not smell the soot, but the scent of sweat, sand and blood. He saw the velarium, the huge sail roof that was stretched over the upper tiers to protect the spectators from the scorching Roman sun. He saw the imperial box, from which emperors decided life and death with a single gesture. But the true heart of the arena lay beneath his feet; the hypogeum. This labyrinthine system of underground passages, cages and lifts was the stage for magic. From here, wild animals - lions from Africa, bears from Germania - were catapulted onto the sandy arena seemingly out of nowhere. Here gladiators waited, their helmets reflecting the light, their muscles tense. Flavius imagined a young man named Marcus, searching for support on the hilt of his sword. Marcus was no hero, but a slave who could win glory in the fight for his life - or fall into the sand. The Colosseum was the place where the distinction between man and beast blurred, where life was spectacle and death was entertainment. The games lasted for hundreds of years. Then, with the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, the roar ceased. The stones were plundered, the Colosseum became a quarry, a dwelling, a workshop, even a fortress. When Flavius opened his eyes, he took a deep breath. Today, the building was just a skeleton, a half-ruined crown. But history was burned into every joint. He ran his hand over a block of sandstone crowned by a medieval cross. The Colosseum was not only the largest arena ever built. It was the ultimate memorial: a reminder of the unbridled power of the Roman Empire, its cruelty, and the ultimate transience of even the hardest, most ambitious structures in the heart of Rome.

POMEGRANATE IS SAID TO BE A SUPER FRUIT

On the eastern edge of a sun-drenched garden, where the air was thick with the scent of figs, grew a pomegranate tree. It looked unremarkable until its fruits burst open to reveal their insides: hundreds of tiny, ruby-red jewels – the arils. The old gardener Amira knew that this tree was no ordinary tree. She called it her 'king' because each fruit had a small, perfect crown at its tip. One day, her grandson Tariq returned from the city with a bowl full of artificial sweets. 'Grandmother,' he asked, 'why do you always eat this sour fruit? The city has much better things to offer.' Amira laughed and picked a pomegranate from the branch. She carefully cut it open, and the bright red juice almost spilled out. 'My little Tariq,' she said, 'this fruit is what modern doctors call a "superfruit", but we have always known that. It is not only sweet; it is medicine and history.' She explained to him the secrets enclosed in the seeds:

Antioxidants: 'Every little pearl is a soldier, my child. These soldiers fight against the "bad things" in the body – free radicals. Their power is three times stronger than that of green tea.' She called it the 'inner shield'.

Heart and blood: 'The Persians called the juice "blood of the heart". It helps keep the blood fluid and the arteries clean. It is the fruit that keeps your heart strong.'

History and myth: She told him that the pomegranate was a symbol in many cultures: of fertility (because of its many seeds), of life and rebirth (because of its long shelf life) and of royal power (because of its crown).

She handed him a handful of arils. "Eat them. They are sour, sweet and a little tart – like life itself. But they give you the strength to endure anything." Tariq nibbled on the crunchy seeds. He felt the taste invigorate his tongue. He understood that the true power of the pomegranate lay not in its sweetness, but in its incredible concentration of nutrients. It was not just a fruit; it was nature's complete nutrient package. From that day on, Tariq saw the tree differently. He saw not just a sour fruit, but a small, crowned pharmacy from his grandmother's garden – the true 'superfruit' that combined the wisdom of ancient times with the insights of modern science.





THE FELDBERG IN WINTER

The Feldberg, a harmless green giant in summer, transformed into an icy ruler during the cold season. Storms whipped across its summit, driving the fine snow before them and leaving the trees standing on the slope like frozen sentinels. The valley was often shrouded in thick fog, enveloping the world in a mysterious grey. A little squirrel named Fips, who had been preparing all winter, ventured out of his burrow. He had hidden a nut that he had forgotten and was now desperately searching for. As he jumped excitedly through the crunchy snow, the world around him sparkled in the sunlight that broke through the blanket of fog above the summit. From up here, high above the clouds, the sun seemed bright and warm. Suddenly, Fips saw a group of people trudging through the forest on wide snowshoes. They laughed and pointed to the tracks they left in the snow. Fips was fascinated and followed them from a distance. They passed a frozen lake and marched past a small, snow-covered hut with a cosy light burning inside. When the hikers stopped to take a break, Fips spotted an apple that one of them had lost. He rushed over, grabbed it and hurried back to his winter pantry. The nut was lost, but the apple was a much better find. Happy and full, Fips crawled into his warm burrow and dreamed of the snowy winter wonderland that Feldberg had become.

CLIFFS OF MOHER, COUNTY CLARE

The Cliffs of Moher are one of Ireland's most famous sights. The Cliffs, not far from Knockevin in County Clare, are completely vertical and the cliff edge is abrupt. On a clear day the view is stunning, with the Aran Islands engraved in the waters of Galway Bay. From the cliff edge you can hear the roar far below as the waves crash and gnaw at the soft shale and sandstone. Legend has it that the cliffs are home to otherworldly beings and mystical creatures. A witch named Mal is said to have fallen in love with Cú Chulainn, the brave warrior of the Knights of the Red Branch. Cú Chulainn, however, did not return her feelings. Undeterred, Mal pursued him relentlessly throughout Ireland. Eventually, the chase led them to the southern region of the Cliffs of Moher, near the mouth of the Shannon River, where Cú Chulainn jumped onto an island known as Diarmuid and Grainne's Rock. In another legend of the Mermaid of Moher, a local fisherman came across the presence of a mermaid while casting his line near the Cliffs of Moher. Intrigued, he struck up a conversation with the mystical creature. While they were talking, the fisherman noticed a magical cloak resting near a rock. This cloak was essential for the mermaid's return to the sea, as she had to wear it. However, his desire for her magic cloak quickly consumed him. The man seized the opportunity, snatched the cloak and fled hastily to his house, carefully hiding the precious object. - The cliffs are full of stories about ancient warriors, witches and giants.





MAHACHAI MARKET BY THE RAILWAY

Mae Noi had spent her life on the edge of the tracks. More precisely: on the tracks. Her stall at the Maeklong Railway Market in Thailand was her kingdom, her realm of fish, prawns and fragrant herbs. Tourists called it the 'Talat Rom Hup' the umbrella-pulling market - because of the ritual that took place here several times a day. On this particularly hot morning, while customers haggled and the scent of chilli and salt hung in the air. Mae Noi sat relaxed on her stool. Her wares - baskets of seafood, fresh mangoes and curry pastes - were so close to the steel of the tracks that you would have thought they would slip away at any moment. No one paid any attention to the warnings crackling over the market's loudspeaker system. Everyone knew the routine. It was the heartbeat of the market. Suddenly, a vendor shouted, 'Ma Kom!' - She's coming! Mae Noi looked at her watch. Right on time. As if on cue, the market sprang to life. There was no chaos, no panic, just a lightning-fast, perfectly choreographed movement. The vendors, including Mae Noi, reached with practised hands for the awnings that protected their goods from the sun and pulled them back with a loud bang. The baskets and buckets lying on the floor were not picked up, but simply pushed into the middle of the stall or under the tables. Everything higher than the tracks had to disappear Along, deep horn sounded, triggering not fear but anticipation. Then it came, the iron snake. The locomotive of the Maeklong train pushed its way slowly, almost reverently, through the narrow alley. The train did not run next to the stalls, but right through the market. The steel wheels rolled just centimetres from Mae Noi's toes and only millimetres above the baskets she hadn't even pushed away. The fabric of her awning almost brushed against the carriages. The faces of the tourists in the train windows were a mixture of amazement and fear, while the local customers stepped aside laughing to let the train pass in peace. Mae Noi waved briefly to the train driver, smiled and watched as the last carriages slowly trundled past. No sooner had the train passed than there was a loud clackety-clack - and the stalls sprang back to life. The awnings were pushed out, the baskets put back on the tracks. The whole spectacle took less than two minutes. The Maeklong Market was not just a place of commerce, Mae Noi thought as she handed a handful of dried squid to a customer. It was a daily lesson in organisation, serenity and the deep Laotian ability to find life where others would see only an insurmountable obstacle. The market was a living, breathing partnership between the railways and the people.

CAP FORMENTOR

A light breeze blew across the narrow winding roads of the Formentor peninsula, but it failed to dispel the thick, stagnant air that hung between the bumpers of the countless hire cars. Leo stared intently at the red dot on the horizon - the lighthouse at Cap Formentor. In his romanticised image of Mallorca, he would now be standing on the cliffs with his girlfriend, a painter named Clara, watching the sun sink below the horizon. Instead, they had been stuck in a traffic jam for over an hour, with no one moving forwards or backwards. Clara, whose sketchpad was now covered with doodles, sighed. 'It's like an allegory for our relationship, Leo,' she said with a sarcastic smile. 'Once in motion, we don't know how to stop. Once forced to a standstill, we can't move.' Leo rolled his eyes but got out of the car to stretch his legs. He spotted a group of cyclists who had leaned their bikes against a rock ledge in frustration and were sharing bread and cheese. He felt a sudden wave of insight. They were stuck here in the beautiful countryside, but they had a choice: either they could be annoyed about the missed view, or they could enjoy the moment that was available to them. He returned to the car. 'Come on, let's have a party,' he said. Clara looked at him confused. He turned the music down low, took the blanket out of the boot and spread it out on the warm asphalt. They are chocolate and crisps and watched as the sun slowly bathed the rocks and the sea in shades of gold and pink. The lighthouse, their actual destination, was still visible in the distance. As darkness fell, they saw the glow of the lighthouse and the twinkling lights of the other cars, which were gradually starting to move. They almost forgot that it was their turn to leave. The traffic jam at Cap Formentor had shown them that sometimes the journey is more important than the destination.





HAMPI BAZAAR, KARNATAKA

At the bazaar in Hampi, once the beating heart of the Vijayanagara Empire, time seemed to stand still. The old pavilions, now only partially preserved, cast long shadows on the stone road leading to the majestic Virupaksha Temple. An old merchant named Raju sat in his place at the edge of the bazaar, deep in thought. He was the grandson of a wealthy spice merchant and knew the legends of the bazaar. Once, it was said, the streets were filled with precious stones, the finest silk fabrics and rare spices. Foreign merchants from distant lands such as Persia and Portugal came here to offer their wares. But today, Raju thought, it had become quieter, almost peaceful. The few remaining merchants sold simple souvenirs and local handicrafts. Suddenly, a small, emaciated monkey appeared. He was not like the other monkeys. who were used to being fed by tourists. This one had a sad, painful aura about him. Raju knew the stories from the Ramayana that said Hampi had once been the kingdom of monkeys, Kishkinda. He knew that this monkey was something special. The monkey seemed to be looking for something specific. It jumped from one ruin to another, searching through the stones and sniffing the ground. Finally, it paused, looked Raju straight in the eye and pointed with its hand to a gap in the payement. Raju was amazed. He crawled on the ground and put his hand in the gap. He felt a cloth bag. When Raju opened the bag, he revealed a handful of old, sparkling sapphires. They were so beautiful that Raju was almost speechless. The monkey seemed to have accomplished its mission. It nodded to him and disappeared into the surrounding rocks. Raju realised that the monkey must have been the spirit of a past monkey king who had given him part of his legendary treasure. From then on, Raju sold not only souvenirs, but also the story of his miraculous find. And even though the Hampi bazaar would never return to its former glory, its splendour lived on in the story that Raju told to anyone who would listen.

ADVENTURE PARK, PILATUS ROPE PARK

The rope park is located on Mount Pilatus, which has been shrouded in legends and myths for centuries. Our story begins high up near the Fräkmüntegg mountain station. Pilu, a little dragon and descendant of the ancient mountain dragons, wanted to learn to fly. However, he was still a little fearful and shy. His friends - Felix the swift ibex, Flora the clever crow and Finn the brave falcon - had already taught him a lot. But the big leap from the rocks to one of the treetops, as the dragons used to do to ascend, was still too big for him. One day, new visitors arrived on Mount Pilatus. They had ropes tied around their waists and were climbing from tree to tree. They were humans, and they looked like they were having a lot of fun. Pilu watched them curiously from his hiding place. They balanced across narrow wooden bridges, overcame wobbly obstacles and finally abseiled from one tree platform to the next with loud cheers. It looked so easy and yet so exciting. Pilu plucked up his courage. He swung himself onto a branch that pointed towards a rope slide. 'Pilu, what are you doing?' cried Flora. 'That's dangerous!' But Pilu didn't hear her. He had made up his mind to do the same as the humans and fly along the ropes. He slid off, slowly at first, then faster and faster. The wind tore at him and he felt the adrenaline rush through his little body. He laughed and roared with joy. The humans below saw him and shouted with surprise and excitement. Pilu, the flight-shy dragon, went from being the rope park dragon to a brave adventurer. He landed gently on the last platform, proud and happy. From that day on, the rope park was not only a place for humans, but also a secret training ground for dragons learning to fly. And if you look closely when you visit the Pilatus rope park, you can sometimes hear the distant roar of a dragon swinging from tree to tree with joy.





GADI SAGAR TEMPLE, RAJASTHAN

Am Gadi Sagar, the artificial lake on the edge of the golden city of Jaisalmer, sat the old boatman Kishor. He had witnessed countless sunrises that bathed the water in shimmering gold and knew every little island with its ornate temples. At the entrance to the lake stood the majestic Tiloki Pol Gate, which carried a story of love, defiance and jealousy. Legend has it that the king, Maharawal Garsi Singh, ordered the construction of the lake in the 14th century to supply the city with water. But he fell madly in love with a dancer, Tiloka, and built the magnificent gate in her honour. The queen, jealous and angry at her husband's love for Tiloka, wanted to have the gate demolished. But Tiloka was clever. She secretly had a Krishna temple built on the top floor of the gate to protect it. Now the queen could no longer destroy it, as this would have been considered sacrilege. The gate remained stanting, a silent witness to a forbidden love. Generations later, Kishor sat there and told this story to the tourists who rented his colourful boats. When a young girl asked him if he believed the story, he just smiled. 'Belief is like the lake,' he said. 'It catches the rain that the clouds bring. What you see are only the waves. But what lies beneath is true life. Sometimes you just have to look a little deeper.' The girl thought about this. At that moment, the golden walls of Jaisalmer Fort were reflected in the still waters of the lake. The sun was setting, bathing everything in a soft orange glow. Kishor saw the reflection of the temples and gates in the lake, a golden image of the city that held the love and stories of its people. And he knew that the truth of the story lived in that reflection.

HOVERCRAFT SR.N1

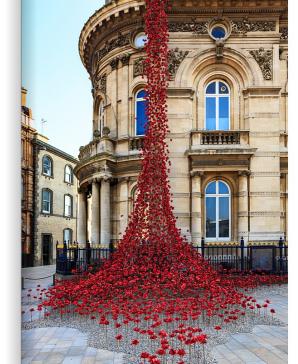
The barn door creaked as Sir Christopher Cockerell pushed it open in Norfolk in 1955. He wasn't working with precious metals, but with a vacuum cleaner, a coffee cup and a cat food tin. His neighbours thought he was eccentric, but he knew that the strange contraption floating in front of him contained a revolutionary principle. It took four years for the idea to become reality. On 25 July 1959, the 50th anniversary of the first aerial crossing of the English Channel, the SR.N1, the first practical hovercraft, floated across the waterway from Calais to Dover. It was a technical marvel that looked like a flying saucer. Cockerell, the inventor, was on board as 'mobile ballast' to ensure stability. The glorious era of the hovercraft had begun. In the 1960s, these futuristic vehicles regularly carried passengers and cars across the English Channel and the Solent. It was the fastest way to cross the strait. But in the 2000s, after the opening of the Eurotunnel, they lost the battle against the competition. Today, only a small ferry service between Southsea and the Isle of Wight remains as a reminder of this glorious time. But for those who witnessed the golden age of the hovercraft, the memory of the era of seemingly effortless gliding over the water and of an eccentric inventor with a cat food tin remains.





SODOM APPLE IN BRYS FORT

On the golden walls of Jaisalmer, where the sun makes the desert sand glow, a unique plant once grew; the Sodom apple, Although it possessed an enticing beauty with its bright purple flowers and radiant, apple-like fruits, it was surrounded by a bitter curse. The legend of Brys Fort tells of a jealous maharaja, whose fate was closely linked to the transformation of the city, who had a young bride. She was exceptionally beautiful, but her heart belonged to another. The Maharaja, filled with anger and jealousy, could not win her love. One day, in an attempt to bind her to him forever, he conjured up a mysterious plant; the Sodom apple. He cast a spell that anyone who ate its fruit would be bound to the city of Jaisalmer for as long as their love lasted. But knowing that love cannot be forced, he added to the spell that the fruit would crumble to dust and ashes when eaten, as a sign of his broken love. The bride, recognising the bitter deception, was brave. She ate one of the apples to show the Maharaja clear proof of her true love. The apple crumbled to ashes in her hand, an unmistakable sign that she was not his. Even the enchanted apple could not change her love for her beloved. Disappointed and defeated, the Maharaia suffered a heavy loss and the city fell into decline. The Maharaja, who was almost destroyed by the tragic events, ordered all Sodom apple trees to be banished from Brys Fort and Jaisalmer to prevent the tragic story from repeating itself. Only a few of the plants can still be found in the remotest corners of the desert, but their magic has faded. Today, they are only a rare testimony to the legends of Bry's Fort. The story of the pomegranate reminds people that true love cannot be forced and that one should never be seduced by outer beauty that hides a bitter interior.



WEEPING WINDOW

When the Weeping Window, made of ceramic poppies, was installed at the Maritime Museum in Hull in 2017, it brought not only a work of art to the city, but also a flood of memories and stories. One of these belonged to Doris, an elderly lady who sat on a bench opposite the museum every day. For Doris, the poppies were not merely a spectacle of art. They were a deep, painful reminder of her grandfather, a fisherman from Hull. His fishing fleet was recruited for war service during the First World War. He never returned. His story was just one of many in a seafaring town whose victims disappeared into the sea without a grave to mourn. On the first day of the exhibition, as the red flowers seemed to flow like drops of blood from the window of the former dock office. Doris noticed a young girl gazing reverently at the poppies. She saw the girl's gaze and realised that she was not just admiring the beauty of the installation. The girl, named Chloe, was holding an old, faded photograph. It showed her great-grandfather, a merchant navy sailor who had been killed in the war. The two struck up a conversation, and Doris told her about her grandfather, who went into battle with his comrades from the trawler fleets. Chloe explained how her great-grandfather's story was hardly ever mentioned in her family. She felt that these poppies were a bridge to the past. From that day on, Doris and Chloe met again and again at the Weeping Window. The installation became a meeting place for generations who shared the stories of Hull's fallen sailors, fishermen and trawler crews. The curtain of poppies was not just an exhibition, but an emotional place of remembrance. When the Weeping Window left Hull to travel on, it left behind a deep trail of memories and a new friendship. Doris and Chloe staved in touch and continued to tell the stories of their grandfathers so that the memory of Hull's seafaring victims would never fade.

HADRIAN'S WALL

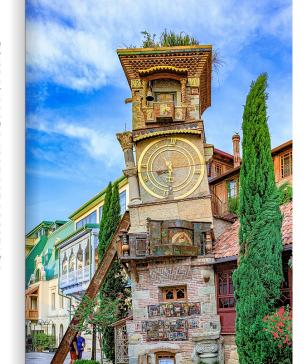
Sheltered from the wind that swept relentlessly across the barren hills of northern England, the young soldier Marcus crouched by the parapet of Hadrian's Wall. The evening twilight bathed the endless stone wall in a soft, grey light. For weeks, he had seen nothing but this wall, the vast horizon and the rough, unyielding tribes that the Romans called 'barbarians'. Marcus had actually come from a sunny village in Gaul. Here, on the northernmost border of the Roman Empire, everything was different. The cold crept into his bones, and the silence of the landscape was broken only by the wind and the occasional howling of wolves. He missed the warmth of his homeland, the wine and the laughter of the people. One day, he spotted a young boy from the northern tribes, his face painted blue, crouching at the foot of the wall, carefully holding a small sheep by the hand. He must have lost it. The boy saw Marcus and looked at him with fear and suspicion. Marcus, surprised by the encounter, raised his hands to show he was not a threat. The boy ran away, but the little sheep remained behind. Marcus decided to take care of the matter. The next day, as he continued his patrol, he found the sheep near a gap in the wall that had been created by a storm. The boy was sitting there with his mother, and they looked hungry. Marcus thought of his own family. He took a piece of bread, some cheese and a small bottle of wine from his provisions. He gave it to the boy and gestured with his hand that they could take the sheep back with them. The boy looked at him with wide eyes, took the food and gave him a small, finely carved wooden figure, a replica of a sheep, as a thank you. It was not a gesture of trade, but a gesture of humanity. Marcus, the soldier on the enemy border, had found a connection to someone on the other side. As he returned to his post, the cold wind no longer felt quite so unbearable. He now knew that although the wall separated people, humanity could bring them together again.





SMEATON'S TOWER

On the treacherous Eddystone Rocks, 14 miles off the coast of Plymouth, stood the lighthouse designed by the brilliant engineer John Smeaton. Its construction, reminiscent of an oak tree trunk, was a marvel of engineering that guided ships for decades from 1759 onwards. But even the strongest structure cannot withstand the constant pounding of the sea forever. In 1877, lighthouse keeper Alistair noticed that the entire tower vibrated noticeably when the waves were particularly strong. After 118 years of service, the relentless surf had eroded and hollowed out the rock beneath the foundations. It was clear that the tower, which had saved the lives of so many sailors, was itself in danger. Alistair thought back to the many nights he had spent in the glow of candles, and later oil lamps. above the dark sea. He thought of the stories he had told with the other keepers in the small, barren lantern room. The tower was more than just his home; it was a companion that offered him comfort and security. The decision was made: Smeaton's Tower had to be dismantled. But the people of Plymouth could not simply give up the old lighthouse. So the upper part was dismantled stone by stone and rebuilt on the cliff at Plymouth Hoe, overlooking the sea. It was like giving an old friend a new, peaceful home. Alistair, now retired, was among the first to visit the relocated tower. He climbed the 93 steps he knew so well to the lantern room. From up here, he looked out to sea, where in the distance he could see the stump of the old lighthouse and its newly erected successor. He saw the new lighthouse, bright and powerful. But in his eyes shone the light of Smeaton's Tower, whose history was now carried from the sea to the city and would live on forever as a monument to John Smeaton.



THE BELL TOWER

The bell tower, which rises into the sky like a crooked house of cards in the narrow, cobbled streets of Tbilisi's old town, was only built in 2010 by the famous puppeteer Rezo Gabriadze. It is a whimsical and charming reinterpretation of history, reminding residents and visitors alike that the magic of imagination is alive in the soul of the city. In its short lifetime, the tower has accumulated a history that has become an urban legend. The story is about an old puppeteer who had thought about the history of Tbilisi for so long that he felt the walls themselves were whispering the stories to him. He heard the songs of the princesses in the fortress walls of Narikala, the cries of the fishermen on the Kura River and the clattering of carts in Moti Chowk. But what he felt most strongly was the gap in time left by the many wars and conquests in the city. To fill it, he built the crazy, leaning tower, stone by stone, from all the old, forgotten stones of the city. He decorated it with puppets and turned it into a place of magic and wonder. Every hour, when the clocks of other towers move in perfect synchrony, a small carved doll emerges from the tower and rings the bell with a small hammer. But that is only the beginning of the magic. Twice a day, at noon and at 7 p.m., a window in the tower opens and a puppet theatre begins its performance. It is an allegorical story, the 'cycle of life', which tells the story of Tbilisi and the universal story of love and hope. The story goes that if you watch with a pure heart, the puppets seem to be made not only of wood, but of the soul of the city. And when the performance is over, you can hear not only the laughter and applause of the audience, but also the soft whispering of the stories that the puppeteer has placed in the tower. And everyone who hears these stories becomes a part of the magical soul of Tbilisi

BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINT

On the rocks above the ancient Khmer temple Vat Phou, where jungle vegetation grows wildly, lies a strange formation carved into the stone. It is the footprint of Buddha, and it is associated with a story that has been passed down from generation to generation over centuries. Once upon a time, according to the old monks, there lived a young man named Somchai in the Champasak area. He was a simple farmer, but his heart was pure and his faith in the teachings of Buddha unshakeable. He wished for nothing more than to feel the presence of Buddha and receive his blessings. One day, after meditating for days on end, he hiked up the steep mountain where the temple now stands. He climbed over moss-covered stones and past ancient trees until he reached the highest point. He prayed, his eyes closed, for peace and enlightenment. When he opened them again, he saw a glowing footprint in the rock, surrounded by a soft, golden glow. Somehai was overwhelmed. He immediately recognised that it must be the footprint of the Buddha. When he placed his own rough feet next to it, they were tiny in comparison to the divine imprint. He knew that the Buddha had chosen the mountain as his last stop before entering nirvana to spread wisdom and virtue. From that day on, Somchai returned to the mountain every morning to meditate and clean the footprint. He told the people in the surrounding villages about his discovery. At first they did not believe him, but over time they too saw the gentle glow surrounding the footprint and began to believe his story. Many years later, the Vat Phou temple was built on this site to honour the divine footprint. And even today, it is said that those who climb the mountain with a pure heart can see the soft glow and feel the wisdom of Buddha permeating the rock and spreading across the entire landscape.





PALACE HILL KHAO WANG

High above the city of Phetchaburi, on Khao Wang Mountain, King Mongkut (Rama IV) had a summer palace built in the mid-19th century. However, the story tells of more than just the royal chambers and Western-inspired buildings. It is the story of a king with a passion for the stars. During his 27 years as a monk, King Mongkut had travelled the world and developed a deep fascination with astronomy. He was the first Thai king to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and Western science. On the highest of the three peaks on which his palace was enthroned, he ordered the construction of an observatory. Here, under the vast canopy of Thailand's sky, King Mongkut spent his nights. He observed the stars and the movement of the planets with a passion that his subjects found difficult to understand. The guards who watched over the palace in the darkness often saw the light of the observatory shining and wondered about their king's mysterious activities. One evening, when the sky was particularly clear, a young maid named Chaba climbed the hill. She had lost her way after fleeing from one of the aggressive macaques that inhabited the mountain. Shivering with fear and cold, she came across the illuminated observatory. The king looked down at her from above. He was not angry, but surprised. He invited her to look through his giant telescope. Chaba, who had never seen anything like it before, looked through it and saw the stars in all their glory. She felt as if she could touch the infinite vastness of the sky. From that day on, Chaba often returned to the observatory. She and the king talked about the stars and the mysteries of the universe. Through their conversations, King Mongkut realised that his passion should be accessible not only to himself, but to all people. He decided to share his knowledge with the people and founded schools to promote the education of Thai youth. The summer palace on Khao Wang remained more than just a royal retreat. It became a symbol of the bridge between tradition and progress, of the openness of a king who saw the future in the stars. The story of Chaba and King Mongkut, who shared their dreams under the bright starry sky above Phetchaburi, is still told today.

THE HOUSE OF FREE PRESS

Just outside Bucharest once stood the Casa Scînteii, the 'House of the Spark', a colossal Stalinist building designed to embody the power and splendour of the Romanian Communist Party. It was the culmination of the regime's demonstration of power, a monumental printing press that silenced the voices of the opposition and carried party propaganda to every corner of the country. In the shadow of the building, in the winter of 1989, lived a young printer named Mihai. For years, he had been printing newspapers glorifying the regime in the basement of Casa Scînteii. He knew the damp, musty walls and the faint smells of printer's ink like the back of his hand. On that December evening, however, when the air was charged with cold and tension, he experienced something new. It was the sound. A soft rattling coming from a corner of his printing room. Curious, he investigated and found a hidden window leading to a small, secret shaft. He climbed through it and found himself in an inconspicuous, invisible passageway leading to the top floors of the building. There, in a secluded room he had never seen before, he found a small group of people. They were young reporters who were secretly printing leaflets. They told of the protests in the neighbouring city of Timisoara and the calls for freedom. They were the secret messengers of the revolution. Mihai, who had been oppressed his entire life, felt a new spark ignite within him. He helped them print their message with the old printing presses, hoping that their voices would finally reach the people. In the days that followed, Mihai saw with his own eyes as the revolution swept across the country. The house of propaganda, the Casa Scînteii, became the house of free press overnight. The red stars and communist symbols that once adorned the building were removed when Mihai and his comrades took over the building. The old printing house, once a symbol of oppression, became a symbol of a new beginning. Mihai remained as a printer and helped to print the newspapers and books that spread the truth of the new free press. He saw the past and the future merge as the old walls of the former propaganda building became the home of the new free press. And he knew that the power of the word had the power to bring down even the strongest walls.





MURAL AT MOTI CHOWK

The walls of Moti Chowk, the central square in Jaisalmer, had always been witnesses to the bustling life of the city. But the mural that adorns the square today had a very special story. It was the story of an artist named Vikram and a little girl named Priya. Vikram was born in Jaisalmer, but he had spent many years in the big city pursuing his artistic dreams. When he returned, he found the city quiet and colourless. The glorious past of the princes and merchants who had once enlivened the square seemed to have faded away. One day, he met Priya, a girl with the brightest eyes he had ever seen. Priya was used to playing in the silence of the old walls and imagining stories about the kings and warriors who once lived there. One day, she asked Vikram why the walls were so grey and sad. Why, she asked, were the old stories no longer being told? Vikram took Priva's words to heart. He began to paint the old legends on the walls. He painted horses going to war, princesses waiting at the window for their lovers, and merchants passing by with camels laden with spices and fabrics. He painted the people who had made Moti Chowk what it was. Priya was his biggest critic. Every day she came to him and showed him where a horse should look braver, where a warrior's eyes should sparkle more intensely. Vikram, who had lost touch with his roots in the big city, found them again through the eyes of the little girl. When the mural was finished, the walls of Moti Chowk glowed in bright colours. The residents of Jaisalmer gathered to rediscover the old stories in the vivid images. The square was once again full of life and colour. Vikram never left Jaisalmer again. He had found his true home in Priya's eyes. And on the walls of Moti Chowk, the past lived on in the stories he had painted.

GRAFFITI WALL

A few decades ago, street art was frowned upon in Bangkok. In the early 2000s, graffiti was considered vandalism and was rejected by the majority of the population. But the underground scene continued to flourish, and a small, dedicated group of local artists tried to gain recognition for the art form. A turning point came with the Bukruk Urban Arts Festival. Inspired by European collaborative projects, the first festival in 2013 brought together Thai and international artists. In once-neglected neighbourhoods such as Charoen Krung and Ratchathewi, they created huge murals that transformed the city into an open-air gallery. The success was overwhelming. What began as an 'invasion' ('Bukruk' means invasion) captured the hearts of residents and visitors alike. The festival laid the foundation for today's thriving street art scene. A second edition took place in 2016, further cementing the movement and expanding it to include workshops and music events. Famous local artists such as Alex Face with his three-eyed child and Rukkit played a key role in changing the face of the city and making their work an integral part of Bangkok's cultural identity. Today, remnants and new works from the festival can be found throughout the city. What was once considered an eyesore is now appreciated and celebrated, and tourists flock to the neighbourhoods to marvel at Bangkok's colourful and ever-growing graffiti art.





WHITE TEMPLE

The dazzling white sparkle of Wat Rong Khun, also known as the White Temple, in Chiang Rai is not a work of the past, but the legacy of a modern dreamer. Its story is that of Chalermchai Kositpipat, an artist who combined the world of pop culture with the profound teachings of Buddhism to create a unique work of art. Once, it is said, Chalermchai was frustrated. The ancient temples of his homeland were in poor condition, and he felt that their spiritual significance was being lost in the modern world. In a vision, he saw himself creating a temple so pure and radiant that it would illuminate the world. Inspired by this vision, he bought the old, dilapidated Wat Rong Khun in 1997 and began transforming it into his work of art. The story is a symbolic journey to enlightenment, It begins with the 'Bridge of the Cycle of Rebirth', lined with hundreds of upward-reaching hands representing greed and human desire. Those who cross this bridge leave worldly temptations behind. The bridge leads to the main temple, whose white colour symbolises the purity of Buddha and whose countless glass shards symbolise his wisdom. Inside the temple, the story continues, but in a surprisingly modern form. The murals feature not only traditional Buddhist motifs, but also images of pop culture icons such as Superman and Neo from The Matrix, as well as depictions of global issues to show that Buddha's teachings are still relevant today. It is an invitation to visitors to pause and reflect on their own life's journey. However, Chalermchai's dream did not end with the construction of the temple. He saw it as an ongoing project that would continue to grow and evolve even after his death. It is a story that never really ends, but is constantly rewritten over time, just as Buddha's wisdom constantly reinterprets the course of the world.

HOME MADE ENGLISH BREAKFAST

Every Saturday morning at 8 o'clock sharp, the alarm clock rang in Tom and Sarah's attic flat. Since their mother-in-law had been visiting for a few weeks, this rule was set in stone. Tom, who burrowed back into his pillows, knew exactly what to expect: the famous homemade English breakfast prepared by his mother-in-law, Martha. Martha, a resolute lady from the Isle of Wight, had made the traditional English breakfast her life's work. She insisted on preparing all the ingredients herself: from the sausages, which she seasoned according to an ancient family recipe, to the beans, which she made from dried beans rather than from a tin, a process that took hours. Her attention to detail was impressive - and a challenge for the young couple, who were used to guick muesli and coffee. This Saturday morning, the pressure was particularly high. Last time. Tom had dared to eat his beans with ketchup, which Martha had acknowledged with a stern look. This time, he wanted to do everything right. The kitchen smelled of fried bacon, onions and the herbs in the sausages. Martha stood at the stove, armed with a spatula and a look that brooked no mistakes. She handed Tom a plate so generously laden that it seemed to spin in circles. On the plate were bacon, sausages, scrambled eggs, fried tomatoes, mushrooms and, of course, the beans, arranged in a careful circle. Tom began to eat cautiously, each bite like a ritual. He praised the sausages, the mushrooms and the egg, all under Martha's watchful eye. When he got to the beans, he took a deep breath and popped the first three into his mouth. They were creamy, mildly seasoned and tasted like hours of preparation. It was delicious, but he missed the familiar sweet taste of tomato ketchup. As he had the last bean on his fork, he noticed Martha looking at him expectantly. He knew this was the moment of truth. He slowly pushed the fork to his mouth, smiled and said. 'Martha, this is the best breakfast I've ever had.' Martha smiled for the first time that morning, 'I know that,' she said. 'But I just needed to hear it from you.' Tom looked at his wife and winked at her. He had passed the test - at least for this week. He knew it had been worth the effort to keep the peace in his mother-in-law's house and to honour her unique way of showing love.





HIKERS IN THE BLACK FOREST

The leaves crunched under Elias's hiking boots, a sound that calmed him. Deep in the Black Forest, far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, he felt at one with nature. He was on his way to Schliffkopf to watch the sunset from up there. But the deeper he ventured into the forest, the darker it became. The tall fir trees filtered the sparse light, and soon an almost eerie silence lay over the paths. Elias passed a small, moss-covered hut that seemed almost completely swallowed up by trees. He had heard of the legends and myths of the Black Forest, of forest spirits and witches, but he had always considered them to be old wives' tales. But in this silence, the fantasy suddenly seemed more real. Suddenly, he saw a woman. She was standing in front of the hut, dressed in traditional costume, which he had seen in old paintings. Her gaze was fixed on the depths of the forest. Elias, hesitant at first, spoke to her. The woman turned around and smiled gently. She introduced herself as Lotte, a hiker who had lost her way. She offered to show Elias the path she claimed to have found. Elias, relieved, followed her. However, Lotte did not lead him onto the familiar path, but onto a narrow, eerie path that led deeper and deeper into the forest. She spoke of the 'mystical paths' of the Black Forest and the magic that dwells in the trees. Elias felt the cold increasing and realised that he had strayed from his path. Just as he was about to turn back, he saw a beam of light in the distance. He heard the voices of other hikers and the sound of their walking sticks. The group of hikers had been waiting for him at the Schliffkopf observation tower and were calling his name. He tore himself away from Lotte, who let him go with a sad look. When he turned around again, she had disappeared as if she had never been there. Elias ran to his friends and told them about the encounter. They laughed and joked about forest spirits. But Elias knew better, He had discovered the magic of the Black Forest, which was hidden not only in the beauty of nature, but also in the stories. He had found not only the way, but also a secret of the forest.

HURRICANE LOTHAR

The millennium was drawing to a close, but the final act of the 20th century was to have a tremendous impact. On Boxing Day 1999, old forester Karl was still in bed when an unusual wind rattled the windows of his forest lodge in the Black Forest. It was no ordinary wind, but a deep rumbling coming from the woods. Karl knew that this wind did not bode well. He remembered the stories his ancestors had told him about the destructive power of nature. But what he witnessed that morning surpassed anything he could ever have imagined. The hurricane, later named 'Lothar', reached unexpected strength. In the Black Forest, trees snapped like matchsticks. The forest that had been Karl's home all his life was razed to the ground in just a few hours. Karl stood at the window in shock and watched as an old fir tree, which he had hugged as a child, fell with a painful crack. The noise was deafening. He saw thick branches break off and the roots of trees, which had once seemed so firmly anchored in the forest floor, being torn from the ground. The gentle rumbling of the wind had given way to an angry roar. When the storm finally subsided, Karl stepped out into the silence after the inferno. He saw a landscape he no longer recognised. Where once there had been a dense forest, countless trees now lay crisscrossed on top of each other. The swath of destruction was so deep that it could be seen from the air. The disaster raised many guestions, and Karl knew that the forest would regenerate. He saw how people stuck together and joined forces to begin the clean-up work. He saw how nature, scarred by destruction, slowly began to come back to life. And he knew that Lothar was not just a storm, but an event that had taught people how fast and unpredictable nature can be. The story of Lothar became a reminder of the power of nature, but also of humanity's ability to recover from it and start afresh.





WINEGROWING IN DURBACH

On the steep slopes of the Durbach Valley, where the sun kisses the vines and the Black Forest protects the vineyards, there once lived a young winemaker named Jakob. The history of winegrowing in Durbach dates back to the 13th century, and Jakob was proud to be part of this tradition. He worked in the vineyards of Staufenberg Castle, whose majestic walls towered over the vines. Generations of his family had tended the vines here. Jakob knew that his work was more than just harvesting grapes. It was the continuation of an ancient history that had been buried in the fertile soils of the valley for centuries. One day, during the harvest, Jakob came across an old stone hidden in the steep slopes. It was a boundary stone marking the Klingelberger vineyards. When Jakob placed his hand on the stone, it seemed to him as if he could hear the stories of the many winegrowers who had worked here before him. He heard the songs they sang during the harvest, smelled the scent of the grapes and tasted the wine that had been produced in this valley for centuries. Inspired by the experience, Jakob began to produce a new type of wine, a wine that would carry the essence of the old stories within it. He called it the 'winemaker's wine' and it soon became a symbol of the hard work and passion of the people of Durbach. The grapes came from the steep slopes they cultivated, and the wine was treated with the same respect and love that Jakob had learned from the generations before him. The Winemaker's Wine became famous, but Jakob remained humble. He knew that wine was more than just a drink. It was a tribute to the past, a toast to the future and a tribute to all the people who had worked in the steep vineyards of Durbach. It was a wine that tasted not only of grapes, but of history, tradition and a love of winegrowing. Thus, Jakob became not only a winemaker, but also a guardian of tradition. He knew that winegrowing in Durbach was not just a job, but an art form, a tribute to nature and the people who love it. And in every bottle of wine that left the vineyards of Durbach, the history of the valley lived on.

WINTER IN THE MARKGRÄFLERLAND REGION OF BADEN

In the Markgräflerland region, where winter rarely brings deep snow but rather a mild, grey veil, the cherry trees in the Eggenertal valley had a special role to play. Unlike their sisters in other regions, which were covered in thick blankets of snow, the trees here carried a quiet, almost mysterious dignity. The story tells of an old man named Friedrich who spent his entire life among these trees. He knew every scar in their bark and every detail of their bare, gnarled branches, which became almost invisible under the blossoms in spring. While the young people waited impatiently for the blossoms to appear so they could take photos and celebrate the natural spectacle, Friedrich knew that the true story of the cherry trees lay in the winter season. On a particularly cold day, when the air above the fields was frozen, Friedrich went for a walk with his granddaughter Lena. Lena, who was influenced by the hustle and bustle of modern city life, saw only bare, lifeless shapes in the trees. She asked her grandfather why the cherry trees in the city were shielded during the winter, while here they were exposed to the cold. Friedrich smiled and said, 'They're not naked, Lena. They're just resting before putting all their energy back into the blossoms. They remember the power of the sun and the sweetness of the fruit they will bear.' He took one of their bare branches in his hand and stroked it as if he were petting a beloved animal. Then he saw something special. A tiny, old piece of cherry still hung from the branch, shrunk by the cold into a small, black pebble. 'This is the winter cherry,' said Friedrich. 'It is not sweet and it is not juicy, but it reminds us that life also exists in rest.' Lena, who had never seen a 'winter cherry' before, touched it. It was cold and hard, but there was a kind of beauty in its simplicity. It was not a radiant beauty like the blossoms, but a quiet, deep beauty that existed in the stillness of winter. Lena began to see the cherry trees not just as bare branches, but as a period of rest for nature, waiting for the return of life. When they returned to the warm parlour, Lena's view of the world had changed. She no longer saw only the hustle and bustle of the city, but also the quiet power of nature, which rests in winter and returns in spring. She had learned that beauty lies not only in spectacle, but also in simplicity.





OLIVE PLANTATION

High above the picturesque village of Bunyola, on the rugged slopes of the Serra de Tramuntana, lie centuries-old olive groves. For old farmer Miguel, every gnarled, twisted olive tree was not just a plant, but a part of his family history, carved into the stone terraces over generations. Every morning, before the sun reached the highest peaks of the mountains, Miguel would go to his grove. The old trees, their massive trunks marked by wind and weather, had the ability to survive even in the most barren soils. Miguel knew each and every one of them, with their own unique characteristics. One day, his grandson Toni, a young man with a head full of modern ideas, brought back a new, smooth olive tree from a breeding programme that promised rapid growth. Miguel looked sceptical, 'A tree needs time to write its story,' he said to Toni, "It has to feel the sun and the wind, the rain and the drought. It must learn to fight against adverse conditions. But Toni was impatient. 'The old trees are beautiful, Grandfather, but they don't yield enough,' he said. 'We have to modernise." Miguel just nodded, but he knew that Toni didn't understand that the value of an olive tree lay not only in its yield, but in the history it carried within it. This year, the harvest was particularly dry. The new tree, spoiled by rapid breeding, struggled with the drought and bore little fruit. But the old trees, whose roots reached deep into the stone walls of the terraces. defied the drought. They did not yield many olives, but the few they did produce were of exceptional quality. When Toni tasted the fruit of the old trees, he understood his grandfather's words. The olive oil from the old trees tasted of centuries of history, of the patience and love that went into every drop. He understood that the olive trees of Bunyola were more than just a plantation. They were a living monument that carried the history of Mallorca within them. Since then, Miguel and Toni have been working together. Toni brings in modern techniques, and Miguel preserves tradition. And in every drop of oil they press, you can taste the history of the ancient olive groves of Bunyola, which form the heart of the Serra de Tramuntana.

THE BERLIN TV TOWER

The grey sphere of the television tower in East Berlin was intended to be an unmistakable symbol of the strength and modernity of the socialist state. The population saw it as a symbol of the technological superiority of the GDR. But sometimes stories take a very unexpected turn. The construction of the tower was a masterpiece of engineering, but the engineers had overlooked one detail. When the steel colossus was inaugurated in 1969, it quickly became apparent that the sun caused a unique phenomenon on the sphere. When exposed to direct sunlight, the stainless steel shell of the tower sphere reflected the light in the form of a large, glowing cross. This was highly embarrassing for the atheist leadership of the GDR. For Berliners, however, the phenomenon quickly became a topic of conversation and was popularly referred to as 'the Pope's revenge' or 'Dibelius' revenge'. The population was highly critical, as the cross appeared on the very structure that was intended to demonstrate the superiority of socialism. Many years later, after the fall of the Wall and German reunification, the tower still stood. The cross still appeared when the sun shone. But this time it was not a symbol of irony or political struggle, but a silent sign of change. People no longer saw it as revenge, but as a symbol of hope hovering over reunified Berlin. For an old man named Klaus, who had worked on the construction of the tower as a young engineer, the cross had a very personal story. He had witnessed the embarrassing jokes of the GDR era and survived the fall of the regime. He saw the cross as a sign that even in the grandest of human plans, nature or a higher destiny can prevail. And he saw that the tower had not only survived the political ideology of its time, but also the times themselves, to become a symbol for the entire city.





ELIZABETHAN II'S JUBILEE

The sky above the Isle of Wight was bright blue on this June day in 2022, with only a few fleecy clouds scattered across it. But the real show was not happening on the ground. Hundreds of residents had gathered along the picturesque coastline to witness an event that linked the history of the Queen and the island: the Royal Air Force flypast to mark the Platinum Jubilee. Among them was retired sailor David. He was born on the island and had spent most of his 90 years here. He knew the history of the island, which was closely linked to the history of the royal family. He still remembered the Queen's visits as a young girl and the stories his grandparents told about nearby Osborne House, Queen Victoria's former retreat. David sat on the beach with his granddaughter Emily. She, a young girl from the city, had little connection to the tradition of the monarchy. But she loved her grandfather and knew how much this event meant to him. Suddenly, in the distance, they heard a deep rumbling that grew louder and louder. It was the sound of aeroplanes taking off from military bases on the mainland and heading for London. David, who had lived on the coast since his youth, knew the sound well. But this time it was different. It was louder, more solemn and filled with a sense of history. The aircraft flew in impressive formation over the island and the coastal landscape. It was a spectacle of incredible precision and beauty. The modern Eurofighter Typhoons, the historic Spitfires and Lancaster bombers – all seemed to span the arc from World War II to the modern era. Spectators on the beach cheered, waved and shouted as the planes flew overhead. Emily, who saw the spectacle through her grandfather's eyes, began to understand what it meant. It was not just a flypast, but living history. The aircraft were not just machines, but symbols of the enduring monarchy, the resilience of the British people and the changing times. As the last jet disappeared and the smoke of the Red Arrows in the colours of the British flag could be seen in the distance, Emily looked at her grandfather. David, who had been silent the whole time, had tears in his eyes. He saw the history of the Queen and the island in the planes and knew that the traditions he cherished so much would live on. The planes flying over the Isle of Wight were more than just an air show. They were an echo of the past carrying into the future.

SPRING WHITE ORCHIDS WITH PURPLE HEART

Once upon a time, in a hidden valley far away from the hustle and bustle of the world, a very special orchid bloomed. Its petals were as pure and immaculate as the first snow, but at its heart it bore a bright purple colour. In this valley lived a young orphan named Elara, who lovingly cared for the orchid with its unusual flowers. The valley was filled with ancient legends, and one of them told of a brave warrior who gave his life to save his village. His love for his homeland was so deep that his heart, pure and innocent as it was, fell to the ground and became an orchid with a violet heart. The flower was to preserve the memory of his purity and courage. Elara knew the story. When spring came, the orchids began to bloom. The play of light on the petals sparkled so beautifully that it attracted people from the surrounding villages. They came to admire the flowers, but Elara knew that they saw not only the beauty of the flowers, but also the story of the brave warrior. They saw the pure heart that the orchid carried and understood that true strength lies not in power, but in the purity of the heart. One day, when a storm swept through the valley, the delicate orchid blossoms were carried away by the wind. Elara was inconsolable. But when the storm subsided, she found that the blossoms had not been destroyed, but had been carried away by the wind to bloom in the most remote places in the world. From that day on, people knew that the orchid with the purple heart carried not only the memory of the warrior, but also the hope for a better world. Elara, the young orphan who cared for the orchid, had not only preserved the history of the orchid, but also passed it on. She had realised that the beauty of the orchid lay not in its flowers, but in the story it carried in its purple heart. And so, every year, the orchids with purple hearts bloomed to remind the world that true beauty and strength come from within.





THE HAMMOCK BEAR

Mani, an Asian black bear, was used to roaming the jungles of Laos. But one day, near a river, he discovered a strange structure that was unlike anything he had ever seen before. A sturdy wooden frame standing between the trees supported a colourful hammock. It was not like the vines he used for climbing, but a soft, swaying net of fabric. At first, Mani was sceptical. The hammock swayed and the frame creaked when he leaned on it cautiously. But his curiosity was stronger. After a few failed attempts to lie down on the wobbly fabric, he finally managed to distribute his weight so that he lay gently in the hammock. The feeling was incredible. He was in the air, free from the solid earth, floating gently between the treetops. The hammock swayed back and forth in time with the wind, and Mani, who was otherwise a vigilant bear, closed his eyes and relaxed. He dreamed of flying honeycombs and sweet mangoes that he could pick from above. The hammock became Mani's secret retreat. The hikers who discovered the wooden frame with the torn hammock wondered who might be seeking peace and quiet there. But no one suspected that it was a bear who had found his new passion here. Sometimes, when people were nearby, Mani would hide in the undergrowth. He watched them and saw how they looked at the wooden frame, and he had to smile. He knew that the hammock was not meant for humans, but for him, the floating bear of Laos. And if you listened closely, you could hear his soft, contented snoring echoing through the Laotian jungle.

KUHRIOSUM

On Kronenplatz square in Bietigheim-Bissingen, where the hustle and bustle of the town pulsates, there is a fountain that is so unusual that it is affectionately known as Kuhriosum. Created in 1987 by artist Jürgen Goertz, it tells a little story about the magic of imagination. Once upon a time, there was a little cow named Charlotte who lived in a pasture on the outskirts of Bietigheim-Bissingen. Unlike the other cows, who only had the lush grass on their minds, Charlotte dreamed of higher things. She dreamed of flying carpets, singing flowers and magical fountains. Her sisters made fun of her and called her 'dreamy Charlotte'. One day, when an artist named Jürgen Goertz was walking through the town, he heard about dreamy Charlotte. He was fascinated by her story and decided to create a monument to her. He created a sculpture that was not just a cow, but a creature that embodied the dreams of the little cow. The Kuhriosum was not only a sculpture, but also a fountain. Not only did water drip from the cow's eyes, but also a glittering, golden stream that carried the story of the dreaming Charlotte within it. And when the children played around the fountain and the water fountains sprayed high, it seemed as if the cow was spraying the magic of her dreams into the town. Since then, the people of Bietigheim-Bissingen say, the Kuhriosum has not only brought good luck to the town, but also a dose of imagination. Sometimes, if you listen carefully, you can hear a soft laugh and a quiet 'Moo' in the splashing of the fountain — the dreamy Charlotte, who still dreams of her magical adventures today.





PUMPKIN EXHIBITION

The Blühende Barock in Ludwigsburg, the huge garden show at the residential palace, is famous for its pumpkin exhibition. According to legend, however, it is more than just a simple show - it is an annual meeting between a princess and a pumpkin spirit. Once upon a time, when the park was still unknown to pumpkins, a princess named Amalia lived in the palace. She was touched by the melancholic beauty of autumn, but the empty garden pained her. Her gardeners simply could not find flowers strong enough to survive the golden autumn. One evening, during one of her walks, she came across a small, lost pumpkin. It was a pumpkin of an amazing orange colour, and it glowed in the moonlight. As she approached the pumpkin, a small, glittering figure appeared. It was a little pumpkin spirit. He told the princess the many stories that pumpkins carried within them, of the sun of summer and the cold of winter. He said that his kind had the power to beautify autumn and give people hope. The princess, touched by the story, decided to gather the pumpkins in the park. She and the little pumpkin spirit summoned all the pumpkins from the land, from the small decorative pumpkins to the giant edible ones. They arranged the pumpkins into impressive figures that told the fairy tales and stories of the land. When autumn came and people visited the Baroque garden, they were overwhelmed by the beauty of the pumpkin exhibition. They saw not only pumpkins in the figures, but also the stories they carried within them. From that day on, the pumpkin spirit returned to the Baroque garden every year to create the pumpkin exhibition. Princess Amalia grew old, but the story lived on in the hearts of the people. And today, when the pumpkin exhibition takes place at the Blühendes Barock in Ludwigsburg, it is believed that the stories of the princess and the pumpkin spirit can be found in the artfully arranged pumpkin figures.

MAE NAM KHONG

Deep in the enchanted forests of Laos, where the Mekong River winds its emerald waters through narrow gorges, there was an ancient legend. It told of the Naga, a serpent-like deity who lived at the bottom of the river and watched over it. But the Naga was not always a deity. Once upon a time, it was a simple water snake that lived in a small stream. It admired the great mother of water - Mae Nam Khong, the Mekong, which gave it life and nourished it. One day, when the stream had almost dried up, the snake had a dream. She dreamed of how she could change the world. In her dream, she plunged into the deepest depths of the Mekong, where she met the ancient gods. She begged the gods to give her the power to help the Mekong. 'Please, let me be the mother of the waters,' she prayed. The gods, touched by the purity of her heart, gave her a task. She was to live in the world of humans to learn how to bring nature into harmony with humanity. She was reborn as a little girl named Sila, who lived in a small village on the banks of the Mekong. Sila grew up near the river and learned to understand its language. In the rainy season, when the river overflowed its banks, she helped the people save their homes. In the dry season, when the river receded, she showed them where to find the best fish. She was wise and kind, and the people called her the 'daughter of the Mekong'. One day, when Sila was grown up, she returned to the river and prayed. She had learned the lesson that the Mekong is not just a river, but a part of life that must not only be given, but also received. She felt her true nature returning to her and transformed into the great Naga who would protect the mother of water. The Naga still lives in the Mekong today. It is said that if you look closely at the water, you can sometimes see a movement that does not come from a fish, or hear the sound of a deep rumbling that does not come from a motorboat. It is the Naga watching over the river and reminding people that the Mother of Water is always with them.





CORVIN - THE CARRION CROW

High above Matthias Church, where the colourful Zsolnay tiles reflected the sun, lived a very special raven. Unlike the crows in the city that rummaged through the rubbish, this raven named Corvin was a direct descendant of the raven that once returned King Matthias Corvinus' ring. Corvin did not carry a shiny jewel in his beak, but he carried the memory of it in his heart. One day, when the hustle and bustle of tourists enjoying the view of the Danube from the castle district had subsided, Corvin landed on a windowsill. He saw a young girl named Eszter looking at an old, faded photograph. Eszter, who had grown up in the city, had lost touch with the old stories. She knew nothing of the legend of the raven who once returned the king's ring. She saw the crow as just an ordinary, annoying bird. But Corvin felt a connection to the girl. He sensed her sadness and her longing for something greater than the hustle and bustle of the city. He tapped the window with his beak to get her attention. When Eszter looked up, she saw the depth in his intelligent, alert eyes. Corvin, using his magic, snatched up a shiny souvenir that had fallen to the floor, a small golden ring, and left it on the windowsill. Eszter, surprised and fascinated, picked up the small ring. She felt a strange warmth emanating from it. When she looked up, Corvin had disappeared. But in the distance, on top of the parliament building, she saw a tiny black dot rising high into the sky. Eszter understood. She had rediscovered the connection to the ancient stories that lived in the soul of the city. The raven had not only brought her a ring, but also the memory of the magic buried in the history of Budapest. From that day on, Eszter no longer saw the crows on the roofs of Budapest as ordinary birds, but as the guardians of the ancient stories that made the city so special.

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL

As the first tender, sun-warmed rays of spring broke through the grey blanket over Kingston-Upon-Hull, the city awoke to new life. The cold, biting wind that so often swept in from the North Sea and across the Humber estuary gave way to a milder, gentler breeze. The port city, once famous for its whaling and fishing, had been through a lot over the centuries. But in spring, it seemed to regain its strength and spirit. The old guays, once bustling with activity, were populated by young families enjoying the warm days by the water. Old fisherman Arthur lived by the River Hull, near the old town. He was one of the few who still had a connection to the city's glorious maritime past. While his fellow citizens celebrated the modern changes, he sometimes looked wistfully at the river that held so many stories. But this spring, he noticed something that filled his heart with joy. A young girl named Lily, the granddaughter of an old friend, came to the river every day. She had a small easel and painted the old red-brown brick houses, the old ships and the fishermen who still found their way up the river. She didn't paint the city as it was, but as it should be - full of colour and hope. One day, when Arthur passed by, he asked Lily what she was painting. 'I'm painting the city,' she said. 'The city in spring.' Arthur, who had only ever seen the city in grey fog, didn't understand what she meant. Lily smiled and said, 'In spring, everything comes back to life, the old houses, the trees, the people. And you just have to look closely to see the colours.' Arthur, touched by her words, looked at the city with new eyes. He saw the delicate green of the trees in the parks, the colourful flowers on the balconies of the old houses, and the bright blue of the sky reflected in the water of the river. He saw how the people in the city, like nature, were awakening from their winter slumber and celebrating the hope of a new beginning. From that day on, Arthur no longer saw the city as a place of the past, but as a place of the future. And the story of spring in Kingston-Upon-Hull was no longer told only by nature, but also by the people who had rediscovered the magic of spring in the streets of the city.





SUN UMBRELLAS

Amie, a small umbrella maker in Amiens, loved springtime when the sun bathed her city in golden light. But business was slow. People no longer seemed to appreciate simple, traditional craftsmanship, and her workshop, located in the narrow streets of the Quartier Saint-Leu, was in danger of closing. One day, as she passed by the blooming Hortillonnages, the floating gardens, she had an idea. She decided to bring colour back to the city, not with flowers, but with the fabrics of her parasols. She spoke to the mayor, but he was sceptical. He only saw the risk, not the opportunity. But Amie was a woman with a big heart. With the help of the other merchants in the neighbourhood, she began to stretch parasols in a wide variety of colours across the streets. She used parasols made of silk and cotton in all the colours of the rainbow. At first there were only a few, then more and more, until the entire neighbourhood was covered by a canopy of floating colours. The tourists who came to the city were thrilled. They had never seen anything like it before. The city, otherwise known for its Gothic cathedral, suddenly became famous for its floating parasols. People came from all over the world to see this extraordinary spectacle. The merchants, who had been sceptical at first, saw their businesses begin to flourish again. Amie's workshop, which had been on the verge of closing, became a busy place once more. Not only had she saved her livelihood, she had also restored colour to the city. The parasols floating in the streets were not just a work of art, but a symbol of hope. They reminded people that the traditions of the past still had a place in the modern world, and that a love of craftsmanship and imagination could enliven the soul of a city. Since then, the people of Amiens say, the hanging parasols are not just a decoration, but a symbol of hope that fills the city with colour, joy and the magic of imagination. And Amie, the umbrella maker, became the guardian of this tradition and the protector of the soul of her city.

GRASS PASTURE IN THE KAKHETI PRAIRIE

On the edge of the vast, sun-drenched steppes of Kakheti, where the earth is barren but the grass seems endless, the shepherd Luka wandered with his flock. For generations, transhumant shepherds had been moving with the rhythm of the seasons, taking their thousands of sheep from the high mountains of Tusheti to the winter pastures in the semideserts of the south. Luka knew the way, knew the wind and the smell of the grass. In the flock there was a small, curious lamb named Beka. While the other lambs stayed close to the flock, Beka was always off in search of the rarest, juiciest blade of grass. Luka, who often had to bring him back, affectionately called him the 'little explorer'. One day, when the sun was at its zenith, Beka discovered a small, golden blade of grass growing in the middle of a cliff, protected by other plants. Beka, who had never seen a blade of grass of such beauty before, began to climb the steep cliff, Luka, who was watching the lamb, became uneasy. He knew how dangerous it was to climb the cliffs. Just as Beka was almost at his goal, the cliff began to slide. The lamb cried out in fear, and Luka, without hesitation, rushed down the slope to save it. He knew that the life of a lamb was not worth much, but Beka was more than just a lamb. It was part of the flock that was his family. He managed to reach the lamb just as it was about to fall. He carried it on his shoulders, the lamb trembling with fear, and carried it back to the herd. He was angry, but also relieved. When they arrived at the herd, Beka, without hesitation, held out a small, golden blade of grass to him. Luka, touched by the sign of gratitude, ate the blade of grass. It tasted sweet and of adventure. From that day on, Luka had a new perspective on the steppes of Kakheti. He saw not only the grass and the flock, but also the little adventures and stories hidden in the barren landscape. And the story of the shepherd who saved the lost lamb became a legend among the shepherds of the Kakheti steppes, passed down through generations.





VOLUBILIS

High above the fertile valley of Volubilis, where the ancient Roman ruins lie, there once lived a Berber boy named Tahar. He was nicknamed Qualili because, like the oleander in the dry riverbeds, he lived on the barren slopes and grew up in the stories of the shepherds who were his family. Tahar had a special connection to the ruins, which the Berbers called Walila. While others saw only a collection of stones in the remains, he saw the stories of the people who lived and died here, the conquerors who came and went, and the nature that survived it all. He was particularly fascinated by the majestic victory monument, the triumphal arch, which once honoured the Roman emperor Caracalla. One day, while grazing his flock near the triumphal arch, he found a stone. It was no ordinary stone, but a stone with a pattern he knew from Roman mosaics, but also from the intricate patterns of the Berbers. It was a piece of history. Tahar was fascinated. He began to work on the stone and discovered that it was not just a stone, but part of a larger whole. He began to work on the stone. He sanded and polished it until the pattern was recognisable again. He carved the history of the ruins onto the stone, the history of the people who lived and died here, the conquerors who came and went, and the nature that survived it all. When he returned to the village, he showed the stone to his grandfather. The old man was moved. 'You have not only found a stone, my son,' he said, 'you have found the soul of Walila.' From that day on, as the story goes in the villages at the foot of the ruins, Tahar Qualili became known not only as a shepherd but also as a storyteller. He had understood that the stories lived not only in the ruins but in the stones themselves, telling people how the past influences the present.

STEPANTSMINDA AND THE HOLY MOUNTAIN KASBEK

The legends of Kasbek, the glacier-covered sacred mountain, are as alive in Stepantsminda as the prayer flags fluttering in the wind. In the stories of the elders, who gathered around the fire at the foot of the majestic peak, lived the mythical hero Amirani. It is said that the Caucasian Prometheus was chained to Mount Kazbek for his disobedience. where the gods punished him for his sins. But the story that remained in the hearts of the inhabitants of Stepantsminda was different. Once, people said, there was a young man named Davit whose father had disappeared in the crevasses of Kazbek while attempting to climb the peak. Davit, a shepherd like his father, vowed to conquer the mountain. not out of boastfulness, but to uncover his father's secret. He knew the paths, the animals and the dangers of the mountain, but he also knew that the mountain had a soul. One day, as he set out for the summit, his father's spirit appeared to him, 'Davit, you don't need to climb the summit,' he said. 'The mountain has already given you everything you need: strength, patience, calm. And you will not find the secrets of the mountain at the summit, but in your heart.' Davit understood. He turned back and devoted his life to the village and the stories of the holy mountain. From that day on, he told people about the wisdom of the mountain, which is not to be found in the heights, but in the depths of the heart. Davit's story became a legend passed down from generation to generation by the shepherds of Stepantsminda. People came from all over the world to see the holy mountain Kazbek, hear the ancient legends and feel the silence of the Caucasus. And if you listen carefully today, you can hear in the wind blowing over the peaks the echo of Davit, the shepherd who found the true wisdom of the holy mountain without ever climbing it.





THE MERMAID OF SITGES

On the edge of the picturesque beach of Sant Bartomeu, beneath the protective walls of the church, a rather inconspicuous bronze figure has stood since 1965. It is the Mermaid of Sitges, a statue by Catalan artist Pere Jou, who turns towards the sea with a welcoming gesture. But it is not only the artwork itself, but also a special tradition that makes it a local legend. The story tells of two inseparable friends, the fisherman Mateo and the seamstress Sofia. Mateo, a man with a weather-beaten face and strong hands, spent his life at sea. Sofia, with her nimble fingers, created elaborate dresses for the villagers. They met every evening on the steps in front of the church to watch the sun set and talk about their dreams. Mateo dreamed of a big catch that would make him rich, and Sofia dreamed of a dress so beautiful that the queen would wear it. One day, after the statue of the mermaid had been erected. Mateo noticed something strange. When he touched the mermaid's open palm before setting sail, he had good luck at sea. When he told Sofia about it, she was sceptical. But when she saw the first riches he brought back from the sea, she too began to believe in the magic. Sofia began to touch the mermaid before setting sail and ask for inspiration. And indeed, the ideas for her dresses seemed to spring to mind when she touched the mermaid's hand. The two friends, now both successful in their craft, came to the mermaid every evening to thank her and tell her about their adventures. Word of the story spread, and soon many people were touching the mermaid's hand to find luck and inspiration. But over time, people forgot that the mermaid was more than just a lucky charm. They began to take her for granted, as a simple statue in the square. One evening, when the moon was high in the sky. Mateo and Sofia noticed that the mermaid looked sad. They had forgotten the stories they carried in their hearts. They decided not only to ask for good luck, but also to give thanks and tell the stories of the magic they owed to the mermaid. Since then, according to the stories told in Sitges, the mermaid has not only been a lucky charm, but also a guardian of memories.

THE DEVIL FLYERS

On the slopes below the Teufelsmühle, near Loffenau in the northern Black Forest, the wind had a special power. It was there, where two enthusiastic hang-gliders discovered an ideal launch site on the clear-cut area in the summer of 1977, that the legend of the 'Devil's Flyers' was born. The story is about Johannes, a young man from Loffenau and a descendant of millers who once worked at the Teufelsmühle. Johannes had a passion for flying that was unusual for the people in his village. He did not dream of conquering the wind, but of understanding it. On the slopes, where cold air rose from the valley and the wind played around the tall fir trees, he sought the perfect moment for his take-off. The devil, who could no longer take possession of the old mill, watched Johannes with a suspicious eye. He saw the passion and unshakeable confidence that Johannes placed in the wind. The devil, who believed himself to be the ruler of wind and weather, wanted to tempt Johannes into overestimating his powers. One day, when the sky was particularly clear, the devil appeared in the form of an old man. He said to Johannes: 'Young man, if you really want to fly, you must fly into the storm. Only there will you find the true strength of the wind.' Johannes, who knew the stories of the ancients, knew that this was a trap. He saw in the old man's eyes not the wisdom of the wind, but the lust for power. He turned around and said, 'True strength lies not in defeating the storm, but in understanding it.' He waited for the perfect moment and then took off in a gentle updraft that carried him far above the valley. The devil, frustrated by the boy's wisdom, disappeared in a cloud of smoke. And from that day on, according to the story told in Loffenau, the hang gliders named their club 'Teufelsflieger' (Devil's Flyers), not because they were possessed by the devil, but because they had managed to defeat the devilish forces and make the wind their friend.





LANDS END

The stormy wind whipped the waves against the steep cliffs of Land's End. It is the westernmost point of England and a place where the rugged character of Cornwall is most evident. Here, where the land ends abruptly, ancient stories and legends begin. One of them tells of a young fisherman named Liam, whose family had lived by the sea for generations. Liam was a fearless man who braved even the wildest storms. But his greatest treasure was his daughter Elara, whose laughter was as bright as the sun rising over the sea. Elara had a secret passion: she loved the ancient stories about the sunken kingdom of Lyonesse, which was said to lie off the coast of Land's End. One evening, when the wind was blowing particularly strongly. Liam cast his net. He dreamed of a big catch, but the sea gave him only a small, glittering piece of driftwood. It was no ordinary piece of wood, but an intricately carved replica of a sword. Liam thought of his daughter and took the wood home with him. When Elara saw it, she said. 'Papa, this is the sword of Lyonesse. It was found to tell us that the sea not only takes, but also gives.' Liam laughed and said it was just a piece of wood. But that night, as the wind battered against the windows, he dreamed of a sunken kingdom and a fearless king who lost his home. When he got up the next morning, he saw that the weather had calmed down. The sun was shining and the sea was calm. He went to the beach and saw that the tide had washed a shiny piece of jewellery onto the shore. It was a small, golden fish figurine. He took it home and showed it to Elara. Elara was overjoyed. She knew that the sea had given them not only a treasure, but also a story. From that day on, Liam and Elara no longer saw the sea as a mere expanse of water, but as a living soul that tells stories and gives treasures if you are willing to listen and find them. And so the story of the family who listened to the treasures of the sea from Land's End became a legend in Cornwall, passed down from generation to generation.

ALLERHEILIGENBERG

On Allerheiligenberg, Solothurn, where a sanatorium once stood, the wind blows across the Jura heights. A striking monument, consisting of a column and a figure, towers into the sky. It commemorates the former institution and the spirit of the place, which is still alive today. Once upon a time, there was a young nurse named Heidi who worked at this sanatorium at the beginning of the 20th century. The air up here, so pure and clear, was supposed to heal the patients' lungs. But Heidi knew that it took more than just clean air. She saw the fears and worries in the eyes of the sick and wished she could give them something more than just medical help. Heidi had a special talent. She sang. Her voice was like the wind blowing over the hills, gentle and full of hope. In the evenings, when the sun disappeared behind the Jura mountains and the patients were lying in their beds, she would sneak up the hill to where the monument stands today. There she sang old folk songs and told stories of the hope that spring brought with it. The patients who listened from their rooms felt comforted. One of her patients, a young painter named Artur, was too weak from his illness to hear her melodies. But he felt the magic. He asked Heidi what she did on the hill every evening. Heidi told him about her songs and her stories. Artur, inspired, decided to paint a memorial for Heidi that would capture the spirit of the place; the hope that the singing brought to people's hearts. But Artur was unable to complete his painting. He passed away before he could finish his work. Heidi, deeply affected by his death, decided to carry on his legacy. With the help of the other patients, she collected stones and erected the monument that stands today on All Saints' Hill. The monument is not a simple sculpture, but a tribute to the hope and comfort that Heidi and Artur gave to the patients. It is said that on particularly windless days, you can hear the melody of Heidi's songs blowing over the hill. And in the shape of the column and the figure, you can see the hope that remains alive even in the most difficult times.





MENORAH

In front of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, stands the large bronze menorah, a powerful testament to Israel's history. Each of the 29 relief panels on its branches tells of a decisive moment in the life of the Jewish people, from biblical times to the founding of the modern state. An old man named Dov. his face lined with countless stories, often stood in front of the monument. He himself was a witness to history and saw the menorah not just as a statue, but as a living book made of bronze. One day, as he was looking at the reliefs, a young soldier named Sarah approached him. She asked him what it all meant. Dov smiled. He showed her a relief depicting the story of Abraham, who left his country to follow God's call. 'This is the beginning,' he said, 'The history of our people began with a promise,' He led her on to the reliefs of the kings and prophets who shaped the faith of the people. He showed her the relief depicting the Babylonian exile, when the people lost their homeland. 'Each branch tells a different story,' said Dov. 'But all the stories are connected.' He showed her the reliefs depicting the Diaspora and persecution, and finally the relief depicting the Holocaust. Sarah, her eyes filling with tears, asked, 'How could our people survive all this?' Dov, himself a Holocaust survivor, placed his hand on the relief depicting the return to the land of Israel and the founding of the state. 'The Menorah is more than just a sculpture,' said Dov. 'It is a reminder that our faith, our hope and our will to survive are stronger than any destruction.' Deeply moved, Sarah no longer saw the Menorah as a mere work of art, but as a symbol of the eternal struggle and unshakeable hope of the Jewish people. From that day on, Sarah often visited the menorah. She now knew that the history of her people lived not only in books, but also in the reliefs of the menorah that stood in front of the Knesset, burning as an eternal light for the people of Israel.

RED COTTON TREE

In the bustling heart of Tel Aviv, not far from Rothschild Boulevard, stood an old, gnarled red silk tree, also known as Bombax Ceiba. Its branches were like gnarled arms whispering stories. In spring, when the city awoke in the warm sun, the tree blossomed in a sea of bright red flowers, as if it had brought its own fiery spring with it. The tree witnessed countless declarations of love, secret rendezvous and fleeting glances exchanged in its vicinity. Its story began many decades ago when a young man named Amir chose the tree as a meeting place for his secret romance with a young woman named Naomi. Amir was a gardener who took care of the trees in the city. Naomi was a talented artist who expressed her feelings and inspiration in her paintings. They met every day under the tree when it was in full bloom. The bright petals that turned the ground into a red carpet were their symbol of love. But one day, Naomi had to leave the city. Her father had taken a job in another city, and the family had to move. Amir was heartbroken. But Naomi promised him that she would return when the tree's flowers bloomed again. Time passed, and Amir, who did not know if he would ever see her again, tended the tree with even greater devotion. He decided to record the stories of the people he observed under the tree. He painted the young lovers, the laughing children and the old people resting on the benches in the shade of the tree. When spring came and the tree was in full bloom again, Amir stood under the tree and waited. The petals that fell on him were like a kiss of hope. Suddenly, he saw a woman walking down the street with a little boy. It was Naomi. She had come back to fulfil her promise. Naomi hugged Amir and then looked at the paintings he had hung on one of the tree's branches. She saw their story in the paintings and understood how much Amir had loved her. She decided to stay in Tel Aviv forever and use her art to serve the city. Since then, the people of Tel Aviv say, the red silk tree has stood as a symbol of love and hope. Every year in spring, when the petals fall to the ground, they remind people of the story of Amir and Naomi and that love, like the blossoms of the tree, awakens again and again.





HONEY BEES - PART OF A MIRACLE

Spring in the Markgräflerland region, where the cherry trees were in full bloom, was the most beautiful time of year for Maya the honeybee. During these weeks, flowers bloomed in abundance and the air was filled with the sweet scent of nectar. For Maya and her sisters, this was the time of hardest work. To collect 500 grams of honey, they had to make an incredible 40,000 flights, covering up to 120,000 kilometres - a distance that would take them to the other end of the world. On this special morning, the air was warm and clear, and the cherry blossoms glowed in the sun. Maya, one of the most experienced collectors of her people, set off. She flew over the rolling hills of the Markgräflerland, past the vineyards and flowering meadows. She visited one cherry blossom after another to collect the precious nectar that was the gold of the bee colony. The work was hard, but it also filled her with a deep sense of satisfaction. Maya knew that every blossom she visited was a small contribution to the greater whole. She was part of a larger plan, a cycle that connected nature and the bees. But one day, when Maya was at the end of her strength, she crashed. She landed on a cherry blossom that floated gently above the ground. She was so exhausted that she almost gave up. But then she thought of the gueen, her sisters and the importance of her task. She thought of the honey she collected and the hope it carried. She pulled herself together and continued her flight. When she arrived at the hive, she was happy. She had done her part and was part of something bigger. And at night, as she lay down to rest, she dreamed of the thousands of kilometres she had travelled and the honey she had collected with her sisters. And she knew that she was not just an insect, but part of a miracle.

KEW BOTANICAL GARDENS

The old, curved glasshouses in Kew Botanical Gardens, where the air is tropical and humid, are not just architectural marvels. They also bear witness to countless stories of distant lands, exotic plants and the passion of a gardener named Leo. Leo, who had worked in the greenhouses at Kew his entire life, felt more connected to plants than to people. He knew every leaf, every flower and every root and their peculiarities. During the years he worked in the Palm House and the Temperate House, he had developed a special connection to the old, gnarled palm trees and the rare, exotic plants. One day, as a storm swept across London and the rain lashed against the glass roofs, Leo dreamed of the distant lands from which the plants came. He dreamed of the rainforests of the Amazon, the steppes of Africa and the jungles of Asia. He dreamed of the people who cared for the plants and the stories they carried with them. In this dream, he saw a small, inconspicuous orchid hidden in the depths of a rainforest. It was the last of its kind and was waiting for a saviour. Leo, knowing he had to find the orchid, left the dream and set off on his journey. He searched through old books and gardeners' records until he found the story of the orchid. It was a rare species that had been collected in the 19th century and cultivated in one of Kew's greenhouses. Leo, who had found the orchid in the annals, set out to search for it. He found it in a forgotten corner of the Temperate House, small and inconspicuous, but still alive. He cared for it with love and patience, and it blossomed again. Its flowers were small, but of such delicate beauty that they touched the hearts of visitors. The story of the orchid became a legend at Kew Gardens. Leo, the gardener, became a hero who had rediscovered hope in a forgotten corner of the greenhouse. And the visitors who saw the orchid knew that the glasshouses at Kew were not only a place of plants, but also a place of stories.



THE COPPER ROSE BEETLE

In a garden on the edge of the Black Forest, where the compost heap worked away warm and fragrant, lived a little hero who loved to get dirty: Cupri, the copper rose beetle. Cupri was not as striking as his famous cousin, the magnificent green golden rose beetle. But his beauty lay in his depth. His shell not only shimmered green, but had a deep, bronze to reddish sheen - as if an alchemist had dipped him in a bath of molten copper. Cupri, like all rose beetles, was a creature of transformation. As a larva (grub), he lived deep in the compost for months. He was not a pest that ate roots, but a diligent recycler who converted dead, rotten wood and decaying leaves into nutritious soil. He was the unseen gardener of the depths. One sunny June morning, Cupri was ready. He had wrapped himself in a protective cocoon made of his own excrement and soil and completed his metamorphosis. Now he emerged from his dark hiding place. His first act on the surface was to pounce on one of his favourite flowers: the bright red rose. Unlike many other insects that destroy petals, Cupri did not. He was a gentle eater who fed only on nectar and pollen. He loved the sweetness of life without destroying it. As Cupri crawled over a red petal, he felt a brief shadow. 'What are you?' asked a boastful wasp who was just attacking a careless beetle. 'You're all rusty and dirty. And you're taking up so much space in my rose!' Cupri unfolded his wings. Unlike many beetles, which have to lift their wing covers (elvtra) first, the rose beetle could fold his wings out through a side recess under the covers. 'I am the gardener who lays the foundation,' Cupri replied calmly. He rose into the air, his bronze armour glinting. I may not wear the brightest gold, but I carry the strength of the earth in my colour. And I am the sign that the soil is healthy.' He circled the garden. The sun caught his subtle copper sheen. The copper rose beetle was the silent confirmation that true beauty and strength often lie hidden in work - in the alchemy of the earth, which transforms decay into new life. And sometimes, when the sun was just right, he wore a colour as rich as any gold.





THE EXOTIC BLOSSOMS OF THE CANNONBALL TREE

Old Achan Sumedh, a Buddhist monk, took care of the small grove behind his wat in Thailand. In the middle of this grove stood a tree that was unlike any other: the cannonball tree (Sala tree in Thai). This tree was a study in extremes. Its fruits were large, woody balls that looked like cannonballs and fell to the ground with a loud plop. But its flowers... its flowers were otherworldly in their beauty. The flowers hung on long stems that grew directly from the trunk. Each flower was a whirlwind of colours: pink, deep red and bright yellow. But the most fascinating thing was their structure. They had six outer petals and in the centre an arrangement of stamens that looked like a tiny snake with a crown. One hot afternoon, Nong, a young visitor from the city, came to the garden. He was impressed by the exotic shape. 'Achan,' Nong asked, 'are these flowers real? And do they smell so wonderful? It's a fragrance that is sweet and spicy at the same time, as if you were looking into a hidden room of paradise.' Achan Sumedh smiled and nodded. They are real, my son. And their fragrance is so intense that it stuns the bees and attracts moths. Nature is not subtle when it wants to represent the divine.' He explained the spiritual significance of the tree to Nong:

Indian mythology: In India, the structure of the flower is often associated with the shape of the Naga (the serpent beings) and the crown of the god Shiva, which is why it is often planted near Shiva temples.

Buddhist worship: In Thailand and Sri Lanka, it is often considered to be the sacred Sala tree under which the Buddha was born and which plays an important role in legends.

You see the loud cannonballs on the ground,' said the monk, 'which symbolise transience and the end. But you also smell the flower growing on its trunk, which proclaims imperishable beauty and new life.' Achan Sumedh gently picked a flower that was just blooming. The cannonball tree teaches us that even in the face of destruction (the ball), the greatest splendour (the flower) can spring directly from the foundation of life. It is a constant reminder that the miraculous exists alongside the ordinary.' Nong bowed. He smelled the flower, and the intense, exotic scent carried him away for a moment. He understood that this tree, in its dramatic contrast – deadly bullet and heavenly scent – reflected the essence of the spiritual journey.

THAR DESERT

The twilight painted the Sam Sand Dunes in an unreal, coppery gold as the old man Bhoora Ram set his sandal in the soft, untouched sand. For decades, he had been the guardian of this silent, undulating sea that stretched east of the village of Kanoi. Kanoi was just a speck of green hope in the vastness of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, and Bhoora Ram's family had lived there for generations, trading camels. But for him, the magic lay here, in the dunes. Today, Bhoora Ram had brought his young granddaughter, Laija, with him. It was her first time alone with her grandfather in the highest dunes. Grandfather, whispered Laija as she watched the fluid movement of the sand ridges, 'Myd we live in Kanoi when the most beautiful place is here?' Bhoora Ram miled, his teeth flashing in his tanned face. 'Kanoi is the root, my child. These dunes, the Sam Sand Dunes, are the breath. We need both. The village holds us steady, the sand teaches us freedom.' He pointed to the horizon, where the last ray of sunlight set the surface of the sand ablaze. 'Look closely. When the sun disappears, the sand begins to dance.' Indeed. As the temperature suddenly dropped and the wind picked up, the extremely fine sand began to 'sing' – a deep, resonant hum that echoed through the desert. It was the whisper of the Thar. The finest particles slid down from the ridges, constantly painting new, perfect patterns. Bhoora Ram pulled out a small, dented brass container and it a small oil-tuelled lantern. This lantern comes from Kanori, he explained, it is our promise that no matter how far we travel in the desert, the light of our home will always burn for us.' He told Laija stories of travelling merchants, mysterious Raiput warriors, and the gods of the desert who shaped the golden dunes. The collective knowledge of his family, gathered over generations in Kanoi, was their compass. As the stars, countless diamonds on dark velvet, exploded above them, Laija understood. The Sam Sand Dunes were not just a picturesque place in Rajasthan. They were the





BARREL ORGAN PLAYER

Jan Kataryniarz (Kataryniarz is the Polish word for barrel organ player) was an integral part of Warsaw's Old Town, as indispensable as the cobbled streets themselves. Every day, whether the spring sun warmed the colourful town houses on Rynek Starego Miasta (Old Town Square) or the cold Vistula wind blew, Jan pushed his old wooden cart to its place beneath Sigismund's Column. On this cart sat his beloved barrel organ, a creaky but magnificently painted machine whose mechanics were the centrepiece of his life. Jan himself was a small man with a thick moustache, a flat cap and eyes that reflected the melancholy and resistance of the city. He was a witness. He had seen Warsaw rise from the rubble of war, a miracle of reconstruction that brought back its proud past brick by brick. His music was the perfect complement. He didn't play modern pop songs, but waltzes, polkas and old Polish folk songs that grandmothers sang to the little children of Warsaw. Every time he turned the crank, he seemed to turn back time itself. On a cold autumn afternoon, Jan sat in his usual spot. The tourists had thinned out, and only a few elderly ladies were warming their hands on cups of hot tea. He was playing a particularly melancholy tune when a young man in a fashionable coat stopped. The young man. Marek, was a successful software developer who saw the old town only as a backdrop for his expensive lunches, 'Good afternoon, Mr Kataryniarz,' Marek said somewhat condescendingly, tossing a coin into Jan's open hat. Why do you always play the same old songs? People want to hear something new. Something that fits the modern pace of Warsaw.' Jan stopped turning the crank. The melody broke off in mid-bar. 'Marek,' Jan replied guietly, 'you live in the skyscrapers of the city, in a world where everything is new. But this old town is not new. It is a memory. We did not rebuild these walls to be modern, but to remember who we were.' He tapped on the wood of his barrel organ, 'My music is like this building. It is the sound of memory. When I play these old melodies, I remind people that the city has a soul that is older and tougher than concrete and glass. It is the indestructible melody of Warsaw.' Jan smiled, picked up the crank again and finished the wistful waltz. Marek stood still. He was no longer listening to just a barrel organ, but to the echo of generations. He understood that Jan Kataryniarz was not just a street musician. He was Warsaw's musical archivist, keeping the city's history alive - one melody at a time.

THE NEEDLES

The old fisherwoman Elara sat on the windswept cliffs at the westernmost tip of the Isle of Wight and gazed out at the raging sea. Below her, they towered: The Needles. These three striking, sharp-edged chalk cliffs were more than just a sight to behold for Elara; they were the last teeth of an ancient dragon. Elara knew the true story of the Needles, which was not written in books but told in the tales of sailors. Long ago, the island was not so isolated. The Needles and the cliffs of Old Harry Rocks on the opposite coast of Dorset were once part of a single chalk formation, a solid bridge. But the sea, the tireless blacksmith, had struck again and again. The tides and storms gnawed incessantly at the soft chalk rock. Over thousands of years, the coast gave way, and what remained was this lonely resistance: the Needles. Once, the rock at the end had been much thicker. There was actually a fourth 'needle' - a slender, needle-shaped column called Lot's Wife. But in 1764, it too succumbed to the sea and crashed into the depths with a loud bang. Elara looked at the red and white lighthouse clinging to the outermost rock. It was a modern guardian, but the Needles themselves were the original guardians. That afternoon, she watched a young couple who had travelled from a nearby coastal town. They laughed, took photos and saw the rocks as a beautiful, static monument, 'They don't know how alive this place is,' Elara murmured into the wind. 'They see the end points. I see the struggle.' She remembered a severe winter storm in her childhood that turned the sea into a raging, foam-crested bull. The roar of the sea as it crashed against the chalk cliffs had been terrifying. The next morning, the land looked different - a new crack, a new crevice, another piece of land sacrificed to the ocean. The Needles taught the fishermen humility. They were a promise that even the seemingly hardest things must ultimately yield to the unstoppable force of time and water. As the sun sank lower and the chalk cliffs glowed in brilliant white, Elara knew: the Needles are not permanent statues. They are ticking clocks of geology, ending the history of the land with every beat of a wave, only to begin a new, smaller but equally proud history. They were the Isle of Wight's majestic final farewell to the Atlantic Ocean.





SINT-JANSHUIS WINDMILL

Jan Van der Velde had been accustomed to the sight since childhood. He lived in a small, gabled flat near the eastern edge of Bruges' historic city centre, and from his window he could see it: the Sint-Janshuis Mill. It was one of the few wooden mills that had survived the passage of time and stood proudly on one of the green hills along the canal ring (the so-called vesten). It was not the oldest, but it was Jan's favourite mill. The Sint-Janshuis mill was a classic post mill (standerdmolen), which meant that its entire wooden structure rested on a single strong post and could be turned to face the wind. It was a symbol of Flemish perseverance. Jan was not the miller, but a baker whose grandfather had once bought his flour from this mill. But in recent years, with the advent of modern industry, the mill's sails turned only for tourists and historical remembrance. One grey November day, as a strong North Sea wind blew across the flat polders, Jan closed his shop early. He felt the melancholy of the cold season, which turned the canals into steel-grey mirrors. He walked to the vesten, where the Sint-Janshuis mill stood enthroned on the hill. He saw the old miller, Pieter, adjusting the sails, even though he knew that the ground flour had little commercial value. 'Good evening, Pieter,' Jan called out against the wind. 'Are you letting the old spirit breathe again?' Pieter, his face marked by wind and flour, nodded. 'The mill has to work, Jan. If it stands still, it dies. The mechanics forget, the beams swell. It needs the wind to remember what it was built for.' He pointed to the huge wooden sails, which began to turn slowly and majestically in the strong wind. The creaking of the old oak beams and the deep roar of the blades created a powerful, earthy sound. 'This mill,' Pieter continued. "is the history of Bruges. It's not just the beauty of the canals and bell towers. It is the work, It is the bread made with the power of the wind and the tenacity of the Flemish people." Jan stood there watching the mill battle against the north wind and convert it into motion. He understood that Sint-Janshuis was not just a backdrop. It was a living monument to a time when people depended on the power of nature. The mill was the heartbeat of old, working Bruges and it reminded him that true permanence lies in constant, meaningful movement. That evening, Jan returned to his warm bakery, inspired by the wind of the mill. He knew that as long as the sails of the Sint-Janshuis mill turned, the soul of the city would remain alive.

KOUTOUBIA MINARET

Jamila knew Marrakesh like the back of her hand, but the sight of the Koutoubia Minaret captivated her every day anew. It was not only the tallest building in the city; it was its heart and compass. Built in the 12th century under the Almohad dynasty, the minaret towered majestically above the rooftops of the medina. Its ochre-coloured bricks, glowing in the blazing Moroccan sun, were adorned with turquoise tiles and intricate geometric patterns that embodied thousands of years of Islamic art. Jamila sold spices in Diemaa el-Fna, the bustling square that lay in the constant shadow of the minaret. Every morning, just before the first call to prayer, she would look up at the square tower. There was a famous legend about the Koutoubia; when construction was completed, the caliph noticed that the foundation deviated by a few degrees from the perfect alignment with Mecca. Although the error was minimal, he insisted on demolishing the minaret and rebuilding it. The minaret we see today is the second one - a testament to the Almohads' absolute commitment to precision and devotion. One day, Karim, the young apprentice at Jamila's stall, complained about his work. 'People always want spices they already know. I want something new, something that stands out more!' Jamila looked up. The top of the minaret was crowned with three golden balls (or apples). Legend has it that they were made from the melted jewellery of one of the Caliph's wives, who had accidentally eaten two dates during Ramadan. As atonement, she donated her jewellery. 'Karim,' Jamila said softly, as the muezzin's call wafted down from the top of the tower, 'look at the Koutoubia. It is a monument to error and perfection.' She explained to him how the caliph once saw a flaw where people saw only beauty, and how he turned it into a lesson in unyielding devotion. 'Your work, Karim, may seem ordinary, but it is the first construction. You must carry it out with the precision of the second construction. People come to Marrakesh because this tower reminds them that the greatest structures are not those that are completed the fastest, but those that are built with the greatest respect for the idea.' When the call to prayer ended, Karim closed his eyes and breathed in the scent of saffron and coriander. He understood that the soul of Marrakesh did not lie in the noisy alleys, but in the silent, mighty tower, which, with its immaculate height and history of error, called for devotion. The Koutoubia was not just the shadow of Marrakesh; it was its conscience.





HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENT, BUDAPEST

The architect Imre Steindl died before seeing his masterpiece completed. But he knew that the building he designed would not be an ordinary parliament; it was to be a monument to the eternal soul of the Hungarian nation. The story began in 1885, after the unification of Buda, Óbuda and Pest. The young, proud nation needed a representative building worthy of its thousand-year history. The style had to be grand, and Steindl chose Neo-Gothic, inspired by the Palace of Westminster in London but refined with Hungarian splendour. For years, the Parliament grew, brick by brick, spire by spire. It was a tremendous effort: over 100,000 cubic metres of stone, half a million decorative stones and forty kilograms of pure gold were used in its construction. It was a building that displayed wealth and architectural audacity. Old lady Katalin had known the Parliament building since childhood. Her grandfather had worked as a craftsman on the filigree balustrades. She remembered how, as a little girl, she had marvelled at the 90 statues of Hungarian kings and military leaders that adorn the façade. For Katalin, the most important place inside was the dome hall. There, beneath the impressive Renaissance dome that pierces the neo-Gothic structure, lies the nation's true treasure: the Holy Crown of Hungary (Szent Korona). This crown, which has adorned Hungarian kings since the 11th century, symbolises Hungary's continuity and sovereignty. Its presence in the parliament building is no coincidence; it emphasises that political power in Budapest is inextricably linked to historical continuity. One evening, as darkness enveloped the city. Katalin stood on the banks of the Danube. The lights of the parliament were on. 365 red lamps illuminated the façade - one for each day of the year. The monumental structure shone across the water, its 96-metre-high dome (a reference to the year 896, when the Hungarians settled in the region) reflected in the calm surface. Katalin thought of the turmoil the building had survived: revolutions, wars, occupations. Yet it stood there, an unshakeable anchor. She knew that the Hungarian Parliament building was more than just a place where laws were made. It was a stone crown for the city and an unbreakable reminder that Hungary's identity lay in the Danube, its history and the proud, shining structure on its banks.

EXHAUSTED

After a day full of intense impressions and fascinating art in the famous Staedel Museum in Frankfurt, three children gave in to the fascination of the paintings – but not with jubilant enthusiasm, rather in the form of blissful exhaustion. They had previously explored the masterpieces of artists from different eras with wide-eyed wonder until the flood of images, stories and the quiet grandeur of the rooms had exhausted their energy reserves. Now they are lying peacefully asleep on a soft bench, their little heads resting on the cool leather. Their cheeks are flushed and their closed eyes speak of a state of deep calm. Presumably their dreams are just as colourful and lively as the paintings they have just admired. There is something magical about this moment: three young visitors taking a well-deserved break in the midst of the venerable art collections. Perhaps one day they will return, with new eyes and full of energy, to rediscover the treasures of the museum. Until then, this image of childish tiredness remains a warm part of the vivid stories that unfold at the Staedel Museum.





BRIGHT SUNFLOWER

Midsummer had a firm grip on the fields between Gräfenhausen and Birkenfeld. The air shimmered above the asphalt, but the landscape exuded a deep, contented peace. There, where the soil was a little stonier and the heat burned relentlessly, she stood: Helia, Helia was no ordinary plant; she was a sunflower, and the largest and brightest in the entire field. She towered a head above her neighbours, and her flower head, larger than a dinner plate, was a single, radiant wheel of gold. The farmer, Mr Schneider, had planted the sunflowers mainly as bird feed, but Helia had immediately caught his eye. She was an incorrigible optimist who turned towards the sun all day long. One late afternoon, a young photographer from Pforzheim, Lena, came to Gräfenhausen with her equipment. She was looking for a motif that captured the essence of summer in this region - something that was not only green, but vibrant. Lena had almost given up. Most of the flowers were drooping wearily in the heat. But then she saw Helia. Helia stood in all her glory. Her bright yellow petals seemed not only to reflect the light, but to actively draw it from the fading sun. The dark, almost black core in her centre was a stable anchor. Lena set up her camera, but the image she saw in the viewfinder was flat. It lacked feeling. She moved closer to the flower. Helia seemed to look at her with guiet dignity. It was as if the flower was saving, 'I endured the full heat to become this gold.' Lena understood. The flower was not only beautiful; it was resilient. It was the perfect symbol of the tenacity of life, asserting itself even in the scorching summer heat of Baden-Württemberg. Lena waited. When the sun finally touched the horizon and the last soft light of the 'golden hour' bathed the scene in a warm glow. Lena clicked. The photo she took showed Helia, the bright sunflower, against the dark background of the nearby forest near Birkenfeld. She did not look exhausted, but triumphant, Helia radiated the promise of abundance and perseverance. Lena knew that she had not just photographed a flower. She had captured summer itself in Gräfenhausen – a guiet, golden miracle in the midst of ordinary fields.

