



A Prophecy of Coconuts

*Adventure
Stories of Pirates, Robots
and Coconuts*

by Julia Fellner

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Don't you want to discover the mystery of the coconut?

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Prophecies. What a ridiculous concept. I didn't believe in them. Whenever they came up in stories I rolled my eyes and put the book aside. If you have a prophecy at the beginning of a story it always comes true. So what suspension is left to keep you reading? Of course, one never knows unless one finishes the story. Though oftentimes it's for naught, ever so often you do stumble across an interesting twist. Maybe I simply didn't like prophecies because they implied there was a larger-than-me fate, which had my whole life mapped out, when I didn't even know what I wanted to eat for dinner that night. "Olive," Maggie shouted, shaking my shoulder. "Have you been listening to what I've been saying?" Nope. I had been too busy contemplating the fortune-teller's booth and who was more misguided: the fortune-teller for ripping off people or those people who sought happiness in a prophecy. "Of course I was listening," I replied. "And you're sure you don't mind?" How could anyone disappoint Maggie, especially when she had such an excited look on her face? More importantly, how could I ever admit I hadn't been listening to her? Imagine how her face would fall. "Of course I don't mind if it makes you happy," I answered with a forced smile. What had I let myself be talked into? I didn't care. Maggie let out a happy squeal and lunged at me, pulling me into a tight embrace. If it made her this happy, how bad could it be? Ah, irony, my archenemy. "Thanks, Olive," she said, linking her arm with mine. "I know you don't necessarily believe in superstitions." Oh uh. "But it's going to be fun." Even bigger Oh uh. "You might even learn something interesting." Bigger oh uh if she was dragging me to where I think she was heading. "I'll pay." Yep. She was heading for exactly the booth I had hoped to avoid. Oh uh overload error. Systems shutting down. Too late to run. Emergency protocol: smile on. Maggie pushed me into the chair opposite the fortune-teller who gave me a broad smile. The burning smell of incense sticks hit my nose with brutal intensity. She handed the fortune-teller coins and sat down next to me. The woman muttered words in what she believed to be a mysterious-sounding language. To someone who knew Gaelic it was a list of random vocabulary. Bread, house, socks. Then she said with a fake Eastern European accent, "Let's find out your future, eh?" Reluctantly, I let her examine my hand. She ran her fingers over my palm, drawing her forefinger down the lines on my skin. "Ah, I see." I highly doubted she was able to see anything, except that I washed my hands regularly but I was too polite to say so. Besides, Maggie was staring at me with such hopeful eyes, how could I ever disappoint such a sweet face? "I see..." the woman continued, lowering her voice, "I see a great prophecy about your future. You will go on a life-changing quest, find true love and coconuts." "Coconuts?" I repeated, trying very hard not to laugh. "It's a mystery," the fortune-teller continued dramatically. "A ginger cat will warn you of great danger. A destination will be uncovered in a graveyard. A journey will lead you away to an ancient sanctuary. There your true love will be revealed." "All of this will happen to me?" "Today," the fortune-teller whispered and nodded enthusiastically. "We're kind of busy today," I said. "Maggie and I wanted to go

see this castle..." "If your journey is meant to lead you there, it will. But you will only find out if you follow your fate. You'll see." "Thanks." I drawled as I shouldered my rucksack. "Do you want to get your palm read, Maggie?" "I think yours is a big enough prophecy for today." We left the booth behind us. "You did this on purpose to tease me, didn't you?" "Olive," she exclaimed in a mock melodramatic voice, with a hand over her heart. "I'm deeply shocked you would think such a thing of me." "By thing you mean, thinking you were cunning enough to trick me into letting that woman read my fortune because teasing me amuses you?" She fiddled with her hair nervously and I was afraid I had offended her. "I meant it as a compliment of your intelligence and sneakiness, you silly goose." My heart constricted at the thought she might be mad or worse: hurt by my comment. "I'm honoured you put so much effort into finding a way to tease me. I'll have to find a way to repay the favour." The lips sparkling with cherry red lip-gloss curved into a smile. Her eyes glinted with a mischievous adventurousness. Why did I get the feeling she had tricked me into giving her permission to tease me as much as she liked? Fortunately, Maggie didn't insist on going into more booths at the fair, although I wouldn't have been opposed to taking a closer look at the one selling Sloppy Joes. I checked my watch. It was still early in the day and we had at least an hour or two, before the castle we wanted to visit opened. What should we do in the meantime? I made the mistake of looking at Maggie. Excitement shone in her eyes as she smiled at me. "We could go to the graveyard," she suggested. "Maybe we'll meet a ginger cat on the way." I sighed. "All right." Maggie linked her arm with mine. "I'm sure it'll be fun." "You're probably the first person to ever say so about going to a graveyard," I replied. There we were, despite all logic and reason, hunting after a prophecy of coconuts. I hoped Maggie wouldn't be disappointed when it didn't come true. I glanced at her. She caught my eyes and gave me a wide smile, distracting me from my train of thought. Since Stirling, or at least its city centre, wasn't particularly large we didn't have to walk for long. We marched up the steep hill on which Stirling Castle was mounted. However, instead of following the road to the Castle, we made a turn to the left-hand side of the hill. Behind the Church of the Holy Rude (yes that's what it was actually called), stretched out a large cemetery. "Look," Maggie called out and stopped in her tracks. Since our arms were still linked I was forced to a halt, half-way on the street, opposite of which the entrance of the graveyard was located. A car raced by half a foot of where I stood. "Thanks," I said. "I didn't see the car coming." "What car?" Maggie looked up, confused. "I meant that cat over there." I looked to where she was pointing. On top of a stone pillar lounged a ginger cat. It eyed us with the expression so typical to cats, curious and judging because they had been awoken from their sleep. "The prophecy talked of a ginger cat, didn't it?" "A ginger cat which would save my life," I remembered. And it had, in a way. If Maggie hadn't stopped because of the cat, I would have ended up as one squashed Olive. "Let's go explore the graveyard then," I suggested. What if, against all my doubts, the prophecy was coming true? Did all of this mean I would find my true love tonight? I glanced again at Maggie. Did she really think such a fairy-tale like life possible? Maggie, ever the ray of sunshine, tugged me across the street and this time I made sure to look before crossing. We walked through the gates of the churchyard and strolled around the church to the graveyard. Macabre as it might have been, the hill covered in gravestones was beautiful. Magnificently sculptured gravestones decorated the small

hills of the far stretching cemetery. Maggie skipped down the path with morbid excitement but since the other people in the graveyard looked like tourists rather than mourners I doubted they minded. "Let's climb that slope," Maggie pointed at a slope amidst the graves. We didn't see the path, which led up to the slight hill, although on top there were tourists. On our side of the slope the path was lined with a metal banister. "Tell me you aren't suggesting what I think you are." "Come on, Olive," she pouted. Before I could make the decision whether to protest or not, Maggie dragged me uphill. Graceful as she was, she hopped over the metal rails of the banister as if she did it every day. I put my hands on the rail and pushed myself upwards. Oh the curse of being ridiculously tiny. My feet flailed as I heaved myself across the banister. Maggie grabbed my arms and pulled me forward. I hadn't counted on the help and thus I made a lunge at the same moment. Long story short, I ended up falling straight on top of Maggie. Our bodies were aligned directly, our breasts pressed against each other, her hands on my waist. "I'm so sorry," I said. "Are you hurt?" "I'm fine," she smiled. "Sorry," I said again, realizing my hand had been on her breast the whole time. "I guess I should get up before I crush you." "You're not heavy at all," Maggie replied. She got up at the same time as I did. Our limbs were tangled so much she had to put her hands back on my waist to steady me. Once again, we were pressed against each other, staring into each other's eyes. "Are you alright?" Both of us were startled by the voice of an elderly man who had walked upstairs on the planned path. We both stammered something about being fine, before getting to our feet. I brushed my long hair into my face, afraid Maggie might see my blush. "Look at this," she said. "What is it?" Maggie lifted what she had found weighed down by a suspiciously familiar ginger cat, which lounged on top of the stone pillar showing the surrounding landmarks. She scratched the cat behind its ear, while waving the piece of paper she found at me. "It's a leaflet from Doune Castle." "But that's the castle we want to visit." "What did the fortune-teller say? Something about a destination being uncovered in a graveyard, right?" Maggie handed me the brochure. "It must be fate then." It was a peculiar thought to consider the prophecy was true but we had wanted to head to Doune anyway, so why not give fate a chance then? Though, how much of a prophecy was it if I had made the choice myself before we talked to the fortune-teller? At least, I could rest in the security of knowing it wasn't fate's choice but my own. "Let's go," I agreed, before my thoughts spiralled into another tirade of questioning the concept of prophecies. We walked back down the hill. This time we walked down the normal path, which led us down on the opposite side of the slope. It didn't take us long to reach the bus station. Both of us were quiet during the ride back to Stirling. I did catch Maggie sneaking glances at me though because I was guilty of doing the same. Was she as worried about proving my doubts in the prophecy wrong, as I was about disappointing her hopes in them? "Off to the castle," Maggie announced, when we had stepped off the bus. As we walked through Doune village, Maggie grew more talkative. I couldn't help but be infected by her excitement and cheerfulness. "Do you honestly believe in prophecies?" I asked her, as we walked toward the castle, whose battlements were visible above the treetops. "Maybe," she shrugged. "Maybe I like the idea of being part of something great or maybe I'm just a hopeless romantic." We lapsed back into silence, when we had entered the castle since both of us were listening to the audio guides pressed to our ears. Still, ever so often my eyes –

and thoughts – would drift over to Maggie. Why was she behaving so strangely today? I tried to pry my thoughts from accusing her of planning something. It was the whole prophecy business messing with my head. That was the real fatality of prophecies. Once one was given, you couldn't trust anyone or anything. The thought of a prophecy becoming true, simply because of what the implications of prophecies' being real meant, was as bad as the sobering realization of how little magic there was in the world. Enough of these prophecies, I thought, and pressed the button on my audio guide, listening to the next track. As the audio guide explained about the family for whom the castle had been built, I made my way up the narrow meandering stairs. Maggie walking beside me, the two of us entered a wide hall, which probably used to be several rooms. I stared out of the window. Across a narrow river, the village was visible. In the background, the foothills of the Highlands framed the scene like in an oil painting. I resumed looking at the hall. There were alcoves on the opposite side. Maggie waved and pointed at the alcove she was standing in. I reached her side and she took off my earphones. With her hands still on the headphones hanging around my neck, she explained excitedly, "This is an ancient sanctuary, like in the prophecy." "How so?" "This is the improvised chapel, where a priest would hold small services for the Duke and Duchess of Albany. Is that sacred enough for you?" "Sanctuary, yes. But not exactly ancient," I argued. "Old enough," she dismissed my protestations. "Look this is where the holy water was kept." My eyes followed her perfectly manicured hand to where she was pointing. It was a small niche in the wall. The most curious part however, was the object, which lay within said niche. "What's that?" "It looks like a coconut to me." I didn't trust the smirk she was barely able to hide. "Why don't you look at it more closely?" I raised an eyebrow at her. "You planned all of this, didn't you?" She shrugged, failing more and more to hide her grin. "I don't know what you are talking about." "How did you know I wouldn't be paying attention, so you could trick me into going to the fortune-teller with you?" I asked. "You're always thinking too much," Maggie said but unlike when I heard the comment usually from other people, her tone was entirely without malice. "At the same time you're too nice to ever admit you hadn't been listening to what I was saying." "Sorry," I said, feeling guilty but not surprised she understood my psyche so well, although we had only known each other for a couple of weeks. "It's part of who you are. That's why you're the scientist and I'm the romantic," she dismissed my worries I had offended her. "Never mind that for now. Don't you want to solve the mystery of the coconut?" Her grin turned into a nervous smile. Instead of contemplating coconuts, I would have rather asked what had caused the frown marring her sunny face with worry. "Go on," she insisted. I reached for the coconut. As I took it into my hands, the two halves came apart. The top half clattered to the ground. I glanced around, feeling like I had pushed over a famous artefact in an eerily silent museum. Doune Castle, however lovely as it was, was quiet with only a couple standing in front of the large window I had stared through before. They didn't seem to be aware of Maggie's and mine presence. I turned my attention back to the coconut half I still held in my hand. A piece of red paper was wedged in the bottom half of the coconut. "What's this?" Maggie fiddled with the other coconut half she had picked up from the ground. "You will never know unless you read it." With my heart pounding in my chest, I took out the paper. Unfolded, it had the shape of a heart; a biological heart that is, not the unrealistic symbol. It was so Maggie; to tease me for studying

biology. Underneath the heart was written in a beautiful calligraphic script: Do you want to make the prophecy come true and go on a date with me? I was amazed. "You really did plan all of this?" "And what is your answer?" she asked, peeking at me from underneath her eyelashes, twisting the coconut half in her hand. "I have never believed in prophecies but maybe I was wrong not to," I said, caressing her cheek with my palm, "because this one seems to be coming true." "Good," she said and letting the coconut clatter to the ground, she pulled me closer by putting her hands on my waist, at the same time I wrapped my hands around her neck. Our lips met in a kiss long overdue. With our foreheads leaning against each other, I whispered against her lips, "You did that on purpose, too, so I'd have to admit at least one prophecy came true, didn't you?" She just smirked and kissed me again.