

## Chapter Three

*For what the lost treasure was exchanged*

Our accord and agreement was that I should go with this traveling scholar, as he called himself, and wished to be called, into the forest to that spot where what was left of my lost goods lay hidden; there I was to receive them again, unless my wishes should be otherwise, and should give him for his pains what I myself wished to.

Now after we came into the beginning of this same forest, he made with his staff a double ring on the ground and two strange characters round about it, put me, along with himself, inside it and mumbled out some words which were such gibberish that I was not able to understand a one of them; soon thereafter a serpent of frightening form, but of lovely colors, appeared outside the circle. It was of terrible size and had as it were the visage of the most extremely beautiful maiden, two feet in front such as one paints on griffins, and on its back two wings such as bats have, but without their looking so repugantly black, but rather rosy red, and set here and there with many eyes, just as on a peacock's tail; its body was covered all over with gold and silver scales, so that it appeared as if it were covered with naught but brand new coins made of the two afore-mentioned metals; on its head it was crowned with a diadem made of all sorts of precious jewels, the tail, however, which was rather long, well colored, and delicately ringed, ended in a frightful fiery flame which seemed to me to be of terrible heat, because without surcease sparks of fire flew out of it as frequently and quickly as if Vulcanus, Sterops, and Brontes were forging with might and main a most brightly glowing piece of iron on their anvil with many heavy hammers. This

frightful sight caused me many millions, yes untold more millions of terrible fear and pain than the lovely visage of the *monstrum* had in the beginning pleased me; for just as this serpent's entire body was pleasant, lovely, and delightful to behold, its tail, on the other hand, was all the more many thousands, thousands and thousands times more repugnant and ugly.

It asked the traveling scholar what his desire was, saying that he had demanded she come into this forest, after she first had set her blue-glazed feet on the outermost edge of the circle; he answered: "I desire to hear whether and where this man present here and deprived of what was his may attain again his lost property in this forest."

She said thereupon that most of what was left from what had been lost was still to be found at the spot where the thief had hidden it, and was easy to get, provided no one else espied it before our arrival there to thwart our recovery of it; but nevertheless, let Fortuna decide this game as she wished, there would nevertheless be such a precious jewel to be obtained instead of the lost treasure that it might well not be bought for all the gold taken from the victim of the theft, nor all the worthy goods which he still possessed; with which jewel I should find myself well content, should it be bestowed upon me.

The traveling scholar hereupon wished to force the serpent with conjuration to reveal both the hidden treasure and also the way to it, but it answered that it was compelled by a higher power to bend to Fortuna who had already made her decision now and had set out in haste to enrich another man; and when the traveling scholar was unwilling to forbear to continue with his conjuring constraint, it behaved so violently and terribly that I was happy that he gave it leave to depart. Straightway thereafter it was fettered and led away by a naked maiden whose figure we often see depicted by painters as standing on a winged globe and with a sail in its hands.

Therefore the fellow made another circle, stepped into it with me, and thereupon conjured another spirit, which he asked what the virtue and effect of the jewel was which was to be obtained instead of my lost property. He received as an answer that it had the power to make him who had it with him invisible, and it was already to be found in an anthill, and, to be sure, very close to where what I had lost had been hidden, which anthill the conjured spirit, so that he, the conjurer, might readily find it upon his arrival, would mark with a tongue of fire above it which no one save us two would be able to see, but, so that we might without fail find it, he would permit us to be accompanied thither and shown the way by underlings under his command.

Finally the spirit revealed to the traveling scholar also, because they were on especially familiar terms with one another, that in just this way my property had been taken from me by a woman that had robbed me when she was invisible.

After that the traveling scholar erased again the ring he had made, after first he had dismissed the spirit again or had got rid of it. As soon as this occurred, there surrounded us a large horde of wolves which at first enclosed us from behind in crescent-moon fashion, just as the Turks are wont to make their battle order, but finally found a ring almost completely around us save for a gap toward which we walked, while they, the wolves or spirit in wolves' shapes, left it open to this end in the circle around us till we finally came to the anthill and saw the afore-mentioned tongue of fire flickering merrily over it.

There we sat down, whereupon the afore-mentioned flame instantly went out; the old man, however, said to me: "Well, good sir, here is the place where you will take possession either of your treasure and lost money or of the means to make yourself invisible; choose quickly one way or the other, before the hour of fortune slips away completely, to obtain the one or the other."

I thought of this and said to myself: According to the report of the serpent which appeared and was placed under duress, 'tis doubtful whether you will get back your lost treasure or not. Who knows whether perhaps someone has already seen it and taken it away? Moreover, you will know how a large number of sovereigns were thrown down onto the public market place amongst the folk! So who knows how little might still be left of that which is supposed to lie hidden here, and whether, be the treasure ever so large, it should be chosen over the art of making oneself invisible, which rare art I have long and often wished to possess anyway. I therefore said to the traveling scholar: "Of goods and gold I still have more, therefore I shall indeed renounce and forego what was lost and hidden here and reckon it to those treasures which also lie hidden elsewhere here and there. Whoever finds it, as much as I might think I have a right to it, as far as I am concerned, and with my consent, may keep it for his own, but with this reservation: that I retain the jewel with which I can make myself invisible and which I am willing to accept in lieu of my lost treasure."

Thereupon both of us sat down by the anthill, of which the itinerant scholar took a handful and asked me whether I saw him. I answered "Yes!" He, however, seized another handful after he had put the previous one aside, and asked me again as before whether I still saw him, and proceeded so long in this fashion till he seized a handful, through the power and effect of which he disappeared from me in a trice. Nevertheless he kept sitting on his former spot and asked me as before whether I saw him, which seemed to me exceeding wonderful and frightful, especially because I heard him so close to me and yet did not see him; now when I told him that I did not see him, he said: "Then hold up your handkerchief and receive what you desire to have and in the stead of your lost property." I did it and thus received the makings of the nest from the anthill,

whereupon I instantly saw the old man again. He commanded me to tie up the handkerchief carefully so that the thing, which was among the matter carried together by the ants and perhaps, consisted only of a simple tiny little stone or root would not be lost. I obeyed with the greatest care and attentiveness, so that not a single grain of it got away, but meanwhile paid heed to see whether the itinerant scholar was looking me in the eye when he spoke with me, or at my hands when I bound up the handkerchief; for had I remarked anything of the sort about him, I should have straightway concluded that he, as a magician, might have made himself invisible by some other means, and have it in mind to pay me off for my treasure, which I had renounced, with this useless nest material so as to then recover and retain the treasure for himself alone. But after I was not able to remark about him the least thing of this sort, I quite changed my mind and was much more content than if I had been given I know not what other sort of great thing.

Afterwards we tested repeatedly the effect of my handkerchief, for the itinerant scholar easily discerned what my suspicions were; therefore he gave me myself cause to assure myself for certain and to make me believe firmly by repeating the experience often before my own eyes; and what made this certain was that I was unable to see the handkerchief itself but was easily able to seize it when I put it down anywhere.

Now when I had in this fashion become certain about this matter, the itinerant scholar took leave of me, not knowing whether in this hour of good fortune, as he called it, he had received or not any of my treasure, over which I had granted anyone who found it complete power and sufficient rights of ownership.

