

Arina Avram

SNOW STORY



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*Trăiești
într-o familie
care te dorește mult
înțelegerea tuturor
Arina*

*Este o telenovelă autohtonă,
născută la Poiana Brașov*

2000, 2000

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Once upon a time there was a raging fire, everything seemed frozen in time in a sea of ice. Winter trees shivered in the bitter wind, naked branches were adorned with beautiful snow flowers. There was a huge fire on the horizon, flames licking the sky and keeping warm the souls of those who came near it. Around the bonfire stood a group of gypsies and sang loudly, at the edge of the forest, a large petrified forest, white and bright under the winter snow. One evening in the twilight, a few girls in colorful clothes and a few swarthy boys in pantaloons with shiny coloured belts danced wildly. The hot blood, the oriental blood, defied the cold weather and freezing wind.

The sound of sleigh bells approached, but was covered by the songs and shouts. The merry sound approached slowly. Two blue eyes, like the summer sky, watched the show. Curled up beneath a pile of furs, the daughter of the emperor had ordered her coachman to stop the silver sled. The decor of winter's dreamy twilight and the magic of music fascinated her. A handsome young man, with black hair, his hair fluttering in the wind, a slender young man surrounded by a flock of happy girls, appeared in her line of sight. His sharp black eyes were shining. He looked at her intently. His eyes were like arrows and turned them toward his girls, but shortly after that he looked at the princess again, he stared at her in wonder. The princess's heart palpitated with fear, emotion, and joy.

'Let's go! Go as fast as you can!' Larisa asked the coachman.

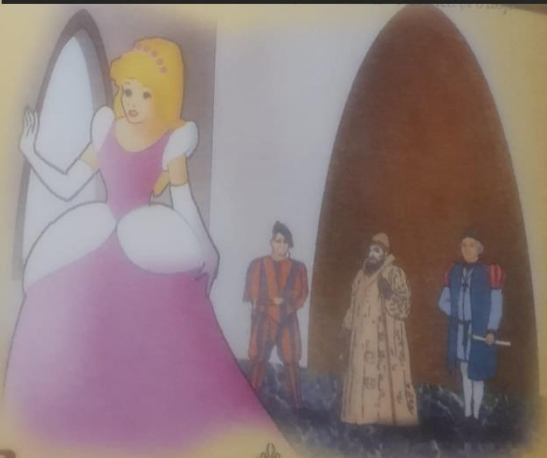
She wanted to run as far as possible, to hide from herself the nature of the feelings, but the distance made her feel sad.



At that time, the emperor's courtiers shouted and told that His Highness wished to marry his daughter to a royal son. So, offspring of sultans, sons of kings from the West, descendants of vovodes, heirs of pharaohs, princes from the The Land of Silk and the The Land of the Rising Sun rushed to arrive first... Larisa, the blonde princess, a beautiful girl in diaphanous veil, wept bitterly and sighed. She turned down all the suitors, one by one, upsetting his father. From time to time she was going on a sleigh ride, making her way past the gypsy camp. She looked at the prince of gypsies, sometimes secretly, sometimes directly, but he showed no signs of answering. The emperor's daughter almost always returned to the palace with tears in her eyes, seeing him in the company of a long-haired girl. Her long black tresses hung loose over her brown shoulders.

Every time the guards announced the arrival of a new visitor, Larisa would run to the golden drawing room, hoping the prince of the gypsies would appear! But in vain. Dozens of royal bachelors have come and gone, the world's richest princes, the most brilliant princes in the world...

The emperor became more and more gloomy. He was afraid one day he would pass away and won't be there to see her daughter married, to get a new emperor for the country. His land would fall into ruin under the rule of a such thoughtless young lady, there was no doubt, in his opinion. Bitterly regretted not having other children to transfer his hopes to them for the future of his reign. Losing his patience, one day, he called his daughter and scolded her:



'My girl, the light of my eyes, I waited in vain, for you to bring a touch of joy to me. Know that if you do not listen to me and you don't get married, you will cause my death...', the emperor said.

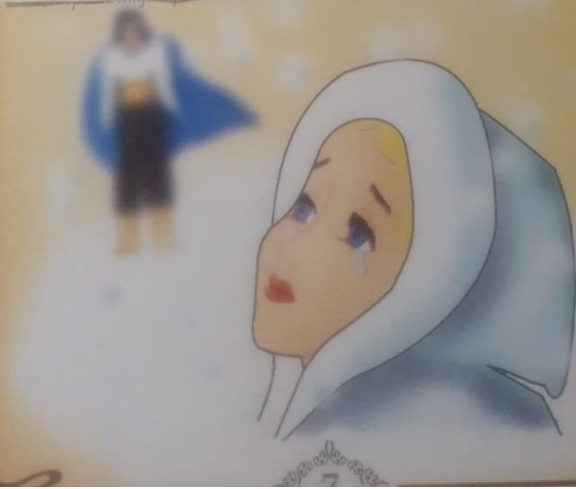
Frightened by her father's words, the princess decided to break the silence. She wanted to clarify, once and for all, why gypsy prince gazed at her in the woods. She set off for the forest again. It was snowing gently. The snowflakes fell, icing the branches of the fir trees in white.

Larisa glided along the new snow through the forest in utter silence. She told the coachman to stop near the tents of the gypsy camp, sending him thereafter to bring her the prince of dreams. The wind had begun to blow; the frost was cruel. Only the tip of the nose of the princess was visible, her face was buried in fluffy fur. She waited for meeting with bated breath, but the servant returned alone.

'Your Highness, this fool doesn't want to come. He only agrees to meet you at the frozen spring. You may command him will be flogged for disobedience, the gypsies set up their camp on the land of your kingdom...' he said.

'Oh, no! You're not going to whip him, are you? He is a prince. I saw his gold belt and boots, his blue cloak with diamonds... He can't be a commoner...' Larisa told him, horrified.

'My lady, the gypsies do not have your rank. Not even bullbasha, their leader, the king of gypsies, can covet the admiration of a royal princess!' he answered.



The girl looked at him dumbfounded. At the age of 17, she did not understand this kind of differences. Besides, how could he afford to refuse her invitation? Her first thought was to return home, but something stopped her. Love is stronger than fear and anger. She consented to go to the frozen spring.

They saw each other, approached each other, twining their hands, happy both of them. The moon, shrinking in size in the winter cold, watched the lovers and the frozen snow-covered fir tree tops from the purple-blue sky in the sunset light.

The young man, the most loved and respected human being among the nomads, wasn't Bulbasia's offspring, but he was being chased all the time by the girl of the leader of the gypsies. All tent-dwellers awaited their marriage as a matter of course.

In order to meet Larissa, Sandri - for that was the name of the handsome man - the young man whose face was white as snow, an unusual presence among gypsies, had to escape the watchful eye of the bride-to-be. Not an easy thing to go through.

And the days flowed by... regularly, uneventfully, the days rolled by unnoticed, rolling like a string of beads alongside the river of time. The emperors fell ill, sick with grief. The girl understood that she could no longer hide her love. She convinced Sandri to propose to her in order to save her father and the kingdom. But her plan was a failure. The emperor could not admit a nomad son-in-law, he could not admit a young gypsy boy on the throne. He gathered strength and miraculously healed himself. Disappointment removed the disease, confirming that iron cuts iron.

Gradually, she became aware of a further, less generous, reaction regarding her love. Her father would never have accepted Sandri as her husband therefore she decided to run away with him. Disguised in gypsy-style clothing, the two lovers took road passing through the forest, wandering silent paths covered with snowdrifts, advancing with difficulty among the trees that groined under a blanket of snow.



Enraged beyond measure, the emperor ordered to track down the nightowls, offering a large sum to anyone who would give a clue leading to their hiding place. Imperial camps scoured the land far and wide, but to no avail.

One day, an upright gypsy woman with a wasp-like waist, with piercing eyes, arrived at the palace dressed in a long grey cloak. Mysterious, she asked to be received by the emperor, because she brought him important news about his daughter. The ruler agreed to receive her at once, threatening he would cut off her head, if she dared to trick him. It was Lunka, the daughter of Bulbasia. Her fear was gone, replaced by hatred and blood rage. She stepped ahead towards the throne, falling at the emperor's feet. It is said that gypsy love is the strongest on earth, it was no wonder she was desperate because of her lover's betrayal.

"Your Highness, I know where your only daughter is. She stole my lover and trampled your heart... Day and night I chased them with the help of the magic orb. I constantly fight to separate them by sorcery, but her prayers destroy all the efforts. Your Highness, I have come to tell you that my magic orb has the answer about their hiding place. Please send the soldiers quickly to bring the girl back to you here, but swear to me you will not touch my man. I'm not asking you for anything. I just want Sandri back alive," she said.



The emperor ordered his army to quickly go to the cave where he had learned that Larisa had taken refuge together with the prince of the gypsies. He asked that only the girl be brought to him, instructing a faithful servant to take the life of the one who had dared to steal her from him. He also was giving order to the servant to burn his body and scatter his ashes to the four corners of the earth.

Arriving at the cave, the sovereign's army found only the beautiful princess, because the lad was out hunting. Larisa felt like a wild animal being cornered and fought as hard as she can with the soldiers. The girl was tied fast in her saddle so she could not fall out of it if she tried to. Then two burly men drove her to the palace. The servant assigned to kill Sandin remained waiting for him in the cave.

A furious blizzard had begun, people couldn't stand against wind. The storm whistled and roared, as if it was singing sinister songs. Wrapped up in her dark cloak, Liutka looked at the army with wide-open eyes in which could be seen a feeling akin to horror. She greeted the soldiers to make sure that they were bringing the emperor's daughter. Glad to see her being returned by force, the gypsy woman asked about her man. The soldiers wearing chainmail and plate armour with shield, lance, halberd saluted her in mockery and went out. As she insisted, they told her in no uncertain terms that the impudent would be killed, not knowing who was the curious woman. As if bitten by a poisonous snake, the stranger woman started to scream, running towards the forest like a bullet from a gun and uttering yells and shouts with which were mingled the shrill cries of birds. Having heard about the terrible crime, Larisa's eyes filled with tears.



Lubka was pale, disheveled, exhausted. She struggled through the thick blanket of snow and heavy drifts blocked the entrance to the cave preventing her from reaching there faster to try to save the life of the man she loved. A little owl hooted. "Who, who, who?" again and again, in a hiding place, and the screams were heard a long way off. After a few good hours, she reached the cave. A great fire appeared on the horizon and the fire raged angrily to the sky. It smelled like burnt steel, more precisely, mixed smells of burnt flesh and freshly cut fir trees were floating in the air. A crushing exhaustion came over her and her legs were painfully heavy. She collapsed in the snow, she was wet to the skin. The snowflakes fall in millions from the sky, little stars from high, like white butterflies in a silent dance, covering her body and smothering the flames. At the palace, the sadness reigned everywhere. Ever since she found out about Sarcot's death, Larisa no longer had the will to live. She prayed for his soul in the little church situated on the north side of the Imperial court, prayed for hours at a time. She never spoke to her father, she ran away from the servants. Still more crowned heads sent their descendants for the contest devised by the emperor to see who would receive the princess' hand in marriage. Larisa told her father that she would kill herself if he forced her to marry against her will. One afternoon, as she was returning from the place of prayer, a woman wearing dark clothing appeared in her path like a ghost.

"You killed him! You killed him!" she was screaming and hitting the princess with all her might. It was Lubka, who poured out the bitterness of her soul and beat her rival. Larisa did not defend herself. She had from the first moment given herself up to her enemy entirely. The attacker punched and slapped her repeatedly, knocking her to the ground. Several servants jumped to the princess's aid. With difficulty, they saved her, but the distraught woman managed to escape.



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Notified immediately, the emperor ordered that the gypsy caravan campsite nestled in the forest to be evicted and the eviction carried out without due notice, during the night, and with excessive use of force, without delay. He could barely control his impulses to demand that all the gypsies be killed, because they were the source of all his troubles.

Full of bumps and scratches, experiencing pain all over the body, experiencing excruciating pain in her heart, Larisa was dying. The best doctors and healers in the world were brought to save her, but all efforts proved in vain. The emperor had promised to give up half of his kingdom to the one who could cure his daughter. As any crowned head with a broken heart he was on the verge of asking all the bells in the country to ring as quickly and as loudly as possible for days when a servant whispered fearfully to him:

"Your Highness, an old gypsy woman insists on giving an elixir to the princess." As soon as he heard those words, the emperor went out of his mind.

"Gypsy, gypsy again! May I never hear of gypsies again! Put her in chains immediately!" the emperor shouted.

At that moment, Larisa's nanny appeared, her eyes red from crying. She has always stood up for what she thought was right as a mother for Larisa after the empress had died in childbirth.

"Your majesty, I think the princess is dying. You should come to her, to reconcile with her... in the very last moment," she said.

Burdened with such a concern, the sovereign stepped into the girl's room with immense difficulty. The light inside her eyes was slowly dying, like the flame of an extinguished candle. Some maids were whispering in a corner and elbowed each other to get a better view. They had heard that a gypsy witch had been imprisoned in the cellar of the palace.



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"What are you talking about there?" thundered the emperor, shocked by the audacity of them. The girls froze in fear and the whole room fell silent. Larisa was one step away from closing her eyes forever. One of the girls with a fleshy face red as a carrot burst out crying.

"My Lord Emperor, bring the gypsy quickly! Maybe this is the last chance for the princess," she said.

The heart of the father was softened by the love of the maids, though he was a man with the heart of a lion. He immediately sent for the old woman who had boasted that she could save his daughter. But he did not forget to threaten:

"I will send her to the gallows if she deceives me."

The gypsy woman asked to be left alone with the princess, a wish that was fulfilled immediately. There was not a moment to lose. The old woman approached to Larisa, knelt down and kissed her hand.

"Listen, my beautiful princess, I am Şandri's mother..." she told her.

As if by magic, Larisa's cadaverous face showed the hint of a smile.

"I have come to give you some wonderful news. My boy is still alive!" the woman said.

Suddenly, the princess let out an exclamation of surprise. She wept profusely when the gypsy woman told her the big news, but her tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy.

"He sent me word asking if I needed anything. A monk brought me the message, but he asked me not to tell anyone, so as not to endanger the life of the one who spared my son. Instead of killing and burning Şandri, as he received the order, that servant burned the goat he had hunted. The man took pity on my son, because he himself had lost a son in the army not long ago, but he made Şandri swear not to say anything, to go away and never return," the gypsy woman spoke again.



The old woman also told her how she had left the tent, hiding in an abandoned inn, in the heart of the forest, just to be able to talk to her one day. The monk had confessed to her that Şandri missed the princess, but that he didn't want to see her anymore so as not to cause even more harm to her life and health.

'Well, my dear, if Şandri wants to forget you, forget about him. Marry the man your father will choose for you, proclaim yourself empress, live your life to the fullest! That's why I came, to tell you that my boy would be happier if he knew you were doing this. Get up, you don't really have any ailments... You miss him, don't you? Well, I know, but stop, do not waste your life attempting to change what cannot be changed! Tell your father to give me some gold coins because I cured you. I need some money... I don't need the half of your kingdom...' the gypsy woman said.

Larisa sighed deeply and collapsed again. She confessed to the gypsy that she no longer wanted to live without Şandri, even if he preferred to see her happy in her world. She started sobbing, begging her to help her find him.

The gypsy woman left without asking for a reward, after she had told the princess where she should look for her son. She had convinced herself that Larisa really loved Şandri, that she was ready to give up the throne to live with her lover.

Larisa quickly recovered after only meeting Şandri's mother once. As soon as it was over, she gathered a few strictly necessary things and set off for the woods.

The silver snow glistened in the velvet light. The old woman came out to meet her. She gave her three enchanted sticks for the road and told her to use them only in case of danger or attack. If she was going to break one of them, all the living creatures of the forest would jump to her aid.



She advised her to use them wisely, however, only in the most difficult moments, because serious dangers awaited her. The emperor's daughter thanked her warmly, quickly made her escape, for fear that the palace troops would follow her. She sank into the shades of the forest, through the snowdrifts that rose as high as her waist. Her boots heavy, she trudged forward, she stumbled through the deep snow, whipped by a chilly wind... for days on end.

She was pale, disheveled, exhausted. One evening she heard a horrible noise coming from somewhere. She held her breath, for fear of waking an unknown animal, emerging from its den. As she breathed a sigh of relief, a huge bear grabbed her and dragged her away. The monster sensed the presence of a human and had awoken from hibernation. Hungry, he had come out to attack her.

Caught off guard, Larisa had completely forgotten about the gypsy's gift. She prayed in her mind, she was ready to face her fate. When the beast tried to drag her away, a thread of her bag got caught on something and broke, exposing the enchanted sticks. The girl has wakened as if from a dream, grabbed one with her mouth, crashing it between her teeth. In an instant, from all corners of the forest appeared all the living creatures, small and large creatures, who had rescued her from the clutches of death.



She continued on her way, she was upset that she had wasted one of the enchanted sticks. The cold had penetrated her entire body. It was only the longing for Saurin that kept her on her feet. The night was deep and heavy. An owl hooted somewhere in the distance, just showing up like a bad Penny. Larisa was in immediate danger. From the shadow of a secular tree, an ugly old woman appeared. All thin and hollow-cheeked, her skin was earthy and her eyes were bulging. She was the Wicked Witch of the Forest and pounced upon the girl, pecked her with her hard fingers like huge birds attacking. The old hag was looking forward to eat a beautiful girl thinking that it will help rejuvenate her skin. She dragged Larisa into her underground abode, putting her in an iron cage until she could prepare a fire for cooking. Left without the bag of enchanted sticks, after the Wicked Witch had taken it from her, the princess wept and prayed for Saurin's happiness. At one point, a puppy appeared out of nowhere, wagging its tail. He wandered past the cage where the girl was, his eyes wet. The girl reached through the bars and patted his head. She asked him to look for her bag and bring it to her. The dog sniffed her hands insistently and disappeared. Creepy noises were coming from the kitchen. The Wicked Witch of the Forest was sharpening the knives she used to cut her victims. When all hope was gone, the puppy brought the bag to the girl and pushed it into the iron cage. Unfortunately, she didn't see it. She had fallen into a deep slumber due to fear. The old hag stirred with a knife spread in and was happy that she will be able to kill the girl more easily in her sleep. The dog began to bark wildly.



The princess woke up scared. The monstrous woman came forward, roaring, ready to deliver the coup de grace to Larisa. Before she unlocked the door of the cage, as if by magic, the girl removed the bag of enchanted sticks and broke one in the greatest haste. Immediately, the old woman's house was attacked by all the creatures that had made their home in the forest, who freed the girl and destroyed the Wicked Witch.

Then Larisa searched deep in the forest, but there was no sign of Sandri. Only in the bowels of the great mountain she hasn't searched yet. The falling snow was thick and damp. Maybe it would have been better to wait for spring! But from the deep, heartbreaching love was born a strength that she shouldn't have to have. The memory of Sandri perished and panic gave her wings. She took a deep breath for a few moments and flew at the climb again with renewed strength and determination. She spotted a path leading to the north and soared up the slopes of the mountains. But she didn't have a good trip for a long time. At the top of a high rock appeared a figure. It was a monster. The Ogre! He was about three meters tall with a head the size of a huge pumpkin. He had three fierce eyes and a huge horn on his head. The Ogre had been looking for a beautiful wife for a long time. As soon as he saw the pretty princess, he understood that she was the woman of his dreams. First, he made a marriage proposal to her, promising her a mountain of gold. Larisa confessed to him that she was the daughter of the emperor and that she gave up all her possessions to live with the man she loved. Visibly irritated, The Ogre grabbed her by the armpits and rushed her to the huge cabin where he lived. Desperate, the girl broke the last stick. All the creatures living at the foot of the mountain ran to escape her, knocking the giant down.



Freed from the monster's hands, the girl continued her ascent with eyes unable to twinkle and with heart being drained of strength. But the monster was on her trail again. He survived by pretending to be dead, fooling the princess's helpers. After they had dispersed in the forest, The Ogre immediately set off in search of the princess. He caught her without much difficulty, locking her in one of the rooms of his cabin, until he could complete the wedding preparations. The girl wept bitterly and mourned, raising fervent prayers to the Lord. She looked hopelessly through the latticed window, watching the dancing snowflakes.



Day and night, she could not sleep. She decided to end her days there. On the night before the wedding, when the clock struck midnight, she heard a voice of incomparable sweetness. She looked scared towards the door, convinced that The Ogre would appear, with a false voice to impress her. But the door didn't budge.

A blinding light came through the window. Larisa rubbed her eyes, she was stunned into silence. A true angel, with wings as white as fresh-fallen snow, was speaking to her. The angel came thanks to the prayers of Sandri, who was at the monastery hidden behind a rock at the top of the mountain. After breaking the iron bars of the window, he urged her to get out of the prison. He accompanied her every step she took with his light, to protect her from the evil spirits of the night, promising to take her to the monastery. There, Sandri thought only of her.



At dawn, they reached the gate of the monastery, and the angel disappeared. Larisa did not dare to enter, being a male-only sanctuary for monks. Patiently she waited for daylight, hoping someone from inside would discover her. Her feet would feel frozen when an old monk with a white beard asked her what she was looking for. Her kind eyes in the wilderness had the power to speak without words. Bursting into tears, the girl finally begged him to bring Sandri to her.

Great was the surprise of the young man when he saw her. His eyes filled with tears.

'Sandri, my love, kiss me!' cried the girl tearfully and embraced him.

Timidly he tried to avoid her clumsy caresses, not allowed to a servant of God. But Larisa could not understand such resistance. She had come from so far away, had faced so many dangers, to find him. She couldn't understand life without him. Sandri saw things very differently. He loved her too, but he was aware that the emperor's wrath would be fearsome for them. He had found his inner peace in the monastery, dreaming that at least in their next life he would be with her. The princess was disappointed by his attitude and got angry. She then said her goodbyes to him. She seemed to be in a hurry and had to step through knee-high snow drifts, without looking back. Sandri ran after her, trying to convince her that it wasn't good at all to break up with him with anger. Suddenly, Larisa threw herself into the chasm. There was a chasm near the monastery. It was so big and deep, dark, and filled with the noise of wind.

Sandri was devastated because he had not been able to stop it. As a result, he bowed three times and threw himself into the chasm, too... It had begun to snow again, when the emperor's troops arrived at the gates of the monastery.

They asked the monks to help them find the princess. The old abbot said that he had seen from the window of his monastic cell how the two young people had fallen into the abyss. The soldiers and the crowd went in a hurry to search for them. The commander of the troops gave the order to remove the bodies.

It was crazy to descend into the chasm, even in summer, much less in the winter, when a sudden burst could start an avalanche. But the emperor's warriors could not return empty-handed, because nobody would save them from the executioner's axe.

Only at nightfall did they manage to remove two giant snowballs. In the midst of the balls there were Larisa and Sandri. The whole way down, they had been covered in the newly fallen snow. The soldiers carefully removed the snow that sheltered them, freeing their bodies. They were quickly taken to the monastery, where they began to breathe slowly, to everyone's amazement. When they came back into a full sense of their existence they found themselves surrounded by the emperor's army and they both wished they had not been saved. While each of them was struggling with fear, no longer wanting to live, the emperor himself appeared. He hugged them happily, surprising everyone, but not before he checked the left ear of Sandri.



What happened before then? After having an ominous dream, the old gypsy woman, Sandri's mother, ran away to the palace. She was eaten up with guilt for what she'd done and she had confessed to the emperor that Sandri was not in fact her boy, but the son of a Czar from the East. Sometimes, the Gypsy camp was situated on the outskirts of the capital of his country. By that time, she was a fortune teller at the palace of the Czar. She was expecting a child at the same time as the Czarina. Before she became a mother, her husband had died, bitten by a viper. On the same day, both she and the Czarina had given birth to a boy, but her baby was born dead. After the loss of her family, she knew she could not have endured that life a moment longer. She had lain in wait for the moment when the Czar's son had been left unattended and had clothed him in the rags of her lifeless son. She had dressed dead infant in some of the king's son clothes and placed his body in his golden basket. She had abandoned his own lifeless son and fled with the royal baby. The proof of her words was a mark on Sandri's left ear, a distinguishing feature of all members of the Eastern ruling family.

The emperor was in the seventh, the eighth, heaven with joy and ordered the army to bring the two lovers. He sent a messenger to the court of Czar to inform him of what had happened. Overwhelmed with joy that his son was alive, he immediately set off there, to bring him home. After he recognized the mark on Sandri's ear, a fairytale wedding took place in the two kingdoms, like you've never seen before. Day after day, the gypsy woman cried and begged for mercy, mostly begging the stolen prince to understand her. Everyone forgave her... After the wedding, it started to snow and the flakes gathered and laughed, falling all over the two countries...





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