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The Great Season of the Majestics

by

Mileva Anastasiadou

Anna was about to turn twenty five in a couple months, which meant she had to find a mate. She followed the ritual reluctantly, mainly to please her mother.

“You shouldn’t postpone it much longer, dear,” her mother had said.

“I’d prefer to rely on luck, or maybe fate.”

“I’m sure you do, honey, yet all previous human experience dictates otherwise.”

Her mom was right. When divorces grew to high numbers, scientists proposed the new method, which proved to be working. That’s when astrologers began proliferating, as people relied on them to find their soulmates.

“Based on my calculations, your ideal mate should be a Scorpio, with Taurus rising, and ideally his astrological chart should look like this,” the astrologer told her, showing her the chart of her potential mate.

Anna hadn’t met any Scorpio men in her life. She’d always fallen for Geminis. She felt rather upset with the results. When did this all start? She tried to remember. She was certain, it had something to do with the Majestics, the great new religion, yet she wasn’t so sure. After all, that was a religion, which was supposed to move humanity

forward, to promote critical thinking.

Where did it all go wrong?

* * * *

Leo rubbed the back of his neck, thankful the meeting was finally over. It was pretty tough for him, yet he had no choice but to accept the verdict; it was their turn to run as the gods of the world. He stood still for a while, taking big breaths, wondering how on earth he would announce the news to the rest of the team. They’d certainly feel disappointed. He had always been considered the most powerful among them and he had given a good fight, yet judging by the end result, he proved a failure at negotiations.

Once upon a time, a long time ago, all immortals were eager to govern. It took them much time and many failures to discover that this position required great amounts of responsibility and effort. Power is intoxicating, yet tiring at the same time. When they first rolled the dice, the game proved more difficult than imagined. The Olympians won, yet most of the immortals doubted the result. The war of gods started then, which lasted for many centuries. The Nordics were the first to defy the result. They moved North and ruled there for many

years. In different parts of the world other religions formed, until another meeting was necessary, when they all gathered again at the top of Olympus and decided it was time for a change.

Later on, in most parts of the so-called civilized world, the Christians governed for many years. Yet they decided to retire as soon as they saw the dead end. As the end of the world seemed to be approaching, they called for an emergency meeting at heaven.

At this meeting, everything was different. None of the immortals wanted the job. Who could want a job that would make them responsible for the end of the world?

“It’s our turn and our chance to save the world,” he said to the rest of the Zodiacs, when he went out of the meeting room.

“Really? They entrusted the Zodiacs with such a mission?” asked Cancer, the most pessimistic of all.

“Well, there will be some changes.”

“What kind of changes?” asked Scorpio, the most suspicious of all, leaning to Leo’s side, as if the big secret would be soon unveiled only to him.

“We will be called the Majestics from now on,” exclaimed Leo, in a futile attempt to magnify the moment, to properly announce a significant fact that would encourage the team and offer the sip of grandiosity that the moment deserved.

To Leo’s disappointment, instead of the expected reaction, they all sighed in despair.

“If we intend to establish a new religion, we need a myth, symbols, celebrations,” said Virgo before adding, her face radiating determination: “First of all, we need a prophet.”

Leo was the first one to applaud.

* * * *

Anna met Richard a few days later.

“What’s your star sign?” she asked.

“I’m a Gemini, superfluous, shallow, rather talkative, yet smart,” he said, shaking her hand. That was the way things worked. Star signs were more important than names.

“Pisces here, sensitive, fragile, yet creative and sweet,” she replied. “Nice to meet you.”

They walked around for a while, in silence.

“Do you think we could have a coffee or something?” he asked impatiently, having stayed silent for too long for his standards.

Anna thought about it for a while, taking her time before answering his question. A coffee doesn’t mean anything. A coffee is just a coffee.

They sat on a bench, facing each other, holding two cups of hot coffee in their hands.

“So, what are your plans for Aqualia?”

“I don’t feel that festive this year,” he admitted. He didn’t even want to think about the festive days.

Anna, on the other hand, loved this kind of celebration. She couldn’t wait to take some days off and read all the books she had bought, without having the time to read them on work days.

“Isn’t there a book you want to read this year?” she asked, touching her hair, awkwardly bowing her head, in an attempt

to avoid his glance. His intense stare made her uncomfortable, yet she somehow enjoyed it.

“I prefer magazines,” he said, touching her hand, as if he expected her understanding. She felt disappointed, yet she couldn’t help but respond to his kiss, when he came close and kissed her.

“May Mike’s light bless you,” she told him before waving goodbye. Not so long ago, the Great Prophet Mike lived and died for the Majestics, sacrificing himself for humanity’s enlightenment. Yet still, there were people, who doubted his gift.

Anna felt she should do something about it. She didn’t know what just yet.

* * * *

“I’m a prophet,” Mike reluctantly confided in me.

“Indeed, I am the chosen one,” he said with certainty, as I sat on the chair beside him, staring at the ceiling to avoid his eyes.

“Can you imagine why they have chosen me?”

I couldn’t. Yet his answer didn’t quite come as a shock:

“I was born on the 20th of January. This is the first day of the Great Majestic Season.”

That’s right. The greatest of the Majestics, God Aquarius, is on duty during the season. Everyone born during his season, is supposed to be under his protection.

I was born under the protection of Leo. People born under his protection are nowadays considered cynical, indecisive, prone to self-doubting, yet smart at the same time. In the old days, when the Majestics were only star signs, Leo people were the

most fearless of all. Nobody knows how this changed. Some scientists formed a theory about it, claiming that due to the extinction of lions, the main symbol of Leo, back when the world was approaching to an end, all the characteristics of the sign changed, since the lions, once considered the kings of all animals were finally defeated.

My parents do not believe in any religion and have had some intense conversations with each other and other people as well, in an attempt to understand the roots of God Aquarius. My father claimed that January was the most depressing month of the year, that’s why God Aquarius was invented in the collective unconscious, little by little. My mother said that on the 20th of January, where she came from, there used to be a celebration of a saint of the old religion, St Eftimios he was called, and Eftimios means “the good humored one,” the one who is joyful, which means people desperately needed joy that season.

My parents believe in critical thinking. It’s an irony, if you ask me. The Majestics are the gods of critical thinking, yet my parents don’t believe in them. On the other hand, I find it ironic that a new religion preaches reasoning. Reasoning is rather contradictory to faith anyway. True believers, like Mike, claim that this an inevitable step for the evolution of mankind.

I challenged Mike’s reasoning many times, before finally talking to a psychiatrist about his situation. After a while, as he gained more and more self-confidence, he claimed, during preaching, that critical thinking involves more cognitive acts than plain reasoning; it’s also about abstract thinking, creativity and imagination.

Mike died in the psychiatric department

of the biggest hospital in the country. Until his dying day, despite the medicines he was given, he insisted on his delusion, that he was the prophet. I haven't regretted my decision to betray his confidence and talk to doctors about his illness. Besides, most gods' representatives among mortals had a good friend who betrayed them. My name could have been Judas, had I been born in another era, which is a nice name indeed.

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They sat on the same bench two days before the great day.

"I've brought you something," said Anna.

"Oh no, I didn't know we would exchange gifts. I told you I'm not that much into Aqualia."

Richard unwrapped the present unwillingly and took a long look at the book she had offered him.

"What is it about?" he asked.

"Most of the species you see here are extinct," she explained.

"You're one of them, aren't you?" he asked.

"I'm not sure what you mean."

"One of those who claim that they know the truth. Who believe all this nonsense they have been telling us, about saving the planet and all. About all the harm humans did to the planet."

"Sure I am." Anna felt offended, yet she didn't leave. At least not immediately.

"Please, spend some time thinking, analyzing facts, before you make up your

mind," she told him, before standing up, ready to head home.

"At least, read the book."

Richard looked the other way, instead of watching her walk away.

She felt disappointed. Perhaps she should have listened to the astrologer's advice, after all. Yet she still liked that man. Somehow, she still liked him.

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The penguin must have sneaked in through the open window. After walking around the house, he showed up at Richard's room.

"How on earth did a penguin find its way to my bedroom?" he wondered aloud.

There was no way Richard could have known that many years ago the day that was about to dawn was called international penguin awareness day, nor that it was named "Blue Monday" by a few, the most depressing day of the year, which kind of explained the penguin and his own moodiness.

"Happy Aqualia!" exclaimed the penguin, jumping around the room in joy. Richard could not share the penguin's enthusiasm though. He wasn't that much into the festive spirit after all. He couldn't bear any more lectures on the perks of critical thinking that saved the planet some years ago, when people came to their senses and realized that destroying natural resources would inevitably result in their own extinction. He only wished for a carefree life, like the one his ancestors lived, not spending time thinking of ways to

reduce his imprint on the planet.

“I have seen you in books,” he said after a long pause.

“Yep, unfortunately, my species went extinct thanks to your species. I’m only a ghost.”

“A ghost?” asked Richard, without really expecting an answer. Repetition seemed to help him swallow the words of the penguin.

“I’m here to teach you a lesson, as you may have already imagined.”

Richard wondered if he should offer a cup of coffee to the penguin, until he decided that ghosts, especially penguin ghosts, wouldn’t drink coffee.

“To battle your unwillingness to think,” went on the penguin. “Mike the prophet sacrificed himself for you to think, yet you waste your time on TV and cheap magazines.”

“I will keep notes,” Richard said, pretending to be the best student in a class of invisible classmates.

“It’s more complicated than this. You don’t have to learn anything by heart, like you’re used to. You are about to learn how to think.”

Richard felt slightly offended. How dared that stupid creature presume he couldn’t think?

The penguin’s voice went softer, as he tried to make Richard understand:

“You all think that you think. But thinking takes more than just commenting on stuff you have been observing, doesn’t it?”

Richard nodded, although he wasn’t yet sure what the penguin was talking about.

“I’m not used to teaching,” said the penguin, after a long sigh. “It’s actually my first time, so I may get a bit impatient with you.” He then took a tiny little blue scarf out of his pocket and folded it around his neck and as he was folding it, the scarf was getting bigger and bigger, until it was more than a plain scarf, until it looked like a cape, like the cape Superman of another era wore, and then grabbed Richard by the hand and together they flew into the cold night sky.

They landed on a roof, in the center of the city.

“What have you been thinking about during the flight?” the penguin asked him.

“Nothing,” said Richard apologetically. He knew deep inside that this was not the right answer.

“I’ll tell you what you’ve been thinking about. You spent your time enjoying the flight, observing the sights, wondering for a while how on earth we’re flying, yet that thought didn’t last long, because you let yourself trust the ghost penguin that led you. You let your faith win.”

“Isn’t that what this trip is all about?”

“I’m not here to teach you faith. You have enough if it. Faith is not bad, as long as it goes hand in hand with reasoning. Seizing the day is fine as well, as long as it involves thinking too.”

“Balance is what’s most important, isn’t it?”

“It is. Your species has been an expert on faith. The only way to deal with despair though is not through faith, but by thinking. Faith places the problem outside of ourselves, leaving it exposed to external circumstances, letting a *deus ex machina* take care of it and fix it at will. Thinking on

the other hand, internalizes the problem, making us personally responsible to find a solution. To doubt the status quo of things and discover new ways out.”

Richard thought about it for a while. It’s always easier to feel, or even believe in something, than thinking about it with a critical mind. It’s even easier to let other do the thinking for you. Thinking has been underestimated. It’s all about living the moment, feeling the vibes. To him analyzing facts, checking them, deconstructing them, discussing them to discover truth had not been a favorite pass-time.

“Think, think, think!” exclaimed the penguin. “Doubt, deconstruct, synthesize, that’s the only way,” he cried as he took Richard by the hand once more and flew into the night sky, throwing books over the town.

As soon as Richard took his own book and started exploring it, the penguin vanished. He found a tulip where the penguin stood with a note attached to it:

“Thinking is joy. Thinking is magic. It can make your life meaningful. Wounded people, traumatized by everyday life’s expectations, who haven’t had the opportunity to develop thinking skills, cannot see the magic in everyday life. They need it in increased doses. That’s what festive seasons are for,” he read aloud.

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Her mother welcomed her warmly and took away her coat. Anna kissed her father on the forehead and sat beside him. She unzipped her purse and took out a box. She offered it to her father who looked back

at her in amazement.

“Happy Aqualia, dad! May Mike’s light bless you.” Her father looked at the book his daughter had offered him, his face brightened in enthusiasm.

“Let’s eat,” her mother ordered.

Anna exchanged glances with her father while silently agreeing to leave the book aside for as long as the meal would last.

Once they finished, she helped her mother with the dishes and went to sit by the fireplace with her dad. Her mother came to join them after a while.

“So, what’s the book about?” she asked.

“It’s a very old book actually,” said Anna, who couldn’t wait to analyze the importance of her treasure. Her mother frowned.

“Another old book?” she asked.

“Books are important to develop thinking process, mother,” Anna reluctantly said.

“Thinking is overrated darling,” said her mother smiling impatiently. “It takes time from more useful tasks, like washing the dishes.”

“She’s wounded by everyday life. Magic of everyday life cannot be easily detected by wounded people. That’s why the dose must be increased. That’s what festive seasons are for,” she thought.

That wasn’t a thought she made herself. That was a thought implanted in her brain by Pisces, her protector who had watched the scene silently, invisible to the company of the three mortals, like a guardian angel of old times. Pisces believed in Anna and her creative talent. He was certain she would create the myth necessary for the further

development of the religion.

She went into her old bedroom, disappointed, to have some rest and listen to music. The radio played songs from the old times, “Deep blue day” by Brian Eno, and “Blue Monday” by New Order, another divine intervention by Pisces who attempted to inspire the girl. She decided to write a story herself on Aqualia and the importance

of books and critical thinking and joy. She couldn't possibly know that her story would mark the beginning of a new era, when she sat down on her chair and started writing:

“The penguin must have sneaked in through the open window. After walking around the house, he showed up at Richard's room.”

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Bethany Abrahamson gained degrees in biology and history from the University of New Mexico and enjoys writing in the fantasy genre in her spare time. Her inspiration for her drawings comes from Dungeons and Dragons. When she's not writing or painting you can usually find her playing fiddle or vielle, or crocheting.

Mileva Anastasiadou is a neurologist. Her work can be found in many journals, such as the Molotov Cocktail, Maudlin house, Jellyfish Review, Asymmetry fiction, the Sunlight Press