ON the high hills of Altai, the tops of old pines and fir trees engage in peaceful communion. They know much—the mountain forests! They stand in wonder before the snowy ranges of the mountains. Their roots know what riches, what innumerable mineral treasures, are guarded in the stony depths of the mountains, for the future prosperity of humanity.

And the roots of these giant trees tenderly embrace the gray stones. These are the stones of the "site of compassion."

Who knows who placed these stones here? And who saw these men transfixed in awe beneath the stone stronghold?

Had these people heard of the future wealth of this country? Did they know of Zvenigorod, the City of the Bells? Was it they, who conceived the saga of the river Katum, of all the events which passed on the shores of this river, as it rolled down the great stones from the White Mountain, Belukha?

Were these people settlers or wanderers?

Old grandmother Anisya knows something about this place.

She comes here to perform her invocations and conjurations. Do not be afraid! She is not a witch; she is not a Shaman sorceress. No one would speak ill of grandmother Anisya. But she knows many precious things. She knows the healing herbs; she knows conjurations which serve as prayers; she learned them from her grandmother. And a century ago the same stones and the same forests stood here as now.

Grandmother Anisya knows conjurations against all evils. No one besides herself knows that the kirik stone from the nest of a hoopoe is the best protection against treason. No one besides herself knows the best time to find this nest and how to obtain the stone. She can tell you how hard are the present times and you can be saved only by conjurations. At the present time three conjurations need to be remembered.

The first of them is against enemies, against thieves and evil men. The second—do not forget it!—against mortal weapons.

The third—remember sharply!—against lightning, against all thunder of heaven or earth! The thunder of earth resounds and heavenly forces rise.

Remember the first one:

"On the sea, on the ocean, on the Buyan Island, there is an iron chest and in this iron chest there are steel swords. Ho, steel swords! Approach our enemy! Cut his body in pieces! Pierce his heart! until he renounces all his evil; until he returns the stolen booty; until he will surrender all, without concealing anything. Thou enemy, adversary, be cursed by my powerful conjurations!"

"Be damned in the depths of hell! Beyond the Arrarat mountains, into the boiling tar! Into the burning ashes! Into the scum of swamps! Into the bottomless abyss!"
“Be you, enemy, pierced by the spike of an aspen tree!

“And be dried even more than the hay!”

“And be frozen even more than the ice!”

“Become cross-eyed, lame, mad, armless, impoverished, hungry, outcast and perish by another’s hand!……”

You see, what strong powers grandmother Anisya possesses! Who can withstand such conjurations!

And not only does she speak in a strident voice, but she also holds in her hand a tiny stick, and as she speaks of the death of an enemy, she breaks this stick, just as the life of her evil adversary shall be broken. And never shall he know from what hill, from what mountain, came this unconquerable power.

The second conjuration is against weapons. Each warrior must know this conjuration. Hear and remember!

“Beyond the far-off mountains is the sea of iron. In the sea stands a pillar of bronze. And on that bronze pillar there stands a shepherd of cast iron. And this pillar rises from earth into heaven. From the East to the West.”

“And the shepherd commands his children; he commands the iron, the steel, red and blue, the copper, the lead, the silver, and the gold. He speaks to guns and to arrows. He gives to the fighters and warriors the great command:

“You iron, copper, lead, go back into your mother earth, away from the warrior; return, tree, to the far-off shore and you, arrow-feathers, return to the birds! And you birds—disappear in the sky!”

“And he commands swords, axes, boar-spears, knives, arquebuses, arrows and all warriors to be calm and peaceful.”

“And he orders every warrior not to shoot at me from a gun!”

“But he orders the arbalest and string bows to bend and cast all arrows deep down into the earth!”

“Let my body be stronger than stone. Firmer than steel. Let my armour be stronger than helmets and ring-armour.”

“I seal my words with all locks. I cast the keys under the white Flaming Stone, Alatyr!”

“And as locks are strong, so strong are my words.”……

No one would care to be in the position of this conjured adversary. What weapons could avail against this powerful incantation! The White Flaming Stone itself, Great Alatyr, bears witness to this innumerable might! And again, not only words are projected into the space, but grandmother Anisya has four stones in her hands and she throws them at the four ends of the earth.

But the third conjuration is the most awe-inspiring one. This one is against lightning, against the thunders of heaven and earth:

“Holy! Holy! Holy! Thou who dwellest in the thunder! Thou who subduest the lightnings! Thou who floodest the earth with rain! Thou, mightiest Ruler! Thou alone adjudge the cursed Satan with all the devils! But save us, sinners!”

“Thy wisdom is incomparable, all-powerful! All honour from God! From him comes liberation to the motherland! Be it so now, eternally and for ever! Thou, Lord of Terror! Thou, Lord of all miracles! Thou, who dwellest on the most high! Thou, who
movest in the thunder! Mastering fire! Lord of miracles! Thyself destroy the enemy, the Satan! Be it so now, eternally and for ever, Amen! '......

This is most powerful. The highest heavenly power is summoned. From the mountain stream, grandmother Anisya takes a handful of clear water and dashes it into space. And glistening drops, as heavenly lightnings, surround the conjurer.

The conjurations are ended. And the power departs from grandmother. She becomes small and bent. And the small old woman walks away beyond the hill, From Jalnik—site of compassion—to the lake at the foot of the mountain, through fields of spring wheat, into a distant village, she goes. Not for her own ends, did Granny come from afar to invoke the high forces. Grandmother sent out conjurations for all people, for distant warriors, for a new life. But she also prayed for the unknown silent ones who are buried under the stones and roots of the pine trees. She brought holy oil for the saints. Because on the highest pine tree, in the bark, an old ikon is carved out and it is said that the ikon appeared of itself.

On the summits of Altai, fir and cedar groves tower high. From the far, far distance, one may behold their dark caps. Under the roots of firs, many stones are gathered together with great labour. Beautiful sites Ancient sites! How did they come to be here? Was it the unknown pilgrims who built them? Was it the Mongols? Was it the Tzar, the terrible? Or are they from times of unrest? Or from wars and foreign invasions? All these at one time were here.

And the silent ones lie buried here. Lie in rest, unknown to all grand-fathers. And thus one prays for them

For the known and unknown, for the sung and unsung, for the storied and unstoried......

The sites of compassion, so are called these beautiful sites of silence. They are also called sites of wonder.

Site of wonder resounds with exultation. But site of compassion is still near to the heart. In this expression lies so much of love and gentle pity, so much of rest and words of eternity. The giant fir trees guard this place with their mighty branches. Only the tops rustle. Below is silence and shade. The gray juniper. Only two or three dry blades of grass. Everywhere, blackberries and dried ever-green needles. High on the fir tree sits an old raven. He is so old that he has claws, not only on his feet but even on his wings. As we regarded this raven with awe, as a pre-historic relic, he fell down dead. The stones are set in rows and in circles. All of them must remember the moraines of the glacier period. White, grayish, violet, bluish, and almost black. From the East to the West these stones may be observed, adorned by a white moss. Everywhere, too, is gray moss. Everywhere there is ancient grayness.

In grayness sleep the "calm ones."

In white garments, repose the "resting ones."

Oh, through what suffering they passed! Many things they witnessed. Wise and without doubts is their wisdom!

"As in heaven, so upon earth. As above, so below. That which was shall come again!"

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And he dries even, even the purest dew.

And the shepherd commands his dogs to bark.

And the night wakens, and warms the soul.

And the broken heart, with bloodless white.

You iron, cold and white, to heaven.

If it snows, so doons, and soars.

Where are the tinsel, and the garland?

Return to the Pastor Anderson and disappear in the sky!