

Lost Odyssey - 1000 Years of Dreams

Little Liar (Part 1)

Narrated by David Grandmont

Everyone in the marketplace hates the little girl.

Not yet ten years old, and far from having outgrown the sweet innocence of childhood, she earns only open contempt from the grownups that have shops in the market.

The reason is simple.

She lies about everything.

Hey, mister, I just saw a burglar go into your house!

Look, lady, everything just fell off your shelves!

Hey, everybody, did you hear what the traveler said? Bandits are planning to attack this market!

Even the most harmless white lies can be annoying if repeated often enough, and the shopkeepers have found themselves growing angry.

You better watch out for her, too, the lady greengrocer warns Kaim.

Nobody here falls for her lies anymore, so she's always on the lookout for newcomers or strangers. Somebody like you would be a perfect target for her.

She could be right.

Kaim is new to the town. He arrived a few days ago and has just started working in the marketplace today.

What do her parents do? Kaim asks while unloading a cartful of vegetables.

The woman frowns and shakes her head with a sigh.

She doesn't have any.

They died?

The mother did, at least, maybe four or five years ago. She was a healthy young woman who never so much as caught a cold in her life, then one day she collapsed, and that was it for her.

How about the father?

She sighs more deeply than before and says, He left to find a job in the city.

The parents used to operate a variety store in the market, though the mother almost single-handedly took care of the actual buying and selling of the many goods they carried.

As soon as she died, the shop's fortunes took a plunge, until it was eventually taken over by someone else. The father went off to the distant capital city in search of a good-paying job that would enable him to cover their debts.

He promised to come back in six months, but he has been gone a whole year now. Letters used to arrive from him on occasion care of his friend the tailor, but those, too, gave out about six months ago.

I guess you could say it's sad for such a little girl to be waiting around for her father to come home, but still...

The girl now sleeps in a corner of the communal storehouse run by the people of the marketplace.

We all used to talk about taking care of her- to be stand-in parents for her until her father comes back.

This is no surprise to Kaim. He knows from his own experience that all the people who work in the marketplace---and not just this plump, kindly woman---are good-hearted and generous despite their limited means. Otherwise, they never would have hired a stranger like himself.

But long before that first six months went by, we were all heartily sick of her. She was a sweet, simple girl while her mother was alive, but this experience has left her kind of twisted.

All her sweetness is gone.

Of course we all feel sorry for her, and we take our turns feeding her and dressing her in hand-me-downs, but the way she keeps telling lies to all the grownups, nobody really cares about her anymore.

Why can't she see that...?

She must be lonely, don't you think?

With a pained smile, the woman shrugs and says,

That's enough gabbing for one day. Work, work! and she goes back inside the shop.

Kaim is sorting the vegetables he has unloaded in front of the shop when he hears a little voice behind him.

Hi, mister, you new here?

It's the girl.

Uh-huh...

You're not from the town, are you?

No, I'm not...

Are you living upstairs while you work here?

For a while, at least. That's what I'm hoping to do.

I'll tell you a secret, okay?

It's starting already, Okay, Kaim says without pausing in his work.

There's a ghost in this marketplace. The people here don't tell anybody about it because it's bad for business, but it's really here. I see it all the time.

Really?! Kaim responds with a feigned surprise.

He decides to play along with her rather than scold her for lying.

In this endlessly long life of his, he has encountered any number of children who have lost their parents or been abandoned by them.

The sadness and loneliness of children who have been cast into the wide world alone exactly what Kaim feels himself as he continues to wander throughout the infinite flow of time.

What kind of ghost?

A woman. And I know who she is.

It's the ghost of a mother who lost her child, she says.

Her little girl---her only child---died in a epidemic.

Overcome with grief, the mother chose to die, and now her ghost appears in the market every night, searching for her daughter.

The poor mother! She killed herself so she could be with her daughter, but she can't find her in the other world, either. So she keeps looking for her and calling out, Where are you? Hurry and come with Mommy to the other world.

The girl tells her story with deadly seriousness.

Don't you think it's sad? she asks Kaim. She actually has tears in her eyes--- which is precisely why Kaim knows she is lying.

Even if he had not been warned by the woman, he would know this was a lie based on what she told him about the girl's background.

Kaim carefully arranges bunches of well-ripened grapes in a display crate and asks the girl,

Why do you think the mother can't find her daughter?

What?

The girl asks him with a dazed stare.

Well, he explains, the girl is not in the other world, and she's not wandering around in this world. So where is she?

Kaim does not mean this to be a cross-examination.

He simply feels that someone who lies out of sorrow can have a far easier time of it by recognizing the lie for what it is. The loneliness of a girl who has lost her mother and been abandoned by her father consists not in telling on little lie but in having to keep on lying.

Hmm, now that you mention it, that's a good point, the girl says, smiling calmly.

Really--where did the girl go?

Kaim momentarily considers pointing at the girl as if to say Right here, but before he can do so, she continues:

This is the first time anybody ever asked me that. You're kind of...Different.

I wonder...

No you are, you're different, the girl insists

I think we can be friends. Her smile deepens.

Kaim smiles back at her, saying nothing.

Just then, they hear the lady greengrocer coming from the back of the shop, and the girl dashes away.

Just before she disappears around the corner into the alleyway, the girl gives Kaim a little wave as if to say See you soon! For the first time, the face of the girl with the all-too-grownup speaking style shows a hint of childishness befitting her years.

The girl begins coming to see Kaim at the shop several times a day when the lady grocer is not around.

She tells him one lie after another.

I baked cookies with my mother last night. I wanted to give you some, but they were so good I ate them all.

Bandits kidnapped me when I was a little baby, but my father came to save me and beat up all the bandits, so I didn't get killed.

My house? It's a big, white one at the foot of the mountain. You're new here so you probably don't know it. It's the biggest house in town.

You don't have a family? You're all alone? Poor Kaim! I wish I could share some of my happiness with you!

All her lies are born of sorrow: sad, lonely lies she could never tell to marketplace people who know her background.

At the end of every chat with Kaim, as she is leaving, the girl holds her finger to her lips and says,

This is just our little secret. Don't tell the lady grocer.

Of course, Kaim says nothing to anyone.

If he happens to find himself in a situation where the market people are speaking ill of the girl, he quietly slips away.

Lies and disparagements are funny things. They don't take shape because someone tells them but rather because someone listens to and voices agreement with them.

A truly isolated individual can never speak ill of anyone.

The same can be said regarding lies.

Because she has someone to tell her lies to, the girl need not fall into the abyss of true isolation.

To protect her small, sad share of happiness, Kaim plays the role of her listener, raising no objections.

Little Liar - Part 2

Narrated by Guillaume Brunelle

One day when the girl comes to see Kaim, she takes special care not to be noticed by the lady grocer or by the owners of the neighbouring shops.

Tell me, Mister, are you planning to stay here a long, long time?

No, I'm not, Kaim says, continuing to unload vegetables and fruit.

You'll be leaving when you save up enough money?

Probably.

But you don't have enough yet?

I'm getting there, he says, turning a strained smile on the girl.

This is a white lie of his own. He already has enough money to support himself on the road. Nor has he taken his current live-in job because he needs money so badly.

He is here because he has not found a destination he wants to travel to. A journey without a destination is an endless journey.

Wise men say that you need dreams and goals in life. But dreams to accomplish and goals to realize shine as guideposts in life precisely because life is finite.

So, then, what should be the dreams and goals of one who has been burdened with a life that has no end?

Kaim's is not a journey to be hurried.

Nor is it one that can be hurried. Perhaps drifting day after day with no destination can not even be called a journey.

If I were you, says the girl, I would get out of this marketplace as soon as I had saved up enough for two or three days of traveling.

Kaim responds to her with a silent, pained smile.

What would be the look on the girl's face if Kaim were to tell her, I'm staying here for you?

I am finding the meaning of my life for now in providing you with a listener for your lies. The moment these words come to mind---words he can never actually speak to her---the girl looks around furtively and says in a near-whisper, If you want to get out of here soon, I know a good way you can do it.

A good way...?

Sneak into the tailor's and steal his money. There's a little pot in the cabinet at the back of the shop. It's full of money.

Are you telling me to steal it?

Yes.

She looks straight at Kaim without the slightest show of doubt in her eyes.

In all seriousness, she goes on to explain, That tailor deserves to have his place

robbed.

The money in the pot, she says, is tainted.

I know this girl, a good friend of mine, she says, and it's so sad about her.

Her mother died, and her father went off to work in the capital, and she's all alone.

Her father was supposed to come and get her after six months, but she hasn't heard a thing from him.

Yet another lie born of sorrow.

Kaim calmly asks, is there some connection between your friend and the tailor?

Of course, she says. A close connection. What's really happening is the father was sending her money every month the way he was supposed to, to help make her life in the town a little easier. And he kept writing to her. He wanted to tell her he found a good job in the city and she should come to live with him right away. He's too busy to come for her, so she should come to him. And he sent her money for the trip. But none of the letters or the money ever reached the girl.

And why do you think that is?

Before Kaim can answer, the girl says, The mistake he made was to send the letters and money care of the tailor. He's been keeping all the money for himself.

Kaim looks away from the girl.

In order to prop up one sad lie, the girl has piled on a still sadder one--- a lie that can hurt another person.

This is the saddest thing of all.

The lock on the tailor's back door would be really easy to break, the girl adds, and she gallops away without waiting for Kaim's reply.

The girl comes running into the grocery store the next morning, shouting for the owner.

She says directly to the women, not to Kaim,

Burglars broke into the tailor's shop last night!

She says she saw a number of burglars sneaking in late at night after the

marketplace emptied out.

My oh my, says the woman with a forced smile, that must have been just terrible.

She is obviously not taking the girl seriously.

But it's true, though! I really saw them!

Look, little girl, I've had just about all I can take from you. You're such a little liar, it scares me to death to think about you growing up to be a burglar or a con artist or something. I'm busy trying to open my shop now, do you mind? Try in on somebody else.

She is hardly through speaking when someone outside shouts,

Help! Somebody come! The tailor is standing in the street looking horrified and screaming at the top of his lungs.

Bur--burglars! They took all my mo-mo-money!

The little girl slips away as the tailor comes in.

The marketplace is in an uproar.

The girl was not lying: that much is certain.

But, all too accustomed to her lies, people now suggest the possibility of another kid of lie.

Maybe she did it. What do you think?

And so it begins...

I think you may be right.

Talk about play-acting!

I wouldn't put it past her.

Let's go find her. We'll make her tell---even if we have to get a little rough with her.

No one objects to this suggestion.

Some run off to the storehouse and the others start searching the marketplace.

Can't find her anywhere!

The storehouse is empty.

She ran away with the money!

As the searchers return with their reports and speculation,

Kaim finally understands everything.

After all her sad lies, the girl has left behind one final truth.

She couldn't have gotten very far!

Yeah, we can still catch her!

The little thief! Wait till I get my hands on her!

The men rage and the women fan the flames:

Good! Give her what she deserves!

We were so nice to her, and now look how she treats us! We can't let her get away with it!

A dozen men start to run after her,

But Kaim stands tall in the road, blocking their way.

Hey, move it!

The men are out for blood, but Kaim knows if he felt like it, he could knock them all down and they wouldn't be able to lay a finger on him.

Instead, he relaxes his powerful stance and throws a leather coin pouch on the ground in front of the men.

The stolen money is in there, he says.

What?

Sorry, I stole it.

A confused stir quickly turns into angry shouts.

Kaim raises his hands to show he will not resist.

Do what you like with me, I'm ready.

The lady grocer breaks through the wall of men, shouting at him, How could you do this, Kaim?

I wanted the money, that's all.

And you're not just saying this to protect the girl?

The woman's intuition is too sharp.

Forcing a smile, Kaim turns to the tailor and says, It was in the pot in the cabinet, right?

The man nods energetically.

It's true! He must have done it! I had the money in a pot! He's the thief!

The money wasn't the only thing in the pot, though, was it?

What are you saying?

You had some letters in there, too. Letters from the girl's father.

That's a lie! Don't be crazy!

It's true, though.

No, there couldn't have been any letters! I threw them all---

The tailor claps his hands over his mouth.

But it is too late.

The lady grocer glares at him.

What's this all about? she demands.

Uh...no...I mean...

You'd better tell us everything.

The people's angry glances turn from Kaim to the tailor.

Some days later, two letters arrive from the girl addressed to The lady at the grocery store and the nice man upstairs.

Kaim's letter says the girl managed to find her father in the capital.

He has no way of knowing if this is true or not.

It is hard to imagine a little girl finding her father in the big city so easily without knowing his address or workplace.

Still, he decides to believe it when the girl's letter says,

I am happy now.

Human beings are the only animals that lie.

Lies to deceive people, lies to benefit oneself, and lies to protect one's own heart from the threat of crushing loneliness and sorrow.

If there were no lies in this world, much strife and misunderstanding would surely disappear.

On the other hand, perhaps it is because this world is a mixture of truth and lies that people have learned how to believe.

When he is through reading his letter, Kaim turns to the woman.

Concentrating on her own letter, she shyly raises her head when she senses Kaim looking at her.

I give up! she declares. Listen to this:

'I am so grateful to you and the others in the marketplace for all you have done for me. I will never forget you as long as I live.'

A liar to the bitter end, that girl, she says, smiling through her tears.