Why Tallinn will never be finished

A legend speaks of the sorrow of the mythological mother Linda for her husband, the Estonian king Kalev, how she gathered stones in her apron and heaped them upon the grave of her beloved until her apron tore. She sat down on a rock and broke into bitter tears. From these tears Lake Ülemiste was formed.

They say that in the lake lives a curious little man- Ülemiste Vanake (*Oldie of the Lake Ülemiste*). His peculiar apperance and extraordinary gait made him the laughing stock of the town, and the little man could not forget that.

Every autumn, in the darkest time of night, he climbed out of Lake Ülemiste, hobbled downhill to the gate and asked the watchman whether Tallinn was finished at last.

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*/It is night. The Watchman is at his job - watching at the city wall, protecting the City of Tallinn. His son has come to see him at work/*

The son: Have you seen him, dad?

The watchman: Thank God! Today it is going to be 25 years of me standing by this gate. And he comes once every year. Why hadn’t I seen him ( Of course I have seen him).

The son: Once every year… Is he old?

The watchman: He is a Grey Vanake with a long beard and watergrey eyes.

The son: And every time he asks -

The watchman: He asks: is the city already done?

S: And what do you say?

W: I have to say: no, the city isn’t ready yet.

S: And then?

W: Then the Vanake sadly shakes his head and leaves.

S: Where? Where does he go?

W: Where he came from.

S: But where did he come from?

W: From the Ülemiste Lake.

S: From the Ülemiste Lake… but… dad, hey, dad?

W: Yes?

S: But if…what if we said that yes, the city is ready? What then?

W (appalled): Then! Then he would send the waters of Ülemiste, destroy the city and make us all drown.

S: Why? Is he mad at the city? Have the people of this town done something to him?

W: I don’t know that. Nobody knows that. Don’t demand so much. Go home. Even the old ones are now asleep. You’ re still a child.

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In every large city there is constant building and rebuilding. But if there is a rest from building, the little man must not be told. The judiciary has given strict orders to the city watch to answer when he asks that it is far from finished: big houses are still to be built. The old man curses, then turns and goes back into Lake Ülemiste.

Should he be told one day that Tallinn has been finished, he would release the waters of the lake, which would stream downhill and flow over the whole of Tallinn. Such would be his revenge for his past insults.