



REIGN OF
ZOULVISIA

WRITTEN BY ALEXA CHIPMAN

THE KEY

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Once upon a time, in the kingdom of Zoulvisia, the heroes Isabel and Bob the Unicorn were very tired indeed. They had been walking along the same stone road all day with almost nothing to eat.

Bob was considering lowering himself to taking a bite of grass, and was just looking about for an especially succulent green patch, when he saw something rather odd lying on the stone.

It was an ancient key made of wood. As you know, most keys are of silver, or some kind of metal, so it interested him.

“Look here,” he brayed to Isabel.

“Very curious indeed,” she replied, picking it up. They looked around to find the owner but no-one else was on the road. Instead, they saw a specially broken down bit of rock wall and in it was inlaid a small keyhole. Almost instantly, the key fit.



The low wall erupted upward to form an impressive gateway and portcullis. It slowly ground upward and its heavy gate swung wide. The two adventurers walked in, still wondering who owned the key and magical doorway.

A leaf-covered path lead into the most beautiful garden Isabel had ever set eyes on. Large, bright coloured flowers were dotted here and there amid rich green fronds. Though it had once been truly splendid, it seemed to be overgrown and neglected. They walked on, still wondering what it could all mean and who had forgotten about such a lovely place. They heard the tinkling of a distant stream and followed the sound until they saw a rushing fountain set in stone.

It was darker than the rest of the garden, and from instinct, Isabel drew her sword. It was well she did so, for at that very moment a black knight burst through the trees, brandishing a broadsword!





Dreadful in aspect, the dark pitch-black knight swung a death blow at our heroes. Unicorn Bob leapt aside with a whinny, and Isabel caught her enemy's blade with her own sure sword.

Ringling and clashing filled the fountain grove as the two combatants jumped and twirled. Finally Isabel's sharp and keen blade crashed into the evil knight's helm and he fell to the ground in defeat.

Isabel stood panting for a moment, and splashed herself with some of the water from the fountain. The moment she did so, the garden began to shake and a bright shimmering light appeared. It engulfed them, and as the two blinked, the garden had vanished.

In its place was a cold, featureless wasteland with nothing for miles but stones and twisted trees. "It's freezing," Unicorn Bob chattered, "who would live here?"



Apparently someone did dwell in the cold wasteland, for a beautiful woman came bounding over to them, down a jumbled heap of stones. They could see in a moment that it was a princess, by her rich clothing and noble bearing.

“Thank you!” she clasped her hands, “you have saved me from the cruel black knight!”

“How came you here?” Unicorn Bob asked.

“My palace was once a splendid place, full of gardens and playing water. The dark magician enchanted it so that I was banished to this cold kingdom and the knight guarded my old home so I could not return.”

“I have vanquished the knight,” Isabel informed her, smiling.

“Then I am free to return,” the princess sighed happily, “I can go home!”



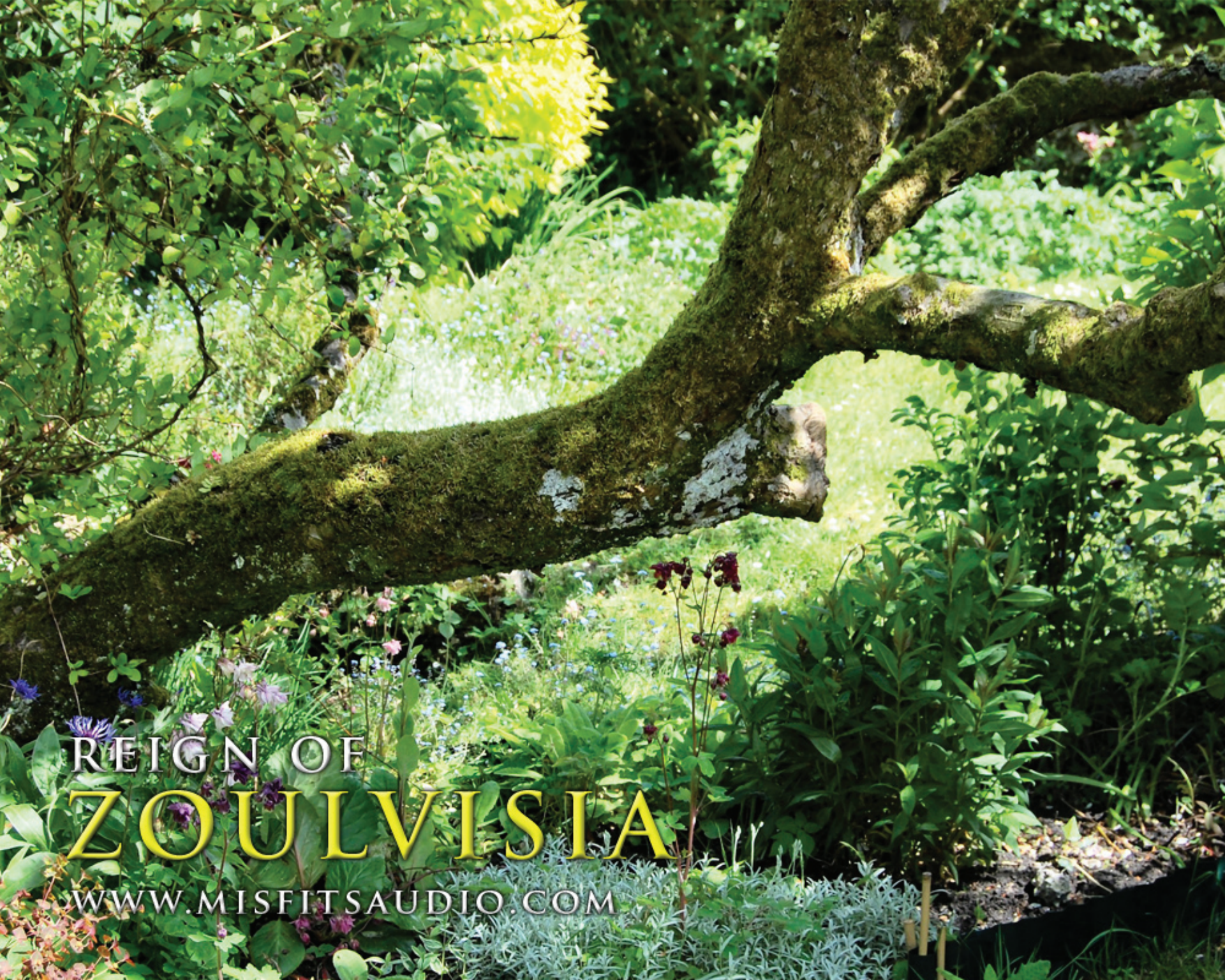


Isabel found a keyhole set in the stones and once more turned the wooden key.

This time a shimmering bright blue path sprang to life before them. Without fear, now that the foe was gone, they stepped through and were back in the garden.

A whole crowd was there to greet them, for the courtiers of the princess had heard of the end to their banishment, and had thronged to welcome her back. Already the court gardeners were hard at work pruning and weeding. In no time at all, the beautiful gardens would be back to their full glory. Of course the princess invited Isabel and Bob to a feast, and they ate their fill, ready to continue on the next day to help whomever in Zoulvisia's lands needed assistance.

THE END (for now)



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