The Kingdom of Almost
Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

The Kingdom of Almost

Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

Princess Nora rode her pony through a valley she had never seen before. The sun shone, birds sang, and a river sparkled. But something was odd. A bridge stopped halfway across the water. A house had no roof. A sign pointed to 'The Kingdom of Almost.' Nora frowned. 'Almost?' she whispered. 'What does that mean?' She flicked her braids and rode on.

In the kingdom's square, people rushed about starting new things. A man painted half a wall, then dropped his brush. A woman planted three seeds and wandered off. Books lay open with sentences that just stopped. Mayor Bramble bustled up, his long purple coat flapping. 'Welcome!' he cried. 'We love starting projects! Finishing? Well, we almost always do.' He laughed, but his tired eyes did not.

Nora noticed a small moss troll sitting on a bench, knitting a scarf that was only a few rows long. 'I'm Gran Mossback,' the troll said gently. 'I've watched this kingdom for years. Everyone starts, nobody finishes. They lose interest fast.' Nora thought of her own satchel, neatly packed with everything she needed. 'That must be why nothing works,' she said. 'But maybe we can change it.'

Just then, a boy with messy orange hair and paint-smudged cheeks ran up. 'I'm Pip!' he said. 'I'm building a kite, a boat, and a treehouse—all at once!' He showed Nora his tool belt and a wooden hammer. Nora smiled. 'That's a lot of projects,' she said. 'Do you ever finish them?' Pip scratched his head. 'Almost,' he said. 'But starting is the fun part!'

Nora and Pip walked to the river, where the half-finished bridge sagged into the water. 'Why did they stop?' Nora asked. Pip shrugged. 'Someone had a better idea, I guess.' Gran Mossback hobbled up. 'The dam upstream is also unfinished,' she said. 'If the rains come, the valley will flood.' Nora's green eyes grew wide. 'Then we must finish it!' she declared. 'Together.'

Mayor Bramble called the villagers together. 'Princess Nora says we should finish the dam!' he announced. Murmurs rippled through the crowd. 'But finishing is boring!' someone shouted. 'We like new things!' Nora stepped forward. 'Finishing can be exciting too,' she said. 'And it keeps us safe.' Gran Mossback nodded. 'She's right. Let's try.' The villagers looked at each other and slowly agreed.

The next morning, Nora organized everyone into teams. 'Team One, gather stones. Team Two, mix clay. Team Three, carry water.' Pip bounced up and down. 'I want to do everything!' Nora laughed. 'Choose one and stick with it,' she said. Pip chose stones. At first, he was eager, but soon he eyed the clay team. 'Stay with your task,' Nora reminded him gently. 'We need you here.'

All day, the villagers worked. Some grew tired and wanted to quit. 'This is hard,' complained a woman with a half-knitted scarf. Gran Mossback patted her arm. 'Just a little more,' she said. 'Think how proud we'll be.' Nora walked among them, helping and encouraging. She showed them how each finished stone made the dam stronger. Slowly, the wall began to rise.

By afternoon, the dam was almost done. But the sky darkened, and rain began to fall. 'Hurry!' cried Mayor Bramble, his clipboard held over his head. 'The river is rising!' The villagers worked faster, passing stones hand to hand. Pip's arms ached, but he didn't stop. Nora cheered them on. 'We're almost there!' she shouted. 'Don't give up now!' The rain poured down.

The river swirled and churned. Water lapped at the top of the dam. 'One more row of stones!' Nora called. Everyone pushed together. Mayor Bramble, his mismatched buttons straining, heaved a big rock into place. Gran Mossback tied the last knot of rope. Pip hammered the final peg. With a mighty splash, the water stopped. The dam held! The valley was safe.

The villagers cheered and hugged each other. 'We did it!' shouted Pip, his gap-toothed grin wide. 'We actually finished!' Mayor Bramble wiped his brow. 'I've never felt so proud,' he said. 'Finishing is wonderful!' Nora smiled. 'You see? Persistence and teamwork make great things happen.' Gran Mossback chuckled. 'Even an old moss troll can learn something new.'

From that day on, the Kingdom of Almost changed its name to the Kingdom of Done. The bridge was completed, the roofs were fixed, and books were finished to the last page. Pip started a new project: a treehouse. But this time, he worked on it every day until it was done. 'Finishing is my favorite part!' he declared. Nora gave him a high five.

Mayor Bramble called a celebration in the square. 'We promise to never give up again!' he announced. The villagers cheered. They hung a sign that read 'Finish What You Start.' Nora stood beside Gran Mossback, who wore her finished scarf with pride. 'You've taught us well, Princess,' the old troll said. Nora's freckled face glowed. 'You all did the hard work,' she replied.

On the last day of her visit, Nora packed her satchel. The kingdom buzzed with completed projects. Pip gave her a wooden whistle he had carved himself. 'I finished it!' he said proudly. 'It only took me three days.' Nora hugged him. 'Keep it up,' she said. 'Remember, every finished project is a little victory.' Pip nodded, his hazel eyes shining.

As Nora rode away, she looked back at the Kingdom of Done. The bridge stretched all the way across the river. The houses had bright red roofs. Children read books to the very end. Gran Mossback waved her knitting needles. Mayor Bramble held up his clipboard, now filled with checkmarks. Nora smiled. She had helped a whole kingdom learn to finish.

Back in her own castle, Nora started a new project: a garden. She planted seeds and watered them every day. Some days she felt tired, but she remembered the Kingdom of Almost. 'Persistence,' she whispered. And sure enough, the flowers bloomed. She picked a bouquet for her mother. 'Look what I finished!' she said. Finishing, she knew, was the best adventure of all.