



Kraljevitch Marko

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Croatian

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There was once upon a time a mother who gave birth to Kraljevitch Marko. She reared him, and placed him in a position to become a hero. When Marko was growing up he was obliged to feed swine, but he was then weakly, and so dwarfish a lad that his comrades were able to beat him, and wanted him to be a sort of servant for them and tend their swine. But he was not willing to do this, so they beat him and lugged him by the hair, so that he was obliged to run away from them. He got away, and went into the fields, and there roamed about, thinking: 'They would be beating me all day, now one, now another of them; but as it is, when I go to them in the evening, they will only beat me once.'

As he roamed about, he came up to a baby. He saw that it was a handsome one, and that it was lying in the sun. He made it a cool shade with branches, and went a little way off and sat down. As he thus sat, up came a Vila, and said to herself: 'Gracious God! who has done this? Let him ask me for anything in the world; I will give it him.' He heard this, approached, and said: 'Sister, I have done this for you.'

'You have done it, little brother? Come! what do you ask of me in return, that I may reward you for being so good as to make a cool shade for my baby?' 'Ah, dear sister! what I should ask you, you could not give me.'

‘Well, what is such a mighty matter? only tell me.’ He was thinking of this, that his comrades might not beat him at the pasture; therefore he said that he should wish that they should not beat him. She replied: ‘Well, if that is what you wish for, come and suck my breast.’ He obeyed her, went and sucked. When he had finished sucking, the Vila said to him: ‘Well, go now and heave yon stone, and try whether you can heave it up.’

The stone was twelve hundredweight. He went to heave it, but could not stir it from its place. Then the Vila said to him: ‘Come and suck again; when you have done sucking, go and heave it.’ He went to suck, and when he had finished, went to heave it, but only lifted it a little. Then he went again to suck, with such effect that he could already cast it a little way. He went to suck once more. Then he was already able to cast it to a great height and over hills, so that it was no more to be found. Once more she bade him come to suck. He sucked his fill, and then she said to him: ‘Go now whithersoever you will; no one will beat you any more—no, not your comrades.’ He went merrily to the herdsmen, and they called to him: ‘Where have you been that we are obliged to tend your swine?’ and rushed upon him to beat him. He only waited for them. When they came up to him, he seized one, knocked them down, and the one who was in his hands was quite squashed, with such force had he taken hold of him. The other shepherds, who saw what he did, ran to the home of those whom he had knocked down, saying: ‘Marko has knocked down your son, and so-and-so’s, and so-and-so’s.’ They all went to his mother: ‘What manner of son is this that you have reared up?—a brigand, who kills our children!’ She was terrified out of her wits, thinking what her son had done. She began to revile him: ‘Sonny, never did my eye see that you did anything; wherefore do you thus to me, that other people come to revile me because of your doings? Go! I shall be glad if my eye never sees you more. Why do you put me to shame?’ ‘Well, then, good! if so you say, I will go into the world.’ ‘Only go that I may never see you.’ ‘Well, then, good! go I will.’

He went. Now, he thought to himself: ‘What shall I do? I am a hero, but I have not what a hero requires.’ Then he went to a smith, at whose smithy were five-and-twenty smiths. ‘God help you, smith!’ ‘God help you, Kraljevitch Marko! why have you come to me?’ ‘I have come to you that you may forge me a sword weighing twelve hundredweight; then you shall also forge me a mace, if you make the sword well; but you must know that it must be stronger than your anvil. If it cuts it through, you shall receive payment; otherwise, not. Have you understood me?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Well, then make it now.’ All five-and-twenty smiths went immediately and forged the sword. When it was ready, Marko came. ‘Well, smith, have you got it ready?’ ‘Yes, Marko.’ ‘Now come, let me see.’ Marko struck, but the sword broke into two pieces, and not the anvil. ‘Ah! friend smith, you’ve not

done it well; you get no pay.' He went on to another smith. 'God help you, smith!' 'God help you, Kraljevitch Marko! What work do you want done?' 'I have come to you to make me a sword weighing twelve hundredweight, and to make it stronger than your anvil, because, if it cuts through your anvil, you will receive payment; if not, you will get nothing. Have you understood me?' 'Yes.' 'Then make it.' Then up came the thirty smiths, worked at the sword, and worked until they had finished forging it. Marko came: 'Well, smith, is the sword ready?' 'It is, Marko.' 'Show it me that I may see it.' Marko took it, struck, cut through the anvil, and cut right into the block. 'Well, smith, you've made it well. Now that you've made me a sword, make me also a sheath for the sword, and also a club, that is, a mace, weighing twelve hundredweight, then I will pay you all at once. But when I throw the mace, it must not break; if it breaks, then you get no payment.' He made him a mace also, but did not make it well. When Marko threw it, he let it fall upon himself, and the mace broke. Then said Marko: 'You have made me the sword well, but not the mace. Reach out your hand that I may pay you for the sword.' The smith reached out his hand, and Marko cut it off with the sword, saying: 'There's your payment, smith, for the sword, that you may no more make such swords for any hero.' Then he went to a third smith, with whom thirty-eight smiths were at work, and said: 'God help you, smith!' 'God requite you, Marko! why have you come to me?' 'I have come to you to make me a club, that is, a mace, weighing twelve hundredweight; I tell you the truth, if I throw it up on high, and it breaks when it falls, you get no payment.' All thirty-eight smiths worked till they forged it. Marko came: 'Well, is the mace ready?' 'It is, Marko.' 'Show it, that I may see it.' When he gave it him, he threw it so high into the air that it was three days and three nights in the sky. When it came down, Marko presented his back; it fell upon him, and cast him to the ground, and blood flowed from his nose and teeth, but the mace remained sound. But Marko sprang up quickly, and said to the smith: 'Ah! dear smith! you've made it well for me; reach out your hand that I may pay you.' He reached out his hand to him, and he cut his hand off with his sword. 'Let this be your payment, smith, that you may no more make such staves for any hero.'

Then he went off to his mother and said to her: 'Mother, you see in me a hero; if you revile me, I shall go about the world.' Then his mother began to scold him: 'Why are you like this? Why don't you live like other people? You have oxen; go, then, on to the green hill and plough the fallows and pastures, and thereby support your old mother.' Marko obeyed her, took the oxen, and went. But he didn't go on to the green hill, to plough the fallows and pastures, but he went and ploughed the emperor's highroads. When the Turks saw this, they went to Marko—three hundred Turks, all chosen warriors—and said to him: 'Why, Marko, do you plough the

emperor's highroads? you have the fallows and pastures!' Then at him, to cut him down. When Marko saw this, he hadn't with him either his sword or his mace, so seized his plough and felled all three hundred Turks. Then said he: 'Ah! gracious God! a wondrous hero!' Then he took the Turks' gold from them, left his plough, unyoked the oxen, and turned them loose on the green hill: 'Go, little oxen, on to the green hill, and feed and graze from pine to pine, like the cuckoo; Marko has not managed to plough with you, and now never will he more.' And home he went singing: 'Here, mother, you have gold enough, live upon it, and I will go into the world, that your eye may see me no more.'

He took his mace and sword, went and came to an inn, where some Turks were drinking red wine and conversing. 'We should be glad to make the acquaintance of Kraljevitch Marko and see him. We have heard that he is a celebrated hero. His brother Andro is in Stambol here. He is a hero, but they say that he is a still greater hero.' 'In whose service is Andro Kraljevitch?' 'In that of a pasha; he will soon come riding past here.' 'Good; I will wait for him.' Up came Andro Kraljevitch, riding with the pasha. Marko called out to him: 'Eh, adopted brother, Kraljevitch Andro!' 'Thanks, unknown hero, perhaps you are Kraljevitch Marko?' 'Quite true, I am Kraljevitch Marko.' 'Good; let us go into the inn to drink a cup of wine, that love and the fortune of heroes may thus unite us. Now we are not afraid of going into combat against any empire.' So they went on the way to an inn. Kraljevitch Marko said: 'Prithee, sing me a song, Andro.' 'Dear brother, I dare not. The Vila of the cloud would shoot me.' 'Don't be afraid; I am here.' Andro obeyed, and sang so that all the branches began to fall. All at once a spear flew against Andro and struck him down. Marko looked about to see whence it came, and espied a Vila in the cloud; he seized his mace and threw it at the Vila, so that it at once struck her to the ground. The Vila began to shriek: 'Let me go, Marko! I will bring Andro back to life, and will give you a wondrous horse, so that you will be able to fly in the air.' Marko agreed, and she took certain grasses, and brought Andro back to life. Marko obtained the wondrous horse, and both rode off to an inn and drank red wine. But in the inn there was a wicked harlot. She became enamoured of Andro, but he would not even look at her. She therefore put sweet honey into his wine, that he might drink the wine. Marko went out for a short time, and the wicked woman murdered Andro. But when Marko came in he seized the wicked woman, and spitted her on his sword: 'Take that, wretch, for murdering my brother Andro.'

He went on into the world. He roamed hither and thither, and when he met with any hero, he tried the fortune of combat with him, as in his encounter with black Arapin. Arapin built a tower beside the level sea. When he

had built it handsomely and raised it high, he said thus to it: 'Handsomely, my tower, handsomely have I built thee, and high have I raised thee, for I have no father nor mother, no brother nor sister, nor even my beloved, to walk about in thee. But I have a love, the daughter of the emperor Soliman. I will write him the leaf of a white book, and send up to him by a black Tatar; for if he will not give her to me, let him meet me in single combat.' He wrote the leaf of a white book and sent it by a black Tatar. When Soliman read over the leaf of the white book, he shed tears abundantly, and his empress Solimanitza came to him and questioned him: 'Why do you weep, emperor Soliman? Ofttimes have letters come for you, and you have not shed abundant tears; what distress is tormenting you?' He told her this, that black Arapin had written to him, that, if he did not give him his daughter, he must meet him in single combat; and how could he meet him in single combat? She advised him to write the leaf of a white book to Kraljevitch Marko to come, promising to give him three loads of money. He wrote the leaf of a white book and sent it by a black Tatar. When Kraljevitch Marko read over the leaf of the book, he began to laugh greatly: 'Yes, i' faith, emperor Soliman! what will your money do for me, if black Arapin severs my head from my shoulders?' And he said not whether he would go or not go. The emperor Soliman was anxiously expecting the Tatar, who brought to him the words, that Marko neither said that he would come, nor that he would not come. Thereupon the emperor was sorrowful, for he had no such man who would deliver his daughter. There arrived a second letter from black Arapin, that he must give him his daughter; if he did not give her, he must meet him in single combat. As he read it, he shed abundant tears. Thereupon his only daughter came to him and asked him: 'Why do you weep, emperor Soliman? Letters have ofttimes arrived for you, and you have not shed abundant tears.' He replied to her: 'Dear daughter! You see that black Arapin writes to me, that, if I do not give you to him, I must meet him in single combat; and how shall I, poor man that I am, meet him?' 'You know, dear father, that there is one hero, Kraljevitch Marko. Write to him, that you will give him nine loads of money, if he will come and meet him in single combat.' The emperor Soliman wrote to Kraljevitch Marko the leaf of a white book, and sent it to him by a black Tatar. When he read over the leaf of the white book he laughed greatly: 'I' faith, emperor Soliman! what will your money be to me, if black Arapin severs my head from my shoulders?'

Thereupon he did not say whether he would come or not come. Sorrowful thereat, the emperor did not know what to do. Then came a third letter from black Arapin, that he was coming, and that he must prepare, would he, would he, to give him his daughter, and that all inns and shops must be shut for fear of him. Thereupon the emperor Soliman shed abundant tears as he read it. His daughter came to him: 'Why do you weep, emperor

Soliman? Letters have oftentimes arrived for you, and you have not shed abundant tears. What distress is assailing you?' 'You see, dear daughter, that black Arapin writes to me, that if I don't give you to him, I must meet him in single combat! But how shall I, poor man, meet him?' 'Write, dear father, to Kraljevitch Marko to come, and offer him twelve loads of money, and a shirt which is neither spun nor woven nor bleached, but made of nothing but pure gold, and a serpent that holds a tray in its mouth, and on the tray a golden casket, and in the casket a precious stone, by aid of which you can sup at midnight just as well as at mid-day.' He wrote the leaf of a white book and sent it to Kraljevitch Marko by a black Tatar, and offered him all that his daughter told him. When Marko read the leaf of the white book, he laughed greatly, and said: 'I faith, emperor Soliman! what will your money do for me, if black Arapin severs my head from my shoulders?' And then, too, he did not say that he would come or not come. Thereupon came the leaf of a white book from black Arapin, that Arapin had now got ready three hundred heroes, all in silver armour, and all chosen warriors. Then said Kraljevitch Marko to his piebald horse: 'Eh! piebald horse, my pearl! you know well that you must be faithful to me, for, if not, I shall cut off your feet at the knees, and that you must bear yourself valiantly.' And the piebald horse replied that he must saddle and mount with speed to go soon, and that black Arapin was already near. Marko saddled and mounted him, and went to the city where the emperor Soliman reigned.

Now, when he had ascertained by which road Arapin's men were coming, he presented himself to a young innkeeper, and said, knocking at the door: 'Open, and bring some wine.' But he excused himself, saying that he dared not draw any, for all inns and shops were obliged to be shut for fear of black Arapin. But the hero said to him: 'You must bring some for me, or I shall cleave your head to the shoulders.' The innkeeper saw that it could not be otherwise, and was obliged to bring him a cup of wine. Marko drank half, and gave half to his piebald horse. Then he brought two cups, one for Marko, and one for the horse. Meanwhile, Marko went into the garden to look about him. When he got there, he saw by the side of a brook a damsel in sorrow, and wondered what ailed her that she wept so piteously, saying: 'Ah! my rivulet! I would rather abide in you, than lie behind black Arapin's back.' When Marko saw that it was Soliman's daughter, he said: 'What ails you, damsel, that you weep so piteously?' She replied to him: 'Go hence, unknown hero! As to what you ask me, you cannot aid me.' 'Now, only tell me; maybe I shall aid you.' 'Black Arapin will come, and will take me away from my father and mother; but I had a man, who could have set me free, but he will not. I offered him twelve loads of money, and a shirt, which is neither spun nor bleached, but is made of pure gold; and a serpent, that holds in its mouth a tray, and on the tray a golden casket, and in the casket a precious stone, by aid of which he could sup at

midnight, as well as at mid-day; but he won't. The sun has not seen him, neither has the moon thrown its light upon him, nor has he seen his mother more, nor has a bird sung to him.' Marko answered her: 'Don't chatter, don't chatter; but go and say that I have arrived. I am Marko; and let him dress and furnish you handsomely, and give you all that is requisite for Arapin, and all that he shall desire.' Then she ran to her father, and told him all that Marko said. Meanwhile, while Marko was conversing with the damsel, Arapin arrived, saw an inn open, and a horse in front of it standing tethered at the entrance. He said: 'Who is this, that is not afraid of my terror?' And thereupon he said that he would soon teach him to be afraid of him. After this, he shouted an order to the bedelija; the bedelija (such is the [Turkish] name for a horse) would not stir.

'Well, I'll go thither; I won't make quarrels; maybe I shall obtain possession of the damsel without any disturbance.' And, in fact, thither he went, obtained possession of the damsel, and all that he needed was given him. Then he went again to the inn, and saw the horse again standing there. Again he was about to go to the innkeeper to slay him; but he shouted to the horse, the horse wouldn't stir. Said Arapin: 'Well, I won't make quarrels, now that I have obtained the damsel without any quarrel.' When Arapin proceeded on his way, Marko came out of the garden, and his piebald horse said to him: 'Where have you been so long, that Arapin might easily have killed me?' 'Now don't fear, my piebald; we shall soon kill him, please God, not he you.' Then he called for one more cup of wine for himself, and one for his piebald. When they had finished drinking, they started on their way, and in pursuit of Arapin. Arapin had already told his chief officer to look round to see whether any dark fog came out behind them. He looked round, but saw nothing. But when he afterwards looked round a second time, he espied a dark fog, and said to Arapin: 'Yes, my lord, a dark foul fog is coming behind us.'

Scarcely had he said this, when Marko attacked, and began to slaughter, his rearguard. Arapin said to him: 'Don't be silly, Marko; why are you playing the fool with us? I don't know whether you are jesting, or playing the fool.' 'I am neither jesting nor playing the fool, but am in earnest.' 'Do, then, what you can; throw what you have.' 'I won't; but throw you your mace.' Marko's piebald threw himself down, and Arapin's mace went over Marko's head. Then Marko threw his mace, and felled Arapin to the ground, and the piebald leapt to Arapin, and said to Marko: 'Come, see that you cut off Arapin's head.' When the piebald leapt, Marko, too, struck with his sword, and cut off Arapin's head, and the piebald quickly leapt backwards thirty paces. Then he left Arapin's carcase on the ground, gave the head to the damsel, and said: 'Kiss him, now that he is dead, though

you wouldn't when he was living.' They went home, and the emperor caused a great entertainment to be prepared, and all Marko's friends, and his father and mother, to be invited, and Marko obtained his promised reward.

So, too, he tried the fortune of combat with Musa Urbanusa. He had three hearts. Marko fought with him for three nights and three white days without cessation, so that red foam already issued from Marko, while not even white foam came from Musa Urbanusa. Then Kraljevitch Marko shouted: 'Eh! sister Vila!' The Vila replied: 'I cannot help you, because the baby has fallen asleep in my arms; but don't you know your secret weapon?' Then said Kraljevitch Marko: 'Look, Musa Urbanusa, whether the sun is now rising or setting.' Musa looked at the sun, and Marko drew his knife, and ripped Musa up. Musa seized hold of him so powerfully that he barely dug his way out from under Musa, whom he had ripped up. There he lay, and Marko pushed himself sideways, and when he had extricated himself, went to look what there was in this man that was so strong. He saw that Musa had three hearts, one was beating, the second was beginning to beat a little, and the third did not yet know aught about it. On the third he saw a snake lying, and the snake said to Marko: 'Thank God that I didn't know of it; you wouldn't have done what you have done. But open your mouth, Marko, that I may enter into you, that you, too, may be as strong as he was.' Marko became angry, and cut the snake to pieces, saying: 'I don't need such a foul creature as you are.'

Then he proceeded on his way, and went about till firearms were invented. He went up to a shepherd, who was shooting birds. Then Marko asked him: 'What's this that you are doing?' 'Eh! you see, I'm shooting birds; and I could shoot you, also.' 'And how would you kill me with this thing? Heroes have not killed me; could you do so?' Then he reached his hand to him, and said: 'Shoot into my hand here.' He shot, and shot through his hand. Then said Marko: 'It is not worth my while to live any longer in the world; now any cuckoo could slay me; I had rather quit it.' He went into a cavern, and lives there still at the present day. Into this cavern a man was compelled to go, who was let down by a rope in a chest. When he arrived within, the Vila immediately stepped up to him, and said: 'Christian soul, why come you here?' He told her why and how. But Marko heard that somebody was conversing, and immediately asked the Vila who it was that had come in. She told him that a soul from that world had come to see what was in the cavern. Marko immediately said that he must come to him, that he might see how strong people in the world still were, and he must give him his hand. But she gave him a red-hot iron, and Marko took it, and squeezed it in his hands so that water spirted out of it, and said:

'Ah, ah! I could still live in the world if no one would talk about me for three days.' He also commissioned him to tell the lords that he should come there. He gave him a letter, too, and sealed it with his own hand, and allowed him to go up. He shook the rope, and got into the chest. Then they pulled him up, and he gave the letter to the lords; but, for fear of Marko's coming, the lords did not make the letter public for people to know how Marko had gone into the cavern. The footprints of his horse are still recognised.

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