



The Rhodopes

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Historical, Magic

“The earth was quaking – like a volcano rumble was the sound of the approaching hooves of the multitude horse army. The morning was crisp, the faces of horsemen sunburned, their strength depleted. The noise began to quench (subside) until it completely stopped. The young Khan got off his horse, looked around and his black eyes seemed to pierce the air, and he could see far away, very far in the future.

“Land forever,” Khan Asparukh shouted, thrust his sword in the soft soil of the Ongala (land of Ongala).

“Land forever, forever, forever,” the loud voice of a large cavalry and the accompanying women, children, old men were heard”

There was admiration in Yurdan’s eyes. The boy left his favourite book on his bed and excited by of what he read, he looked through the small window, stared, he wanted to be able to see the future. Myra – the girl with the golden braid appeared before his eyes. The girl was hopping, and she passed in front of Yurdan’s window. Yurdan knocked on the window to catch her attention and with hands gestures asked her to wait for him in the street in front of the house.

Yurdan greeted her with the common Slavs dialect, and Myra’s pale face blushed. She didn’t wait long and replied with the type of the Proto-Bulgarians greetings, bowed her head and put her right hand on her chest.

The two of them walked along a muddy street towards the lake. A man’s voice was heard from a distance:

– Choush, chouoush.

A herd of sheep ran for grazing, and the shepherd urged them to go the grassy valley. Yurdan ran after the sheep, grabbed a twig and twirled it in the air with a whistle.

Myra laughed aloud, and the sheep were completely confused, they were running in one direction, and then in another. Then the voice of the shepherd startled little Yurdan:

– Boy, you scare the animals out. If you want to become a shepherd, I will teach you. You are agile and young – continued the man.

– I love animals very much, and I love to run with them on will – said Yurdan, and he bent down, to catch a barely walking baby-lamb, and began stroking it on its short coat (furring).

The old man looked at him with joy and admiration and promised to teach him to lead lambs to graze. Myra gladly added:

– And I, too, will come to learn and help and to walk around mountain pastures. But now I want to show Yurdan the secret creek that appears and disappears.

– Run, kids, let the magic of the Rhodopes reach you – children heard the shepherd's husky voice.

Myra and Yurdan were marching through the mud, jumping over puddles, slipping on the autumn leaves, they continued to walk through the meadows and reach the lake that was sometimes blue, sometimes green.

They walked around the lake and stopped by the creek breathlessness.

– I've been here before, but I have never seen this river – said Yurdan with astonishment.

– The creek is not always here, sometimes dries, and there's no sign of her as if it hides – Myra said – but obviously she loves us. Myra put her fingers in the icy water.

Yurdan bent down and took a pebble and threw it into the water and waited to hear the familiar puddle, puddle, puddle, but the stone sank without any sound.

– Did you see that, Myra? – Yurdan asked.

– Yes, I did, and I can also tell you: it's a freezing river. Where does the river come from?

The river twisted like a snake between rocks, meadows, and one could see a waterfall in a valley that flowed from above, from very high, almost out of the sky.

Yurdan and Myra went on and reached an unusually big tree. It seemed to stop the river and did not allow her to continue her 'walk.'

– Look at this giant; this tree is so high up almost to the sky and wide as a wall without end- said Yurdan to Myra.

Myra's eyes seemed to absorb the sunlight, and their color was blue and green – changing just like the color of the lake, Yurdan thought.

Myra glanced at Yurdan; then she gasped tired of the long walk and excitement:

– Go on, do not stop, let's climb on this tree, only then we can see all the beauty of rivers, lakes, pastures, rocks, we will look from the height of the waterfall.

A mighty roar split the air. Yurdan and Myra moved side by side and clasped their hands. They looked around, but couldn't see where the danger comes from.

A second loud roar made them run, but they wandered like the sheep did, to the left and the right. Something heavy fell before them. Children fell on the ground and screamed frightened. Their voices travelled in the peaceful air, and the sky frowned.

Yurdan saw the head of a huge animal before him, and he started crawling and pulling Myra's foot. The animal shook its head and did not move further. It was a big brown bear standing on its hind legs and growled again. The sky grew even more grey.

– Myra, what are we going to do, this bear will eat us alive, look at her, she's hungry -Yurdan whimpered.

Myra was crying and could not speak. Yurdan was scared and began to pray:

– Dear clouds, please help us, please cry, pour out your whole anger, to oust the bear – Yurdan gouged his throat.

It started to darken; the clouds were approaching ...

Myra wiped the tears from her beautiful face and trembling; she raised her hand up and felt a slight drop on her fingers. It became even darker; a grey transparent cloud obstructed the path in front of the bear.

The children were watching the big animal lifting her paws and trying to push, to get through the cloud.

– Look, Myra, my request is heard, the clouds are helping us.

– Yes, this cloud is stronger than the Bear; it does not let this giant reach us. Let's run, as the shepherd advised us: "Run, children and the magic of the Rhodope Mountains will reach you" – Myra was sauntering with trembling voice.

Just when they started to flee, a strange voice coming in from the cloud stopped them:

– I'm the Lady of the Mountain, where are you off to, children?

Children turned to the cloud, and both remained like numb. The Bear had become a woman with a long dress, and with a tiara on her head. But the cloud was still there and did not allow her to come close to Yurdan and Mira.

- We are wandering in the mountain; we want to see the beauty of The Rhodopes from a height, Yurdan said.
- Remember, this mountain is sacred and must be guarded. The power of the rivers and lakes is tremendous; it can lift rocks. Water can remember, it should not be polluted, forests keep the air clean and fresh should not be cut. Animals are the life and spirit of the mountain and should not be killed.

Suddenly poured a torrential rain and the two buddies fled trying to find where to hide. Yurdan turned back and saw in the distance the Bear standing on her hind legs, shaking the water off herself.

Soaking wet and frightened, they stood next to an even larger tree from what they had seen by the river. Myra looked around and began climbing. Yurdan bent down, tightening the laces on his medieval leather shoes (tzarvuli-handmade, calf leather, comfortable). Got up climbed on the tree and with a bounce, he found himself on one of the higher branches.

It was quiet; Myra has stretched out to grab a farther branch and moved even higher. She paused, looked around, and saw how far they moved from the river and the beginning of the base of the tree. She turned to check where Yurdan was and shouted surprised.

- Look left; see those flowers spread out like umbrellas, with the colours of the rainbow – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet – said Myra.
- The Rainbow made of flowers? Are they real? Let's jump on one of them -the boy suggested boldly.

Myra caught Yurdan by the hand, and they both flew to the Red umbrella-flower. They fell, and their noses felt aroma and softness. 'Intoxicated' of the strong aroma they started humming and felt that they were sinking. The leaves opened even more broadly, and a beautiful red-transparent wall surrounded them. Then a whole world revealed before them: of beautiful jugs, necklaces, dolls.

Yurdan's long black eyelashes opened, and closed and seemed to touch everything around him. He felt them close to his eyes, to his nose. Myra's eyes changed its color again; the golden pitchers passed before her sight, the dolls' braids were as golden as hers. Myra shrugged shoulders, did not say a word and excited decided to check out some of the other flower-umbrellas.

Yurdan gazed at the movements of Myra, who looked like a fairy as if she was flying toward the orange flower-umbrella. When Myra fell, a soft song suddenly was in the air, and she recognized it, the song of Orpheus. Her grandmother had told her about Orpheus.

She felt with her heart the power of his music; like that they were playing 100 violins. A slight smile of delight appeared on her tender rose- color-like face, and Yurdan was admiring the fairy tale.

The magic of the red flower had disappeared, the umbrella was closing. Yurdan decided to jump on the white-like flower-umbrella snow. His shoes (tzarvuli) touched the soft surface. He felt the tenderness of the white umbrella, he squatted, and he caressed the flower. He stood up, stared at the distance as he did his favourite hero of the book, Khan Asparukh, and said,

– Land forever.

Myra looked at him, and his words impressed her, but at that moment they heard a husky voice, emerged between the stems of the flowers:

– For centuries I've been waiting for guests like you, where have you been?

Standing, leaning on a rough wooden stick, the old woman approached the stem of the orange flower and shaken it so strong that Myra flew right on the grass beside the legs of the old woman.

Yurdan looked frightened, but he saw Myra on the grass rolling and laughed until the moment of when the white flower swung like a swing, and Yurdan also fell, hearing his own voice.

– Aaaaa – and he was flying with his eyes closed, his black eyelashes growing with the shadow of the golden jugs, he was still wearing the memory of them in his eyes.

When he opened his eyes, he felt the soft tap of Myra on his shoulder.

– Welcome to my kingdom, dear children- said the old woman and looked at them rigorously.

Yurdan and Myra holding hands got up slowly.

– You are my guests, and you will become my ambassadors. You are the ones who will tell about this land, about the majesty of our planet. My dear, this is the land of the ancient Thracians. Everything you saw was from the time when Orpheus has made people happy with his music, poetry, and wisdom. The skilful hands of Thracian craftsmen make these beautiful jars and necklaces. This land is the oldest and most beautiful place on Planet Earth.

The old woman stopped, looked at her small listeners and asked:

– What is your name little beauty?

– Myra-replied shyly the golden-haired friend of Yurdan.

– Myra, you are a Thracian, in your heartthrobs the love and the skill of a Thracian. I am Surah, and I originate from an old Thracian family. My mother Nona, my grandmother Seta – all of them passed each other the story of the Thracian woman. And now I'll hand it over to you, dear girl, and remember that the most ancient civilization touches you, and I, Surah, am part of it. And you, young man, what do they call you?

– Yurdan- the boy said clearly and loudly.

– Yurdan; ahead of you is the future of the new settlers here. You will start a great Proto-Bulgarian family, which centuries ahead will be proud of its ancestor. You will walk days; you will cross this beautiful mountain called Rhodope, and you will look ahead, just ahead.

Years passed, many years. The land was shaking, the roar was approaching. Yurdan's horses reached 'Popovi meadows.'

– Choush, choush – a man's voice cried.

Yurdan's black eyes stared in the distance, the cave, the river. His beautiful horses stopped in sweat waiting thirsty and drank water from the river. The water was cold, crystal clear, and the river bed was visible.

– Grandpa, see what I found – said the young Jordan and he was running out barefooted.

Yurdan jumped from his horse and approached his grandson. The boy had raised his head up and handed his grandfather an old coin.

– Jordan, this is a Thracian coin. The Thracians lived here on this land. These 'Popovi meadows' carry the name of our Proto-Bulgarian family, but the land here was called Geredava. Here lived the most ancient people.

– And what are we then? – The little boy asked curiously.

– We are Proto-Bulgarians who love this land as well as the Thracians have loved it. We honour this land, as we know and we call ‘Land forever,’ as our great Khan has said once. Khan Asparukh who first came here many years ago.

The old man remembered his childhood – especially when dressed in a white robe (shirt) and a bag on his shoulder he walked through the Rhodopes and in his head, were the words of the old woman: “You shall be the patriarch (progenitor) of a great Proto-Bulgarian family.”

The old woman saw the future as did his favourite khan – Khan Asparukh.

– Grandpa; is this not about the story you often tell me about the beautiful golden-haired Thracian Myra and the old Grandma Surah...

The child’s voice echoed and Yurdan felt himself as he has been carried in the future.

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