

The golden coin

Reincarnation story

The Tatar invasion passed over like tide, leaving after it sticking remnants of clams and seaweeds. The little village, nesting in a valley slowly recovered. The invasion was leaving after it smoking ruins, ruined maidens and killed men and children. Only the old men with empty eyes were looking at devastation and pottering about this dead landscape.

But it was just on first view. Here it could be heard blowing of axe in the forest; somebody was nailing new rafters for his roof. The survivors gathered lost in forest ram lamb in one herd, to care of them easy.

Rope up there- on the high ridge on east it could be seen finely jet of smoke. There was a hut of one hunter. Nobody knows his name. They were telling him Chrisul, God's man, because he was living alone like hermit. He was walking around wild places and taking food by fishing and hunting. Old men said he returned from war and saw his wife and child slain. He didn't dare to make home in the place of burned one, buried them and stayed in forest...

In these troubled times bogomiles were hovering about. Peasants listened to them with respect, but couldn't follow them, connected with oat to their suckling mother-earth. And holy men went away. In the evenings there were rumors, that Chrisul become their follower, but nevertheless everybody from village went to him, seeking cure, because he knows every herb and malady.

Boyars very seldom visit this distant village. They gather taxes only two times of year. But sometimes noble men with their crews went to hunt and disturbed the peaceful life of natives. They seek not only shelter, but food, mead and maiden to serve them...

In this autumn day, the crew of boyarress Theodosia was hunting wild boars. Peasants, pursuing animals were crying to course them to hunters. The boyarress, opposite to other noble women had no interest in women deeds and conversations. She liked to ride her motley steed; she could manage with bow or spear not worse than other men-hunters. Her father Kalojan teaches her these things, but he died last winter...

Dressed in man's cloths, with gray cloak, she could be difficult recognized as boyarress and woman. Only her queen's posture on the horse and authority behavior would betray her. Theodosia run to short track, outstripping others. The thrill of hunting was making her to feel overfilled with life. Her senses become sharp, her cheeks and womb were filled with hot fire, and her heart was beating wildly.

Suddenly she heard noise right of her and thought maybe somebody from guards overtake her. She could only turn her head, when her eyes looked at angry gaze of the very big boar. She hadn't time to throw the spear or to prepare arrow, because her horse rise and obtrude her. The beast roars wildly and run to scared horse, pushed it and the rider fall. The getting mad horse flees in panic between trees...

The maiden was unconscious on wet summer foliage. She didn't see neither second attack of the animal nor the arrow, hitting the boar below its left arm. The beast fell in agony, but bite the leg of the girl, making deep wound. Suddenly from the bushes it jumped big man with gray hair. He pushed the boar from the leg and tore piece of his shirt to stop the bleeding. After that he raised falling unconscious huntress on his left arm, taking her to ways he only knows...

Chrisul put the maiden on bed, made from branches and straw. He washed her wound with water and mead, put leaves of herbs and binds again the leg. Boyar's dress was torn to pieces by angry boar. The hunter sigh, stand up and kneel somewhere in the far end of the hut. It creak a cover of big forged wooden chest. There he kept the white shirt of his wife and ragged doll of his girl. There was also necklace with blue bead.

Chrisul dressed sleeping sick woman with white shirt with beautiful red embroidery on edges. He hesitated, but picked up the necklace and placed it on her neck. The man wiped one accidental tear from his left eye with reverse side of his hand.

With disobedient legs he went little glade, where he bury his family. There was only one, clumsy engraved cross on the tree above their tomb. Chrisul was sorry for absence of priest

to say prayer for their souls- he was slain by Tatars too. That's why he made hut near them, to be with them and to ask forgiveness, that he couldn't protect them in time.

He remembered how he returned from battle and his horse neigh, sniff at the smoke of fire. He didn't remember how he run and his legs bring him home. There was not home- only several beams stick up from ruins and still smoke. With mad eyes he kneeled and seeks remnants of his family, but there was nothing. He went to dwell and suddenly he saw them. The mother embraced her child even in death...

Chrisul didn't remember how long he stayed near them.

-Ivana, I-va-na-a-a!- sorrowful cry spring out his throat and shake entire his body and soul.

He press fists and looked to God- powerless and desperate, shaken from this unprecedented sorrow..Hand of somebody awake him for the depths of suffering.

- Stop it, boy! Enough!

Chrisul looked at the old and cracked hand, holding his shoulder. He turned and saw old man Nikodim, the bee- master.

- How to live now, dad Nikodim? How?

The old man shakes his head and sign.

- You alone have to understand how...

From this time the warrior began to change. He leaved his armor and sword and become hunter. He was seeking peace for his soul, for his thoughts, cure for his pain. With passing time it become dull, not so fierce, like scar from sword on his chest- it hurts only in winter and make him cough profoundly and weary...

...Chrisul put forest flowers on the tomb, sigh and turned back to hut. He pulled out a rabbit from his trap, putted it in bag and proceeds into falling gloaming...

He set fire and cook the rabbit for dinner of his unexpected guest. When the meal was almost ready, the maiden opened his eyes.

She looked with children's curiosity everything near her. She touched her dress, tried to stand up, but groan and relax back on leather coverings.

- Where am I? What happened?- she asked silently.

- Boar attack you. Good luck that I was near. Alas, animal was so heavy, we could eat it now. But good luck for you, that boar didn't make dinner with you- laughed with cordiality Chrisul.

Later they drink noisily with wooden spoons aromatic tasty stew. The fire saved them from cold, darkness and bad thoughts. It seemed like her life of boyarress was only dream and only somewhere she heard about it. With amazing Theodosia thought how this unknown hunter didn't ask her name and home place, but heal and feed her. She didn't dare to discover his noble origin. She fall in sleep and dreamed the fire. This fire filled her all. Theodosia tossed in fever. She felt tender and healing hands of the man, changing towels on his forehead. She dimly remembered he gave her to drink tea from birches barks for the fever.

When she felt relaxed, Chrisul looked long time on his moon face, where shadows of fire were dancing.

- Ivana, did you return, Ivana?- he whispered.

The maiden opened his eyes and looked at him. Fire from fever made another fire inside her. Hunter banded her wound, but it was time to bind wound in his soul. The night covered them with its star's cloak...

In the morning Chrisul wake up early and went to bring water from dwell. He decided to pick some forest fruits and herbs for his patient. In the returning he saw tracks of horses. Hunters visited his hut, but there were no signs of fight for taking the girl. He came into hut and saw the shirt diligently folded and with necklace on it. Beautiful girl disappeared like dream...

...They passed two moons and again hunters came in the forest. But this time they didn't go hunting. The boyarress Theodosia guided them directly to hut of the hermit. Two man from his crew outstrip her and already tied hands of the bogomil's follower.

- Leave him!- She ordered.

After that she turned to kneeled man, first not recognizing him.

- Stand up! I only wanted to thank you for goodness.- and she was giving him golden coin/zlatitza/

- I don't want your zlatitza!- Answered quietly the prisoner.

Her brown, with golden dots eyes met his eyes...

- I know.- she answered silently.

Then she turned her horse and made gesture to his crew to turn back.

She was riding slowly, striving not to look back...

- Kostadin Iordanov Boianov

Paladin

Sofia

Bulgaria