

Danil D'Zha

Adventures
of Indi
the little princess



Part 1 «Yoly»

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Princess. Part 1 «Yoly»**

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Аннотация

The events of this story unfold in India in the middle ages. A little Princess from a noble Kingdom is kidnapped by a mysterious forest creature. Her father, King Raja, and his faithful commander Sikh go in search of her. Impassable jungles, mangroves, mountain rivers, wild animals and magic await them on the way to the mysterious Spruce Forest. In the role of antagonists are the well-known archetypes of Slavic mythology, the history of which, according to one version, began in India.

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As light and darkness one planet divides
So good and evil, one coin with two sides.
And in this fairytale's florid story
Is revealed, dear reader, the mystery
That in truth there's no darkness and light
Just our illusions, and not a clear sight.



It was an unusual evening... The sun had become red, heralding the approach of the rainy season. Wild beasts hid from the heat in the most secluded corners of the jungle, stray dogs wandered through the nooks, and fish lay still in the river creek. Then the wind died down, the cicadas fell silent, the birds stopped singing and the Kingdom of Hindustan plunged into dark, silent night.

Every year at this very time, a mysterious creature emerged from the forest and abducted girls, for unknown reasons, and what's more, only girls of the age of seven. The King knew this well, and therefore put his bravest guards near the chamber of his daughter, Princess Indi.

The sound of a curved ivory horn reverberated across Jagannath – the capital of the great kingdom. Parents rushed to lock their homes and hide their young daughters in windowless rooms, safe from the sonorous chimes of the magic bells that the creepy forest creature used to lull people into a dream, as it pursued its next victim.

The sky was cloudy and tense, the moon and stars hidden from sight. At midnight, the thunderstorm broke. The first lightning bolt hit a huge old banyan, and the tree was quickly covered in orange flames.

The little Princess was scared and called to her mother,

beautiful Queen Rani. The chamber of her parents was next to hers, and the Queen immediately came and comforted her daughter. As she went to the window to shut the blinds, she saw the blazing tree, and before it the flash of a strange silhouette. But the villain escaped the Queen's attention, and she never even suspected that it was sneaking towards its prey. There was another thunderclap, and the rain fell in a torrent such as hadn't been seen for over a century. As the downpour extinguished the fire, the river swelled over its banks, and the streams of water swiftly turned everything around into an impassable swamp.



As Indi dozed in her room, the guards stood at the entrance and did not sleep a wink. The rain did not abate, and the thunder was getting stronger and stronger. Suddenly, at the end of the

hallway, came the sound of steps. The warriors thrust their spears forward, ready for battle, but the crafty creature was not going to fight – it simply bewitched them with captivating sounds of its bells and then laid them down with the spell:

Branches, cones, moss and bark,
Fir, cedar, spruce and pine...
The time has come to fall asleep,
Dive into the whirlpool of dark!

The creature snuck into the girl's room, grabbed her, and left in her place an ominous token. No one stood in its way, as all who heard its forest song fell asleep, and the monster freely left the kingdom, sailing a self-made boat along the river.

In the morning, the storm passed and the rain ceased. King Raja woke up before everyone else and went to visit his daughter. But as soon as he came out of his chamber, he saw the sleeping guards at her door. He cried out in rage and ran into the room of the little Princess. Her bed was empty apart from a strange wooden doll. The Queen rushed in, and seeing that their only child was gone, fell into a faint.

That very day, the furious Raja selected the strongest warriors and ordered them to find and rescue the Princess, and that the forest monster be mercilessly put to death!



Meanwhile, little Princess awakened from the spell. She lay on soft moss under a huge spruce tree, and, covered by a veil, did not even feel that she was far away from home in a mysterious forest. Cuckoos were cuckooing, green parrots were flying from branch to branch, spotted deer were grazing not far off in a meadow, and egrets walked by the river. She was not scared and did not even think to call to her guards... she was terribly curious about what happened while she slept!

A rustle in the bushes attracted her attention. Indi got up and peered from behind a tree. A furry hare nibbled berries from all over a bush. The little girl had never seen a wild hare, so she tried to get a closer look, but it scampered away. Indi ran after it, forgetting about her strange situation. Just as they reached the top of a hill, the hare suddenly disappeared into a hole. But Indi beheld a wonderful view of a vast plain, in the fields of which some girls were at work. The Princess descended the hill and approached them. The girls immediately surrounded her.

“Are you new here?!” the first girl asked her.

“What’s your name?” said another one.

“I am Princess Indi. I am seven years old.”

Indi was different to the other girls. Her skin was lighter, her brown eyes bigger, and her long hair shone and bore the sweet incomparable scent of rose oil. And her royal upbringing had

taught her to always be polite and attentive.



“And my name is Kavita. All of us here are seven years old,”

the third girl said. “And princesses don’t belong here. We all work equally, and now you will have to. Put on some gloves and start weeding the beds. You will meet other girls later.”

The princess was not accustomed to being told what to do, but there was no one to complain to, so she obediently put on gloves and began to work.

“Why do you plant all of these trees? Already, there’s forest all around,” Indi asked.

“Once the fir forest was very dense, but people, through negligence, almost destroyed it. Now we need to help it recover.”

Indi ran a hand over the prickly spruce branches and immediately smelled the soft coniferous aroma. She had never seen trees like that, and she very much wanted to plant just such a sapling in the royal garden.

“And what about your parents?” she asked, thinking about her own mother and father. “Don’t you miss them?”

“We have no time for that here. We are all busy with work,” the girls replied. “Now this is our common home, where we feel good and comfortable together. You’ll love it here too.”

After finishing with the seedlings, the girls went to sort through the cones and put them in baskets. Indi went with them. The valley was covered with various new plants and trees, and beautiful red flowers with an exotic and alluring aroma surrounded it. All responsibilities were fairly divided between the little workers. While some worked in the field, others cooked meals and cleaned up. They slept in small huts, carved like nests,

hanging from huge century-old spruces. During their rest time, the girls played in the meadow, looked after the forest animals, watered flowers, and studied botany.

The girls busied themselves tirelessly until evening, but as soon as the sun went below the horizon, Indi heard a familiar melody and felt her eyes closing...

The next morning, Indi woke up with a strange feeling that someone was watching her. Opening her eyes, she squealed with surprise. Before her, there stood an old dwarf dressed in rough canvas clothes, staring at her with huge green eyes. On his head was a hat overgrown with grass and sprouting whimsical form mushrooms, and under a nose like a long twisted twig there hung a beard of silver moss; his feet were bound in plaited shoes and a huge owl perched on his staff.

“Well, hello, Indi!” he said in a kind voice. “I am Yoly, the keeper of this forest. And this is my old friend, owl Ullu.”

Indi was not frightened at all, but rather curious!

“How old are you? And what’s this thing in your hand, like a wreath with bells?”

“I am more than two hundred years old,” Yoly answered. “These bells are magical and made from cones of special spruce tree.”

He handed her the wreath, but the silver bells immediately changed into ordinary spruce cones in her hands.

“You see,” Yoly said, “these bells have power only in my hands. I use their soporific chime when I need to go quietly

amongst the people.”

“So that’s how you managed to drag me out,” Indi said thoughtfully, “but why?”

“I need you!” the forest dwarf exclaimed. “Now let’s go, I’ll show you to your new dwelling.”



The rainy season was already over. Every day the king's

men returned to the city, bringing the disappointing news that the little princess still had not been found. Neither the bravest of the brave warriors, nor the hunters with their hounds, nor the people of neighboring cities were able to point to the trail of the kidnapper. Even magicians and sorcerers were powerless.

But then an old man appeared in the city. His long hair was wrapped tightly around his head and bound in a scarf, and a wide piece of white jute fabric, twisted at the waist, served as his only clothes. On his neck, under a grey beard, there could be seen rosaries made from dried fruits of rudraksha, and he had a ragged bag over his shoulder. Leaning on a stick, he slowly walked barefoot on the beaten road leading to the royal palace.



Majestic and enduring Jagannath, about which people composed songs, had been the capital city of the prosperous kingdom for many centuries. On all sides it was surrounded

by high walls with watchtowers that neither robbers nor wild beasts could get past, and all its gates were heavily guarded. At the vast market square, camel caravans with exotic foreign goods were offloaded, and there were shops of artisans and craftsmen. The old man had never seen so many people. All were bustling and busy with something. Some traded, others bought, one cleaned the fish while another cooked them and offered them to taste. Around the square, elephants dragged huge logs for house-builders, magicians and snake charmers entertained bystanders, children flew kites, and buffaloes rested and grazed in the shade of spreading acacias. And on the hill at the heart of the city was the magnificent palace of Raja, the flag on its stone tower set at half-mast as a reminder about the missing Princess.

The palace guards blocked the old man's way.

"I have news about the Princess," he said.

Two guards immediately opened the gate and told the old man to follow them. The royal palace was made of pale white marble and gleamed faintly with precious stones. In the menagerie yard, the antelopes wandered dejectedly, the mynas flapped around restlessly, the nightingales perched in silence in their golden cages, the turtles stood still on the bank of the pond, and even the peacocks had ceased to flaunt their colorful tails – it seemed that everything pointed to the sorrow of the kingdom. In the throne room, the huge portrait of the Great Ruler, father of the current King, covered the whole wall. Raja appeared almost

immediately.

“Who are you, old man? What brings you here?”

“My name is Sadhu. As soon as I heard about your distress, I immediately came to you. I think I know who kidnapped the Princess and where you can find her.”

Raja immediately invited the old man to take a seat and ordered that water and food be brought for him.

Raja said sternly, ‘I have been waiting for three months for some news about my daughter. My people have worn down more than one pair of shoes in their search. If you can really help me, I’ll give you as much gold as you can carry! But if you try to fool me, I’ll throw you in the dungeon!’”

“I don’t need your gold,” Sadhu replied humbly, “and I always have to carry my own dungeon with me. I will tell you everything I know.”

Sadhu took a sip of water and began.

“Many years ago, when I was a little boy, my grandmother told me the story of a mysterious dwarf named Yoly, about whom she knew firsthand. Yoly was the Keeper of the Forest and cared about all forest inhabitants, and particularly about the small shoot of a Great Spruce, brought especially from the far North.” The old man took out from his bag antique manuscripts with drawings, handed them to the King, and continued. “One day the people were celebrating the approach of the rainy season. They set a huge fire, and when the firewood ran out, they went to the forest to collect more. It was a gloomy moonless

night... having stumbled in the dark on they cut the dry remnants of branches and with them the little sapling and threw them into the fire. There was a burst of blue flames, and a strange squeaking sound was heard. The people were afraid and ran away, but the fire burned on. Soon, it spread to the bushes, and then onto the trees. The forest, still dry, quickly broke out in flames, and only a sudden downpour of rain saved it from burning out completely. Many animals and birds suffered that night. But the forest dwarf mourned most of all that he could not save the precious offshoot of the Great Spruce, and thus the forest was doomed to destruction. And then the dwarf swore that once a year – on this night – he would kidnap a girl of the same age as his little sapling, of those whose parents had caused this great harm to the plants and creatures. And he would raise these girls in the Spruce Forest, instilling in them concern and love for nature. So they would redeem the guilt of their ancestors. To keep the girls always young, he planted magic azaleas, bred by his own method. The miraculous aroma of these flowers stopped the girls from ageing. And the dwarf mixed a special potion of magical herbs to make them feel calm, so they did not miss their homes.”

Raja listened carefully to the old man. He guessed that only a captive could have told Sadhu all this, and if one had managed to save herself, there was a chance for his daughter too. And now King understood what he was being punished for; the chopping down of trees to build houses and ships! – and that was only half

of it, because he had burned so many forests during wars! And his palace was decorated with his many hunting trophies: on the floor, there were tiger skins, on the walls, there hung the heads of the wild animals that he had killed; there were decorations made from tusks and fans made from peacock feathers; he had given the beautiful Queen Rani luxurious furs of rare animals and songbirds in cages. The King looked around, thought that his house was like a graveyard of nature, and got angry! But he didn't know whom to blame.

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