



RUSSIAN HORROR BOOK

VORA-MÖRT

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Victor Bacau

Vora-Mort

«Издательские решения»

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Scary urban tales have been popular in Russia for a long time, and I can say why — even through fear, even through horror, people are ready to believe that there is something more in the world than their everyday life. And perhaps this is also true for people all over the world. Fear gives rise to terrible stories. And in every story, as you know, there must be a monster. And a hero. So, that is not so bad, to feel fear, — for it's an occasion to find a hero. Once, maybe, even in you.

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For as long as I can remember, I've always liked scary stories. I've always been a geek, I loved Lovecraft, Edgar Poe, and of course Stephen King. I always thought there was more life in horror stories than in ordinary stories. A couple of years ago I just turned on the stories of different peoples of the world, I collected all the old legends, «terrible» of Volcker, urban stories from around the world, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the United States. I was wondering what people from different countries are afraid of. At me as if something was found, I searched and studied for several months, like I was led to this, more than just interest. It was as if something was pushing me to look, and I soon found what I was subconsciously looking for in all these terrible stories-similarity. Each country has its own flavor, its own special monsters, and at the same time there is some terrible similarity between all.

I excitedly told my friends about such similarities, for me there was some discovery :

Water and goblins (owners of waters and forests)

Child-eating witches, vampires

Werewolves-bears and werewolves-wolves

And a lot of monsters, similar to each other, even if they are from different countries.

All these similarities, all these stories from different parts of the world, in which there is something in common, they seem to give hope to the crazy geek that in the world there really is something more remote, something more than our everyday life.

One day I decided to make my own list of scary stories and in this book I want to share our horrors and our color, as if I was telling these stories to a friend, perhaps from the other side of the world.

Here in Russia we are afraid of many things, perhaps, as lots of people are.

Our history has long been divided into two periods, before and after the revolution. From “before” we own numerous ancient legends of monsters living in cold forests and terrible swamps; stories about the human cruelty of merchants and landlords during serfdom.

The Soviet Union and its collapse brought some confusion to our thoughts and left us a lot of terrible tales about the military development programs of the time.

The first decade after the collapse of the USSR brought us pain and disappointment of new military conflicts and our hard lives.

While politicians and heads of states were arguing who was right and who was stronger, millions of people tried to survive on the brink of poverty, they learned to get used to a new life and, of course, they had something to fear...

The huge factories that had been accompanying us right from the Soviet Age had suddenly become awfully empty, staring at us with their black “eye-sockets”. The architecture that seemed

pretentious, had become eerily creepy. The great and controversial era was then off, and its former extent remained a gray faceless houses, which nowadays we have a symbol of urban horror.

We have almost no haunted castles left, but something else.

Old high-rise buildings and dilapidated barracks, Soviet hospitals and factories, crumbling and rotting.

Russian horror was born in the hopelessness and despondency of old abandoned buildings; in tiny Soviet apartments with their old furniture. It hides in cold deep woods near our cities.

Our horrors are controversial just as our history.

The horror, the otherworldly, the inexplicable are every time a test to understand what you believe and to know who you are.

I can say that scary urban tales have long been popular in Russia, and I can say why – even through fear, even through horror, people are ready to believe that there is something more in the world than their everyday life. And perhaps this is also true for people all over the world. Fear gives rise to terrible stories. And in every story, as you know, there must be a monster. And a hero.

So, that is not so bad, to feel fear, – for it's an occasion to find a hero. Once, maybe, even in yourself.

VORA-MORT

One of my grandmothers was of Mordovian origin, and the other came from Komi, of Northern Russia. Both of them once married my Russian grandfathers and moved with them to Novosibirsk. In Soviet age, thus often happened, couples used to move from one region to another, and took with them their habits, traditions, culture. Of course, fairy tales too, also plenty of folk tales.

My grandmothers had something to tell their grandchildren.

It is generally thought that during the time of socialism, people stood up to reject all religiosity and superstition. Maybe the facts looked like that, but it was impossible to do a remake to human nature. We still believe in the other worlds, our souls tremble with the mysterious. So my grandmother Galina (that one from Komi) was a true communist, a Party member and a principal of the school, but when she was retired, she however loved to tell me the legends she'd heard in her native land. Those were mysterious, and creepy, and cruel.

In general, according to the Komi-Permian mythology, things in the Universe are as follows: the world was born from the eggs of a huge Mother Duck. That greatest Duck had two human-like sons who took out the egg-world from nonexistence. And if I remember everything correctly, the huge bear named Osh tore the young world with its claws, and thus highlands and lowlands appeared. In these legends there are many monsters, werewolves and spirits... A bear, for example, is a special figure – he is a werewolf, who can take the form of a man and accompany the souls to the next world after they're dead. For me, meeting a hefty bear in the Siberian woods is a sure ticket to the next world; and it doesn't matter if the legendary bear is Osh or an ordinary bear.

The life of Komi, like the life of any ancient people, was closely connected with the woods. And our wild Siberian woods hide alot of different mysterious creatures. But of course, that's only a legend. Tales, say so... At least that's what I thought in my childhood.

...

This happened to me a long time ago – people then already possessed mobile phones, but being nevertheless still far from cool smartphones of nowadays. I was twenty-two, a last-year student at the history faculty and like most young students I had some enormous plans for my future being a very brave girl. By that time my grandparents were already not alive, I also lost my mother. I had such friendly relations with my father, and he did not protest when in the summer I decided to leave with folks for a friend's native village for a couple of weeks.

Well, he wasn't quite a friend...

We were a small company (two guys and two girls) who were going to visit a native place of our prof.

He was quite young, just some years above us. With each other, we called him nothing more than a "buddy"; completely a friend, as if he was a student too. He taught us some insignificant elective course in the mythologies of the peoples of Russia, and he often liked to tell us all sorts of stories instead of theory. We liked him, he was easy to communicate with and that was always interesting. As usual, many girls in the university were pining for him, but I was not.

At the end of August, almost before starting the studies, he invited us to visit his place to “feel the Siberian romance” – or, to spend several days in an old country house where his aged mother had spent all her life.

“She’s an old woman,” said Mitroshin, while he was driving us from the city to his village. I was sitting next to him, in the front seat, behind us – somehow the three of them fixed together – there were Max, Lena and Artem. “I was a late baby. Before that, she had another children. That is, I had siblings but I do not remember them – I was too small then.”

“What happened to them?” I asked him.

“Dead,” he shrugged his shoulders calmly. “The elder sister was ill for a long time. She died when she was at your age. And the brother disappeared in the woods. He went there and got lost, he was later found in a swamp...”

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