

Wiktorja Lehmann gl3;

Time of Bogdan (4934 znaków)

Bogdan was a man of sound sleep, but one night, on his eyelids appeared an unsettling image. In his dream, Bogdan was walking through his beautiful and thriving orchard. The smell of apples was hovering in the air, while the range of greens and reds were inducing awe. Suddenly the earth trembled. The trees started turning black from their roots upwards. When the whole tree became black, it began to disintegrate, as if the tree lost its strength to keep its form. The wind rose, and Bogdan's stunning orchard ceased to exist.

The next day Bogdan rationalized, that the dream was just a creative visualization of his fears about this year's aphids. Not knowing it would prove a portent of things yet to come.

Bogdan was a simple widower who spent his entire life in Primeval. A life of hard work only gave him an orchard and four daughters in return. As a matter of fact, he never thought of them as separate individuals but as a finished set. There was Jagna, Grażyna, Zofia and Renia. They all had broad shoulders, too bulky thighs, and faces endlessly burned from the sun. No young man ever became interested in his not-so-pretty daughters, and in the end, neither of them got married.

After the death of his wife, a local healer, Ludomiła, helped him raise his daughters. She was an old and very peculiar woman. However, she was the most knowledgeable person in the village. At least that was the case until the doctor Johannes Fluckinger came from Austria itself. More and more people from the Primeval started to ask the doctor for advice instead. Bogdan was one of these people, and he became almost intoxicated with news from the West, from the steam engine through the light bulb to germs.

On a September morning, Jagna fell ill. It all started with coughing and sneezing. At first, Bogdan thought it was standard, even good, for a young body to be sick from time to time. She would build up immunity for later in life. However, a month later, Jagna developed chest pains and fever. She also began to lose weight and feel perpetually exhausted. She started to faint, and in the end, her condition deteriorated so much that she became bedridden.

Bogdan had no choice but to summon Fluckinger. The doctor advised her to stay in bed, breathe fresh and dry air, but most of all rest. But all of that was for nothing. When Jagna started coughing up blood and thick phlegm, everyone knew her time was coming. She died in the middle of December. The funeral took place a few days later. Due to the frozen ground, her body lay in a receiving vault.

After the ceremony, Bogdan noticed something new in his daughter's corpse. Her skin was now pale, almost alabaster. Her body seemed renewed and healthy, almost radiant. The corners of her mouth had slightly raised as if she was smiling. Death has given Jagna peace and beauty. And she was going to give this gift to the rest of his daughters as well.

After Jagna's death, a plague struck the town. With each passing month, more and more people fell victim to the disease. Doctor Fluckinger began to work closely with the village authorities to contain the epidemic, but with the successive deaths, more and more people turned away from him.

Bogdan's other daughters eventually got sick as well. The father looked helplessly at his poor daughters. One morning, Grażyna mumbled to him: "Jagna has been coming to me. Bright like an angel. She told me that the pain would be over soon. And we will meet again." A few days after that incident, both Grażyna and Zosia died, and the vault received two new bodies. Only Renia still had some time.

In the act of desperation, Bogdan went to the old healer. Many of her former patients have returned to her. People in a time of crisis chose to look inward and return to what had served them for so long. Now Ludomiła looked at him with compassion but also with smugness.

- I never liked that Austrian he was too pompous - she explained herself, but Bogdan gave these words barely any attention.

- I don't care about the differences between you and Fluckinger. I only care about the well-being of my daughter.

The healer woman thought a moment about it, stirred her teaspoon a few times and said: "There was this Serbian hajduk ..."

In the morning, Bogdan and a couple of men from the village took the bodies to the clearing. In its centre was a tall, elongated white sandstone. And on this stone, branches of nearby oaks were stacked to form a pyre. The fact that the corpses had not yet begun to decompose helped Bogdan justify his decision. After putting down the bodies, Ludomiła lit the fire. Black smoke and the stench of burning bodies emerged. Then the townspeople gathered around the fire and inhaled the smoke. In the eyes of little Renia appeared tears, and she started coughing heavily.

After the ritual, Bogdan also began to cough and spit blood. Renia died that night and Bogdan a month later.