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### **GOOD AND EVIL FORCES IN UKRAINIAN MYTHOLOGY AND FAIRY TALES**

Ukrainian myths have long reflected the beliefs of Ukrainians, their perception of the world, ideas about good and bad, as well as their ideals. Ukrainian mythology was formed in close connection with the mythology of the Slavs, but it was also influenced by other factors. It is known that the Vikings paved the road from Scandinavia to Byzantium through Ukrainian lands, so in Ukrainian mythology we find some echoes of Scandinavian myths. Also, due to the proximity to the Ukrainian lands of Poland, the countries of the Baltic region, Romania, Moldova, etc., their influences also appeared in Ukrainian myths.

The embodiment of natural forces is usually represented by female characters, especially mermaids and dryads. As we all know, a mermaid is a goddess of reservoirs. It was believed that mermaids were young, beautiful girls who lived at the bottom of rivers in splendid crystal palaces. In Ukrainian myths, mermaids have long, perfect blond or green hair down to their knees. They live in water all year round and come out onto the land in spring, on a Clean Thursday, and roam until autumn. We all remember the image of a mermaid in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale. In Ukrainian myths, there is a variation of the mermaid called mavka (dryad). Traditionally, mavkas are believed to live in forests, and in the Hutsul region, the Carpathian Mountains are considered their dwelling place.

Dryads symbolize the souls of children who were born dead or died unbaptized. They often appear as young beautiful girls who lure boys into the forest with dances and songs, where they either tickle them to death or cut off their heads. Dryad can only dance to a single accompaniment – the flute. Interestingly, the Ukrainian writer Lesya Ukrainka used the image of Mavka (Dryad) in her poem "Forest Song." She created a remarkably attractive image of a beauty born from nature and living in nature. But alongside her appears a representative of the earthly world – Lukash, who plays the flute, after which Dryad falls in love with his melody and him. However, this love brings sorrow and death to Dryad.

Female characters can embody not only the forces of nature but also evil, such as the Witch and Baba Yaha. One of the most vivid characters in Ukrainian demonology is the witch. The witch has a wrinkled face, a hooked nose, large greedy lips, and big immobile eyelids. The word "witch" comes from the word "to know." Therefore, a witch is "one who knows everything." According to myths, recognizing a witch among people is very difficult: she can be old or young, transform into different forms. She is a symbol of a malicious, quarrelsome woman who knows a lot and can influence events.

The next character is Baba Yaha. Baba Yaha is a mythological character common in Slavic folklore. Baba Yaha is usually depicted as a large, hunchbacked old woman with a large, long, humped and hooked nose. In fairy tales, Baba Yaha flies in the air on a broom or in a stupa, commands animals and birds. Lives in the forest in a hut on a chicken leg. She eats people, turns heroes into an animal, a bird or an inanimate object, engages in battle with heroes, after which she sleeps in a long sleep. In some fairy tales, she helps the hero achieve his goal.

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In the world of Ukrainian folk tales and myths, a magical realm flourishes, rich in mysteries and symbolism that reveals the depths of collective consciousness. However, amid this vast imaginative diversity, dark male figures emerge, embodying the power of evil and evoking both fear and fascination simultaneously.

Viy is the character in Ukrainian demonology, that most often appears as an old man with thick, long eyebrows and eyelashes, through which he can't see anything. He lives under the ground. His gaze can be fatal to living creatures. He has a destructive power that can sink a house into the ground creating a water reservoir on its place. Although, this magical power is countered by the fact that "Viy" cannot see anything around him due to his extremely thick and long eyebrows and eyelashes.

The water spirit is an evil spirit, an embodiment of the water element as a negative and dangerous entity. It's a transformed image of a devil that spent 40 days in a water environment and remained there. The water spirit appeared in the form of an old man covered in mud and scales, with a beard and hair made of seaweed, sometimes with a tail and wings. At times, he was described as resembling a person with green or black hair. He had the ability to transform into a catfish, a goat, a dog, a tomcat, and more. He was believed to have control over fish, other aquatic creatures, and mermaids. An angered water spirit could cause harm to people: flooding rivers, destroying dams, mills, and drowning individuals. In Ukrainian mythology, the werewolf is a semi-fantastical creature, a human in the appearance of a wolf.

The ghoulish is the son of the devil and witch. He lives like an ordinary person, but among others, but among others he is distinguished by his anger. According to another belief, ghouls only have a human appearance, but in essence, they are real devils. Any person can become a ghoulish if the steppe wind blows around him. In appearance, a ghoulish may not differ from ordinary people or have a very ruddy complexion. Before death, a ghoulish could transfer its power to another by holding a hand or saying the right words, and immediately after that the weather changed and a heavy wind blew in.

Koschey appears as an old, frail-looking man, often with a very long beard. Sometimes he is a dwarf, and his beard significantly exceeds his height. Despite this, Koschey is extremely strong: he scatters heroes "like mosquitoes," raises a sword "five hundred pounds," and fights with the hero all day long. To maintain strength, he must eat a lot: "for three heroes," he drinks a barrel of water at a time, and eats half a bull.

The word "Koschey" comes from "bone." Therefore, Koschey is often depicted as a thin, bony man. Koschey is blind; in particular, he cannot lift his eyelids on his own, like Viy. He lives very far away, at the edge of the world. Fairy tales often indicate that the hero, before getting to Koschey, tramples down several pairs of iron boots, wears out iron hats, sticks, etc.

This is a large flying dragon with clawed paws, a long neck and a tail with spikes (that is, it looked more like a dinosaur on the outside). The motif of snake fighting is one of the key ones in the tradition of Ukrainian fairy tales. So, Kotygoroshko (folk tale "Kotygoroshko"), Illya Muromets, Mykyta Kozhumiya fought with the Serpent. In the myths of many peoples, the Serpent participates in the creation of the world. He seems to support the earth or maintain the balance of good and evil on Earth.

In the twists of Ukrainian folklore, not only mysterious images of darkness and evil are reflected, but also mighty forces endowed with the blessing of protection and goodness. Among them are prominent figures that protect the home, family, and people, building bridges

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between the invisible world and the one where everyday life flows. From the divine Svaroh, carrying the essence of fire, to Yarylo, who brings a new life-giving cycle with the eastern sun, or the house spirit and Chuhayster, who have become an integral part of the home hearth and household, each of these characters embodies kindness and protective power.

Svaroh is the god of fire, the supreme deity, and ruler of the world. He was envisioned as a young blacksmith, silent and stern. Representing the essence of the Universe, Svaroh sometimes takes the form of the starry sky. He is all-knowing and all-seeing. Svaroh's 12 titans are the 12 constellations of the Zodiac. In the name of these deities, the lord controls the heavenly fire and the Earth's harvest.

The ruler of the world taught people to use fire, craft copper and iron, and forged the first plow. He endows humans with wisdom, peace, and balance, assisting them in mastering any craft. He is the god of blacksmiths, the god of marriage and family happiness. He forged the first wedding ring. Svaroh is honored on July 1st, which is a great blacksmith's holiday.

Yarylo is the god of love, a mythological and ritual character associated with the idea of fertility, primarily of the spring. Yarylo is the god-sun of the spring equinox, the god of young love, the deity of romantic passions, the blossoming of nature, and childbirth. The month of this god is May. His name comes from the root "яр" ("yar") which in many Slavic languages is associated with spring, energy, youth, and passion. Yarylo was depicted as a young, handsome, barefoot lad dressed in white linen clothing, riding a white horse.

Domovyk is a spirit creature that takes up residence in a newly built house along with the people. It influences the well-being of the family because it is the master of the house, the deity of the home fire and the stove, and the guardian not only of the house but also of everyone living in it. Domovyk is invisible, but sometimes, it reveals itself to small children. There's a belief that in wealthy households, the domovyk is hairy, while in poorer ones, it is depicted as naked. Sometimes, it has its own mistress to whom it speaks with affectionate words.

Chuhayster is a cursed figure, a dweller of forests and mountains. Depicted as a tall and sturdy sorcerer, he possesses extraordinary strength. He is covered in white or black fur with a white beard and blue eyes. The Chuhayster is considered a harmless being, known for his cheerful character. It's believed that he hunts dangerous female spirits, like Mavkas, and devours them. He is friendly to humans, guarding them in the woods, providing protection, and enjoying sitting by the campfire, playing the flute, and dancing. He can foresee the future, bestow talents, and teach craftsmanship.

There is always a struggle between good and evil in the world. But culture, in particular Ukrainian myths, convinces us that there is more good. It always wins! We believe in this too!

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