**Legend of the Vyshyvanka (traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt)**

There was a time when people began falling to the ground and dying one by one. No one knew what caused this disease. A man walks along the road and suddenly falls, his skin turns black and he expires.

People left their villages and fled to the forest. But, the disease pursued them. It spared neither young nor old. The time came when there was no one left to bury the dead …

A poor widow named Mariya lived in a village on the banks of the Dnister River. The plague had carried off her husband and five children. Only the youngest daughter, Ivanka was still alive. Mariya stood watch over her daughter, protecting her as her most valuable treasure.

But, the disease entered their home. Ivanka began to pale and wither; she refused food, only drank water and wasted away before her mother’s eyes. She pleaded with her mother:

– Save me, Mom, I do not want to die!

Her sad and forlorn eyes followed her mother around the room. One evening, an old lady stopped by their house. Mariya did not see or hear her come in.

– Glory to God! Good day!

– Glory to God!

– What’s this? Is your last child dying?

– Yes, would that she could live!

Mariya rushed towards the old lady:

– Dearest grandmother, I pray God to deliver us, save my last child. I do not want to be left alone in my old age!

The old lady took her pleas to heart and said:

– I will tell you the secret of this terrible disease. But swear not to tell anyone. Swear on your child.

– I swear … on my daughter!

– Our Lord has sent the Black Death upon us. The number of sinners had grown. God ordered that all persons not wearing a cross should perish. The devils laughed and danced and continued killing everyone who did not wear a cross. They cared nothing about men’s souls. And so, the righteous died alongside the wicked and evil … You have mourned the dead in your family. I will give you some advice … Embroider crosses on sleeves, on the bosom, everywhere. Use black or red colours so that the devils can see them from afar … But, tell no one, otherwise you will see your daughter perish before your very eyes …

It took Mariya little more than an hour to embroider her daughter’s blouse in red and black. The crosses and cross-stitched designs shone and blazed in the sunlight. She embroidered another blouse for herself. Ivanka’s health improved day by day. She asked her mother:

– Please, Mom, add an embroidered wreath of blackthorn … and a branch of kalyna (guilder rose) …

The villagers wondered at Ivanka’s striking embroidered blouse and speculated that she was probably going to retire to the forest and live alon. The crosses were meant for God’s blessings. Ivanka’s health improved; she started skipping and laughing and singing. However, her mother’s heart broke whenever she saw the dead being taken to the cemetery.

One day, Ivanka burst into the house, her face streaming with tears. She grabbed her mother’s arm and pulled her to the neighbour’s yard. A coffin bearing Ivanka’s friends, two young twins, was being carried out of the house.

Mariya grew thinner and thinner; she became a shadow of herself. She caressed and kissed her daughter day and night, while dark storm clouds swirled about in her head:

– Oh dear God! You are my only hope!

… But the children continued dying …

– Lord! I will not survive all these deaths!

She could not bear it anymore. She ran, disheveled and terrified, from house to house:

– Embroider crosses, my dear friends … embroider your shirts and clothing with crosses … and you will live! Save yourselves!

The villagers locked themselves in their homes. They thought that death had come for Mariya. No one believed her.

Mariya ran home, took Ivanka in her arms and hurried to the village church. She rang the church bells and the villagers came running.

Mariya kissed her daughter and spoke to the crowd:

– So, you don’t believe me! You think I’m a fool! Well, so be it … I hurt and cry for your children!

She turned and tore the embroidered blouse off Ivanka’s back. The child’s skin turned black, she slid to the ground and died.

– Murderers! Now, go home and embroider the clothing for your children and yourselves! – She said and fell dead at her daughter’s feet.

From that day on, the plague disappeared beyond the forests and seas. People began sewing and embroidering. Later, there was no more need for embroidered crosses. Mothers taught their daughters, and the daughters of their daughters, and every home was graced with an embroidered shirt, apron or blouse.

Such beautiful clothes are worn to this very day.

But, very few people know the origin of this beauty …

**Recorded by I. M. Rozvadovsky (born 1918) in Terebovlia in 1978.**

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**Pripovedka o nastanku višivanke (tradicionalne ukrajinske vezene srajce)**

Bil je čas, ko so ljudje začeli padati po tleh in umirati drug za drugim. Nihče ni vedel, kaj je povzročilo bolezen. Moški je šel po poti in nenadoma padel, njegova koža je postala črna in izdihnil je.

Ljudje so zapustili vasi in pobegnili v gozd. A bolezen jih je zasledovala. Ni prizanesla ne mladim, ne starim. Prišel je čas, ko ni bilo nikogar več, ki bi pokopal mrtve.

Revna vdova z imenom Marija je živela na bregu reke Dnjester. Kuga ji je vzela moža in pet otrok. Le najmlajša Ivanka je bila še živa. Marija je pazila na hčerko, jo varovala kot svoj najdragocenejši zaklad.

A bolezen je prišla tudi v njun dom. Ivanka je začela bledeti in se sušiti; zavračala je hrano, pila je samo vodo in hirala pred maminimi očmi. Rotila je svojo mater:

– Mama, reši me, nočem še umreti!

Njene žalostne, prazne oči so mami sledile po sobi. Nekega večera je v njuno hišo vstopila starka. Marija je ni niti videla niti slišala vstopiti.

– Slava Bogu! Dober dan!

– Slava Bogu!

– Kaj se dogaja? Ali umira tvoj zadnji otrok?

– Da, ko bi le lahko še živela!

Marija je planila proti starki:

– Najdražja babica, molim k Bogu, naj naju odreši, reši mojega zadnjega otroka! Nočem ostati sama na stara leta!

Starka si je njeno prošnjo vzela k srcu in rekla:

– Povedala ti bom skrivnost te grozne bolezni. A prisezi, da ne boš nikomur povedala naprej. Prisezi pri svojem otroku.

– Prisežem … na svojo hčerko!

– Naš Gospod je nad nas poslal črno smrt. Število grešnikov je naraslo. Bog se je odločil, da bo pogubil vse, ki ne nosijo križa. Hudiči so se smejali in plesali in nadaljevali s pobijanjem vseh, ki niso nosili križa. Nič jim ni bilo mar človeških duš. In tako so pravični umirali poleg zlobnih in zlih … Tudi ti žaluješ za mrtvimi v svoji družini. Dala ti bom nasvet ... Izvezi križe na rokavih, na prsih, povsod. Uporabi črno ali rdečo barvo, da jih bodo hudiči lahko videli že na daleč ... Ampak ne povej nikomur, sicer boš videla umirati hčerko pred svojimi očmi...

Marija je rabila malo več kot uro časa, da je izvezla hčerkino bluzo z rdečo in črno. Križci in s križnim vbodom izvezeni vzorci so sijali in žareli v soncu. Eno bluzo je izvezla še zase. Ivankino zdravje se je iz dneva v dan izboljševalo.

– Prosim, mama, dodaj še izvezeni venec črnega trna in veje kaline (brogovite) ...

Vaščani so se presenečeni čudili Ivankinim izvezenim bluzam in razmišljali, da se bo verjetno umaknila v gozd in živela sama. Križi so bili mišljeni kot božji blagoslov. Njeno zdravje se je izboljšalo; začela je poskakovati, se smejati in peti. Vendar se je mamino srce trgalo vsakokrat, ko je videla, da so na pokopališče peljali novega umrlega.

Nekega dne je v hišo planila Ivanka, njen obraz je bil objokan. Pograbila je mamo za roko in jo odvlekla do sosednjega dvorišča. Iz hiše so nesli krsto z Ivankinima prijateljema dvojčkoma.

Marija je postajala tanjša in tanjša; postala je senca same sebe. Dan in noč je božala in poljubljala svojo hčerko, medtem ko so se temni nevihtni oblaki zgrinjali okoli njenega srca.

– O, dragi Bog! Ti si moj edini up!

... A otroci so še naprej umirali ...

– Gospod! Ne morem prenesti vseh teh smrti!

Ni zdržala več. Razmršena in prestrašena je tekala od hiše do hiše:

– Vezite križe, moji dragi prijatelji ... Izvezite križce na svoje srajce in obleke ... in boste živeli! Rešite se!

Vaščani so se zaklenili v svoje domove. Mislili so, da je po Marijo prišla smrt. Nihče ji ni verjel.

Marija je stekla domov, vzela Ivanko v svoje naročje in pohitela do vaške cerkve. Zvonila je s cerkvenimi zvonovi in vaščani so prihiteli tja. Poljubila je hčerko in spregovorila množici:

– Ne verjamete mi! Mislite, da sem nora! No, naj bo tako ... Trpim in jočem zaradi vaših otrok!

Obrnila se je in z Ivankinega hrbta strgala vezeno bluzo. Otrokova koža je postala črna, deklica je zlezla na tla in umrla.

– Morilci! Pojdite zdaj domov in izvezite obleke za vaše otroke in zase, je rekla in padla mrtva pred hčerkine noge ...

S tem dnem je kuga izginila onkraj gozdov in morij. Ljudje so začeli šivati in vesti. Čez nekaj časa ni bilo več potrebe po vezenju križcev. Matere so naučile hčere, hčere svoje hčere in vse domove so krasili vezena srajca, predpasnik ali bluza.

Ta lepa oblačila se nosijo še danes.

A le zelo malo ljudi pozna izvor te lepote ...

**Posnel I. M. Rozvadovsky (rojen 1918) v kraju Terebovlia leta 1978.**

**Prevedli Živa Močnik in Melisa Rejc, 9. b**