



HOP – History of People

Project Reference: CREA-CULT-2022-COOP 101098484

Skipping stones into water

History of sheep farming on Batin Island, Bulgaria



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Alex was a 38-year-old young entrepreneur. His roots and childhood were connected with a small village on the banks of the Danube river – the village of Batin. When he was small, he spent the summers in the village, and in addition to playing time, he was engaged in rural work – in the fields, with the animals. He helped his family as much as he could and was taught hard work from a very young age. His hard work over the years helped him become an excellent professional and employee, but somehow something was still missing. That's why he decided to start something of his own. Like any starting young entrepreneur, Alex was completely dedicated to his work, because he knew that he should not spare time and effort to win new customers and establish himself permanently in the "market".

The young man had loyal friends who supported him and shared his challenges in life and his successes. Gradually, everyone started a family, and Alex still worked and worked. His parents gradually began to notice that it was time for him to start a family. It weighed on him, but he wanted to be with a special person who would understand and support him and be with him not only because of his financial capabilities.

When he was almost 40 years old, he met Elena at the gym. She was younger, but somehow it was as if their souls had been waiting for this meeting. Alex had nothing to lose and despite the age difference he gave himself a chance to be happy!



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As he listened, Alex suddenly got up and started throwing pebbles and making "skipping stones" into the water. Peter approached him and followed him. The two of them, in a childish way, began to compete to see who would throw the furthest. The shepherd suddenly stopped, fell silent, and then continued his story somewhat nostalgically, going back years to when Batin was a medieval fortress city. According to him, as many "circles" are obtained from each "skipping stone", that's how much livelihood there was in the village years ago. He began to list – plant growing, viticulture, animal husbandry, gardening, beekeeping, added that in the recent past, Batin was also connected to the world by water, because many ships carrying cargo and passengers along the Danube also stopped at the small port of Batin.

Thus, "skipping stone" after "skipping stone" in Peter's mind came more and more memories of the past splendor of the city and life in it. Light ripples drew Elena's attention to an island in the distance and she asked about it. The shepherd said that many years ago, when he was young, the Danube river was very full and almost covered the island. During the summer months, when the water level dropped, the shepherds from the village took their flocks to graze on the island and found that by feeding on the vegetation of Batin Island, the quality of the milk obtained improved significantly, as well as its fat content. The locals maintained this tradition of herding for many years. Over time, the water in the river decreased, so it no longer "watered" the land on the island so well, and it became "dirty" and people stopped taking their animals to graze there.



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Peter gazed silently at the island and a smile appeared on his face that expressed humility and gratitude for the deeds of his ancestors. Elena wondered how to improve the atmosphere and decided to praise her friend in front of the shepherd that he, like the people of the village, is hardworking and develops his "livelihood", albeit in the capital. Peter smiled and patted Alex fatherly on the shoulder, telling him to keep being brave and take good care of the girl.

Elena snuggled into Alex and the shepherd continued on his way with his 5 sheep. The two of them stayed on the bank of the river and made "skipping stones" into the water as in each new circle they sketched a dream to fulfill together!



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