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Obreht, Tea. The Tiger?s Wife

Natalia Stefanovi, a young doctor living in a contemporary unnamed Balkan country, is preparing, along with her best friend, for a goodwill mission across a border which has not always been a border. Right before they leave, however, she receives the news that her beloved grandfather has died. No one else but she knew that he was ill, so the death itself does not surprise her. What is a shock, however, is that he died in a small town on the other side of the border, having told Natalia?s grandmother that he was on his way to visit Natalia. But Natalia knows nothing of this. Having arrived in the town where she will be vaccinating war orphans, Natalia finds herself distracted from her work by memories of her grandfather and the puzzling question of just what he was doing so far from home. Her thoughts circle around and around, always coming back to two stories her grandfather always told her when she was a child?the story of Gavran Gaile, the deathless man who collected the souls of the dying, and the deaf-mute woman known as the tiger?s wife.

The story circles through time, visiting Natalia?s childhood, her grandfather?s childhood, and times even earlier than that, building a portrait of a country divided by ethnicity, religion, and superstition as much as by politics and bloodshed. The seeming fairy tales of the deathless man and the tiger?s wife hold surprising kernels of truth and reality. Vibrant, lyrical, and compelling.

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