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About the time that modern families turn on the television, the evening entertainment for the nomads begins. Nomadic cultures are steeped in all the facets of oral tradition—song, poetry, and storytelling. And the gifted spontaneously bring forth artistic creations in the media of language and song. As soon as they are old enough, kids participate, giggling and reciting simple poems. Both men and women take their turn uttering poetic verse or telling stories from the past. Everyday language is not used. A richer form emerges as they become mouthpieces of ancestral spirits. The complex and profound combination of phonetics, meter, rhyme, intonation, and meaning that flows from the mouth of the orators is captivating. I remember being spellbound, limited only to hearing and feeling. It wasn't until much later that I realized I was participating in an ancient tradition that few in the modern world have had the opportunity to experience.

During a pause, the family musician retrieves the two-stringed *dombra* and begins strumming in contemplative minor keys. The singer belts out a high-pitched song pregnant with extended, wailing notes at the end of each line—one of the haunting ballads about the trials faced by the Kazakh people. As the song goes on and fades into the background, faces become somber and eyes go glassy. Eventually, the children begin to drop off and the yurt grows silent as the ladies quietly go about the task of cleaning up after dinner. They are the last to crawl under the wool blankets and close their eyes.