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Vasilisa the Beautiful and the Dragon Russian Fairy
Tales

Extra Credit Fairy Tale

In a certain kingdom, in a certain land, there lived a king and queen who had three sons. The two older sons were a splitting image of what a true Russian son should behave like, while Ivan was often derided for being lazy and unlike his two brothers who had already married and cultivated large parts of their fathers' kingdom. While Ivan knew that he needed a wife to be the sparkle of his eye, the joy of his heart, Ivan was restless and wanted to see the world. And as such things happen, for good or worse, the King being a just, consented to his son's wishes. Truth be told he loved his two older sons but also had a special place for young Ivan and not wanting Ivan to be alone with out any of his father's influence sent Ivan off with his best horse and his three most loyal servants Lust, Greed, and Slayer.

So Ivan packed up his belongings and companions and set off into the world. As often as such things happen after a short time or a long time, Ivan came upon twelve beautiful maidens and fell in love with the third oldest maiden. But these were no ordinary maidens but also swan maidens and the Tsar's daughter as well! The third oldest maiden assured them that their love was meant to be (the younger maidens were her servants not sisters, but mighty fine servants at that) but Ivan must first prove his valor to her father before they can be married. With that the youngest sister flew to her father's kingdom and was off.

Ivan being at a lost as to where to find such a tsar, since the maiden, as is never the case did not tell him where to find her, searched aimlessly for one, two, finally three years before he came upon Baba Yaga's hut. After Ivan described the princess, Baba Yaga concluded it must be none other than Tsar Vladimir's daughter Vasilisa that he desired at such and such a place, but she did not know how to prove his valor to the tsar. Baba Yaga sent him to her older sister of two with the warning to curl into a feeble position if she should become angry. Ivan came to Baba Yaga's sister and as was fated to happen he incurred her wrath, remembering what do he curled up into a feeble position just before she was about to give a curl blow and told Ivan it was a good thing that he had done so or else she would have assuredly killed him.

After Ivan told Baba Yaga what he desired Baba Yaga said the answer he sought could be found in an egg that a dragon was guarding. This was no ordinary egg but the secret to the princess' heart, which by now had surely forgotten Ivan. To get such an egg Ivan must steal the Firebird from the tsar, since only the tsar and the Firebird know where the egg is hidden. Now Ivan was glad to be gone and thankful that his journey did not lead him to the oldest cruelest Baba Yaga sister, since Baba Yaga striped him of all his father's gifts including his father's horse and left him to walk with his three servants to the Tsar's kingdom.

After a long time or a short time, but longer than such a tale is spun, Ivan came to the Tsar's kingdom where the firebird was locked away in its cage. With great craft and sneakiness Ivan stole into the castle room where the firebird was sleeping. When Ivan opened the cage the firebird darted from the cage. It was such a spectacle to behold, with Ivan clutching to its tale feathers, the firebird went north, south, east and west, all around until finally Ivan shouted "Stop, do you know where the egg to the Tsar's youngest daughter, Vasilisa is held" which the firebird replied he would be happy

to help Ivan find the egg, since truth be told even the Firebird thought so highly of Vasilisa that he wished her happiness, such was her beauty. The firebird flew Ivan past the twelfth ninth thrice kingdom to where the twelve headed dragon was guarding Vasilisa's egg in a chest, wrapped in a cloth, beneath the dragon's heart.

Upon coming to the King's town Ivan learned that a dragon was terrorizing the townspeople demanding young maidens as sacrifices to stymie his wrath. All the valiant knights in the town had already been vanquished by the dragon and soon the king would be forced to send his youngest daughter to the dragon, with all hope lost. Ivan told the king that he would try to slay the dragon, and the king promised him many riches if he were to return successful. So Ivan came to the first of three crossroads where the three-headed dragon was waiting. The dragon warned Ivan that only fear and folly would follow him if he continued on this path, but Ivan replied he would be the only one experiencing fear along with death. So after a fierce fight Ivan managed to cut off all three of the dragon's heads. At the next crossroads the six headed dragon warned Ivan that only fear and folly would follow Ivan on this path, which Ivan replied only you will experience fear along with death. After a fiercer fight than before Ivan managed to cut off all six heads of the dragon and continued on his path until he came to the twelve-headed dragon. The dragon replied "only fear and?" when Ivan said "Enough now we fight!" And such a fight was never seen before beheld for its intensity and duration, the ground and air reverberated with

each blow, until Ivan struck off one, two, three, all twelve heads of the dragon. Ivan retrieved the princess' egg beneath the dragon's heart in a chest wrapped in a cloth, and took the dragon's heart back to the King.

Upon Ivan's return to the king, Ivan was promised the King's daughter in marriage for sparing her life and half his kingdom, which Ivan replied he had already obtained far greater wealth and his heart belonged to another. Instead Ivan asked for a trusty steed and the king's leave which was rapidly given among much fan fare upon his departure, along with a letter proclaiming his valor.

After a long and tortuous journey back to the Tsar's kingdom, Ivan requested to have his youngest daughter's hand in marriage. The Tsar wanting to keep his daughter by his side told Ivan he must first prove his valor, which Ivan replied that he already had and raised the egg for all to see. Vasilisa who beheld the secret to her heart remembered what desire had once been lost and begged her father to consent to the marriage. The Tsar, having hidden the self same egg in the slain dragon's heart and upon reading the King's letter, knew the extent of Ivan's bravery but still delayed, for this was the impossible test which he had laid out to protect his daughter. So the Tsar told Ivan that he would be glad to consent to his daughter's hand in marriage if only his two older daughters were first married. But Ivan was prepared for this and when the older daughter beheld Ivan she instantly fell in love with him for his charming looks and beautiful poetry, and was soundly married right away. Next Greed wooed or was wooed (as some say) by the middle child into marriage.

The tsar still not satisfied with Ivan called for a duel to win his youngest daughter's hand in marriage, assembling his best knights in the kingdom to fight Ivan.

Before the duel was to take place Slayer challenged all the tsar's knights and soundly defeated every last one until it was his turn to take on Ivan. Even though Slayer was a

fierce and magnificent fighter, Ivan turned out to be his match blow for blow, move for move until as fate would have it Slayer was slain by Ivan. The Tsar was then forced to consent to the marriage, with his best knights slain and he himself unable to surpass the bravery and valor of Ivan, and prepared a great wedding feast. Ivan was given half his kingdom until his death at which point he would inherit it all.

I was at the wedding too. The food and merry making was beyond imagination. All except the two older sisters who God punished for

giving in to lust and greed and made their life quite unpleasant. Aye
but not all were miserable, I had fun but not too much fun, wine flowed
freely, past my mouth and down my bread!