

Ivan the Great and Ivan the Nothing

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In a certain village lived an old peasant and his wife. The peasant and wife lived with their two sons, Ivan the Great and Ivan the Nothing, on a farm far away from town. The peasant and wife considered themselves very lucky to have a son like Ivan the Great, who could plow the fields and fetch water. However their other son, Ivan the Nothing was of no use to them. Ever since he was born, Ivan the Nothing could not walk. He could not help tend to the cows or fetch water. All Ivan the Nothing could do was sit in the kitchen and sing songs of hope that one day he would be able to walk. Everyday his parents tried something different to get him to walk, but nothing seemed to work. They fed him special grains, and gave him a lot of milk to drink from the cows, but it was no use. The peasant's wife would weep every night, for she knew that her son would never be able to get married if he could not walk. After Ivan the Nothing reached about 10 years of age, both his parents gave up finding a cure to his problem, and focused all their attention on Ivan the Great finding a wife.

The time came that Ivan the Great was old enough for a wife. He told his mother and father that he was ready to leave. They were more rejoiced that he was going to find a wife, then saddened that he was leaving. Before leaving his home, Ivan the Great gave his brother a special mirror. Ivan the Great told him, "Brother, use this mirror to watch over me. Look into this mirror each day. If you see your reflection that means that I am alive and well. However if you look into this mirror and see my reflection, that means that I am in great danger and to send help right away. With that he mounted his steed and galloped off towards the sun.

Ivan the Nothing checked this special mirror vigilantly. He would keep it by his side and check it every hour. For two years, Ivan the Nothing looked into the mirror and

would only see his own reflection. Everyday his mother would ask him, “Son, is our Ivan the Great in danger?” Ivan the Nothing would respond, “It is not the face of my brother, but mine that stares back at me. Your son is safe.” One day however, Ivan the Nothing glanced into the mirror and was surprised not to see his light brown eyes staring back at him. Instead he saw the dark brown eyes of his brother and his brother’s dark brown hair in the reflection. Upon seeing this he called out to his mother and father, “Mother! Father! We must send help. Ivan is in Great danger.” He called and called to his mother and father but they never came. He realized earlier that morning they said they were going into town and wouldn’t be back until nightfall. Ivan the Nothing was all alone. He did not have any neighbors nor could he walk to find anybody to help him.

Ivan the Nothing was so upset that he couldn’t help his poor brother that he began to weep. No sooner that he began to cry, a raven swooped down into his kitchen and sat perched on the kitchen table. “What is wrong brother?” he asked Ivan. Ivan replied, “Raven, my brother is in great danger. I can neither help him nor send him help because I cannot walk. Without any help my brother will die and I will never be able to see him again.” The Raven told him not to cry and to climb on his back. Ivan the Nothing followed his instructions and crawled onto the raven. Before Ivan knew it he was sitting in front of a large well. The Raven said to him, “Brother drink this water and you will be able to walk again.” Ivan the Nothing listened to his orders, and drank the water. No sooner did he do it, that Ivan realized that he was able to walk. At a distance a horse was standing in the field. Ivan walked over to the horse, mounted it and set off to find his brother.

Meanwhile the other brother, Ivan the Great, had reached a crossroads. At the crossroads there were two paths he could take. One path had a sign that read, "Come this way goodness and wealth will come to you." The other path had a sign that read, "Come this way and you will face danger and ultimately death." Ivan the Great figured that in order to get a bride he should follow the first sign. So he journeyed along that path until he came upon a large castle. In that castle lived a King who ruled over the land and his two daughters. Ivan the Great stayed in the castle for a whole two years doing various jobs. The King took a liking to Ivan and gave him one of his daughter's hands in marriage. Ivan the Great and the princess lived a glorious life. Nothing bothered them nor came between them.

Their glorious life was interrupted one day when a three headed dragon came and kidnapped the princess while she was strolling in the garden. Ivan the Great happened to be in the garden and saw this occur. When the dragon was about to run off with the princess, Ivan the Great jumped on the dragon's back. He was not able to fight the dragon and the dragon took both the princess and Ivan the Great back to his cave.

When Ivan the Nothing reached the crossroads where his brother had been, he took the second path of danger. On this path he encountered a gray wolf who wanted to eat him. The wolf told him, "If you give up your horse I will not eat you." Ivan the Nothing rather live than die, so he turned over his horse to the gray wolf. The gray wolf ate his horse's flesh all the way to the bone. Upon finishing the last piece of flesh, the gray wolf turned into a handsome princess. He told Ivan the Nothing how a spell had been cast on him by an evil sorcerer and that he would not be transformed back into himself unless he was given something from somebody to eat. The handsome prince told

him, "As a reward, Ivan the Nothing I give you this magic sword. Use this magic sword when you are in great danger. Say the word "potion" before you use it in order for it to work. Let me warn you however that you can only use this magic sword three times. Anymore than that and it will be of no help." Ivan the Nothing thanked the handsome prince and continued on his journey in finding his brother.

After Ivan the Nothing had gone a short distance or a long distance, a long time or a short time-for speedily a tale is spun, but with less a deed is done- Ivan came to the castle in which his brother had first come upon. He entered and castle and told the king that he was looking for his brother, Ivan the Great. The king told Ivan the Nothing how his brother came upon this kingdom, lived there for two years and then married his daughter. He told him how the three headed dragon had taken both the princess and his brother as prisoners in his cave.

Ivan the Nothing was anxious to find his brother. He told the king that he was going to find the princess and his brother and kill the three headed dragon. The king asked Ivan, "Do you need an army of soldiers to accompany you?" Ivan simply responded, "I will need no help from an army. Just the help of my magic sword."

Ivan the Nothing traveled over great mountains and valleys and finally reached the cave of the three headed dragon. He entered the cave and found the dragon sleeping. Upon approaching the dragon it woke up and said, "Death will come upon the one who fights me." With that Ivan drew his sword and stuck it in the dragon. Nothing happened. The dragon was still alive and he was supposed to be dead. Ivan became very frightened and remembered that he had to say the word potion for it to work. He cried out the word

and thus cut off all three heads of the dragon. Meanwhile, the six headed dragon had kidnapped the princess and Ivan the Great while Ivan fought the three headed dragon.

Ivan the Nothing journeyed to the cave of the six headed dragon. He entered the cave and found the dragon sleeping. Upon approaching the dragon it woke up and said, "Death will come the one who fights me." With that Ivan drew his sword and stuck it in the dragon. Nothing happened. The dragon was still alive and he was supposed to be dead. Ivan became very frightened and remembered that he had to say the word potion for it to work. Ivan was able to cut off three of the heads of the dragon, however three remained. Ivan said the word potion again and cut the other three heads of the dragon off. Meanwhile, the 9 headed dragon had kidnapped the princess and Ivan the Great' while Ivan fought the three headed dragon.

Ivan the Nothing journeyed to the cave of the nine headed dragon. He entered the cave and found the dragon sleeping. Upon approaching the dragon it woke up and said, "Death will upon the one that fights me." With that, Ivan drew his sword and stuck it in the dragon. Nothing happened. The dragon was still alive and he was supposed to be dead. Ivan then remembered he had to say the word potion for the sword to work. But he had already used the sword three times. Ivan became very frightened and began to weep. An eagle appeared at his side and gave him another sword that was both bigger and stronger than the one before. Ivan jabbed it into the side of the dragon and was able to cut off all nine heads.

Ivan the Nothing found his brother and the princess huddled up at the back of the cave. Ivan the Great was happy to see his brother, while the princess thanked Ivan the Nothing for saving their lives. Ivan the Nothing, Ivan the Great and the princess returned

back to the castle. The king was impressed with what Ivan had done. He rewarded Ivan with his other daughter in marriage. The wedding was held at once. I was at that wedding too. I drank beer and mead; they flowed down my beard but did not go into my mouth.

