

In a certain kingdom, in a certain land, there lived a king with his queen. They had two children, a son, Ivan, and a daughter, Vasilisa. The queen had a sister who took care of the children. The children called her Nania, which stood for nanny in the village. She was very dull and very mean, so the children would always sneak out of the village to get away from her. They traveled to a place called the ice garden, where all of the other children from the village would go. The ice garden was a field and at a certain time of the year would produce flowers that looked as if they were covered in ice. Every time Nania found out, she always got very angry and locked the children in their rooms for three days and three nights. Although the punishment was harsh, the children continued to sneak out and go to the ice garden.

One day, Ivan and Vasilisa set out to go to the ice garden when they ran into some trouble. They were running late and the day began to grow into night, so they decided to take a shortcut over the High Hills. They became lost from the path. The wind became colder and cut their skin like knives. They were scared and had no idea how to get back to the village. Ivan noticed a glow in the distance, so they began heading towards it. It was a long time or a short time before they reached the gates of an old grey castle. The guards ordered Ivan and Vasilisa to follow them. The guards locked them in the highest tower in the castle. After calming down, the children noticed that everything, except the walls and doors, were made of ice: the bed, chairs, tables, windows. They also realized that the guards and the servants were made of ice. Both were frightened and began to cry, but no one could hear them because they were at the highest place in the land where the wind screamed louder than any human.

On the third day, one of the guards entered the tower. He moved slowly and he spoke without feeling. He ordered them to follow him. They asked where they were going, but he said nothing. Soon they were standing in front of the king of the castle. He, too, was made of ice.

He gazed at Vasilisa, but not in the same way that the guards or servants did. His stare was neither cold nor scary. This surprised Vasilisa and made her feel very uneasy. She did not want to trust the king. He told Ivan and Vasilisa to not be afraid, he would not harm them, unless they tried to escape. Every chance the king had, he told Vasilisa that she was very beautiful. She was very young and very scared. She began to cry and Ivan became enraged and tried to attack the Ice King. The guards seized Ivan and Vasilisa and they were both banished back to the tower.

Meanwhile, the king and queen became worried about their missing children and tried any means possible to find Ivan and Vasilisa. They asked everyone in the village if they had seen them. The king and queen grew very angry at Nania for not keeping a close watch on the children. The king ordered his men to take Nania and lock her up in a room with no windows. For three days, Nania sat in the room with no food or drink, but on the third night she was given a plate of food, a spoon, and a candle. She thought for a long time or a short time and finally turned the plate over and placed the candle in the middle. She held the spoon in front of her eye and began to walk backwards around the plate. Upon her third circle, she saw Ivan and Vasilisa in a room, and they were both crying. She also saw a large castle that was covered in ice and snow. This could have been only one place, the High Hills.

Back at the castle, the children tried to make the best of things. They played with icicles, using them as swords. They also made up a game where they used one of the larger icicles as a bat and a snowball for a ball. They called it iceball. They sat for hours talking about what their friends might be doing at that time, and they also enjoyed telling each other made-up tales about how they were going to sneak out of the castle. As time went on, the Ice King became extremely fond of Vasilisa as she grew older. To him, she was the most beautiful woman in all of the lands, with her sleek, black hair and her snow-white skin. The Ice King ordered that the children

be let out of the tower so that he could see more of Vasilisa, but specifically told the guards to not allow them outside of the palace gates. Even though the children were roaming the castle, they were still very cold and unhappy. They were under the close watch of the guards and could not get away with anything.

The children decided that if they were going to survive, they would have to try to sneak out of the castle. They would have to do this without the guards catching them. Moreover, where were they to go once they were out? They were trapped. One day, they were walking down the main corridor of the castle when they passed a mirror. To their surprise, it was not made of ice. They stopped and stared into it. They noticed an image of a woman in the mirror. It was Nania. She spoke to them. She told them that if they could find some wine, they would be able to find their way out of the castle. Confused about what she said, they heard a few guards coming. They told her that they would be back in three nights. Ivan and Vasilisa found a small barrel of wine and hid it under the Ice King's bed. They returned to the mirror on the third night and found it frozen in ice. What were they to do?

The king requested Vasilisa's hand in marriage. He told her that if she married him, he would allow Ivan to leave and go home. She loved her brother and wanted him to be happy and safe, so she agreed to marry the Ice King. She was led into the Ice King's chambers and Ivan was led to the front gates where he was set free. That night, Vasilisa lay in the Ice King's bed when she realized that the barrel of wine was under the bed. She poured two glasses of the wine and both lay there sipping on it. The next morning, Vasilisa awoke in a puddle of water. She looked around the room and realized that nothing was covered in ice anymore. She ran to the window and there stood Ivan calling up at her. Vasilisa met Ivan at the front gates. They began to walk down from the High Hills and the wind became calmer and the cold ceased.

When Ivan and Vasilisa got back to the village they decided to never go to the ice garden again. Ivan grew up into a fine king and married a wonderful queen, who was just like his sister. Vasilisa married Ivan's best friend and they are still living to this very day.