

# **Prince Ivan, the Raven, and the Silver Mare**

Tiffany Gaetano  
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In a certain kingdom in a certain land there once lived a king who had a son, Prince Ivan, who was so handsome, so brave, and a bachelor. When the prince passed his eighteenth year, he asked the king if he could set out in search of a bride. Not just any bride, but the Vasilisa the beautiful who was to be found beyond thrice nice lands in the thrice tenth kingdom. The father gave the prince his blessing and sent word to all the kingdoms that his son, Prince Ivan, was setting out to find his bride, Vasilisa the beautiful.

Prince Ivan walked one day, then another, and as the third day dawned he went beyond thrice nice lands in the thrice tenth kingdom. He beheld the castle of the tenth kingdom and found it to be more magnificent than he had ever seen. Near the castle there was a fence, and on that fence was a raven. The raven flew down from the fence to the ground and said, "Prince Ivan welcome to the tenth kingdom, where is God taking you?" "Little friend I am on my way in search of Vasilisa the beautiful, for whom I wish to marry." "Well Prince Ivan, I can take you to her, but many suitors have asked the King for her hand, but he has denied them because they haven't met his demands. Take me with you and I will help you marry her." Prince Ivan agreed and they both set out towards the castle of the tenth kingdom.

They got to the castles gates and the raven told Prince Ivan to go and ask the king if he could be of some service to him. The King approached Ivan and said "You are very handsome and very brave. I have heard you wish to marry my beautiful daughter, Vasilisa. You could be to some service to me by

becoming a soldier in my army and if you fight well I will give you my blessing and you two will marry.”

As he was going to battle, the raven said to Ivan, “you know to win the Princess you must prove your strength through many battles. Here is a magic saber that will make you great soldier.” From that point on Ivan went to many battles and prevailed over all the armies in which he faced.

Ivan was so brave and fought very well that the King recognized this and summoned him. “Ivan, I have recognized your brave deeds and I would like to reward you with my beautiful daughter Princess Vasilisa. But first you must complete a task for me. Beyond this kingdom, across the great ravine, lives an old witch, Baba Yaga. She has a mare that is all silver and when it runs it leaves behind a gold trail. Bring the mare to me and you and my daughter shall marry.” “Noble king, how must I travel across the ravine?” Ivan questioned. “No man has ever completed this task, but you Prince Ivan could accomplish this since you have shown me great strength in my army.”

Prince Ivan and the raven began their journey with one day passing, then another day, and as the third day dawned he beheld the house of Baba Yaga. He approached her house that had a fence made of human bones and knocked on her door. She opened her door and said “I smell a Russian! Who are you and what do you want?” “Grandmother, I am Prince Ivan I came to provide a service for you in return for a mare.” “Prince Ivan, I do not have any mares left to tend nor give, go to my other sister, she may have some.”

Prince Ivan and the raven continued their journey with one day passing, then another day, and as the third day dawned he beheld the house of Baba Yaga's sister. He approached her house that had a fence made of human bones and knocked on her door. She opened her door and said "I smell a Russian! Who are you and what do you want?" "Grandmother, I am Prince Ivan I came to provide a service for you in return for a mare, I have traveled from your sister's house and she did not have any mares to tend to nor give." "Prince Ivan, I have sold all my mare's to a merchant and have none to tend nor give, go to my oldest sister, she may have some."

Prince Ivan and the raven continued their journey with one day passing, then another day, and as the third day dawned they encountered the great ravine. On the other side of the ravine he saw the house of Baba Yaga's oldest sister. "Oh great raven, how shall I pass over this great ravine?" "Take one of my feathers and soak it with water and sleep with it for six days and nights in your pocket. On the seventh day place it on the edge of the ravine and you shall be able to cross."

Prince Ivan did exactly as the raven advised him and took one of the raven's feathers, poured water upon it, and slept for six days and nights. On the seventh day he placed it on the edge of the ravine and at that instant, the feather grew into a bridge.

Prince Ivan then crossed over the feather bridge and approached Baba Yaga's oldest sister's house that had a fence made of human bones and

knocked on her door. She opened her door and said “I smell a Russian! Who are you and what do you want?” “Grandmother, I am Prince Ivan I came to provide a service for you in return for a mare, I have traveled from both of your sisters houses and they both did not have any mares to tend to nor give.” “I have some mares that you may tend to,” said Baba Yaga. “You can be my stableman for three days and three nights and take care of my forty five mares. If you can take great care of them and treat them well, you may choose anyone you like to be yours.”

Prince Ivan took great care of Baba Yaga’s mares for the first day and night, then the second day and night, and the third day and night. Upon the dawn of the fourth day, Baba Yaga awoke the young prince and told him he could choose anyone of her fine mares. He chose the mare that was all silver and when it runs it leaves behind a gold trail, thanked Baba Yaga and went on his way.

During this time, the three headed dragon heard of Prince Ivan’s task that the king had sent him on and had followed Prince Ivan on his journey. The three headed dragon jumped out to eat Prince Ivan, but the raven warned him just in time. Prince Ivan and three headed dragon did battle not for one day, not for two days, but for three days. On the third day Prince Ivan was getting exhausted. He finally took his magic saber when the three headed dragon was off guard and cut off each of the dragons three heads and buried them in the ground.

Prince Ivan with the raven on his shoulder rode the mare that was all silver and when it runs it leaves behind a gold trail a long distance or a short distance. He continued his journey back to the king who lived beyond thrice nice lands in the thrice tenth kingdom which took a long time or a short time, a short time or a long time.

Prince Ivan made it back and the king rejoiced in his bravery and triumph. The king was so overjoyed and in his joy gave a great feast for tenth kingdom. At that feast he announced that Prince Ivan and Princess Vasilisa were to be wed.

I was at the feast too, I drank mead and wine there; it ran down my mustache but did not go into my mouth, yet my soul was drunk and sated.