

*Ivanitsa  
and the  
Necklace  
of Light*

A Wicked Step Mother Tale

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Russian Fairy Tales  
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Once upon a time there was a king who ruled the kingdom of the everlasting sun. He ruled for many years in happiness with his daughter by his side, despite the loss of his beloved wife years earlier. However, his daughter was coming to an age that required the guidance of a mother. So, he decided to remarry. He searched the kingdom far and wide and decided to marry the widow Santinista. Santinista was not very aesthetically pleasing, but she was an experienced mother as she had two older daughters of her own. King Marko and Santinista were married at once. Santinista and her two daughters were to come to the castle in one week. When they arrived to the castle Ivanitsa was in tears for she had to give up two of her many play rooms so that each of Santinista's daughters had a bedroom. All was well for about a year, with the exception of small spats over extravagant gifts King Marko bought for Ivanitsa. Then suddenly King Marko fell deathly ill. Lying on his deathbed, King Marko sent for his daughter. He told his daughter, "Ivanitsa you are the source of every joy in my life. You are the most beautiful maiden in the land, and I dream of the day you will be the gracious queen of the kingdom of the everlasting sun." He then took his last breath. Queen Santinista listened loathingly in the hallway. Her husband had not even requested her presence. "How dare he neglect to recognize the joy I brought to his life with my presence and the envy he accrued when he was blessed enough to marry me," remarked Queen Santinista. At that moment she vowed to make Ivanitsa pay for her manipulation, for it was her blinding seduction that made her beloved husband overlook her. Ivanitsa now spent her time cleaning, cooking, and tending to the needs of the Queen and her daughters. She even had her nice clothes and jewels taken away from her for according to Queen Santinista "It is not proper for a young girl to have so much that she did not earn." Her life had been drained of the

happiness she had once known. “Ivanitsa while we are out today you must scrub the kitchen floor, wash the breakfast dishes, do the laundry, make the beds, feed the animals and have dinner prepared for our return home,” Queen Satinista would demand. Her ugly and menacing step-sisters erupted into laughter at the impossible amount of work given to Ivanitsa. Ivanitsa was quite accustomed to these ridiculous requests now. However, fortunately she had learned to deal with them thanks to advice her mother had given her before she died. Her mother told her, “Ivanitsa remember that help will always be given to the virtuous. Believe in the power of the world around you. Whenever in need, ask for help and it will be provided.” Hence, everyday Ivanitsa humbly asks the house for help and it provides it to her, because she is kind and pure of heart. Queen Satinista left, and Ivanitsa asked the house for help as she had done so many times before. At once the scrub scrubbed the floor, the sponge washed the dishes, the washboard did the laundry, the strings hung the laundry to dry, the shovel fed the animals, the beds made themselves, and the stove cooked the dinner. Once again Ivanitsa had been saved from the wrath of her step-mother. Queen Satinista arrived home and was again revolted by the fact that Ivanitsa had somehow managed to complete all of the tasks she had set out for her. With a livid look, Queen Satinista vacated the room. At once Ivanitsa’s step-sisters began to dump food on the newly scrubbed floor, break the dishes, and throw the clean laundry into the mud. Ivanitsa burst into tears looking at the scene of the destroyed house. After re-doing her original tasks, Ivanitsa was sent to the far edge of the forest to chop fire wood. The edge of the forest was right next to one of the main roads of the kingdom of everlasting light. While chopping wood a large and luxurious carriage stopped on the road. The handsome prince had seen the beautiful Ivanitsa chopping wood and stopped

to inquire why such a fair maiden was doing men's work. In response to his question Ivanitsa simply said, "It is my duty." For it is wrong to speak ill of your family. Recognizing her virtue, the prince ordered one of his servants to complete the task for her. As many logs were chopped for her home, Ivanitsa sat with the prince. Each grew very fond of the other, and the prince vowed to visit her again the next day at the same time when Ivanitsa would again be chopping wood. Many days passed and the prince continued to meet Ivanitsa. It was apparent that Ivanitsa was in love. Her step-mother prodded her for the reason she came home each day so elated, but Ivanitsa kept her treasured secret. So, one day Queen Satinista sent her daughters to spy on Ivanitsa. They witnessed Ivanitsa and the prince exchanging sentiments, while servants completed Ivanitsa's work. Quickly, they ran back and informed their mother of Ivanitsa's good fortune. She immediately forbade Ivanitsa to leave her room. She nailed the door and windows of Ivanitsa's room shut. If it were not for Ivanitsa and her seductive ways, the prince would be smitten with one of her daughters. The next day Ivanitsa did not show up to chop wood. The prince waited and waited for his beloved Ivanitsa to show, but there was not sign of her. So, the prince ventured into the forest in hopes of finding her. Soon he came upon a hut. He knocked on the door and an old woman answered. Baba Yaga promptly invited him in for dinner. Once inside she screamed at the prince, "Get on my table so that I can chop you up and eat you for dinner." The prince asked her, "Baba Yaga since you are so wise tell me all the ways there are to serve a Russian for dinner. If you can tell me all of the ways without missing any, I will lie down without a fight and allow you to chop me up. If you leave any ways out you must answer the question I have for you and then let me go. Or if you are scared to take my challenge I

will put up a fierce fight and not allow you to easily chop me up.” Baba Yaga falling victim to her pride agreed to the challenge. “I Baba Yaga know all there is to know about serving Russian for dinner; I cannot lose!” At once Baba Yaga began to rattle off methods of cooking and serving Russians. “There is baked, broiled, stewed, fried, boiled, roasted, steamed, skewered, candied, mashed, sandwiched, smoked, and stuffed.” When Baba Yaga had finished the prince asked her, “Are you sure that is it?” And Baba Yaga replied “yes that is every way to serve a Russian.” The Prince then jumped up with glee. “Baba Yaga I have won the bet, for there is one more way to serve a Russian. Raw!” The Baba Yaga was out raged. “That is not a way to cook a Russian, because that doesn’t even involve cooking.” “True,” said the prince, “but I asked for ways a Russian could be served not the ways a Russian could be cooked.” Baba Yaga screamed and said, “fine then what is your question you wretched Russian?” Gleefully the prince replied, “How can I find the true of heart maiden that I have fallen in love with and is to be my bride?” The Baba Yaga took a gleaming blue stoned necklace off and handed it to the Prince. “On search for your maiden carry this necklace with you and ask any woman who claims to be your true love to place it around he neck. But warn the girl if she is deceiving you and is not the true of heart maiden that deserves your hand in marriage she will vanish with out a trace. Nevertheless when it is placed on the neck of your true love deserving of your hand in marriage the necklace will shine with an everlasting light.” The prince thanked Baba Yaga and left immediately to find his bride. He went from kingdom to kingdom searching for his bride, but none who claimed to be deserving of his hand dared put on the necklace after they heard his warning. So, he marched on when finally he came to the Queen’s house of the kingdom of everlasting light. She welcomed the

handsome prince into her castle. He told her of his quest and she at once called her daughters into the room. "Surely one of my pure of heart daughters is deserving of your hand in marriage," said Queen Satinista. The prince warned her of the consequences, but the Queen ignored him as she was confident one of her daughters should marry the prince. However, each one tried on the necklace and vanished without a trace, for neither of them were deserving of his hand. Enraged, Queen Satinista grabbed the necklace and began to put the necklace on herself. "If any deserves to be blessed, it is I, I who have suffered the loss of two husbands and two daughters, and the burden of caring for an ungrateful child that is not my own." With that said she clasped the necklace around her neck and at once vanished without a trace. The prince once again discouraged by not finding his maiden began to leave the house. Ivanitsa heard all of the events from her room, but was unable to get out. The house could not help her this time. It could have unbolted its locks, but it could not remove the nails piercing its wood. So, Ivanitsa grabbed a chair and threw it through her bedroom window. The glass shattered and flew all across the room. Carefully she climbed out of the window and down a tree to the ground below. Dashing as fast as she could, Ivanitsa ran for the front of the castle to where her prince was. She turned the corner and the prince saw the disheveled Ivanitsa. Ivanitsa took the necklace from his hand and said, "I am your maiden." She placed the necklace around her neck and clasped it. The prince was elated as Ivanitsa still stood in front of him with the necklace illuminated with the light of a thousand suns, never to cease shining. They rode to his palace at once. Ivanitsa was amazed to find out that her prince was indeed the heir to all of Russia. And on that very same blessed day, they were

wed. And they ruled Russia in harmony and peace for many years to come. “I was there and drank mead and wine; it ran down my mustache, but did not go into my mouth.”