

Ivan, Maria, and The Golden Fox

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Russian Fairy Tales, Russian 0090

Completed February 22, 2003

Once upon a time in a certain land there lived a beautiful princess named Maria. Maria was the adopted daughter of the tsar and tsarina. She loved her father and would always obey every word he said. The tsar unfortunately was compelled to separate from his daughter and wife to go on a long journey. The princess wept a great deal for this misfortune. She begged and begged and begged her father not to leave her but he had to go. Before he left he told his daughter to choose a suitor to take care of her and his belongings by the time he got back. “This man that you choose should be wealthy, clever, and of noble birth” said the tsar. Those were the only requirements from the tsar, and Maria knew she would obey these requirements. Maria made announcements of the search for a suitor and all across the land suitors were lined up to take a chance to woo the beautiful princess Maria.

A certain peasant named Ivan heard of this news and was in great joy. For his love for Maria began when she was just a little child and he happened to catch a glance of her beauty. To this day, his love for her kept growing like a flower blossoming in the sun. He knew of the requirements but didn't care. He didn't know his true parents but grew up as a peasant when his adoptive parents found him as a baby. The only memory of his previous family was the blanket he was wrapped in as a baby with the letter M embroidered on it. He was determined to travel this far distance beyond thirty lands, to the thirtieth kingdom.

Princess Maria was overwhelmed about how many princes came to her kingdom in order to take her hand in marriage. However she was not impressed with any of the suitors that came to visit her. She knew that all of them only wanted to marry her because her father owned the biggest kingdom in Russia. Maria refused to settle with a suitor that she did not feel comfortable with.

Ivan was on his long journey with the sight of Maria driving him to keep going. As he was coming near a crossroad he met a golden fox. Ivan approached this fox with the hope that the fox would guide him in the direction to find the beautiful princess Maria. The golden fox agreed to tell him which direction to go as long as Ivan would feed him. Ivan was in trouble and didn't know if he should feed the fox. He only brought enough food for his journey beyond thirty lands to the thirtieth kingdom. The golden fox not only promised to lead Ivan in the right direction but also promised to help him with anything the next three times he needed advice. All he would need to do is snap his fingers and the golden fox would appear to help Ivan in his time of need. Ivan agreed and shared with him some of the food he had brought for his journey. Ivan thanked the golden fox and continued on his journey. As Ivan thought that he was close he came upon another crossroad. In great distress, Ivan did not know what to do. He was lost in a land he was not familiar with. He then remembered about the golden fox and his promise. He snapped his fingers and the golden fox appeared immediately as promised. "What can I help you with this time Ivan?" said the golden fox. The golden fox asked Ivan what he needed, and Ivan explained that once again he was lost on his journey to see Princess Maria. The golden fox didn't hesitate to lead him in the right direction, as he promised. Ivan thanked the fox once again and continued on his journey.

Princess Maria was starting to get impatient about finding the right suitor. All of the suitors that are asking for her hand have not been her type. She knew the kind of guy she was looking for and so far none of them have been who she is looking for. Princess Maria was about to call off the search, but she remembered how much this meant to her father. Only wanting to please her father, she kept on meeting more and more suitors. She hoped that soon she would find one that she felt connected to.

Ivan was on his way to the kingdom and remembered that he would not be allowed to see the Princess if he wasn't of noble birth. He pondered many nights about this and couldn't think of a solution. He thought about the golden fox and thought maybe he could help. He snapped his fingers and immediately the golden fox appeared. "What can I help you with this time Ivan?" said the golden fox. Ivan explained his situation to the golden fox and asked if there was any way that he could help him. The golden fox offered to turn Ivan into a Prince for the day as long as he didn't lie to the princess of his true identity. Ivan quickly agreed upon his offer, he wasn't thinking of what would happen if Princess Maria asked him of his birth.

Three days later, Ivan arrived at his destination. He stood in the line waiting for his chance to meet the beautiful princess. While Ivan was waiting for his chance, he felt as if he was truly meant to be a prince. Finally it was his turn to meet Princess Maria. He walked in the room and she was seated upon a throne with servants surrounding her. He was astounded by her beauty and could not help but to stare. Princess Maria introduced herself and saw that there was a worrying look on Ivan's face. She asked if he was okay and he only had one response. "Your beauty is like the sun rising in my heart." Princess Maria knew that this suitor truly meant what he said. She had a feeling that he

was different from the rest. Maria then began to question the suitor about his background but all he did was just sit and stare with the same look. When Princess Maria asked him the same question for a third time, he quickly got up, said his apologies, and ran out of the palace. Princess Maria was greatly distressed because she had the feeling that this man was whom she was meant to marry and she didn't even know his name. She sent her servant to follow Ivan. The servant followed Ivan to a hut in the woods.

Ivan was greatly concerned because he did not talk to Princess Maria. "How could I talk to a princess when I'm not even a prince" Ivan thought out loud. He thought about the golden fox. He did have one more time to ask the golden fox for help. Ivan then agreed to ask the golden fox for his advice. Ivan snapped his fingers and once again the golden fox appeared. "What can I help you with this time Ivan?" said the golden fox. Ivan explained how he loved Princess Maria dearly but he couldn't lie to her. The golden fox simply told Ivan that all of his problems would be resolved if he just went to the Princess and showed her his blanket. Ivan was very distraught with the golden fox thinking that this would not resolve any of his problems. The golden fox disappeared right after his advice before Ivan could ask him any more questions. Ivan snapped his fingers in order to bring the golden fox back. However, he forgot that this was the third time that he asked the golden fox for help.

Meanwhile, Princess Maria's servant was listening to the conversation between the golden fox and Ivan. He found out that Ivan was not truly a prince but was madly in love with Princess Maria. He immediately delivered the information to Princess Maria and told her exactly what happened. He told her everything that happened but failed to mention the blanket, it slipped his mind. At first Princess Maria was angry at Ivan for

lying to her but she kept thinking about the look in his eyes. “The reason he didn’t say anything was because he didn’t want to lie to me,” thought Princess Maria. Knowing that Ivan was coming to visit her she ordered the guards to keep a look out for him.

Ivan finally decided to take the advice from the golden fox. He thought to himself, “He hasn’t lied to me yet.” So Ivan set off for the palace. He traveled through the woods until he reached his final destination. When the guards spotted him in the distance, they instantly gave word to the princess that her Ivan was on his way. She greeted him at the gate and told him that she knew his secret. He tried to explain himself but she wouldn’t let him. Princess Maria fell in love with Ivan, even if he wasn’t a prince. She knew her father wouldn’t be pleased, but she chose Ivan as her husband anyways.

Her father returned from his journey. He entered the palace eager to find his wife, daughter, and her new husband. When he saw that his precious Maria had found a suitor he was ecstatic. However, he didn’t recognize the man that won his daughters heart. Before he could say anything, Princess Maria approached her father and told him this: “Ivan is wealthy in his love for me, clever in how he disguised himself to meet me, and even though he isn’t a prince, I love him.” Her father was a little disappointed in that Ivan wasn’t a prince, but accepted his daughter’s choice. He was about to tell Maria that he approved of this peasant boy until he noticed the blanket with the M embroidered on it. “Where did you get this blanket son?” said the tsar. Ivan responded by telling him the truth: “I was wrapped up as a baby in it when my adoptive parents found me.” A huge smile appeared on the tsar’s face. “You are a prince my son,” exclaimed the tsar. “When you were a child, a golden fox told us that in order for our son’s life to be filled with

happiness we would have to send him away. Your mother and I only wanted you to be happy so we sent you down the river like the fox insisted upon. As we were sending you off, your adopted sister Maria put her blanket over you to protect you.” Once the truth was uncovered, Prince Ivan and Princess Maria were married right away.

I was there and drank mead; it ran down my mustache, but did not go into my mouth.

