

Ivan And the Cattle

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In a certain town, in a certain land, there was a merchant whose wife died, leaving him with an only son, Ivan. Before the merchant died, he turned to his son and said: “Ivan, I am leaving you with the house and the cattle, take care of the cattle, and respect your elders, if you do, you will be rewarded.” Time had passed since, and every day Ivan would ready supper for himself, and then after he would go out in to the field and feed the cattle. One morning, after preparing supper, Ivan went out in to the field to feed the cattle and noticed that his heard of cattle was smaller than usual. Ivan looked around and saw nothing, deciding that maybe he was wrong and he was just hungry. Ivan fed the cattle and went back inside to eat.

The next morning Ivan woke up and went about his daily work. Later on in the day he again began to prepare his supper, and then went out in to the fields to feed the cattle. When Ivan stepped outside he immediately knew something was not right. A significant amount of cattle were now missing from the field, and Ivan knew that something was happening to them. Ivan began to walk through the field, confused on to what was happening to his cattle. Beginning to get tired, Ivan decided to sit down on a rock in the field and wait to try to guard the cattle. Day passed and soon turned in to night, and Ivan grew so tired that he fell asleep sitting on the rock by his cattle. When the next day came, he was wakened by the warm sun and got up. When Ivan noticed more cattle missing, he was upset with himself for having fallen asleep. Ivan was now more than determined to catch who was stealing his cattle.

Ivan began to pace the field without a clue as to what was happening to them when all of the sudden a glare almost blinding struck his eyes coming from the ground. Ivan walked closer to the glare and saw a bright silver coin laying amongst the cattle and

the hay, quickly picking it up in hope of finding a clue. On the front of the coin there was an inscription of three feathers on it, the feather of a swan, the feather of a hawk, and the feather of a phoenix. On the back Ivan noticed that there were no carvings on it, it appeared empty. No where on the coin did it say where it was from so Ivan began to walk back towards the house to eat his supper. On the way back he saw an old man walking through his field so he yelled: "Old man get off of my field! What are you doing so close to my cattle?" Just as Ivan said it, he remembered what his father told him and quickly took back his words. "I am sorry," Ivan said to the old man who he began walking towards. "Someone has been stealing my cattle and I do not know who it is," Ivan told the old man. "Sometimes the solution to your problems seems to be right under your nose, have you found anything?" the old man asked Ivan. Ivan quickly reached in to his pocket and pulled out the silver coin he had found and then said to the old man: "I found this silver coin laying in the field, I have not a clue where it came from." The old man looked at the coin and then told Ivan: "I do not know exactly where it came from, but I know who might." "Please tell me, I will forever appreciate your kindness," answered Ivan. "Go then, to the forest yonder, walk until you reach a hut on chicken legs and you will find the answer." Ivan thanked the old man and set out on his journey.

Ivan traveled through the woods for a short time, or a long time, and eventually came upon the hut on chicken legs. Ivan approached the hut and before he could knock Baba Yaga came storming out saying, "there must be Russian blood near by because I could smell you miles away." Ivan spoke out loudly: "Your senses have not failed you, now let me in, for I need your help." The Baba Yaga, outraged, immediately stomped her foot and told the hut to face the woods and turn its back on Ivan. The hut did so

immediately obeying the Baba Yaga. Ivan immediately spoke out again, “HUT! Turn your back to the woods and your face to me!” The hut turned around immediately and the Baba Yaga stormed out and stomped her foot again, repeating to face the woods, and the hut did. Ivan, fed up with the shouting match, cried out for the hut to turn one last time and immediately shouted to Baba Yaga “If you do not let me in I will be forced to hurt one of your daughters!” Upon the Baba Yaga’s hearing this, the door immediately opened and the legs lowered for Ivan to walk in.

Ivan entered the hut on chicken legs immediately, yelling at Baba Yaga: “Foolish of you to talk back to me, but help me and I will forget it happened.” Fearing Ivan, Baba Yaga immediately said: “please, tell me how I can help you, and sit down, I will make you something.” The Baba Yaga went to the stove and began to cook for Ivan as she listened to him. “I found this coin in my field and I need to find out where it came from. An old man sent me to you, saying you would know of its origin,” said Ivan. Baba Yaga reaches into Ivan’s hand and pulls the silver coin towards her. The Baba Yaga looks at it for a second and immediately says “This is from the kingdom above the clouds. There lives three birds that protect and serve the kingdom, a swan for peace throughout the lands, a hawk to watch over the kingdom, and a phoenix that has been known to cause trouble.” “So it must be the phoenix then that has been stealing my cattle! How do I find this kingdom?” asked Ivan. “You must go through the forest and walk until you reach a ladder that reaches further than the eye can see. Climb it and you should find the kingdom.” Ivan quickly set out from the Baba Yaga’s house and immediately began his search for the ladder.

Whether Ivan searched for a long time or a short time, Ivan came to the ladder in which he could not see the end of. Ivan hesitated at first, not knowing what lied ahead of him, but quickly enough began climbing the ladder. Before Ivan could remember, he was standing on top of a high cloud in which he looked down from and could see all of the kingdoms of the world. The kingdom was full of every kind of bird. There were three statues that overlooked the entrance to the kingdom, that of the swan, the hawk, and the phoenix. Ivan noticed how the statue of the phoenix was larger and stood above the other two statues. Ivan marched into the city and noticed the huge palace. The palace was covered with emerald and had three glass windows that were large enough for a giant to fit through. It was about the same time that Ivan noticed the windows when he noticed a large swan emerge from the window on the left side of the palace. What immediately caught Ivan's eye was the fact that the swan went straight through the window as if it had not existed. Just as Ivan saw the swan he also noticed a hawk swoop back into the palace through the window on the right side of the castle. As Ivan glanced at the third window that was at the head of the palace, twice the size of the windows on its sides, he immediately knew it had to be the window for the phoenix. Ivan had to do something, he was just unaware of what he was going to do yet. Ivan finally decided that he would hide in a tree that overlooked the palace overnight to see if he could catch a glimpse of the phoenix going in or out of the palace.

Day passed and Ivan sat in the tree, watching the window carefully, making sure he did not fall asleep. As Ivan sat there he began to feel gusts of wind begin to pass through the tree. Ivan looked up at the sky and saw the large phoenix flying over head, circling with its wings spreading far across the land. What caught Ivan's attention was

not just the size of the phoenix, but what the phoenix was also carrying. It looked as if the phoenix was carrying a large bag, and as quickly as Ivan saw it, it vanished through the glass of the palace. Ivan immediately began to think that this bag that the phoenix was carrying could very well be full of cattle from his field. If only Ivan could find a way in to the palace to steal this bag from the phoenix so he could no longer carry his cattle away.

Ivan decided he would have to first try to find a way in to the palace to try and get the bag from the phoenix. The best way, Ivan thought, would be to try to enter the palace while the phoenix was out, and wait inside for his return. Ivan slept through the morning, and as night began to fall, he felt a large gust of wind again begin to swoop through the tree. This immediately woke Ivan up, and he looked in to the sky to see the phoenix leaving the palace. Soon enough, the phoenix was out of sight, and Ivan began to climb down from the tree. The palace had two huge doors which seemed to be the only way he could enter the palace. The doors sat on top of emerald steps which seemed to glisten in the moonlight. Ivan decided he would have to try and sneak through the doors to get to the place of the phoenix. The blackness of night encompassed the land, the only light that shined through was that of the moon. Ivan could not see a soul in sight, so he decided to make his way to the doors.

Behind rocks, behind tress, Ivan used everything he could to shadow himself from the light of the moon. He was coming closer, and before he knew it, he was at the steps leading to the doors. Ivan felt it was easy from here on out, and made his first leap onto the emerald steps. It was no sooner than his foot landed on the step that he heard the cry of the hawk and saw its eyes gleaming in the moonlight, swooping down towards him.

Ivan quickly drew his sword, but it was no match for the large hawk, it was quickly knocked out of his hands. The hawk then picked up Ivan with his talons and swept him through the sky, and back down in to the land below the clouds. The hawk quickly dropped him to the ground, and before Ivan could turn around to catch a glimpse of the hawk, he was gone. There had to be a way to go in to the palace, Ivan thought to himself, he would plan again in the morning.

Soon after the sun had risen, Ivan felt a poking at his side: “Get up young lad!” he heard. Ivan looked up and saw an old man standing over him, poking him with his cane. “Quit poking at me old man!” Ivan yelled. It was no sooner than he said it, that Ivan remembered again what his father told him. Ivan quickly corrected himself, “I am sorry for yelling at you, a great phoenix has been stealing my cattle, and I cannot find a way to stop him.” “The great phoenix that resides in the clouds?” the old man asked. “Yes that is him, he is stealing my cattle in a large bag, if I could only steal the bag, no harm would come to my cattle anymore, but I cannot find a way in to the castle,” Ivan responded. “For every evil, there is good, there is a bird which can help you,” the old man then reached in to his pocket and pulled out another silver coin just like the one that Ivan had found in his field. “Look on the back Ivan, what do you see?” Ivan looked on to the back of the coin and again saw nothing, “I see nothing old man, what is it?” “Now feel the back of the coin,” responded the old man. Ivan took his fingers and felt the back of the old coin, it felt like there was a carving of another feather, but he could not see it: “why, I feel a feather, but I cannot see it, it cannot be right.” The old man chuckled at Ivan, “your senses do not betray you, there also resides the bird of invisibility, if someone holds a feather from his breast, they will too become invisible.” “How can I find this

bird?” Ivan asked. “For he guards the ladder to the kingdom, you passed him on your way up, but of course did not see him. Before you climb the ladder, drop this coin to the right of the ladder to give it to him and then reach over and you will feel him, pluck a feather from him you then may do.” “Thank you old man, you have been a great help,” Ivan responded, and set back for the ladder.

Ivan was no sooner at the ladder, remembering what the old man said, he dropped the coin to the right of the ladder, and then reached over and could feel the bird. Ivan quickly plucked a feather and held it in his hand. When he went to look down at his hand, he could no longer see it, for Ivan was now invisible. Ivan put the feather in his pocket and climbed up the ladder back in to the kingdom above the clouds. It was day now, and this was perfect for Ivan, no one could see him, and the phoenix would be in its chamber sleeping. Ivan quickly made his way toward the emerald palace, and ran up the steps to the doors. Ivan pulled the heavy doors apart and went inside. The inside of the palace was completely made of marble. The marble walls and floors shined, and a big crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling. Ivan looked around then quickly ran up marble steps, leading to the top of the palace. When Ivan reached the top he noticed three doors, each with the carving of a feather on it, one a feather of a swan, a feather of a hawk, and a feather of a phoenix. Ivan gently opened the door with the phoenix feather carving on it, and saw the mighty phoenix lying asleep on the ground. Next to the phoenix was a stack of bones, which Ivan knew were those of his cattle. Next to the bones was the bag, large enough to carry the phoenix himself in. Ivan carefully walked past the phoenix to the bag, grabbing a hold of it, and slowly began to drag it towards the door. Night was now

beginning to fall, and Ivan had to get the bag out before the phoenix would awake looking for it.

Ivan got the bag to the door and began to pull it down the steps and was soon out of the palace. As Ivan was dragging the bag through the land, night came, and the light of the sun was now gone. It was about that time that the phoenix woke up, and noticed his bag missing. Enraged, the phoenix swooped out of the glass window, unable to see Ivan, but being able to see his bag being dragged away; he began to make his move for it. If only Ivan could get out of the kingdom with the bag, he would be free, and the invisible bird would protect him from there on out. But before Ivan could reach the ladder, Ivan saw the phoenix swooping down towards the bag, knocking Ivan over, and the feather out of his pocket. The phoenix could now see Ivan, and Ivan could not see the feather. Ivan still grasped on to the bag as he saw the phoenix swoop back around to make another attack. Ivan saw the phoenix diving right towards him with his talons out and sharp, covering his eyes. Just as Ivan thought it was the end of him, he felt himself being picked up and swept across the land. Ivan opened his eyes to see he was riding on the dove, the bringer of peace between the lands and people. Ivan held on to the dove, still grasping the bag, and the dove lowered him down to the land beneath the clouds. Ivan thanked the dove and then got off. Ivan now knew he was under the protection of the invisible bird, and dragged the bag back to his home and field where he burned it. From then on out, Ivan's cattle were never taken, so Ivan threw a large party for everyone in the land to attend. I was there, I tried to drink the mead, I heard it was good, but it only trickled down my beard.