

The Daughter of the King of the Vilas

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There was a mother, who was expecting. As she once upon a time came out of church from mass, her pains fell upon her. Whither should she go? She concealed herself under a bridge, and became the happy mother of a son. The three Royenitzes also came thither. They are hags, who determine by what death every child is to pass from this world. One said: 'Let us kill him at once.' The second said: 'Not so; but when he grows up, then let us kill him, that his mother's sorrow for him may be greater.' But the third said: 'Let us not do so; but if he does not take the daughter of the king of the Vilas to wife, then let us kill him.' And so it was settled.

When he had grown up, he said to his mother: 'Mamma, I should like to marry.' 'Ah, my son, you say that you would like to marry; but there is no one to be married to you.' He asked her: 'Why not?' She told him: 'Yes; the Suyenitzes have pronounced your fate, that if you do not take the daughter of the king of the Vilas to wife, they will put you to death.' He then said: 'Well, I'll go in search of her; but first I'll go to ask a certain old smith; maybe he'll be able to tell me where she is.' The smith said: 'My son, it will be difficult for you to find out; but go to the mother of the moon; if she can't tell you, I don't know who will be better able to tell you than she.' He also gave him three pairs of iron shoes, and sent him off to the mother of the moon. 'Only, when you come to her, take her by the arm, then she will ask you at once what you want, and tell her without delay.' He went off, and just as he was on the point of wearing out the shoes, he came to the moon's mother, and took her by the arm. She asked him immediately what he wanted. He said: 'I want to find the daughter of the king of the Vilas.' She said: 'Well, my son, I don't know; but maybe my son knows. Wait till he comes home, and then you can ask him. But he mustn't find you; he would tear you to pieces at once. When he comes home, he will notice that you

are here. I will conceal you, and when he asks for the third time where the Christian soul is, then say to him: "Here I am!" and he won't be able to do anything to you.' The old woman hid him under a trough. The moon came home, and asked: 'Mamma, you have a Christian soul here.' And when he asked for the third time where the Christian soul was, he announced himself: 'Here I am.' And then he could do nothing to him, otherwise he would have crushed him to powder. He asked him what he wanted. He said: 'I want to find the daughter of the king of the Vilas.' The moon: 'I don't know, but if the sun's mother doesn't know, I don't know who else does.' And he showed him the way by which he must go.

He put on the second pair of shoes, and when he was just on the point of wearing them out, he came to the sun's mother, and took her by the arm. She said to him at once: 'What do you want?' He said to her that, if she knew where the Vilas' castles were, he wanted to obtain the daughter of the king of the Vilas. She then said to him: 'Ah, my son, I don't know; but if my son doesn't know, I don't know who else does. Wait a little till he comes home.' She, too, concealed him under a trough, and he announced himself the third time that the sun asked: 'Mother, you have a Christian soul here:' saying, 'Here I am.' Neither could the sun do anything to him, but asked him what he wanted. He replied that he was in search of the Vilas' castles, and the daughter of the king of the Vilas. Then the sun said to him: 'Ah, I don't know; but if the storm-mare (that is, the storm or wind) doesn't know, then I don't know who will know.' Then he showed him the road, and said: 'When you come to a meadow where the grass is up to your knees, there the storm-mare is. If you don't find her there, wait for her; she will come to feed. Don't go directly to her, but hide behind a tree or in a hole, and when she comes, take her at once by the bridle, otherwise it will not be good for you.'

He went off, and put on the third pair of shoes, then went and went, and arrived at the meadow. When he got there, the storm-mare was not there till dawn. He hid himself under a bridge, and when she came to the bridge to drink water, he seized her by the bridle, and she asked him what he wanted. He replied that he wanted to find the daughter of the king of the Vilas. She answered him: 'Mount on my back.' He mounted, and she then said to him: 'But you mustn't fall off.' She reared; he almost fell off, but kept himself on with his foot. She reared a second time, and then, too, he almost fell off. A third time she reared, and then, too, he almost fell off, only he kept himself on with his knee. Then she said to him: 'This will be harmful to me.' She went off with him like a bird, and sped and sped up to two steps. When she came near them, the steps split in twain from the gust, but speedily closed again, and tore off a piece of the mare's tail. Then the mare said to him: 'You see how

you harmed me when you almost fell off.'

Then they went on till they arrived at the Vilas' castles. Then she said: 'Don't get drunk or forget, so as not to come to me.' He said that he would come, and went off upwards. They received and entertained him, and he asked them at once to give him the king's daughter. They promised that they would give her to him. Then they feasted, and ate and drank till darkness came on. And when evening arrived, he said that he must go out on his own account, and would return directly. He went off to the storm-mare. They had brought her a hundred quintals of hay. He concealed himself in the mare's tail. They sought him, and couldn't find him; but nevertheless they almost found him at dawn; but a cock began to crow, and then they could do nothing to him. Afterwards he went indoors, and they gave him again to eat and drink, and asked him where he had been. He replied: 'I slept under a hedge; I fell down, and soon fell asleep on the spot.' They gave the mare a hundred quintals of hay and several measures of oats. They enjoyed themselves the whole day till evening. He went out again and hid himself in the mare's mane. They sought him all night long, but couldn't find him; but at dawn an old witch told them that he was in the mane. They would almost have found him there, but the cocks began to crow, and they couldn't kill him now. But afterwards they killed all the cocks in the whole village. He went again into the castle. They gave him what he wanted to eat and drink, and the mare, as usual, a hundred quintals of hay and several measures of oats, and said to him: 'You must not go out anywhere in the evening; we will prepare everything for you that you require.' When evening came, they were on friendly terms with him, but nevertheless dispersed. He went out, and went to the mare. Where did she bestow him? She hid him under her foot in her shoe, for she had a large foot. They went to seek him again. But during the day he took two eggs, and the mare hatched them by evening in her throat, and they had almost grown up by evening. When they sought him again, they couldn't find him.

At dawn they consulted the old witch. She told them that he was under the mare's hoof. They wanted now to take him out, but the cockerels which the mare had hatched in her throat began to crow. They could do nothing to him, but they wrung the two cockerels' necks. Now he said that they must give him the king's daughter, that he might depart. But the king said that he wouldn't give her to him, because he had not slept where he had prepared a bed for him. He declared that he had been drunk and had gone out, had fallen down, and gone to sleep on the spot. But the king would not believe him. Now he begged him to bring his daughter to him, that he might at any rate give her a kiss. But beforehand the mare instructed him that, when she came to kiss him, he

was to seize her and pull her on to her (the mare), and they would escape with her. And he was also to take a brush with which horses are cleaned, a comb with which horses are combed, and a glass of water, and make good preparations for himself. But when the king granted his request that his daughter should come for him to kiss her, she stood on his foot in the stirrup, and as she stood to give the kiss, off started the mare, and made her way through the gate, and on and on she went. The king saw this, called for his horse, and after them. They were already far on their way. All of a sudden the mare said: 'Look round to see whether anyone is coming behind us.' He looked round and said: 'There is; he is all but catching you by the tail.' The mare said: 'Throw the brush!' He threw the brush, and a forest placed itself behind them, so that he could scarcely make his way through; the poor king could scarcely get through for thorn bushes.

And they had meanwhile got a long way forward. The king, however, forced his way through, and again after them with speed, till he was again on the point of catching them. Then the mare said: 'Look round to see whether anyone is coming behind us.' He looked round and saw that he was already near, and the mare was all but caught by the tail, and said: 'He is near, and you are all but caught by the tail.' The mare said: 'Throw the comb.' He threw it, and a great chain of mountains, one after the other, placed itself there; and on they went further, so that they had already gone a great space, and the king with difficulty made his way over the mountains, and again after them, so that he was again on the point of overtaking them. The mare told him to look round to see whether anyone was coming behind them. He said that there was, and that she was all but caught by the tail. The mare said: 'Throw the glass with water.'

He threw it, and a great flood of water arose, so that the king could with difficulty get across. And they had already got a long way on. No sooner had the king got out of the water, when on he went with speed, with speed, again after them, and was already on the point of overtaking them, when the mare was already near the steps, and the steps opened from the gust of wind, and the mare sped through, and they closed again, and the king couldn't proceed further through the steps, and shouted loudly: 'Son-in-law, don't go any further; I cannot do so. Let not my daughter complain that I have given her nothing.' Then he somehow threw his girdle over the steps, for he had nought else to give her save that girdle. And the girdle was such that whatsoever its owner wanted, he obtained. Then the king returned, and they remained happy. He thanked the storm-mare courteously, and went home with speed, for he bade the girdle place them at his house. They prepared a grand banquet, for they had plenty, and I was at the banquet and feasted.

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