There was once a Tsar, named Chotei, who had three sons—the first, Aspar Tsarevich; the second, Adam Tsarevich; and the third and youngest son, Sila Tsarevich. The two eldest brothers entreated their father's permission to travel in foreign countries and see the world. Then the youngest brother, Sila Tsarevich, also begged the Tsar's permission to travel with his brothers. But Chotei said: “My dear son, you are still young, and not used to the difficulties of travelling; remain at home, and think no more of this fancy you have taken.” But Sila Tsarevich had a great longing to see foreign lands, and entreated his father so much that at length the Tsar consented, and gave him a ship likewise. As soon as the three brothers embarked, each on board his ship, they all gave orders to set sail. And when they were out on the open sea, the eldest brother’s ship sailed first, the second brother’s next, and Sila Tsarevich sailed last.

On the third day of the voyage they saw a coffin with iron bands floating on the waves. The two eldest brothers sailed past without heeding it, but as soon as Sila Tsarevich saw the coffin, he ordered the sailors to pick it up, lay it on board his ship, and carry it to land. The next day a violent storm arose, by which Sila’s ship was driven out of its course, and cast upon a steep shore in an unknown country. Then Sila ordered his sailors to take the coffin and to carry it on shore, whither he himself followed, and buried it in the earth.
Thereupon Sila Tsarevich ordered the captain to remain upon the spot where the ship was stranded, and await his return for three years; but adding that, should he not come back in that time, he should be free to set sail and return home. So saying, Sila took leave of his captain and his crew, and went forthwith, journeying on and on. He wandered about for a long while, without seeing anyone; at length he heard a man running after him, dressed all in white. Then Sila Tsarevich turned round and saw the man following him; whereupon he instantly drew his sword to be upon his guard. But no sooner did the man come up to him than he fell on his knees and thanked Sila for having saved him. And Sila asked the man what he had done to deserve his thanks. Then the stranger stood up and answered: “Ah, Sila Tsarevich, how can I thank you enough? There I lay in the coffin, which you picked up at sea and buried; and had it not been for you I might have remained floating about for a hundred years.” “But how did you get into the coffin?” asked Sila. “Listen, and I will tell you the whole story,” replied Ivashka. “I was a great magician; my mother was told that I did great mischief to mankind by my arts, and therefore ordered me to be put into this coffin and set adrift on the open sea: for more than a hundred years I have been floating about, and no one has ever picked me up; but to you I owe my rescue, and I will therefore serve you, and render you all the help in my power. Let me ask you whether you have not a wish to marry: I know the beautiful Queen Truda, who is worthy of being your wife.” Sila replied that if this Queen were indeed beautiful, he was willing to marry her; and Ivashka told him she was the most beautiful woman in the world. When Sila heard this, he begged Ivashka to accompany him to her kingdom; so they set out and travelled on and on till they reached that country. Now, Queen Truda’s kingdom was surrounded by a palisade; and upon every stake was stuck a man’s head, except one, which had no head. When Sila saw this, he was terrified, and asked Ivashka what it meant; and Ivashka told him that these were the heads of heroes who had been suitors to Queen Truda. Sila shuddered on hearing this, and wished to return home without showing himself to the father of Truda; but Ivashka told him to fear nothing and go with him boldly; so Sila went on.
When they entered the kingdom, Ivashka said: “Hearken, Sila Tsarevich, I will be your servant, and when you enter the royal halls, salute King Salom humbly: then he will ask you whence you came, and whose son you are, what is your name and business. Tell him everything and conceal nothing; but say that you are come to sue for his daughter’s hand; he will give her to you with great joy.” So Sila Tsarevich went into the palace, and, as soon as Prince Salom saw him, he went himself to meet him, took him by his white hands, led him into the marble halls, and asked him: “Fair youth, from what country do you come, whose son are you, what is your name, and what is your business?” “I am from the kingdom of my father the Tsar Chotei,” replied Sila; “my name is Sila Tsarevich, and I am come to sue for your daughter, the beautiful Queen Truda.”

King Salom was overjoyed that the son of such a renowned Tsar should be his son-in-law, and immediately ordered his daughter to prepare for the wedding. And when the day for the marriage came, the King commanded all his princes and boyars to assemble in the palace; and they all went in procession to the church, and Sila Tsarevich was married to the fair Queen Truda. Then they returned to the palace, seated themselves at table, and feasted and made merry. When the time came to retire to rest, Ivashka took Sila aside and whispered to him: “Hark, ye, Sila Tsarevich, when you go to rest, beware lest you speak a word to your bride or you will not remain alive, and your head will be stuck on the last stake. She will in every way try to make you embrace her, but attend to what I say.”

Then Sila Tsarevich enquired why he warned him thus, and Ivashka replied: “She is in league with an evil Spirit, who comes to her every night in the shape of a man, but flies through the air in the shape of a six-headed dragon; now, if she lays her hand upon your breast and presses it, jump up and beat her with a stick until all her strength is gone. I will meanwhile remain on watch at the door of your apartment.”

When Sila Tsarevich heard this, he went with his wife to rest, and Queen Truda tried in every way to get him to kiss her, but Sila lay quite still and spoke not a word. Then Truda laid her hand upon his breast and pressed him so hard that he could scarcely breathe. But up jumped Sila Tsarevich and seized the stick which Ivashka had laid there ready for him, and fell to beating her as hard as he could. On a sudden there arose a storm, and a six-headed dragon came flying into the room and was going to devour Sila Tsarevich, but Ivashka seized a sharp sword and attacked the dragon, and they fought three hours, and Ivashka struck off two of the dragon’s heads, whereupon the monster flew away. Then Ivashka desired Sila Tsarevich to go to sleep and fear nothing. Sila obeyed him, laid himself down, and fell asleep.
Early in the morning King Salom went to be informed whether his dear son still lived, and when he heard that Sila was alive and well, the King rejoiced, since he was the first who had been saved from his daughter; and he instantly ordered Sila to be called, and the whole day was spent in merrymaking.

The following night Ivashka gave Sila Tsarevich the same caution as before, not to speak a word to his wife, and he placed himself on watch at the door. Then it fell out as before, and when Sila Tsarevich began to beat the Queen, on a sudden the dragon came flying in, and was going to devour Sila Tsarevich. But Ivashka rushed from behind the door, sword in hand, and fought with the dragon and struck off two more of his heads. Then the dragon flew away, and Sila Tsarevich lay down to sleep. Early in the morning the King commanded Sila to be invited, and they spent this day in the same pleasures as before. The third night the same happened again, and Ivashka cut off the last two heads of the dragon, and he burnt all the heads and strewed the ashes in the fields.

Thus time passed on, and Sila Tsarevich lived with his father-in-law a whole year, without speaking to his wife or gaining her love. Then Ivashka told him one day to go to King Salom and ask permission to return to his native country. So Sila went to the King, who dismissed him, and gave him two squadrons of his army to accompany him as an escort. Then Sila took leave of his father-in-law, and set out with his wife on their journey to his own country.

When they had gone half-way, Ivashka told Sila Tsarevich to halt and pitch his tent. So Sila obeyed, and ordered the tent to be put up. The next day Ivashka laid pieces of wood in front of Sila's tent and set fire to them. Then he led Queen Truda out of the tent, unsheathed his sword, and cut her in twain. Sila Tsarevich shuddered with terror and began to weep; but Ivashka said: "Weep not, she will come to life again." And presently all sorts of evil things came forth from the body, and Ivashka threw them all into the fire. Then he said to Sila Tsarevich: "See you not the evil spirits which troubled your wife? She is now relieved from them." And, so saying, he laid the parts of Truda's body together, sprinkled them with the water of life, and the Queen was instantly sound and whole as before. Then said Ivashka: "Now, farewell, Sila Tsarevich, you will find that your wife loves you truly, but you will never see me more." And so saying he vanished.

Sila Tsarevich ordered the tent to be struck, and journeyed on to his native country. And when he came to the place where his ship was waiting for him, he went on board with the fair Queen Truda, dismissed the escort which accompanied him, and set sail. And on arriving at his own kingdom, he was welcomed with salvos of cannon, and Tsar Chotei came out of his palace and took him and the beautiful Queen Truda by their lily-white
hands, led them into the marble halls, placed them at table, and they feasted and made merry. Sila Tsarevich lived with his father two years; then he returned to the kingdom of King Salom, received from him the crown, and ruled over the country with his Queen Truda in great love and happiness.

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