

# *Story of the Knight Yaroslav Lasarevich and the Princess Anastasia*

The Russian Garland

Russian

---

*Advanced*  
*54 min read*

In a certain country lived a Tsar named Kartaus, who had twelve knights, and the Tsar had a chief over these knights, Prince Lasar Lasarevich. Prince Lasar and his wife, the Princess Epistimia, lived for seventy years and had no child; and they began, with tears, to sigh for one to cheer their old age, and to pray for their souls after death.

At length their wish was granted, and they had a son, whom Prince Lasar named Yaroslav. The little fellow had a rosy face, blonde hair, and bright eyes. His parents were overjoyed and made a great feast. When Yaroslav was fifteen years old he went often to the Tsar's Court and played with the children of princes and boyars. Then the princes counselled together, and went to the Tsar and said: "Our lord and sovereign, grant us your imperial favour: your Majesty has a knight, Prince Lasar, whose son Yaroslav comes to your imperial Court and plays with our children; but his sports are mischievous, for whenever he takes anyone by the head, the head falls off, and this causes us great trouble and grief. Now, O Tsar, show us your favour, and either send Yaroslav out of your kingdom or grant us leave to depart, for live we cannot with Yaroslav."

Then the Tsar Kartaus immediately sent for Prince Lasar, told him the complaints the princes and nobles had made of Yaroslav, and commanded that he should leave the kingdom. When Lasar heard this command, he rode away sorrowfully, with his head hanging lower than his shoulders. Now Yaroslav came to meet his father,

bowed to the ground, and said: "Long years of happiness to my lord and father! Why ride you so sorrowfully, my lord? Have you received an unkind word from the Tsar?" Prince Lasar answered: "My dear child Yaroslav, I have indeed received a cruel order from the Tsar. Other children are a joy to their father from their youth up, a support in his old age, and the guardian of his memory when dead. Not so, alas! with you, my son. You go to the Tsar's Court and play mischievous tricks with the children of the princes and boyars, and they have complained to the Tsar Kartaus, and he has banished you from the kingdom."

At this Yaroslav laughed and said: "My lord and father, grieve not for me that I am banished. I have only one trouble: I am now fifteen years old, and have never been able to find in your stables a good horse that might serve me for ever and aye." Then they went into the marble halls, and Yaroslav Lasarevich begged permission of his father and mother to travel about the world, to see men and to be seen. So his parents at length consented, and gave him twenty lads, and fifty skilful builders, to build a marble palace on the sea coast. These builders erected the palace in three days, and sent a messenger to Prince Lasar and the Princess Epistimia, to tell them that the splendid palace was ready. Then Yaroslav took leave of his parents, and Prince Lasar and his wife wept bitterly at parting with their son, and gave him their blessing.

So Yaroslav Lasarevich rode until he came to the marble palace on the seashore. His father and mother offered him gold, silver, jewels, horses, and attendants, but Yaroslav would have none of these: he took with him only an old horse, a Tcherkess saddle, a snaffle-bit, a blanket, and a leather whip. Thus came Yaroslav to his marble palace on the seashore, threw the blanket over him, placed the saddle under his head, and stretched himself out to sleep. Early the next morning Yaroslav arose, went out to walk on the seashore, and shot a number of wild geese, swans, and ducks. Upon these he fed, and lived thus one, two, and three months. Then he went upon a road which was so broad that a shot could not reach across it, and so deep that it went to the ears of a brave steed. Yaroslav looked at the road, and said to himself: "Who travels this road, a great army or a stout knight?" It happened that an old man came riding up to him on his grey horse, and he dismounted and threw himself down with his face to the ground, saying: "Long life and happiness to you, Yaroslav Lasarevich! How goes it with you, my lord? and how comes it that you are in this desert spot?" "What is your name, old brother?" said Yaroslav. The man replied: "My name is Ivashka, master, and my horse is called Alotyagilei. I am a great shot and a mighty wrestler in the host of knights." "But how do you know my name?" replied Yaroslav. Ivashka answered: "My Lord, I am an old servant of your father, and have tended his horses in the fields for three-and-

thirty years, and I come to your father once every year to receive my wages. Thus it is that I know you.”

Yaroslav answered: “I am going to the chase, and am wandering about in the open fields. He who has not tasted the bitter, does not relish the sweet. While still a young boy I ran about in the courtyard, and played with the children of the princes and boyars. But when I seize anyone by the head, his head falls off, and, when I take him by the hand, his hand falls off. This was not agreeable to the Tsar, and he banished me from his kingdom; but this punishment was nothing in comparison to another greater grief which pains me sorely. I am already fifteen years old, but can find no horse in my father’s stable that might serve me for life.” Then said Ivashka: “My lord, Yaroslav Lasarevich, I have a horse, which is called Podlas: he must be caught, and he will serve you for ever and a day. If you do not catch him now you never will.” “But how can I see the horse, brother Ivashka?” Ivashka answered: “Yaroslav Lasarevich, you can see this steed early in the morning, when I take the horses to the sea to drink, but if, when you see him, you do not seize him on the spot, you never will.” Thereupon Yaroslav Lasarevich went into his marble palace, laid the horse-cloth under him, and the Tcherkess saddle and the bit under his head, and stretched himself out to sleep. The next morning he rose early, went into the field, and took the bridle, the Tcherkess saddle, and the leather whip with him. He concealed himself under an oak tree; and presently saw Ivashka driving the horses to the sea to water, and, as he gazed upon the sea, he observed that where a steed drank, the waves foamed and roared fearfully. Above the oak tree screamed the eagles, and on the mountains roared the lions, and no one could approach the spot. Yaroslav wondered greatly, and when the horse came to stand opposite him, he leaped out from the oak and struck him with the back of his hand. The horse fell on his knees, and he seized him by his mane and said: “My trusty steed, who shall ride on you if not I your master?” Then he threw the bridle over him, put the Tcherkess saddle on his back, and rode to the marble palace, and Ivashka followed. Then said he to Ivashka: “What name shall I give this horse?” “How, my lord, shall a servant know better than his master to name such a horse?” So Yaroslav named him Uroshtch Veschei; and he said to Ivashka: “Ride to my father, Prince Lasar, and tell him I am well and have found a trusty steed.” Then Yaroslav Lasarevich rode off upon his good horse to Ivan the Russian knight, and behind him followed Ivashka at full gallop till he was lost to sight.

Ivashka returned to the kingdom of Kartaus, to Yaroslav’s father and mother, and carried the tidings that he was well. The parents rejoiced greatly to hear of their son, and dismissed Ivashka with rich presents. But Yaroslav Lasarevich rode on and on, for two and for three months, until at last he came to a field where an immense army lay slain. Then he cried with a loud voice: “Is there here no man still alive?” Immediately a man

stood up and said: "My lord, Yaroslav Lasarevich, whom dost thou seek?" "I want a living man," said Yaroslav; and then he enquired to whom the army belonged, and who had slain it. "The army," replied the man, "belonged to Feodul the Dragon Tsar, and it has been slain by Prince Ivan the Russian knight, who sued for the hand of Feodul's daughter, the Princess Kandaula Feodulavna; and, as he would not give her of his free will, Ivan sought to take her by force." Thereupon Yaroslav asked how far distant this Russian knight was; and the man replied: "Yaroslav Lasarevich, he has gone too far for you to reach him; ride round the army, and you will see the footsteps of Prince Ivan." So Yaroslav rode round the army, and saw the tracks of the bounding of the steed; for wherever he had struck his hoofs, large heaps of earth were thrown up. He followed the track until he came to another slain army: here he cried with a loud voice: "Is there not one living man here who has survived the battle?" Then up rose a man and said: "My lord, Yaroslav Lasarevich, one steed is better than another, and one youth surpasses another." Yaroslav rode on, and he rode for one, two, and three months; when at length he came to an open country, where he descried a white tent and beside it a goodly steed, before which corn was poured out upon a white linen cloth. Yaroslav dismounted and led his horse to feed, and his horse drove the other way. Then Yaroslav entered the tent, where a comely youth lay fast asleep: he drew his sword, and was on the point of slaying him when he bethought himself that it would bring no honour to slay a sleeping man; so he lay down in the tent, on the other side, near Prince Ivan. When Ivan awoke he went out of the tent, and saw that his steed was driven away, and was grazing in the open fields, whilst a strange horse ate the corn. Then he returned to the tent and saw a youth lying fast asleep. Prince Ivan looked fiercely at him; but suddenly reflected that he should have little honour from killing a man asleep. So he cried: "Stand up, man, and save yourself. Why have you put your horse to feed on another's corn, and lain down to sleep in another's tent? For this you must answer with your life." Then Yaroslav awoke, and Prince Ivan asked him his name, whence he came, and who his parents were. "I am from the kingdom of Kartaus," answered Yaroslav, "the son of Prince Lasar and the Princess Epistimia and my name is Yaroslav. Your steed has not been driven away by me, but by my horse, and good folk are not used to meet strangers with uncivil speech, but rather to treat them with hospitality. If you have a glass of water, give it to me, for I am your guest." "You are young," said Ivan, "and it befits me not to fetch your water; bring it to me rather." "You pluck the bird before you have caught it," replied the other, "and blame a youth ere you have tried him." Then said Prince Ivan: "I am the prince of princes, and the knight of knights, and you are a cossack." "Ay, indeed!" replied Yaroslav, "you are prince in your tent; but let us meet in the open field and we are equals." Prince Ivan saw that he had no coward to deal with: he took a golden flask,

fetched some cold water, and gave it to Yaroslav to drink. Then they mounted their horses and rode into the open country. And when they began to fight, Yaroslav struck Prince Ivan with the butt of his lance and hurled him to the ground: then he whirled round his horse, put the point of his lance to Ivan's breast, and said: "Prince Ivan, wilt thou live or die?" And Ivan answered: "Yaroslav Lasarevich, be to me my elder brother—spare my life!"

Then Yaroslav dismounted, took Prince Ivan, the Russian knight, by his hand and embraced him, calling him his younger brother; whereupon they mounted their steeds, rode off to the tent, and fell to feasting and making merry. And Yaroslav said: "My lord brother, Prince Ivan, as I was wandering in the open country I came upon two slain armies." To which Ivan replied: "Brother Yaroslav, the first army, of the Tsar Feodul, I slew when he refused to give me his daughter Kandaula in marriage; and I am resolved to carry her off by force, for I hear there is no such beauty in the world. To-morrow I shall fight the last battle with him, and thou shall be witness of my valour." The next morning Prince Ivan rose early, saddled his steed, and rode to the kingdom of Feodul, the Dragon Tsar; and Yaroslav went on foot, and concealed himself under an oak tree to witness the fight. Then Prince Ivan called upon the Tsar with a loud voice, and Feodul ordered the trumpets to sound, and an army of a hundred thousand men to assemble. The Tsar Feodul rode against Prince Ivan, and before and behind him rode an innumerable host of squires and knights. Ivan grasped his shield with one hand and his lance with the other. As the falcon swoops upon the geese, swans, and ducks, even so did Prince Ivan fall upon that terrible army; and his steed trod to the ground twice as many as he himself slew. He destroyed the whole host, sparing only the lives of the old men and boys, who could not resist; and he took the Tsar Feodul prisoner, and put him to death. Then he hastened to his kingdom and carried off the Princess Kandaula. He took her by her white hands, kissed her on her soft lips, and led her into his tent. Soon after Yaroslav Lasarevich also arrived, and they all fell to feasting and making merry.

When Yaroslav went out of the tent Ivan said: "My beloved Princess, tell me, is there in the world a fairer one than thou art, or a braver knight than my brother Yaroslav Lasarevich? I have gone far and wide and have not found thine equal." "Nay," replied the Princess, "there are yet fairer than I am. In the open fields is a white tent, in which dwell the daughters of the Tsar Bogrigror. The eldest is named Prodora, the second Tivobriga, and the youngest Legia: they are ten times fairer than I; compared to them I am as night to day. Whilst with my parents I was still fair, but now I am wasted with sorrow. And on the road to the kingdom of India there is a knight, in the dominions of Tsar Dalmat, named Ivashka Whitemantle Saracen's-cap. I have heard from my father that

for three-and-thirty years he has guarded the kingdom of India, and that no traveller or knight rides past, no animal runs by, and no bird flies past; I know no one braver than he, for I have never before heard of the valour of Yaroslav Lasarevich.”

Now Yaroslav overheard these words, and his chivalrous heart could not brook it. He saddled his steed, embraced Ivan the Russian knight, and the Princess Kandaula, and rode off towards the kingdom of the Tsar Dalmat, to engage in fight with Ivashka Whitemantle. He had journeyed for some time, when he bethought himself that he was bound on an enterprise of life and death, without having taken leave of his father and mother. So he turned and rode till he came to the kingdom of the Tsar Kartaus, where he encountered Prince Daniil the White, at the head of three thousand men, who boasted that he would subdue the kingdom of Kartaus, take prisoners the Tsar himself, Prince Lasar, and the twelve knights, and carry them off to his own country. Yaroslav rode straight to the city, and there beheld Prince Lasar assembling an army for battle. Then dismounting from his horse, he threw himself with his face to the ground and said: “Long life to my lord and father! How fares it with thee? Wherefore so sad, my lord?” And Prince Lasar answered: “My dear son, whence art thou come like a sunbeam to cheer me? How can I help grieving? Prince Daniil has invaded our dominion with an immense army and threatens to seize it and carry off the Tsar and me and the twelve knights prisoners.” Then spoke Yaroslav Lasarevich: “My lord and father, give me the shield, and lance, and I will go out to fight the enemy.” But Prince Lasar answered: “My son, how canst thou combat such a host, who hast never been in battle? The cries of the Tartars will terrify thee, and they will slay thee!” “Teach not the goose to swim, father,” answered Yaroslav, “nor a knight’s son to fight with Tartars! Only give me what I demand, and fear nought.”

Like a falcon darting upon geese and swans, Yaroslav fell upon the armies of Prince Daniil the White; and he hewed down not so many as his horse trampled under his hoofs, and he took Daniil prisoner. Yaroslav made him pledge his word never again to set foot in the kingdom of the Tsar Kartaus—he nor his children, nor his children’s children; adding that if he fell again into his hands he should die a miserable death. Then Yaroslav sent him back to his own country, and rode into the city. Then Tsar Kartaus came out to meet him, and Yaroslav threw himself with his face to the ground and said: “Long years of happiness to thee, my liege Tsar Kartaus!” “Sir Yaroslav Lasarevich,” answered Kartaus, “I have wronged thee in banishing thee from my kingdom. Abide here and choose the best city and the fairest villages. My treasures are open to thee—take what

thou desirest, and thy place is at my side." Yaroslav answered: "O Tsar, I am wont to rove about, to seek adventure and to fight." So, after he had eaten salt and bread with the Tsar and with his parents, he took leave of them all and rode forth.

And Yaroslav rode one, two, and three months, till at length he came to a plain, on which was pitched a white tent, wherein sat the three fair daughters of the Tsar Bogrigror, of whose beauty there was not the like in the wide world; and they were busy at their work. Yaroslav stepped into the tent, and was so amazed at the sight, that he forgot to pray to the ikons of the Saints. Then he took the eldest daughter, Prodora, by the hand, and desiring the others to leave the tent, said: "My gentle and beautiful Princess Prodora Bogrigrorovna, is there in the world a fairer maiden than thou, or a braver knight than I?" And Prodora answered: "Sir Yaroslav Lasarevich, how can you call me fair? In the city of Dobri lives the daughter of the Tsar Vorcholomei, the Princess Anastasia, compared to her we are like night to day. On the way to the Indian kingdom of the Tsar Dalmat is a knight named Ivashka Whitemantle Saracen's-cap, and I have heard from my father that he is very powerful, and has guarded the kingdom of India for three-and-thirty years; no one passes him on foot or horse, no animal runs, no bird flies past. But what a brave knight art thou indeed to drive us maidens from the tent!" At this Yaroslav was angered: he bowed the head of the Princess and struck it off with his sword. Then he took the second Princess, Tivobriga, by the hand and said: "Gentle princess, is there a more beautiful maiden in the world than thou, or a braver knight than I?" And she answered as the eldest had done; so he struck off her head in like manner. Then he took the third sister Legia by the hand and asked her the same question as her sisters. And Legia answered: "Sir Yaroslav, I am neither beautiful nor good. When I was with my father and mother I was so, but now I am wasted and no longer handsome." Then she likewise told him of the Princess Anastasia, the daughter of the Tsar Vorcholomei, and of the knight Ivashka. "Fairest lady," replied Yaroslav, "thou has comforted me with thy gentle words."

Then he went out of the tent, took leave of Legia, mounted his steed, and rode off to the kingdom of India, to see the Tsar Dalmat and Ivashka Whitemantle. And he rode on for one, two and three months; and when he came near the city, there upon the plain stood Ivashka, leaning upon a lance, with a Saracen's cap on his head and a white mantle around him. Yaroslav rode up to him, struck off his cap with his whip, and said: "Lie down and sleep, there is no need to stand!" "Who art thou?" inquired Ivashka; "what is thy name, and whence comest thou?" Yaroslav answered: "I am come from the kingdom of the Tsar Kartaus, and my name is Yaroslav: I am

preparing to journey to the kingdom of India to pay my respects to the Tsar Dalmat.” But Ivashka answered: “Never has man or animal passed this way, and thinkest thou to do so? First let us go into the plain and try the prowess of our arms!” The two knights made a furious onset; and after a long fight Yaroslav thrust his lance at Ivashka’s heart, and threw him from the saddle; and Ivashka fell upon the ground like a sheaf of oats, and Yaroslav slew him on the spot.

Then Yaroslav rode on his way to the kingdom of India, and on arriving at the city he went straight to the Tsar Dalmat; and, entering the palace, he made his obeisance and said: “Long years of happiness to thee, O Tsar, to thy family, and all thy princes and boyars! Take me into thy service!” Then said Dalmat: “Man, whence comest thou, and what is thy name, and whose son art thou?” So Yaroslav told him, and the Tsar said: “Which way hast thou come, by land or by water?” Yaroslav replied: “By land,” and the Tsar said: “I have a knight who dwells upon the open plains, and has guarded my kingdom for three-and-thirty years; no man or animal has ever passed him, on horse, foot, or wing; and how hast thou ridden past?” Yaroslav answered: “I have vanquished this man, O Tsar; but I knew not that he belonged to thee.”

On hearing this the Tsar was terrified, and thought to himself: “If he has slain such a knight he can easily conquer my kingdom, and he only wants to rob me of my throne.” This thought made him sorrowful, and he commanded all honour to be shown to Yaroslav Lasarevich, and gave him drink from his own goblet. Then Yaroslav observed that the Tsar feared him: he went out of the castle, saddled his steed, and rode away out of the kingdom. Tsar Dalmat was rejoiced to be freed from Yaroslav, and ordered the gates to be closed fast behind him.

Yaroslav now resolved to go to the city of Dobri to witness the beauty of the Princess Anastasia, and he rode on for one, two, and three months. Then he bethought himself: “I have come to a strange country, perhaps to marry this Princess, or meet death without having my parents’ blessing.”

And with that, away he rode to the kingdom of the Tsar Kartaus, which he found conquered, and laid waste with fire and sword. There remained one solitary hut standing, in which dwelt a one-eyed old man. Yaroslav stepped into the hut, bowed to the man, and said: “Old brother, what has happened to this kingdom?” The man answered: “Brave knight, whence art thou come, and what is thy name?” But Yaroslav replied: “Knowest thou me not? I was born in this kingdom, the son of Prince Lasar, and my name is Yaroslav.” On hearing this the old

man fell to the earth, and said with tears: "Since thou hast been gone, long time has passed. Daniil the White returned, and with him five times a hundred thousand men; he fell upon this kingdom, laid it waste with fire and sword, and slew a hundred thousand brave warriors. Five millions of the common folk, with all the priests and monks, he burnt in the open fields, slew twelve thousand infants, took prisoners the Tsar Kartaus with his twelve knights, and put to death the Tsarina and thy mother, the Princess Epistimia. I am the only one left alive, and have lain nine days here half-dead with fear."

Yaroslav wept when he heard this, and mounting his steed, commended himself to the Saints, and rode to seek the Tsar Daniil the White. He came to the city at noon without being seen, except by some little boys playing in the streets: and he asked them where the Tsar Kartaus was, as he wished to give him alms; so they showed him the prison. At the gate a guard was standing, but Yaroslav struck him down, and broke open the doors. On entering the prison, he saw Kartaus, his father Lasar, and the twelve knights, all blinded; at which cruel sight he fell to the ground, and with tears exclaimed: "Long life to thee, O Tsar, to thee my father, and to you brave knights!" Then answered Kartaus: "I hear thy voice but cannot see thy face. Whence comest thou, what is thy name, and whose son art thou?" So Yaroslav told him who he was; but Kartaus replied: "Fellow, away! and mock me not."

"Father," replied Yaroslav, "I am indeed Yaroslav, and come to relieve you." "Lie not, fellow!" said Kartaus; "if Yaroslav had been alive we should not sit here in prison and suffer such a cruel fate; but I should have been reigning in my kingdom with Prince Lasar and my twelve knights. But since Yaroslav is dead we are punished for our sins, and sit here in sightless solitude. If, however, you are really the true Yaroslav Lasarevich, ride, I pray thee, beyond the Still Waters and the Warm Sea, to the city of Shtchetin, where rules the Tsar Fireshield. Slay him, and take some drops of his blood; and when you return, anoint our eyes with it and we shall then see and shall believe you."

Yaroslav made his obeisance to the Tsar, mounted his horse, and rode forth. But the boys in the streets had observed him, and they told it to their fathers, who said to Daniil the White: "O Prince, there has been in our city a brave warrior; his horse was like a lion, and he was armed from head to foot, and he rode away from the prison where Tsar Kartaus and his companions are confined." Instantly Prince Daniil sent his servant Mursa to enquire who had been in the prison. And when he came there he found the doors standing open, and the guard slain; then, entering the doors, he said: "O Tsar Kartaus, tell me who has been with you here? Prince Daniil

sends me to inquire.” And Kartaus answered: “My good fellow how can we tell who was here? A man was in the prison who called himself Yaroslav, but we recognized not his voice.”

Then Mursa returned to Prince Daniil, and told him what Kartaus had said; and forthwith Prince Daniil ordered the trumpets to sound and the drums to beat; and a host of Tartars assembled around him to the number of two hundred and fifty thousand men. And he commanded thirty horsemen to pursue and take Yaroslav and to bring him before him. So they went in pursuit, and after riding for some time they descried Yaroslav asleep under an oak tree, and his horse standing beside him. The horse perceived that the Tartars were in pursuit of his master, and neighed loudly. Thereat Yaroslav awoke, and seeing the knights afar, he mounted his steed and rode off, exclaiming: “First catch the wind on the wide plains and then look to catch me!”

So saying he vanished from their sight, and rode beyond the Still Waters and the Warm Seas to the Podolish Horde, to the city of Shtchetin. Then the Tartars took counsel together what they should say to the Prince, and they resolved to pretend that they had not seen Yaroslav.

Yaroslav Lasarevich arrived in half a year at the city of Shtchetin, before which lay the remains of an army slain, and in the midst the head of a knight as big as a large hillock. Then Yaroslav rode round this army, and cried with a loud voice: “Is there not here one living man?” And the Knight’s head said: “Yaroslav Lasarevich, whom seekest thou?” At this Yaroslav marvelled greatly; but the Head spoke again: “Wonder not, but tell me whither thou ridest, and what thou seekest.” Then Yaroslav asked: “But who art thou? In what kingdom dost thou dwell, and who are thy father and mother?” And the Head answered: “I am a knight of the Sadonic kingdom, son of the Tsar Prochos, and my name is Raslanei.” And Yaroslav said: “Whose armies lie here slain?” “These hosts belong to the Tsar Fireshield,” replied Raslanei, “and a year has not passed since I came here and slew them. The cause of the war was that the Tsar had seized upon towns belonging to my father. But tell me, Yaroslav, how far are you journeying?” Then said Yaroslav: “I am riding to the city of Shtchetin to slay the Tsar Fireshield.” But the Head answered: “Sooner will you be slain yourself! I was indeed a powerful knight, feared by all Tsars and knights; at my birth I was six feet tall, and as stout as a man could compass. When I was ten years old no wild beast, no man on foot, or knight on horse, could stand before me. Now you see how I am grown: my body is sixty feet long, twelve feet between the shoulders, and a feathered shaft can lie between my eyebrows. My head is as big as a brewer’s vat; my arms are twenty feet long, and I could not stand my ground

against the Tsar. The Tsar is strong, and has a mighty host; sword and scimitar wound him not; fire does not burn, water does not drown him. Yet I have a sword which can wound him, but unluckily I could not wield it, and he struck me down. Nevertheless, I will do you good service, and give you counsel; when you come to the city of Shtchetin and the Tsar Fireshield sees and questions you, answer that you desire to serve him. Then he will bid you follow him; do so, and serve him faithfully, and when he goes out to the chase, accompany him. Then remind him of me, and he will grow sad, but tell him you can get the sword which lies under my head. He will not believe you, but pledge your word, and as soon as you can, come to me, I will lift my head and give you the sword.”

Then Yaroslav made his bow, mounted his steed and rode to Shtchetin; and, as he approached the city, the Tsar perceived and accosted him. Yaroslav dismounted, and falling with his face to the ground, said: “Long years of happiness to thee, O Tsar! Take me, I pray, into thy service.” Then the Tsar asked him whence he came, whose son he was, and what was his name. Yaroslav replied: “I have roamed far and wide, and now seek the service of a good lord and master; I was born in the kingdom of the Tsar Kartaus, the son of Prince Lasar, and my name is Yaroslav.” Then said the Tsar: “Yaroslav Lasarevich, ride into my city—I want followers.” So Yaroslav rode into the city.

One day the Tsar rode out to the chase, and took with him the boyars and knights, and Yaroslav was among them. When they approached the Knight’s Head, Yaroslav stood and marvelled at the sight. Then said the Tsar: “Why standest thou there, Yaroslav?” And Yaroslav answered: “O Tsar, I see here a great army lie slain, and this Knight’s Head, under which rests a trusty sword.” The Tsar sighed and answered: “This Knight has destroyed my army, and I slew him; his sword lies under his head, and I cannot get it. No sword can wound me, no fire burn, no water drown me; this sword alone has the power to slay me.”

Then said Yaroslav: “O Tsar, permit me to bring thee the sword.” And the Tsar replied: “Do this service and I will set thee above all my knights; but if thou talkest idly, thou shalt be safe neither in water, nor under the earth, nor among the rocks.” And so saying, the Tsar returned into the city, and Yaroslav rode up to the Knight’s Head and said: “Sir Knight’s Head, I trust to thy love and friendship to fulfil thy promise and give me up this sword; for I have given my word to the Tsar to take it to him, and shall die a cruel death if I perform not my promise.” But the Knight’s Head answered not a word. Then Yaroslav dismounted from his good steed, fell on his knees before him, and said: “Sir Raslanei, let me die not thus in vain—give me, I pray, the sword from

under thee.”

Thereupon the Knight Raslanei raised himself, and Yaroslav took the sword, bowed to the Knight’s Head, and mounting his steed, rode off to the city of Shtchetin. And on the way he said to himself: “Hitherto I have been victorious over Tsars and knights, but now indeed I am forced to bend before a Knight’s Head, and entreat him to give me a sword!”

Raslanei heard this, and cried with a loud voice: “Ho, Sir Knight! return!” So Yaroslav turned round, and went back to the Head; and the Head reproached him, saying: “Thy sword could not touch my helm.” Then Yaroslav fell on the ground and said: “Sir Knight Raslanei, pardon me for having offended thee!” And the Knight’s Head answered: “Yaroslav Lasarevich, thy youth and want of understanding have made thee speak thus. Thou hast taken my sword indeed; but even with this thou mayest still lose thy life; nevertheless, I wish thee well, and will teach thee understanding. When thou comest to the city, and the Tsar sees thee, he will descend from his throne for joy, welcome thee in the midst of his Court, and give thee gold and silver and precious stones. Then deal him a single blow upon his head with the sword; but beware of striking a second blow, or he will revive and kill thee.”

And so saying, he stretched out his hand to take the sword.

Yaroslav bowed himself to the Knight’s Head, and rode to the city; and no sooner had he reached the castle, and the Tsar saw him bringing the sword, than he sprang from his throne, flung away his sceptre, received him in his Court, and said: “Yaroslav Lasarevich, in return for this service I grant thee one place opposite me, the second by my side, and a third where thou wilt. My treasures are open to thee—take towns and handsome villages, and if thou wilt have my daughter the Princess Nasaria for wife, I will give thee one-half of my kingdom.” And so saying, he stretched out his hand to take the sword; but Yaroslav struck him a blow which cleft his head, and the Tsar fell dead on the spot. Then all the princes and boyars cried aloud: “Yaroslav Lasarevich, strike him a second blow!” But he answered: “A knight deals one blow, and that is enough.” Forthwith a number of princes and boyars and the twelve knights fell upon him, and were going to put him to death; but Yaroslav set his lance under his arm, seized the Tsar with his left hand, and clutching his sword with his right, he fell to slaying the princes and knights on all sides.

Soon the other princes and inhabitants of the city cried aloud: “O Yaroslav Lasarevich, cease killing and slaying!

It is the will of fate—live with us and rule over our land!” But Yaroslav replied: “Choose a Tsar from among yourselves: I am no Tsar for you.” He ceased, however, slaying the people, and taking some of the Tsar’s blood, put it into a phial; then mounting his horse, he rode out of the city and away, until he came to Sir Raslanei, and, taking the headless body, he set the head upon it, and sprinkled it with the blood. Thereupon the Knight stood up, as if awakened from a dream; and Yaroslav embraced him, and they called one another brothers: Raslanei was the elder, and Yaroslav the younger. Then they parted, and each rode his way. Raslanei rode to his Sadonic kingdom, to receive his mother’s blessing, as he wished to marry the daughter of the Tsar of Shtchetin, and rule over that city. But Yaroslav rode on and on for half a year, until he came to the kingdom of Daniil the White. On entering the city he went straight to the prison, before which a strong guard was posted: so he slew them all, broke open the gates, entered the prison, and said: “Hail, O Tsar Kartaus, and thou my father, Prince Lasar, and ye twelve knights! How does Heaven protect you?” But the Tsar Kartaus answered: “Man, whence are thou, and what is thy name?” “O Tsar,” replied Yaroslav, “I was born in thy kingdom, the son of Prince Lasar, and my name is Yaroslav. I have fulfilled thy commands and slain the mighty Tsar, and have taken some of his blood.” Then said Kartaus: “If thy name is indeed Yaroslav Lasarevich, and thou hast slain the Tsar and taken of his blood, anoint our eyes with it; then we shall see the light of heaven and shall believe thee.”

So Yaroslav took the blood from his phial and anointed their eyes, and they saw again; thereat they were overjoyed, and with tears exclaimed: “O Yaroslav Lasarevich, it is indeed he!” and they embraced him. Then the Tsar Kartaus asked him: “Where hast thou been so long?” “Wait an instant,” replied Yaroslav; and so saying, he left the prison, mounted his good steed, and rode out of the city.

Early the next morning Yaroslav cried out with a loud voice; and when Prince Daniil the White heard the shout, he ordered the trumpets to sound and the drums to beat. Then the Murses and Tartars flocked around him, and divers warlike peoples, and Prince Daniil the White rode with them all out of the city.

Yaroslav Lasarevich took his shield and lance, and exclaimed: “As the falcon pounces upon white swans and grey ducks, so darts the brave Yaroslav Lasarevich upon the army of Daniil the White!” And many as he slew with his sword, his steed trod down yet more, and he killed ten thousand Murses, and a hundred thousand of the common Tartars; and he made Prince Daniil the White prisoner, and led him up to the city. He baptized all the little children up to the age of ten years into the true religion, and pronounced a curse upon theirs. Then he commanded the wife of Prince Daniil the White to be put to death, since she had killed his mother, the

Princess Epistimia; but he spared the life of Prince Daniil and his nobles as he had not slain the Tsar Kartaus and Prince Lasar; he only put out their eyes, and threw them into prison under a strong guard. Then all the citizens came and fell with their faces to the earth, and entreated Yaroslav to reign over them; but instead, he seated the Tsar Kartaus on the throne, and Prince Lasar and the twelve knights were restored to their posts of honour. So there were great rejoicings, and they fell to feasting right merrily.

When the tables were removed, Yaroslav Lasarevich stood up, praying to the ikons of the Saints, and took leave of his father and the Tsar Kartaus. All present followed him with their tears, and entreated him not to leave them, but he mounted his horse, and making his bow, rode off towards the city of Dobri, in the kingdom of the Tsar Vorcholomei, to see the beauty of the Princess Anastasia. Now, in this country there was a large lake, in which lived a huge three-headed Dragon guarding a precious stone, that every year came to the shore and devoured a number of men. The Tsar had proclaimed again and again that if anyone slew this monster he would give them plenty of gold and silver and towns. When Yaroslav came to the city and heard of this proclamation, he mounted his steed again and rode off to the lake. As soon as the monster espied him, he sprang ashore: Yaroslav's horse trembled with fright, and fell on his knees, and Yaroslav was thrown to the ground. Then the Dragon seized and drew him into the lake. Yaroslav, who had nothing but his battle sword, leaped upon the back of the monster, and with one blow struck off his two heads, and was about to cut off the third, when the Dragon turned round, and entreating him, said: "O Yaroslav Lasarevich, spare my life! From this time I will never more come on shore and devour men, but will remain at the bottom of the lake." Then said Yaroslav: "Give me the stone, and I will set you free." So the monster went down into the lake, with Yaroslav sitting upon his back; and Yaroslav received the precious stone, and desired the Dragon to set him again on shore; but no sooner had he done so, than Yaroslav struck off the Dragon's third head, and mounting his steed, rode off to the city of Dobri, where the Tsar Vorcholomei came out to meet him. When the Tsar heard his name, and the exploit he had performed, he was overjoyed; and all the people of the city came and bowed to the ground, and all the little children jumped about, and there was great rejoicing in the city of Dobri. The Tsar in his rapture gave a great feast, and invited all his princes and boyars and people of different ranks, with their wives and children. Then he took Yaroslav by the hand, and seated him by his side at table and said: "Sir Yaroslav Lasarevich, thy will shall rule over me and my whole kingdom; my treasures are open to thee—take gold and silver, and towns and villages; and if thou wilt marry, I will give thee my daughter, the Princess Anastasia, with one-half of my kingdom as her dowry." Then Yaroslav, being merry and light-hearted,

said: "Show me thy daughter, O Tsar Vorcholomei." And the Tsar instantly ordered his daughter to appear before him, dressed in sumptuous attire, and she was more beautiful than any fancy could imagine. Then Vorcholomei took her by the hand and led her to Yaroslav. She reached to him a golden goblet of wine, and Yaroslav said: "Health to thee, dear Princess, the fairest in the wide world, long years of happiness to thee." And he kissed her sugared lips. Then the Princess said to him: "Health to thee, too, my brave and dear knight!" Then Yaroslav went to the Tsar Vorcholomei, and said: "O Tsar, thy fair daughter pleases me, and I will take her to wife." So Vorcholomei immediately commanded everything to be prepared for the wedding: and they all fell again to feasting and making merry.

Early the next morning the Tsar commanded another feast to be made ready, and taking Yaroslav by the hand, said: "Brave knight Sir Yaroslav Lasarevich, I give thee in marriage my dear and beautiful daughter Anastasia: love her well and truly, and live in harmony with her. And, that I may witness your happy life, I bestow on thee as her dowry my whole kingdom: only guard it against enemies." Then said the Tsar to his daughter: "Dear daughter, live with thy husband in peace and love, and honour him, for the husband is always the head over the wife." Thereupon he ordered them to drive off to church and be married; and after the wedding they returned to the royal halls. Yaroslav took the bride by the hand and led her to the Tsar Vorcholomei, his father-in-law. All the princes and boyars, with their wives, brought to him costly presents; and the Tsar received them and said: "Long years of happiness to my lord Prince Yaroslav Lasarevich, my beloved son-in-law, and his wife, my daughter, the fair Princess Anastasia!" Then all the princes and boyars cried aloud with one voice: "Hail, Sir Yaroslav Lasarevich, with thy young bride the fair Princess!" and they bowed them to the ground. Then Yaroslav and the Princess Anastasia, with all the princes and boyars fell to eating and drinking and making merry.

One day, as Yaroslav was conversing with Anastasia, he said: "My dear Tsarina, fairest princess in the world, I have gone through many kingdoms to behold thy beauty, and have heard of it far and wide from every maiden; and now, dear, tell me truly, is there any fairer princess than thou, or any braver knight than I?" Then the Princess replied: "My dear friend, there is no braver or handsomer knight in the world indeed than thou; but as for me—what is there fair and good in me? In the country of the Amazons, in the City of the Sun, there is a Tsarina Polikaria, who herself rules over the land; another such a beauty there is not in the wide world."

When Yaroslav Lasarevich heard this, he could think only of the beautiful Polikaria; and one morning he arose

early, and said to his wife: "My dear Tsarina, I am going a journey to a certain city in a distant country; keep this precious stone which I took from the Dragon. Farewell! if I live, I will return to thee, but if death overtakes me, have a Mass said for me." Thereat the Tsarina wept bitterly, and fell to the ground as if dead with grief. Then Yaroslav went to the Tsar Vorcholomei and said that he wished to pay a visit to his father, Prince Lasar, and took his leave.

Yaroslav journeyed for nine months, until at last he came to the City of the Sun, and dismounted at the gates of the palace. When the Tsarevna Polikaria beheld a handsome knight in the courtyard, she was frightened at his appearance in the castle without her permission; and when he entered she said to him: "Brave knight, whence comest thou, and what dost thou seek in our kingdom?"

He replied: "I am come from the kingdom of the Tsar Kartaus, the son of Prince Lasar and the Princess Epistimia, and my name is Yaroslav. I am come to pay my compliments to thee, and to behold thy unspeakable beauty." At hearing this the Tsarevna Polikaria was rejoiced, took him by his white hands, led him into the royal halls, and said: "Sir Yaroslav Lasarevich, abide here and rule over my kingdom, and thy will shall be my will." As Yaroslav gazed on her beauty he was troubled at heart, but he could not refuse her request, so he remained there and ruled over her kingdom.

Meanwhile the Tsarina Anastasia had a brave little son; her father was greatly rejoiced, and gave him the name of Yaroslav. He had rosy cheeks, eyes like saucers, and a stout body: he was the image of his father, and the Tsar, in his joy, ordered a great feast to be prepared.

When young Yaroslav reached his sixth year, he went to the Court of his grandfather the Tsar Vorcholomei, and the children laughed at him, crying: "Yaroslav, you have no father!" This angered him, and he began to beat them; and when he seized one by the head, his head dropped off, and when he seized a hand, the hand dropped off, and when he seized a foot, the foot dropped off; nevertheless, the princes and boyars dared not complain to the Tsar. Then little Yaroslav went to his mother and said: "Mother, tell me the truth—have I a father or no?" At this the Tsarina Anastasia sighed deeply, and replied with tears: "Thou hast a father, child—the brave knight Yaroslav Lasarevich; he is gone a long journey to the City of the Sun, in the country of the Amazons."

On hearing this, Yaroslav Yaroslavovich put on his armour to go in search of his father; and his mother gave him a golden ring with the precious stone. Then Yaroslav saddled his horse, took leave of his mother and

grandfather, and rode forth to seek his father.

One morning, at early dawn, he arrived at the city of the Sun. Now, at that time Yaroslav, his father, was in the camp; and when he heard the voice of a strange knight, he cried: "Who comes riding this way? I will go out and slay him."

With the swiftness of a falcon's sweep, the two knights, father and son, rushed at each other, and Yaroslavovich struck his father with the butt-end of his lance, and well-nigh overthrew him. Then said Yaroslav, the father: "Young boy, go to! or I'll punish thee!" So they made a second onset, and Yaroslav Lasarevich thrust the butt-end of his lance at his son and unsaddled him. And Yaroslav, the father, aimed at him the sharp point of his lance, and was about to kill him; but young Yaroslav seized the lance with his right hand, and the precious stone sparkled on his finger. Then Yaroslav Lasarevich exclaimed: "Whence comest thou, boy? Whose son art thou, and what is thy name?" And the son answered: "I come from the city of Dobri, in the kingdom of the Tsar Vorcholomei; my father is Yaroslav Lasarevich, and my mother is the Tsarina Anastasia. But I know not my father; and for this reason I am come hither in search of him. My name is Yaroslav."

On hearing this, his father leaped from his horse, raised his son, and pressed him to his heart. Then they mounted their steeds and rode to the city of Dobri, where they found all the people in lamentation, for the Tsar Vorcholomei was dead. But the people recognised the knights, and bowed before them and said: "Hail, our Lord Yaroslav Lasarevich with your noble son! Our Tsar has left the dominion of our kingdom to thee." Then the Tsarevna Anastasia came forth from her palace, fell to the earth, and with tears exclaimed: "O my bright Sun, whence comest thou to warm and cheer us?" Then she took him by his white hands and led him into the royal apartments; and all the people, the princes and boyars, made their obeisance to Yaroslav, and brought him rich presents.

Yaroslav mounted the throne with great pomp, took the sceptre, put on the purple robes, and set the golden crown upon his head. Then he called his son to him and said: "My dear child, take a war-horse, a suit of armour, a battle sword and lance, and ride forth. Sit firmly on thy horse, and be a brave knight, as I have been. Ride to the kingdom of Daniil the White, to the Tsar Kartaus, and thy grandfather Prince Lasar; then to my brother-in-arms, Ivan the Russian knight, who now rules in the kingdom of the Tsar Feodul the Dragon-King,

and to the mighty knight, Raslanei, who rules in the kingdom of the Tsar Fireshield. Inquire after the health of them all, and return to me. Upon the journey be gentle and courteous, but brave.” So Yaroslav received his parent’s blessing, and set out on his travels.

In five years he had journeyed and paid all these visits, and returned to his father. And on the way a little old man met him and stopped up the road; but he asked him: “Old man, why dost thou place thyself in my way, and wilt not let me pass?” And so saying, he was about to ride over him, but the little old man saw his intention and said to him: “Poor knight, wouldst thou kill a little old man? Thou canst get nothing from the old.” This did not please Yaroslav: he drew his sword to slay the man; but just as he was rushing at him the old man blew on him, and Yaroslav could not withstand even this mere breath of wind, and fell from his horse like a sheaf of corn. Then the old man took him by the arm and said: “Poor knight, wilt thou live or die?” Yaroslav was so terrified that he could not answer a word. Then the old man laid him on the ground and said: “No knight, no hero, above all, no man, can stand against me; but art thou not the son of the Tsar in the kingdom of Vorcholomei?” He answered that he was. Then said the old man: “Ride home, but say nothing of me in that kingdom.” And with that he vanished.

Yaroslav went to seek his father and mother, and they came to meet him, and the princes and boyars threw themselves with their faces to the ground before him. Then his father took him by his white hands, kissed him on his sugared lips, led him into the royal halls, seated him at the oaken tables spread with fine cloths, and gave a great feast. And the elder Yaroslav began to question his son, and said: “Thou hast travelled to thy grandfather Prince Lasar, tell me about him and how he is.”

Then Yaroslav delivered the following letter from the Tsar Kartaus to his father:—“The Tsar Kartaus sends hearty greetings to the great Tsar and powerful knight Yaroslav Lasarevich! Health to thee and thy lady wife, Anastasia Vorcholomeievna, and to thy son, Yaroslav Yaroslavovich, and to thy princes and boyars and all thy subjects! I continue to rule happily in my kingdom!” Upon the same paper was written by Prince Lasar to his son: “To my dear son Yaroslav Lasarevich, and my dear daughter-in-law, Anastasia Vorcholomeievna, my grandson, Yaroslav Yaroslavovich, and thy whole kingdom, peace and blessing! Rule and govern happily, and mayest thou be prosperous for many long years!”

Yaroslav Lasarevich was greatly rejoiced, and said to his son: “Hast thou been to visit my brother-in-law, Prince

Ivan the Russian Knight?” And young Yaroslav gave a letter likewise from him to his father, in which was written as follows:—“To the mighty Tsar of Tsars, and Knight of Knights, my elder brother Yaroslav Lasarevich, hearty greetings! Hail to thee, and happiness for many years, with thy lady wife, Anastasia Vorcholomeievna, and thy son, the valiant knight Yaroslav, and thy whole empire! Sire, when thy son entered my kingdom, I was returning from battle; I knew not thy son, and imagined he was a knight come to subdue my kingdom. I attacked him, and was about to cut off his head with my battle sword; but he seized his long lance, and with the butt-end thrust so boldly at my heart that I could hardly keep my seat in my saddle; then said he: ‘I am the son of Yaroslav Lasarevich.’ When I heard these words I pardoned him; but the wound he gave me is not yet healed.”

Then Yaroslav delivered to his father another letter, from the knight, Sir Raslanei, which ran as follows: “I, the great Tsar Raslanei Prochorovich, to my younger brother, the great Tsar and powerful knight, Yaroslav Lasarevich, send hearty greetings! And, with this greeting, health and happiness to thee also, O Tsar, with thy fair lady wife, Anastasia Vorcholomeievna, and thy son the brave knight Yaroslav Yaroslavovich! Thy son has cleft my head and has pierced me through with the butt-end of his lance, and my wounds remain still unhealed; but I heard that he was thy son, and have pardoned him, and sent him back to thee uninjured.”

Then Yaroslav related to his father everything in order; and soon the feast was prepared, and they all made merry, and were in great joy at Yaroslav’s return. Then began Yaroslav Lasarevich to praise the bravery of his son, and to tell how he had overthrown Tsars and powerful knights; whereat all the princes and boyars marvelled at his bravery, and declared there were no other such knights in the world as these, father and son, and that no one could stand against them.

Yaroslav Lasarevich subdued many cities to his dominion; and many others, when they heard of his bravery, surrendered voluntarily to his power. And he sat upon the throne in good health for twenty years, and his age was forty-and-nine years and three months when he died. His wife, Anastasia Vorcholomeievna, wept and was inconsolable for the loss of her husband, and she also soon died of grief. And her son Yaroslav wept for his father, the mighty knight Yaroslav Lasarevich, and long too wept for his mother. Soon after he mounted the throne of his father, and ruled with renown and glory.

Read more fairy tales on [Fairytalez.com](http://Fairytalez.com)