



The Story of Ivan and the Daughter of the Sun

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Ukrainian

Intermediate
8 min read

There were once upon a time four brethren, and three of them remained at home, while the fourth went out to seek for work. This youngest brother came to a strange land, and hired himself out to a husbandman for three gold pieces a year. For three years he served his master faithfully, so, at the end of his time, he departed with nine gold pieces in his pocket. The first thing he now did was to go to a spring, and into this spring he threw three of his gold pieces. “Let us see now,” said he, “if I have been honest, they will come swimming back to me.” Then he lay down by the side of the spring and went fast asleep. How long he slept there, who can tell? but at any rate he woke up at last and went to the spring, but there was no sign of his money to be seen. Then he threw three more of the gold pieces into the spring, and again he lay down by the side of it and slept. Then he got up and went and looked into the spring, and still there was no sign of the money. So he threw in his three remaining gold pieces, and again lay down and slept. The third time he arose and looked into the spring, and there, sure enough, was his money: all nine of the gold pieces were floating on the surface of the water!

And now his heart felt lighter, and he gathered up the nine gold pieces and went on his way. On the road he fell in with three katsapi with a laden wagon. He asked them concerning their wares, and they said they were

carrying a load of incense. He begged them straightway to sell him this incense. Then they sold it to him for the gold pieces, and when he had bought it and they had departed, he kindled fire and burnt the incense, and offered it up to God as a sweet-smelling sacrifice. Then an angel flew down to him, and said, "Oh, thou that hast offered this sweet-smelling sacrifice to God, what dost thou want for thine own self? Dost thou want a tsardom, or great riches? Or, perchance, the desire of thy heart is a good wife? Speak, for God will give thee whatsoever thou desirest." When the man had listened to the angel, he said to him, "Tarry a while! I will go and ask those people who are ploughing yonder." Now those people who were ploughing there were his own brethren, but he did not know that they were his brethren. So he went up and said to the elder brother, "Tell me, uncle, what shall I ask of God? A tsardom, or great riches, or a good wife? Tell me, which of the three is the best gift to ask for?"--And his eldest brother said to him, "I know not, and who does know? Go and ask some one else." So he went to the second brother, who was ploughing a little farther on. He asked him the same question, but the man only shrugged his shoulders and said he didn't know either. Then he went to the third brother, who was the youngest of the three, and also ploughing there.

And he asked him, saying, "Tell me, now, which is the best gift to ask of God: a tsardom, or great riches, or a good wife?"--And the third brother said, "What a question! Thou art too young for a tsardom, and great riches last but for a little while; ask God for a good wife, for if it please God to give thee a good wife, 'tis a gift that will bless thee all thy life long." So he went back to the angel and asked for a good wife. Then he went on his way till he came to a certain wood, and, looking about him, he perceived that in this wood was a lake. And while he was looking at it, three wild doves came flying along and lit down upon this lake. They threw off their plumage and plunged into the water, and then he saw that they were not wild doves, but three fair ladies. They bathed in the lake, and in the meantime the youth crept up and took the raiment of one of them and hid it behind the bushes.

When they came out of the water the third lady missed her clothes. Then the youth said to her, "I know where thy clothes are, but I will not give them to thee unless thou wilt be my wife."--"Good!" cried she, "thy wife will I be." Then she dressed herself, and they went together to the nearest village. When they got there, she said to him, "Now go to the nobleman who owns the land here, and beg him for a place where we may build us a hut." So he went right up to the nobleman's castle and entered his reception-room, and said, "Glory be to God!"--"For ever and ever!" replied the nobleman. "What dost thou want here, Ivan?"--"I have come, sir, to beg of thee a place where I may build me a hut."--"A place for a hut, eh? Good, very good. Go home, and I'll

“speak to my overseer, and he shall appoint thee a place.”--So he returned from the nobleman’s castle, and his wife said to him, “Go now into the forest and cut down an oak, a young oak, that thou canst span round with both arms.”

So he cut down such an oak as his wife had told him of, and she built a hut of the oak, for the overseer had come and shown them a place where they might build their hut. But when the overseer returned home he praised loudly to his master the wife of this Ivan. “She is such and such,” said he. “Fair she may be,” replied the nobleman, “but she is another’s.”--“She need not be another’s for long,” replied the overseer. “This Ivan is in our hands; let us send him to see why it is the sun grows so red when he sets.”--“That’s just the same as if you sent him to a place whence he can never return.”--“All the better.”--Then they sent for Ivan, and gave him this errand, and he returned home to his wife, weeping bitterly. Then his wife asked him all about it, and said, “Well, I can tell thee all about the ways of the sun, for I am the sun’s own daughter. So now I’ll tell thee the whole matter.

Go back to this nobleman and say to him that the reason why the sun turns so red as he sets is this: Just as the sun is going down into the sea, three fair ladies rise out of it, and it is the sight of them which makes him turn so red all over!” So he went back and told them. “Oh-ho!” cried they, “if you can go as far as that, you may now go a little farther”; so they told him to go to hell and see how it was there. “Yes,” said his wife, “I know the road that leads to hell also very well; but the nobleman must let his overseer go with thee, or else he never will believe that thou really didst go to hell.”--So the nobleman told his overseer that he must go to hell too, so they went together; and when they got there the rulers of hell laid hands upon the overseer straightway. “Thou dog!” roared they, “we’ve been looking out for thee for some time!” So Ivan returned without the overseer, and the nobleman said to him, “Where’s my overseer?”--“I left him in hell,” said Ivan, “and they said there that they were waiting for you, sir, too.” When the nobleman heard this he hanged himself, but Ivan lived happily with his wife.

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