# The Shepherd's Pipe

Once upon a time there lived in a village an old man and an old woman, poor as poor could be, and they had a son, Ivanushka. From his earliest years he loved to play the pipe. And he played so well that everyone listened — they could never hear enough of him. When Ivanushka struck up a sad tune, everyone grew melancholy, and tears rolled down every face. When he struck up a dance tune, everyone fell to dancing and could not hold back.

Ivanushka grew up and said to his father and mother:
— I shall go, father and mother, to hire myself out as a laborer. Whatever I earn, I shall bring it all to you.

He said his farewells and set off.

He came to one village — no one was hiring. He came to another — and there, too, no workers were needed.

Ivanushka went on.

He walked and walked and came to a far-off village. He went from hut to hut, asking:
— Does anyone need a laborer?

A peasant came out of one hut and said:
— Would you hire on to tend sheep?

— I will, it's no hard task!

— No hard task, that's true. Only I have one condition: if you tend them well, I'll pay you double wages. But if you lose even one little sheep from my flock, you'll get nothing, and I'll drive you off without a penny!

— With any luck I won't lose one! — answered Ivanushka.

— That's the spirit, mind you!

They struck a bargain, and Ivanushka began tending the flock.

At first light he would leave the yard, and he returned when the sun had set.

As he came back from the pasture, the master and mistress were already standing at the gate, counting the sheep:
— One, two, three... ten... twenty... forty... fifty...

All the sheep were whole!

So a month passed, and another, and a third. Soon it would be time to settle accounts with the shepherd and pay him his wages.

— What's this? — thought the master. — How is it the shepherd keeps every last sheep safe? In past years sheep always went missing: a wolf would drag one off, or they'd stray somewhere and get lost... This is no accident. I must see what the shepherd does at the pasture.

Before dawn, while everyone was still asleep, the master took a sheepskin coat, turned it inside out with the fleece outward, pulled it on, and slipped into the sheepfold. He got down on all fours among the sheep. He stood there waiting for the shepherd to drive the flock out to pasture.

As the sun rose, Ivanushka got up and drove the sheep out. The sheep bleated and ran off. And the master, though it was hard for him, did not fall behind — he ran along with the sheep, bleating:
— Baa-baa-baa! Baa-baa-baa!

And all the while he thought:
— Now I'll find out everything, I'll get to the bottom of it!

He thought Ivanushka wouldn't notice him. But Ivanushka was sharp-eyed, and he spotted him at once, only he gave no sign of it — he drove the sheep on, and every now and then he'd flick them with his whip. And every time he aimed straight at the master's back!

He drove the sheep to the edge of the forest, sat down under a little bush, and began chewing a crust of bread.

The sheep wandered about the clearing, nibbling the grass. And Ivanushka kept an eye on them. Whenever he saw that some sheep wanted to dart into the forest, he'd strike up a tune on his pipe at once. All the sheep would come running to him.

And the master kept crawling about on all fours, poking his head at the ground as though he were nibbling the grass.

He grew tired, worn out, but he was ashamed to show himself: the shepherd would tell the neighbors, and there would be no end to the disgrace!

When the sheep had eaten their fill, Ivanushka said to them:
— Well, you're fed and content, now we can have a dance!

And he struck up a dance tune on his pipe.

The sheep set to leaping and dancing, tapping their little hooves! And the master did the same: though he was neither fed nor content, he leapt out from the middle of the flock and began dancing a squatting dance. He danced and danced, his feet performing all sorts of tricks, and he couldn't stop himself!

Ivanushka played faster and faster.

And the sheep and the master danced faster and faster after him.

The master grew exhausted. The sweat poured off him like rain. He was red all over, his hair all disheveled... He couldn't bear it and cried out:
— Oh, laborer, stop playing!.. I can't take any more!

But Ivanushka seemed not to hear — he played and played!

At last he stopped and said:
— Oh, master! Is that you?

— It's me...

— But how did you get here?

— Oh, I just wandered in by chance...

— Then why did you put on the sheepskin coat?

— It seemed cold in the morning...

And with that he darted behind the bushes, and was gone.

He dragged himself home and said to his wife:
— Well, wife, we must send the laborer off as quickly as we can, all's well that ends well, we must pay him his wages...

— Why so? We've never paid anyone, and now suddenly we'll pay him...

— We can't not pay. He'll shame us so that we won't be able to show our faces to people.

And he told her how the shepherd had forced him to dance, how he had nearly danced him to death.

The mistress listened and said:
— You're a real fool! As if you had to dance! He won't make me dance! When he comes, I'll tell him to play. You'll see what happens.

The master began to beg his wife:
— If you've set your mind to such a thing, put me in a chest and tie me up in the

loft to a crossbeam, so that I don't start dancing along with you... I've had enough! I danced my fill this morning, I can barely stay on my feet.

The mistress did just so. She put her husband into a large chest and tied it up in the loft to a crossbeam. And she herself waited and waited for the laborer to come back from the fields.

In the evening, as soon as Ivanushka had driven the flock in, the mistress said to him:
— Is it true that you have such a pipe, to which everyone dances?

— It's true.

— Well then, play! If I too start to dance, we'll pay you your wages, but if I don't dance, we'll drive you off.

— Very well, — said Ivanushka, — have it your way.

He took out his pipe and began to strike up a dance tune. And the mistress at that moment was kneading dough. She couldn't hold back and fell to dancing. She danced, all the while tossing the dough from one hand to the other.

And Ivanushka played faster and faster, louder and louder.

And the mistress danced faster and faster.

The master in the loft heard the pipe. He began to stir his hands and feet in his chest, to dance a little. But it was cramped in there, and he kept knocking his head against the lid. He fidgeted and fidgeted, and then he broke loose from the crossbeam along with the chest. He smashed through the lid with his head, leapt out of the chest, and began dancing a squatting dance about the loft! He tumbled down from the loft and crashed into the hut. There he began to dance along with his wife, waving his arms and legs!

And Ivanushka went out onto the porch, sat down on a step, and kept playing, without ceasing.

The master and mistress rushed out after him into the yard and began to dance and leap about in front of the porch.

They both grew tired, they could barely breathe, but they couldn't stop.

And watching them, the hens began to dance, and the sheep, and the cows, and the dog by its kennel.

Then Ivanushka got up from the porch and, still playing, walked toward the gate. And everyone straggled after him.

The mistress saw that things were going badly. She began to implore Ivanushka:
— Oh, laborer, stop, don't play any more! Don't leave the yard! Don't shame us before people! We'll settle up with you honestly! We'll pay you your wages as we agreed!

— Oh no! — said Ivanushka. — Let the good folk have a look at you, let them have a laugh!

He went out through the gate and played even louder. And the master and mistress with all the cows, sheep, and hens began to dance even faster. And they spun, and they twirled, and they squatted, and they leapt!

The whole village came running — old and young alike, laughing, pointing their fingers...

Ivanushka played until evening. In the morning he received his wages and went home to his father and mother. And the master and mistress hid in the hut. They sat there and dared not show their faces to anyone.