About the Eagle

There lived a widow, and she had three sons. Two of the sons were clever, and the third was foolish. And so they went out to the field to reap. And all four of them reaped. And the foolish son kept calling his mother to go home. The mother answered them: "No, my son, reap one more sheaf each and then we'll go." They reaped one more sheaf each again. Again the sons, all three of them, said: "Let's go home, mama, we're hungry!" And she said again: "Well, sons, reap two more sheaves each." Well, they reaped. Well, she answered them: "Well, let's go home now."

They came home, ate, and all lay down to sleep. The foolish son was laid to sleep apart, while the clever ones lay with their mother in a row. And at night an eagle flew in and carried off their mother. And they did not hear it. In the morning the sons rose — their mother was gone. They say: "You, Vanyushka, did you not hear or see where our mother went?" And he answered them: "No, brothers, I didn't see!" And they, the clever brothers, the two of them, began to agree to go and search for her, and leave the foolish one at home. And the two of them went.

The foolish one ran after them. "Brothers," he says, "where are you going? Take me with you!" They answered him: "We're going to search for our mother, and you stay at home." But he still did not listen to them: "All the same," he says, "I'm going with you!" And he went with them. They walked far and came to a certain pit. And so they sat down near this pit to rest. "Isn't our mother down there?" he says. And the foolish son sits weaving a rope from reeds. And he says: "Brothers, lower me into this pit." And they lowered him down.

And he went down there. And he came to a certain pillar, and on this pillar was written that whoever goes to the right will herd cattle for a year, and whoever goes to the left will be torn apart by a wild beast, and whoever goes straight ahead will find his mother. And he went along that road.

And he came to a certain little hut. He went into this hut and saw his mother. And they rejoiced there, and talked everything over, and she hid him in a chest. The eagle flew in and said that it smelled of Russian spirit. She answered him that she had no one there. The eagle ate and flew away again. At that very minute they got ready, took a few things, and set off with the son on the road, and came again to that pillar and went in the direction where they were to herd the flock for a year.

And they came to a village and hired themselves out to herd. Ivan began to herd. His masters ordered him not to drive the herd beyond that bank. And he said he would not. And still he kept thinking about how he had been told not to drive them beyond that bank. And one day he did just that, drove them beyond the bank, and a sorceress flew in and laid low many cows. Ivan at that very minute turned the cattle back and drove them home, and said that many cattle had perished. The masters told him that if he ever drove them out again, it would go badly for him. And he said: "I won't."

And he herded all summer, and began to think of home. A black raven flew up to him, and he began to talk with her: "Hire yourself to carry us to our homeland. I'll buy you meat for this." And the raven agreed. Ivan saved up money. He bought a small tub of meat, and they flew home.

They flew for a long time. And for every verst he gave her a piece of meat. And when they were a little short of their homeland, Ivan had run out of meat. He thinks: "What am I to do about this?" And he cut two pieces of meat from his leg. They flew one verst. He gave her the piece. They flew another, he gave her the other.

They flew home. The brothers were not at home. They lived there a little; three weeks passed — the brothers came home. They rejoiced that their own mother was at home. They talked everything over and made a feast, celebrated, and began to live well. The end.