Three Kingdoms — Copper, Silver, and Gold — Version 1

Once upon a time, there lived an old man and an old woman; they had three sons: the first was Egorushko Zalet, the second was Misha Kosolapy, and the third was Ivashko Zapechnik. Well, the father and mother decided to marry them off; they sent their eldest son to look for a bride, and he walked and walked—for a long time; wherever he looked at the girls, he couldn't pick out a bride for himself, none of them pleased him. Then he met a three-headed serpent on the road and was frightened, but the serpent said to him: "Where are you headed, good man?" Egorushko said: "I've gone courting, but I can't find a bride." The serpent said: "Come with me; I will lead you, and we'll see if you can get a bride?"

So they walked and walked, and came to a large stone. The serpent said: "Turn the stone aside; there you shall receive whatever you desire." Egorushko tried to turn it aside, but he could do nothing. The serpent said to him: "Then there is no bride for you!" And Egorushko returned home and told his father and mother everything. The father and mother thought and thought again about what to do, and sent their middle son, Misha Kosolapy. The same thing happened to him. So the old man and the old woman thought and thought, and didn't know what to do: if they sent Ivashka Zapechnogo, he wouldn't be able to do anything!

But Ivashko Zapechny began asking to go and see the serpent himself; at first his father and mother wouldn't let him, but later they did. And Ivashko also walked and walked, and met the three-headed serpent. The serpent asked him: "Where are you headed, good man?" He said: "My brothers wanted to get married, but couldn't get a bride; and now it's my turn." — "Come along then, I'll show you; we'll see if you can get a bride?"

So the serpent and Ivashko set off, came to that same stone, and the serpent ordered the stone to be moved from its place. Ivashko struck it, and the stone was gone as if it never were—it flew from its place; there a hole in the ground appeared, and near it straps were fastened. So the serpent said: "Ivashko, sit on the straps; I will lower you, and you will go there and come to three kingdoms, and in each kingdom you will see a maiden."

Ivashko was lowered and set off; he walked and walked, and came to the copper kingdom; he entered and saw a maiden, beautiful in appearance. The maiden said: "Welcome, unprecedented guest! Come and sit wherever you see a place; and tell

me, whence do you come and whither do you go?" — "Ah, fair maiden!" said Ivashko. "You haven't fed me, you haven't given me drink, and already you start asking questions." So the maiden set out all kinds of food and drink on the table; Ivashko drank and ate and began to tell how he was going to seek a bride for himself: "if you show me favor—I ask you to marry me." — "No, good man," said the maiden, "go further, you will come to the silver kingdom: there is a maiden there even more beautiful than I!" — and she gave him a silver ring.

So the fine fellow thanked the maiden for her bread and salt, took his leave, and went on; he walked and walked, and came to the silver kingdom; he entered and saw: there sat a maiden more beautiful than the first. He prayed to God and bowed: "Greetings, fair maiden!" She answered: "Welcome, passing fine young fellow! Sit and tell your tale: whose son are you, and whence, and by what deeds have you come here?" — "Ah, beautiful maiden!" said Ivashko. "You haven't given me drink, you haven't fed me, and already you start asking questions." So the maiden set the table, brought all kinds of food and drink; then Ivashko drank and ate as much as he wanted, and began to tell how he had gone to seek a bride, and asked her to marry him. She said to him: "Go further, there is also a golden kingdom, and in that kingdom there is a maiden even more beautiful than I," — and she gave him a golden ring.

Ivashko took his leave and went further, walked and walked, and came to the golden kingdom, entered and saw a maiden more beautiful than all. So he prayed to God and, as was proper, greeted the maiden. The maiden began to ask him: whence and whither was he going? "Ah, fair maiden!" said he. "You haven't given me drink, you haven't fed me, and already you start asking questions." So she set out on the table all kinds of food and drink, better than which one could not ask.

Ivashko Zapechnik partook of everything well and began to tell: "I am going, seeking a bride for myself; if you wish to marry me, then come with me." The maiden agreed and gave him a golden ball of yarn, and they went together.

They walked and walked, and came to the silver kingdom—there they took the maiden with them; again they walked and walked, and came to the copper kingdom—and there they took the maiden too, and all went to the hole from which one must climb out, and the straps hang there; and the elder brothers were already standing at the hole, wanting to climb in there to look for Ivashko.

So Ivashko seated the maiden from the copper kingdom on the straps and shook the strap; the brothers pulled and pulled out the maiden, and lowered the straps again. Ivashko seated the maiden from the silver kingdom, and they pulled her out too, and lowered the straps again; then he seated the maiden from the golden

kingdom, and they pulled her out too, and lowered the straps. Then Ivashko himself sat down: the brothers pulled him too, pulled and pulled, but when they saw that it was Ivashko, they thought: "If we pull him out, he won't give us a single maiden!" — and they cut the straps; Ivashko fell down. So, nothing to be done, he wept and wept, and went on; he walked and walked, and saw: sitting on a tree stump was an old man—a quarter of a fathom tall, with a beard an ell long—and he told him everything, how and what had happened to him. The old man taught him to go further: "You will come to a little hut, and in the hut lies a long man from corner to corner, and you ask him how to get back to Rus."

So Ivashko walked and walked, and came to the little hut, entered and said: "Mighty Idolishche! Do not destroy me: tell me, how can I get to Rus?" — "Fie, fie!" spoke Idolishche. "Nobody called the Russian louse, it came of its own accord. Well then, go beyond thirty lakes; there stands a hut on a chicken leg, and in the hut lives a baba-yaga; she has an eagle-bird, and it will carry you out." So the fine fellow walked and walked, and came to the hut; he entered the hut, and the baba-yaga cried: "Fie, fie, fie! Russian louse, why have you come here?" Then Ivashko said: "Well now, granny, I have come by order of the mighty Idolishche to ask you for the mighty eagle-bird, so that it may carry me out to Rus." — "Go then," said the baba-yaga, "into the garden; at the door stands a guard, and you take the keys from him and go through seven doors; when you unlock the last doors—then the eagle will ruffle its wings, and if you are not afraid of it, then mount it and fly; only take some beef with you, and when it looks back, give it a piece of meat.

Ivashko did everything as the baba-yaga had ordered, mounted the eagle and flew; he flew and flew, the eagle looked back—Ivashko gave it a piece of meat; he flew and flew and often gave the eagle meat, he had already fed it all, and there was still a long way to fly. The eagle looked back, and there was no meat; so the eagle snatched a piece of meat from Ivashko's scruff, ate it, and carried him out to that same hole into Rus. When Ivashko dismounted from the eagle, the eagle spat out the piece of meat and ordered him to apply it to his scruff. Ivashko applied it, and the scruff healed over. Ivashko came home, took the maiden from the golden kingdom from his brothers, and they began to live and prosper, and they live there still. I was there, I drank beer; the beer ran down my mustache, but didn't get into my mouth.