

Stories from

As the Sun Sets



Mr Moon and Miss Sun -
A story from Korea

미스터 문 양 해

chytrá holka rolník - The Clever Peasant Girl
A story from the Czech Republic

Князь Иван, колдунья Малыш и младшая

**Prince Ivan, the Witch Baby and the Little Sister
Of The Sun**

A story from Russia



Mr Moon and Miss Sun -

A story from Korea

미스터 문 양 해

A long time ago, there lived a little brother and sister with their mother in a small cottage deep in a valley far, far away.

One day, their mother went to another village to help prepare for a great feast. The children had to stay home alone and watch over the house. Their mother finished her work as soon as she could and started out for home, but the sky had already become dark.

As she went over the first hill, the children's mother was suddenly startled by a big tiger. The tiger roared, then walked up and sniffed her. She was very frightened indeed.

"If you give me a rice cake," said the tiger. "I won't eat you."

She quickly threw the tiger a piece of rice cake and started to run. The tiger ate the rice cake in one swallow and dashed to the next hill. When she reached the other side of the next hill, the tiger was already waiting along the path in front of her.

"If you give me a rice cake, I won't eat you," said the tiger in a deep voice.

The poor woman threw the tiger another piece of rice cake and started to run again.

The tiger swallowed the rice cake at once and raced ahead of her.

At each hill he waited for her, growling, "If you give me a rice cake, I won't eat you."

Before long, she had given the tiger the last of her rice cakes. So the next time the tiger said, "If you give me a rice cake, I won't eat you." She had no more to give, then the tiger ate her all up.

It became darker and darker, and finally it was night. The children were very worried, but still their mother didn't come home.

The girl said to her older brother, "I'm scared. Where is Mother?"

As the boy was older, he thought he should try to smile, then said, "Don't worry. She'll be home soon. Let's wait a little longer."

Just at that moment, they heard a loud noise. Someone was trying to open the door latch. Then they heard a voice saying, "Children, open the door. It's your Mother."

"Oh! It's Mother!" said the little girl. She jumped up to open the door. The boy grabbed her. "Wait!" he said, "That does not sound like Mother's voice."

Then, "I caught a cold and my throat is sore," said the voice from outside. "Stop playing around and open the door."

The boy held his younger sister tight. He was not sure what to do.

“Show me your hand.” He shouted.

A big, shaggy, yellow paw pushed through the paper window.

“That’s not Mother’s hand!” cried the girl.

Hearing this, the voice outside said, “I worked very hard today. My hands are all rough now. Stop playing games and open the door right away.”

The children still hesitated to open the door.

“You must be very hungry. I’ll make you something to eat,” said the tiger as it hurried into the kitchen wearing Mother’s clothes.

He boy felt bad. “Poor Mother,” he thought, “I’ll help with supper.”

But when he walked into the kitchen, he saw a tiger’s tail coming from under his mother’s dress.

“It’s a tiger!” he told himself.

Quickly and calmly he led his little sister outside.

“That’s not Mother in the kitchen,” he told her. “It’s a tiger! We have to hide.”

Together they climbed up an old tree by the well. Back inside the house, the tiger was warming himself by the fire of the kitchen oven.

After resting there for a while, he licked his lips and said to himself, “It’s time for supper. I’m going to make a nice little meal out of those two kids.”

The he flung the kitchen doors open. But the house was completely empty. “Where did my supper run off to?” the tiger wondered.

He ran through the house, turning over the furniture and breaking the dishes as he looked for the two children.

Then he happened to see the girl’s shadow move.

“Ah-ha! They climbed up the tree. How silly they are!” the tiger muttered to himself.

“Children!” he called up to them. “What are you doing climbing trees at night? You could fall and hurt yourselves! Get down here this instant!”



The little girl began to tremble with fear, but together the children stayed up in the tree.

The tiger then set about climbing the tree to catch them. Every time he got halfway up the tree trunk, he slipped back down to the ground.

“How did you two climb up there?” the tiger shouted from below. “The tree is so slippery that your poor old Mother can’t climb it. Come down this moment!”

The boy decided to play a trick on the tiger. “It was easy, Mother. Get some sesame oil from the kitchen and rub it all over the trunk.”

The tiger believed what the boy said, so did exactly as he was told. He brought a big jar of sesame oil from the kitchen and spread it all over the trunk of the tree. Then he tried to climb the tree again, but of course the sesame oil made the trunk even more slippery than before. The tiger slid down to the ground hard and fast, landing right on his tail. “Ow!” he cried.

The girl could not help laughing. “Silly old fool!” she laughed. “If you used an axe, climbing the tree would be easy.” She then added. Just as soon as she said this, the girl realised she shouldn’t have spoken and stopped laughing.

But it was too late, for the tiger already heard what she had said. He found an axe and struck at the tree. Then he pulled the axe out and struck the tree again, higher up this time. Using the cuts in the trunk as steps, the tiger was able to climb higher and higher up the tree.

The girl looked down at the tiger coming slowly up the tree and then looked up at the sky.

“Oh, Heaven, please save us,” she prayed. “Please send us a rope.”

Just as the girl had asked, a rope dropped gently down from the sky above. The girl and the boy quickly grabbed the rope and were pulled up away into the sky.

At exactly that moment, the tiger reached the highest branch of the tree. Watching the children disappear into the clouds, he became very angry. Repeating what he had heard the little girl say, he prayed, “Oh, Heaven, send me a rope, too.”

A second rope dropped gently down to the tree. “Follow that rope!” the tiger roared as he grabbed on. The Heavenly rope carried the tiger above the ground.

But the rope was rotten and snapped, sending the tiger falling to the earth below. Every bone in his body was broken.

The two children kept going higher and higher.

The boy became the Sun, shining brightly all day long. The girl became the Moon, lighting dark roads at night.

But the girl was very frightened and didn’t want to be all alone at night. So her brother changed places with her and became the Moon.

Ever since that day, the girl was called Miss Sun and the boy was called Mr Moon, and no one could look at the face of the once shy Miss Sun, because now she is brighter than anything.

chytrá holka rolník - The Clever Peasant Girl

A story from the Czech Republic

Once upon a time there were two Brothers, one a wealthy farmer without children and the other a poor peasant with a daughter called Lenka. When she was 12 he sent her to work on this brother's farm to work as a Goose Girl, looking after the geese. She worked very hard for her keep and after 2 years her uncle employed her as a maid. Then one day he said...

"Listen Lenka, Instead of your wages I'll give you a 2 week old calf. I'll bring it up on the farm and when it's a full grown cow it'll be more use to you than money."

"Yes, let's do that" she said.

And from that day on she worked even harder than before and never asked her uncle for a penny, for she knew her reward was growing big in the field. But her uncle was a rogue and was not to be trusted.



3 hard working years passed and one day Lenka heard that her father was ill so she decided to return home, before leaving she asked her uncle for the calf, which had grown into a good, strong cow.

"The cow! I couldn't possibly have promised you something as valuable as a cow, you must be mistaken, I didn't promise such a gift, you cheeky maid. Here have some money for your trouble and be gone"

(Aghast, she looks at the few coins in her palm)

-Lenka returned home very upset and told her Father what had happened. As soon as he was well again he went to the nearby town and brought the matter before the judge. The judge did not know what to do for the best: the poor brother was in the right but he did not want to make the rich brother angry, so he thought of a cunning plan to solve the problem. He spoke to each brother separately and gave them a riddle to solve:

"What is sharpest, what is sweetest, what is richest?"

Whoever found the right answer first would have the cow.

The two brothers returned to their homes, both in bad tempers and puzzled about the riddle.

"Well, what happened, don't tell me you lost, or did you?" said the rich brother's wife.

"no, I didn't lose, I may still win, but I must solve this stupid riddle. What is sharpest, what is sweetest, what is richest?"

"What a childish riddle. I know all the answers. What could be sharper than our black dog? What could be sweeter than our honey? What could be richer than our money-box?"

**"Wife, you are right, Of course! You've found the answers and the cow will be ours."
And with this they both sat down and enjoyed a hearty meal of roast beef and mashed potatoes.**

The poor brother was rather sad when he returned home to his wife and daughter.

"Well dad, how did it go?" said Lenka.

"Terrible! I've got to solve this impossible riddle – What is sharpest, what is sweetest, what is richest?"

"Is that all? Well cheer up Dad, I'll soon find the answers, let me sleep on it and I'll tell you by morning."

Lenka sat on her bed and went over and over the riddle in her head "What is sharpest?, a knife, a thorn What do you think? A cats claw, cats eye As sharp as cats eyes, that's it! What is sweetest? Chocolate, sweet toffee apples, sweet revenge, sweet dreams, that's it! What is richest? The king, queen, my uncle, bacon, eggs and black pudding, rich soil for growing – that's it!" (writes her answer's down)

The next morning she gave her father the answers

"But don't tell him I told you"



In the court The Judge first called the wealthy brother, who ran forward saying...
“I know the answers, for what could be sharper than my dog who hears everything? What could be sweeter than my honey that has been lying in a cask for 4 years? And what could be richer than my money box where I keep all my money?” (Judge looks unimpressed)

“Let me now hear what your brother has to say”

(reading the note) Nervously the poor brother stepped forward.

“Sir I believe that the sharpest thing is the eye that can see through everything. The sweetest thing is sleep, for sleep can make you forget your worries and give you sweet dreams, and the richest thing must be the earth from which all of mother natures’ wealth comes.”

“You guessed correctly and shall have the cow. But tell me who told you those answers, for you couldn’t possibly have found out for yourself”.

At first he tried to hide the truth but eventually gave in and owned up and admitted that his daughter had helped him.

“well if you daughter is that clever tell her to come and see me tomorrow, but she must come neither dressed nor undressed, neither by day or night, neither on foot nor in a carriage”

The poor brother hurried home full of worry and told his daughter everything that had happened, and of her impossible task.

“Don’t worry Dad. I’ll manage all right,” said Lenka.

That night, 2 hours after midnight, Lenka got up “Neither dressed nor undressed?” (finds a thin sack and puts it on, takes one shoe and sock off, then puts the shoe back on, then takes the other shoe off, clock strikes 3)

When the clock struck 3 – at the very moment when night is about to turn into day – she rode to town on her goat. (gets on goat and it bleats with indignation)

The Judge could not believe his eyes when he saw Lenka coming towards him at the break of day, half clothed riding a goat, and was so impressed by the cleverness that he went straight up to her and asked her to be his wife.

“All right why not? That would suit me very well.” She said.

The day before the wedding the judge promised to love and care for his clever, pretty new wife if she could promise him one thing in return...

“Never meddle or interfere in my affairs, and should you do so, you must return straight back to your fathers’ house.”

“I’ll do just as you wish”.

The next day they married and they were both very happy. Lenka became a lady of importance – she was kind to everyone and people liked her very much.

One day 2 peasants came to the judge, one leading a little foal, they wanted the judge to decide which of them was to own the animal. The peasant who owned the foal’s mother, the mare claimed the foal to be his, and the peasant who owned the foal’s father, the stallion also claimed the foal to be his. Now the peasant who owned the stallion was a rich and important man, who managed to persuade the judge with charm and money that he was the rightful owner.

However Lenka overheard the conversation and didn't like the unfair way her husband had acted. So approached the poor farmer and said... "Why did you let him cheat you like that? The foal should always go to the man who owns the mare, a stallion cannot give birth to a foal."

The farmer shrugged and hung his head in despair.

"Look if you promise not to tell my husband I'll tell you what you must do."

(Whispers the plan in his ear)

The man thanked Lenka and promised to do as she suggested..

The following day the poor farmer could be seen climbing Sharman Hill and throwing fishing nets from the top of the hill. (throws out net and waits for the fish) The judge, who always liked to go hunting with his friends at this time of day, passed by and saw the peasant.

"What on earth are you doing?"

"I'm fishing"

"Are you mad?" Cried the judge. "Have you ever heard of fish swimming on top of a hill?"

"If a Stallion can have a foal, fish can swim on top of a hill."

The judge turned red and realised he had been caught out.

"All right smarty pants, the foal is yours, and I was wrong, but you must tell me one thing – who gave you the idea to answer as you did?"

(Peasant struggling to keep the truth a secret then blurts out)

"It was Lenka" (hand over mouth).



The Judge was thoroughly angry and when he returned home he did not even look at his wife, let alone speak to her. After some time he asked

"Do you remember what you promised the day before we got married"

"I Do" she said.

“Why then did you interfere with my affairs, why did you side with the peasant and go against me?”

“Because I hate injustice, the poor farmer had been cheated, and you know it.”

The Judge could not forgive Lenka and asked her to return to her father right away, but not wanting to seem unfair he promised she could take with her whatever she valued most.

“Thank you for all your kindness, if you cannot forgive me I will do as you say and return to my father, but lets have one more meal together before we part, lets be happy and behave as if nothing had happened.”

So they enjoyed a good dinner with plenty of wine and many toasts to their life together (could have a moment of silly toasts, laughter and topping up the wine glass) and several glasses of strong wine later the Husband fell fast asleep.

Without losing any time Lenka ordered the servants to put her husband to bed. Then they picked him up – bed and all – and carried him out of the house to the cottage where Lenka’s father lived.

The sun stood high in the sky when at last the Judge woke up. He looked around, rubbed his eyes, for he was amazed to find himself in a room he did not know. After a while his wife entered the room.

“Are you still here?”

“Why shouldn’t I be here? I’m at home after all.”

“Why then am I here?”

“Didn’t you allow me to take what I valued most? Well it’s you I value most, so I’ve taken you with me”.

(Laughing) “I forgive you, for I see that you are cleverer than I am. From now on you shall be Judge instead of me.”

And so it was, and ever since Lenka took over the work of her husband, all has been well with the people in their district.

КНЯЗЬ ИВАН, КОЛДУНЬЯ МАЛЫШ И МЛАДШАЯ

Prince Ivan, the Witch Baby and the Little Sister Of The Sun

A story from Russia

Once upon a time in Russia there was a Czar and Czarina and there was Little Prince Ivan who was born dumb. Never a word had he spoken since the day he was born. A great disappointment he was to his parents. "A poor sort of Czar will a dumb boy make!" "If only we could have another child. Anything would be better than this tongue tied brat!"

And for that wish they were punished. They took very little care of Prince Ivan and he spent all his time in the stables listening to tales from the Old Groom. Now the groom was wise – he knew about the past, the future, and what was happening under the earth. Some people said that he got his wisdom from the horses. But, anyway, he knew more than other folks and one day he called Prince Ivan to him and said, "You have a new sister. And a bad one at that. For she is a witch and she will grow like a seed of corn. In six weeks she will be fully grown and then with her iron teeth she will eat your father and then your mother and given half the chance she will eat you. There is no saving the old folks but you can escape if you do what I say. I cannot bear the thought of your little body disappearing between her iron teeth. Now go to your father and ask him for the fastest horse he has and ride away as fast as the wind to the end of the world!"

The little Prince ran off and found his father. There was his father and there was his mother and a little baby girl was in his mother's arms, screaming like a little fury.

"Well she's not dumb" said the Czar.

"Father, may I have the fastest horse in the stable?" And these were the first words that ever left his mouth.

"What ! Have you found your voice at last? Yes take whatever horse you want. And see you have a little baby sister. And a fine girl she is too. She has teeth already – even though they are black. But time will take care of that and it is better to born with black teeth than to be born dumb."

Little Prince Ivan shuddered when he heard of the black teeth of his sister. For he knew they were made of iron. He ran to the stable and the groom saddled a big black horse. And Prince Ivan climbed on and galloped off over the wide world. The horse jumped over streams and rivers and hillocks and anything else he came across. "It's a big place this world. I wonder when I shall come to the end of it." On and on galloped Prince Ivan on the big black horse. There were no houses anywhere and it was a long time

since he had seen any people. He began to feel lonely and wondered if he would ever reach the end of the world and could end his journey.



Then he came to a great sandy plain. And there were two old women sitting in the road, bent double and they were sewing. And first one and then the other broke a needle and they took another needle from the box between them and some thread from another box and they threaded their needles and carried on sewing – their old noses almost touching their knees.

“This must be the end of the world,” thought Prince Ivan and he rode up to the old women. “Grandmothers. Is this the end of the world? And may I stay here with you and be safe from my little baby sister who is a witch and has iron teeth and who is after me?

I won’t be any trouble and I could thread your needles when they break.”

“Prince Ivan,” said the old women, “this is not the end of the world. And little good would it do you to stay with us. For as soon as we have broken all our needles and used up all our thread then we shall die. And then where would you be. Your little sister would get you in no time.”

Prince Ivan wept bitterly for he was very little and all alone in the world. He rode on farther over the wide world, the black horse galloping and galloping.

He came to a great forest. And in that forest there was a dreadful noise – the crashing of trees falling, the breaking of branches and the whistling of things being thrown through the air. Prince Ivan rode a came to the Great Giant Tree Rooter who was pulling up trees and throwing them aside as if they were weeds.

“Is this the end of the world? And may I stay here with you and be safe from my little baby sister who is a witch and who has iron teeth and who is after me?” asked Prince Ivan

“This is not the end of the world” roared the Giant. “And little good would it do you to stay here with me. For as soon as I have pulled up all these trees and thrown them down then I shall die. And then where would you be – your baby sister would have you in no time. And as you can see there are only a few trees left.”

And he carried on pulling up trees and hurling them down. The air was full of flying trees.



Prince Ivan cried bitter tears for he was very little and he was all alone. He rode on farther over the wide world, the black horse galloping and galloping. He came among the mountains. And there was a roaring and a crashing in the mountains as if the earth was falling to pieces. One after another whole mountains were lifted into the sky and flung down to earth, so that they broke and scattered into dust. There was a huge giant, Mountain Chucker, picking up the mountains as if they were pebbles and hurling them to little pieces and dust upon the ground.

“Please, great giant, is this the end of the world? And may I stay here with you and be safe from my baby sister who is a witch and has iron teeth?”

“Prince Ivan, this is not the end of the world and little good would it do for you to stay here with me. As soon as I have thrown down all these mountains then I shall die and then where would you be – your sister would have you in a minute. And there are only a few mountains left.”

The giant set to work, lifting up great mountains and hurling them away. The sky was full of flying mountains.

Prince Ivan wept bitter tears for he was very little and all alone. He rode on farther over the wide world, the black horse galloping and galloping.

At last he came to the end of the world, and there, hanging in the sky above him, was the castle of the Little Sister of the Sun. Beautiful it was, made of cloud, and hanging in the sky as if it were built of red roses.

“I should be safe up there.” Thought little Prince Ivan, and just then the Sun’s sister opened the window and beckoned to him.

The horse leapt up high into the air and through the window, into the very courtyard of the castle.

“Stay here and play with me,” said the Little Sister of the Sun and Prince Ivan tumbled off the horse into her arms and laughed because he was so happy.

And Prince Ivan stayed in the cloud castle that hangs over the end of the world and played many games with the Little Sister of the Sun and was very happy and forgot all his troubles.

But one day he climbed up and up to the topmost turret of the castle. From there he could see the whole world. And far away across the mountains, beyond the forest, beyond the wide plains, he saw his father’s palace where he had been born. The roof of the palace was gone and the walls were broken and crumbling. And Prince Ivan came slowly down from the turret, and his eyes were red with weeping.

“Why are your eyes so red?” asked the Little Sister of the Sun.

“It’s the wind up there,” answered Prince Ivan

And the Sun’s Little Sister opened the window and whispered to the winds not to blow so hard.

The next day Prince Ivan went up the topmost turret again and looked out across the wide world to the ruined palace. “She has eaten them all with her iron teeth!” he said to himself. And little Prince Ivan came slowly down from the topmost turret, and his eyes were red with weeping.

“Your eyes are red again”

“It’s the wind” answered Prince Ivan

And the Little Sister of the Sun put her head out of the window and scolded the wind.

On the third day Prince Ivan went up to the topmost turret again and looked out over the wide world to the broken palace where his mother and father had lived. And when he came down the tears were running down his cheeks.

“Why are you crying?” asked the Little Sister of the Sun.

So little Prince Ivan told the Little Sister of the Sun how his sister was a witch, and how he wept to think of his mother and father, and how he had seen the ruins of his father’s palace and how he couldn’t stay here happily with her until he knew how it was with his parents.

“Perhaps it is not too late to save them from her iron teeth. Let me ride back on my big black horse.”

“Do not leave me,” said the Little Sister of the Sun. “ I am lonely here by myself.

“I will ride back on my big black horse, and then I will come and see you again.”

“What must be , must be,” said the Sun’s Little Sister. “You shall go but you must take with you a magic comb, a magic brush and two apples of youth. These apples will make young once more the oldest things on earth.”

Then she kissed little Prince Ivan, and he climbed on his big black horse and leapt out of the window of the castle and galloped over the wide world.

He came to Mountain Chucker, the giant. There was only one mountain left, and the giant was picking it up.

“Well, little Prince Ivan, this is the end.”

And he heaves up the mountain but before he could throw it away, Prince Ivan threw down the magic brush onto the plain, and the brush swelled and burst , and there was range upon range of mountains reaching to the very sky itself.

“Why,” said the giant, “I have enough mountains to last me for another thousand years. Thankyou kindly, little Prince.”

And he set to work, heaving up mountains and tossing them down , while little Prince Ivan galloped on across the wide world.

He came to Tree- rooter, the Giant. There were only two of the great oaks left, and the giant had one in each hand.

“Ah me, little Prince,” sighed the giant, “my life is about to come to an end, for I have only to pull up these two oaks and I then I shall die.”

“Pull them up. Here are plenty more for you.” And prince Ivan threw down the magic comb. And there was a noise of the spreading of branches, of swishing leaves and opening buds – and there before them was a forest of giant oaks stretching before them as far as the eye could see.

“Why thankyou, Prince Ivan, I have enough trees to last me another thousand years.” And he started pulling up the tree and hurling them round his head and laughing joyfully.

Prince Ivan galloped on over the wide world. He came to the two old women. They were crying their eyes out.

“There is only one needle left,” cried one.

“There is only one piece of thread left,” sobbed the second.

“And then we shall die,” they said both together, mumbling with their old mouths.

“Before you use the needle and thread, just eat these apples,” said Prince Ivan and he gave them the apples of youth. They had hardly finished their last mouthfuls when they sat up straight, smiled with red lips, and looked at little Prince Ivan with shining eyes. They had become young girls again, and their grey hair was black as the raven.

“Thankyou kindly, little Prince,” said the two young girls. “You must take with you the handkerchief we have been sewing all these years. Throw it down and it will turn into a lake. Perhaps some day it will be useful to you.”

“Thankyou,” said Prince Ivan and off he gallops across the wide world.

He came at last to his father’s palace. The roof was gone, and there were holes in the walls. He left his horse in the garden and crept up to peep through one of the holes. Inside, in the great hall, was sitting a huge baby girl, filling the hall. There was no room for her to move. She had knocked off the roof with her head. And she sat there in the ruined hall, sucking her thumb.



And while Prince Ivan was watching through the hole, he heard her mutter to herself.

“Eaten the father, eaten the mother,

And now to eat the little brother.”

And she began shrinking, getting smaller and smaller every moment. And a little baby girl came running out of the ruined palace.

“You must be my little brother, Ivan,” she called out to him, and came up to him smiling. But as she smiled the little Prince saw that her teeth were black and as she shut her mouth he heard them clink together like pokers.

“Come in,” she said and she took little Prince Ivan with her to a room in the palace, all broken down and cobwebbed. There was a dulcimer lying in the dust on the floor.

“Well little brother,” said the witch baby, “you play on the dulcimer and amuse yourself while I get supper ready. But don’t stop playing or I shall feel lonely.” And she ran off and left him.

Little Prince Ivan sat down and played on the dulcimer – sad tunes – well you wouldn’t play happy tunes if you thought you were going to be eaten by a witch. And then a little grey mouse came out of a hole in the ground – now some people say it was the groom who had turned himself into a witch in order to save Prince Ivan from the witch baby.

“Ivan! Ivan!” said the mouse, “run while you may. Your sister has already eaten your mother and your father. And well they deserved it. But be quick or you will be eaten too. Your pretty little sister is putting an edge on her teeth.”

Little prince Ivan thanked the mouse and ran out of the broken palace and climbed onto his horse and galloped off over the wide world.

The witch baby stopped her work and listened. She heard the music of the dulcimer, so she made sure he was still there. She went on sharpening her teeth with a file and growing bigger and bigger every minute. And all the time the music of the dulcimer sounded among the ruins. As soon as her teeth were quite sharp she rushed off to eat little Prince Ivan. There was nobody there – only a grey mouse running and jumping this way and that on the strings of the dulcimer.

When it saw the witch baby the little mouse ran across the floor and into the crack and away so she never caught it. How the witch baby gnashed her teeth! Poker and tongs, poker and tongs – what a noise they made. She swelled up, bigger and bigger, till she was a baby as big as the palace. And then she jumped up so the palace fell to pieces about her. Then off she ran after little Prince Ivan.

Little Prince Ivan, on the big black horse, heard a noise behind him. He looked back, and there was a huge witch, towering over the trees. She was dressed like a little baby and her eyes flashed and her teeth clanged as she shut her mouth. She was running

with long strides – faster than the black horse could gallop – and he was the best horse in the world.

Prince Ivan threw down the handkerchief and it turned into a deep wide lake and the witch baby had to swim across – and swimming is slower than running. It took her a long time to swim across and all that time Prince Ivan was galloping on never stopping for a moment.

The witch baby crossed the lake and she was close behind him and she would have caught him if the Giant, Tree-rooter hadn't thrown down piles of trees just in front of her. She had to stop and gnaw her way through them with her big iron teeth. It took her a long time to gnaw through them and all that time Prince Ivan galloped ahead. Presently he heard a noise behind him and there she was thirty feet high, racing after him, clanging her teeth and she would have caught him if the Giant, Mountain-chucker hadn't thrown down the biggest mountain in the world in front of her and then another one on top of that so she had to stop and gnaw her way through them.

And all the time Little Prince Ivan galloped on until he came at last to the cloud castle of the Little sister of the Sun that hangs over the end of the world. But the witch baby was thundering behind, nearer she came and nearer.

“Ah! Little one,” she screamed, “you shan't get away this time.”

At that moment the Little Sister of the Sun looked out of the window and saw the witch baby stretching out to grab Prince Ivan, so she flung open the window and just in time the black horse leapt through the window and landed in the courtyard with Prince Ivan safely on its back.

How the witch baby gnashed her iron teeth.

“Give him up!” she screamed.

“I will not.” said the Sun's Little Sister.

“See you here,” said the witch baby, and she made herself smaller and smaller until she was just like a real little girl. “Let us be weighed in the great scales. If I am heavier than Prince Ivan, then I can take him. And if he is heavier than me, then I'll say no more about it.”

The Little Sister of the Sun laughed at the witch baby and teased her as she hung the great scales out of the cloud castle so they swung over the end of the world.

Little Prince Ivan got into one scale and down it went.

“Now,” said the witch baby, “we shall see.”

And she made herself bigger and bigger until she was as big as she had been when she sat in the hall of the broken palace and sucked her thumb. “See. I am the heavier!” she screamed and she jumped into the other scale.

She was so heavy that the scale with Prince Ivan in it shot up into the air. It shot up so fast that little Prince Ivan flew up and up and up until he landed on the topmost turret of the cloud castle. The Little Sister of the Sun laughed and shut the window and went up to the turret to meet Prince Ivan. But the witch baby turned back the way she had come, and went off, gnashing her iron teeth until they broke.

And ever since then little Prince Ivan and the Little Sister of the Sun play together in the cloud castle that hangs over the end of the world. They borrow the stars to play with and put them back at night when they remember.

So when there are no stars – it means that little Prince Ivan and the Little Sister of the Sun have gone to sleep over their games and forgotten to put their toys away.

