

Vasilisa the Beautiful and Baba Yaga

Russian folk fairytale
Translated by Elle Brown

Long ago, in a certain kingdom there lived a merchant. For twelve years he lived in marriage and survived only one daughter, Vasilisa the Beautiful. The girl was eight years old when the mother passed away. Dying, the merchant called his daughter to her, took a doll from under the blanket, gave it to her and said:

„Listen, Vasilisa! Remember and fulfill my last words. I am dying, and with the parental blessing, I am leaving you this doll; always take care of it and do not show it to anyone; and when anything bad happens to you, give the doll something to eat and ask it's advice. It will help you out in all your troubles.“

Then the mother kissed her daughter and died.

After the death of his wife, the merchant sorrowed and grieved, and then began to think about how to get married again. He was a good man; brides weren't the case, but most of all he liked one widow. She had two daughters of her own, almost the same age as Vasilisa, therefore experienced as a wife and mother.

The merchant married the widow, but was deceived and did not find a good mother in her for Vasilisa. Vasilisa was the first beauty in the whole village; her stepmother and sisters envied her beauty, tormented her with all kinds of work, so that she would lose weight from labor, and blacken from the wind and the sun; she had no life at all!

Vasilisa endured everything humbly and with every day that passed she grew prettier and fuller, meanwhile, the stepmother and her daughters grew thin and frowned with anger, despite the fact that they always sat idly, like mistresses.

How was this possible? Vasilisa was helped by her doll. Without it, how would a girl cope with all the work! Vasilisa herself wouldn't eat, and she would leave the tidbit for the doll, and in the evening, as everyone settles down, she will lock herself in the closet where she lived, and regale the doll, saying: „Come on, doll, eat, listen to my grief! I live in my father's house; I don't enjoy myself; My evil stepmother drives me from white light. Teach me how I should live and what to do?“

The doll eats, and then gives advice and comforts her in grief, and in the morning does all the work for Vasilisa; she just rests in a chill and pick flowers, and before she knew it, the cabbage is watered, the water is brought in, and the fire is lighted. The doll also showed Vasilisa a herb to be used against sunburn. It was good

for her to live with a doll.

Several years passed; Vasilisa grew up and became a bride. All suitors in the city were assigned to Vasilisa; no one will look at her stepmother's daughters. The stepmother angrier than ever told all the grooms:

„I won't give out the youngest before the elders!“, as the grooms pass by, she beats the evil out of Vasilisa.

One day, the merchant needed to set out from home for a long time on business matters. The stepmother moved to another house to live, and nearby this house was a dense forest, and in the forest, there was a hut, where Baba-Yaga lived: she did not let anyone in and ate people like chickens. Having moved into the new home, the merchant's wife constantly sent Vasilisa, whom she hated, for something into the forest, but she always returned home safely: the doll showed her the way and did not let her approach Baba-Yaga's hut.

Autumn came. The stepmother handed out evening work to all three girls: she forced one to weave lace, the other to knit stockings, and Vasilisa to spin, and left everyone according to their chores. She put out the fire in the whole house, left one candle where the girls worked and went to bed. The girls worked. As the candle burned up, one of the stepmother's daughters took the tongs to correct the lamp, but instead, as her mother instructed, as if by chance and put out the