

Ilyia Of Murom: The beginnings

In the hamlet of Karacharof, by Murom town, dwelt Ilya the Old Kazák. Thirty years he sat upon the oven, having use of neither arms nor legs, because of his grandfather's sin. And when thirty years were past, in summer, there came to him three wayfarers-Christ and two of his apostles, in the guise of poor brethren, strolling psalm-singers, and besought him that he would give them to drink.

"Alas! ye wayfarers, good men, dear friends!" said Ilya; "full gladly would I give you to drink: but I cannot rise, and there is none in the cottage with me."

And the men made answer: "Arise, and wash thyself; so shalt thou walk and fetch us drink." Then he arose and walked; and having filled a cup with kvas [a drink made from rye bread] brought it to the aged men. They received it, drank, and gave it again to Ilya, saying :

"How is thy strength now, Ilya ? "

Ilya answered: "I thank you humbly, ye aged men. I feel a very great strength within me, so that I could even move the earth."

ILYA OF MUROM and NIGHTINGALE THE ROBBER

From the city of Murom,

From the village of Karacharovo,

Rode a daring and stout good youth.

He attended matins in Murom,

He wanted to be in time for vespers in the capital city of Kiev.

He rode up to the famous city of Chernigov.

Near the city of Chernigov

A vast army had been assembled,

A vast army as black as a black raven.

No one walked past there on foot,

No one rode past there on a good steed,

No bird, no black raven flew past,

No gray animal scoured past.

Ilya rode up to this great army,

He attacked this great army,
He trampled it with his steed and jabbed it with his spear,
He defeated this great army.

He rode up to the famous city of Chernigov,
The men of Chernigov came out
And opened the gates to the city of Chernigov,
They invited Ilya to become voyevoda in Chernigov.
Ilya spoke these words to them:

"Hail to you, my men of Chernigov!
I won't become voyevoda in Chernigov.
Point out for me the straight-traveled road,
The straight-traveled road to the capital city of Kiev."

The men of Chernigov spoke to him:
"Hail to you, our daring stout good youth,
Famous Holy Russian bogatyr!

The straight-traveled road is filled with fallen wood,
The road is filled and is overgrown with grass,
Along that straight-traveled road
No one has passed on foot,
No one has ridden past on a good steed.

By that Swamp, by that Black Swamp,
By that birch, by that crooked birch,
By that stream, by Smorodina,
By that cross, by that cross of Lebanon
Sits Nightingale the Robber in a damp oak,

Sits Nightingale the Robber, Odikhmanty's son.

Nightingale whistles like a nightingale,*

He screams, the villain robber, like a wild animal,

And from the whistle of a nightingale,

And from the scream of a wild animal

All the grasses and meadows become entangled,

All the azure flowers lose their petals,

All the dark woods bend down to the earth,

And all the people there lie dead.

The straight-traveled road is five hundred versts,

But the round-about road is a whole thousand."

Ilya urged on his bogatyr's good steed,

He rode along the straight-traveled road.

His bogatyr's good steed

Jumped from mountain to mountain

And bounded from hill to hill,

It leaped across small streams and lakes.

He rode up to the stream Smorodina,

Up to that Swamp, up to that Black Swamp,

Up to that birch, up to that crooked birch,

Up to that cross, up to that famous Lebanese
cross.

Nightingale whistled like a nightingale,

The villain robber screamed like a wild animal

So that all the grasses and meadows became entangled,

The azure flowers lost their petals,
All the dark woods bent down to the earth.
His bogatyr's good steed stumbled against some roots.
The old Cossack Ilya Muromets
Took his silken whip in one white hand
And he beat his steed on its strong ribs.
Ilya spoke these words:
"You food for wolves and bag of grass!
Don't you want to walk or can't you carry me?
Dog, what are you stumbling against some roots for?
Haven't you heard the whistle of a nightingale?
Haven't you heard the scream of a wild animal?
Haven't you felt the blows of a bogatyr?"
Then the old Cossack Ilya Muromets
Took his taut supple bow,
He took it in his white hands,
He stretched the silken string,
He laid on a tempered arrow,
Then he shot it at Nightingale the Robber,
He knocked out Nightingale's right eye and temple,
He dropped Nightingale to the damp earth,
He tied him to his right steel stirrup,
He carried him through the famous open field,
He carried him past Nightingale's nest.
In Nightingale's nest ...

He came to the famous capital city of Kiev

And went to the wide courtyard of the famous Prince.

Vladimir the Prince had left God's church,

He had gone to his white-stone palace

To his hall, to his dining hall...

Vladimir the Prince then questioned the youth:

"Please tell me where you're from, stout good youth,

What name do they call the youth by,

What patronymic do they honor the daring youth by?"

The old Cossack Ilya Muromets spoke:

"I'm from the famous city of Murom,

From the village of Karacharovo,

I'm the old Cossack Ilya Muromets,

Ilya Muromets, the son of Ivan!"

Vladimir spoke these words to him:

"Hail to you, old Cossack Ilya Muromets,

Did you leave from Murom a long time ago

And by which road did you ride to the capital city of Kiev?"

Ilya spoke these words:

"Hail to you, our famous Vladimir of capital Kiev!

I attended Christ's matins in Murom

And I wanted to be in time for vespers in the

capital city of Kiev.

Then my journey was delayed.

I rode along the straight-traveled road,

Along the straight-traveled road I rode past the
city of Chernigov,

I rode past that Swamp, past that Black Swamp,

Past that famous stream Smorodina,

Past that famous crooked birch,

I rode past that famous Lebanese cross."

Vladimir spoke these words to him:

"Hail to you, my peasant bumpkin!

Peasant, you lie before my eyes,

Peasant, you mock me before my eyes!

Since an army of great number has been assembled

Near the famous city of Chernigov,

No one has walked past on foot,

And no one has ridden past on a good steed,

No gray beast has scoured past there,

No bird, no black raven has flown past.

By that cross, by that Lebanese cross

Sits Nightingale the Robber, Odikhmanty's son.

When Nightingale whistles like a nightingale,

When the villain robber screams like a wild animal,

Then all the grasses and meadows become entangled,

The azure flowers lose their petals,

All the dark woods bend down to the earth,

And all the people there lie dead..."

Ilya spoke these words to him: "

Vladimir, Prince of capital Kiev!

Nightingale the Robber is in your courtyard,

His right eye and temple have been knocked out,

And he's fastened to a steel stirrup..."

Then Vladimir, Prince of capital Kiev,

Quickly stood up on his nimble feet,

He threw his marten coat on one shoulder,

Then he threw his sable hat on one ear,

He went to his wide courtyard

To look at Nightingale the Robber.

Vladimir the Prince then spoke these words:

"Whistle, Nightingale, like a nightingale!

Scream, dog, like a wild animal!"

Nightingale the Robber, Odikhmanty's son, then spoke to him:

"Prince, I didn't eat dinner today with you,

You aren't the one I want to listen to,

I ate dinner with the old Cossack Ilya Muromets,

I want to listen to him."

Vladimir, Prince of capital Kiev, spoke:

"Hail to you, old Cossack Ilya Muromets!

Order Nightingale to whistle like a nightingale,

Order him to scream like a wild animal."

Nightingale then whistled like a nightingale,

The Robber screamed like a wild animal

The cupolas on the palaces were twisted,

And the windows in the palaces were shattered
From the nightingale's whistle,
And all the people there lay dead.
Vladimir, Prince of capital Kiev,
Took cover under his marten coat.
Then the old Cossack Ilya Muromets
Quickly mounted his good steed,
He took Nightingale to the open field
And he cut off his reckless head.
Ilya spoke these words:
"You've whistled enough like a nightingale,
You've screamed enough like a wild animal,
You've made enough fathers and mothers cry,
You've made enough young wives widows,
You've made enough little children orphans."
Since then a song of praise has been sung to Nightingale,
A song of praise has been sung to him for ever after.

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