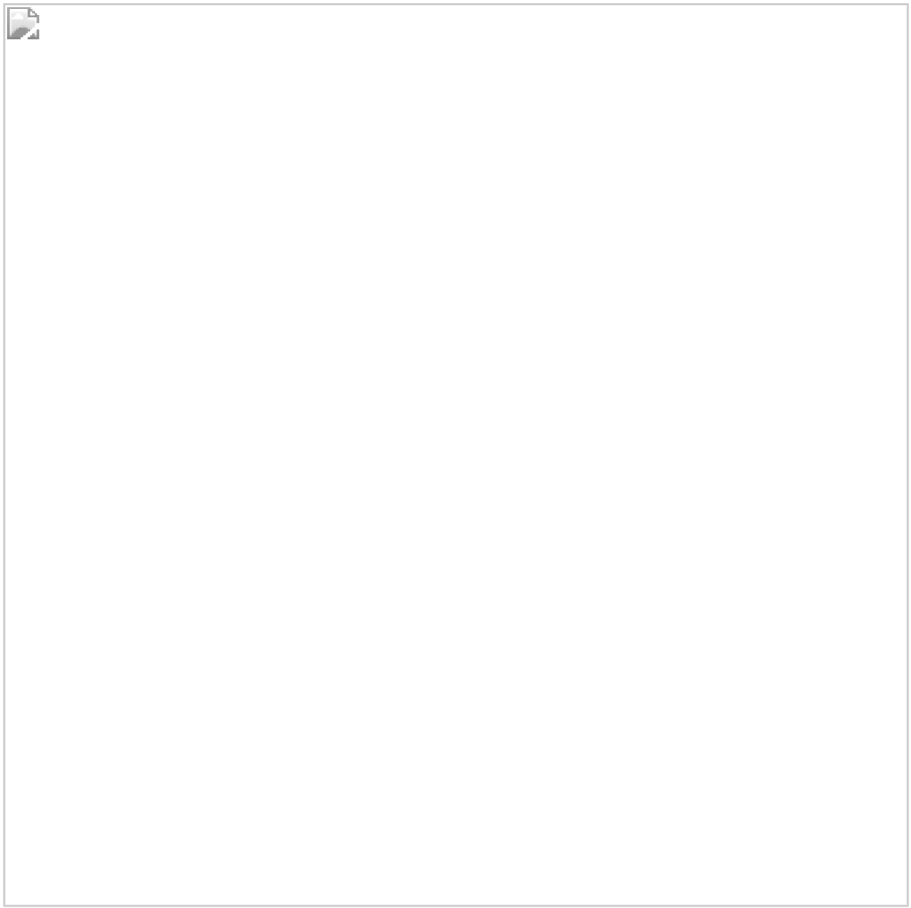
COLORING THE CLASSICS

The Fire-Bird, the Horse of Power, and the Princess Vasilissa

A Tale from Russia



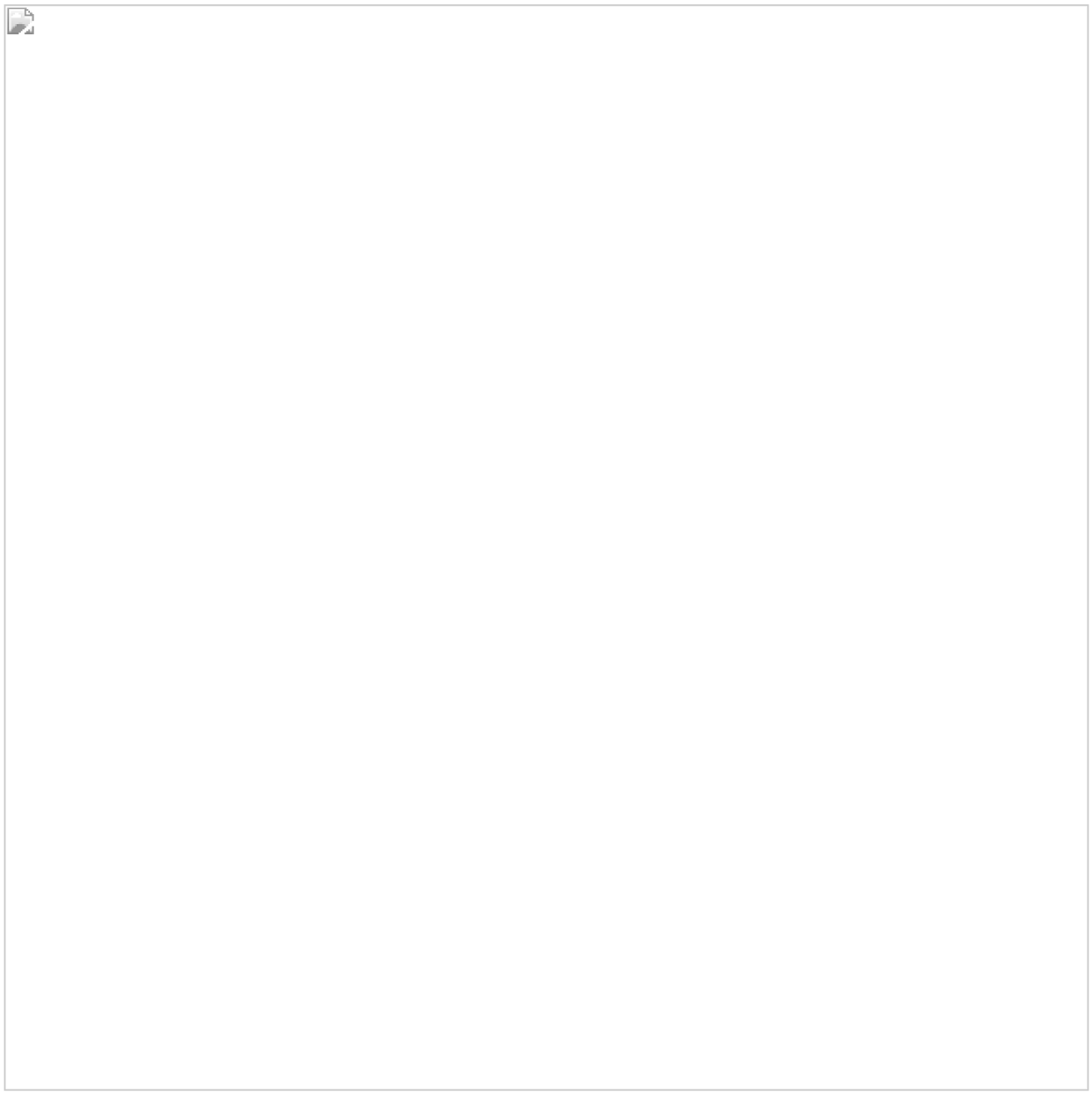
Once upon a time a strong and powerful Tzar ruled in a country far away. Among his servants was a young archer, and the archer had a horse of power, a great horse with a broad chest, eyes like fire and hoofs of iron.

TALK ABOUT IT

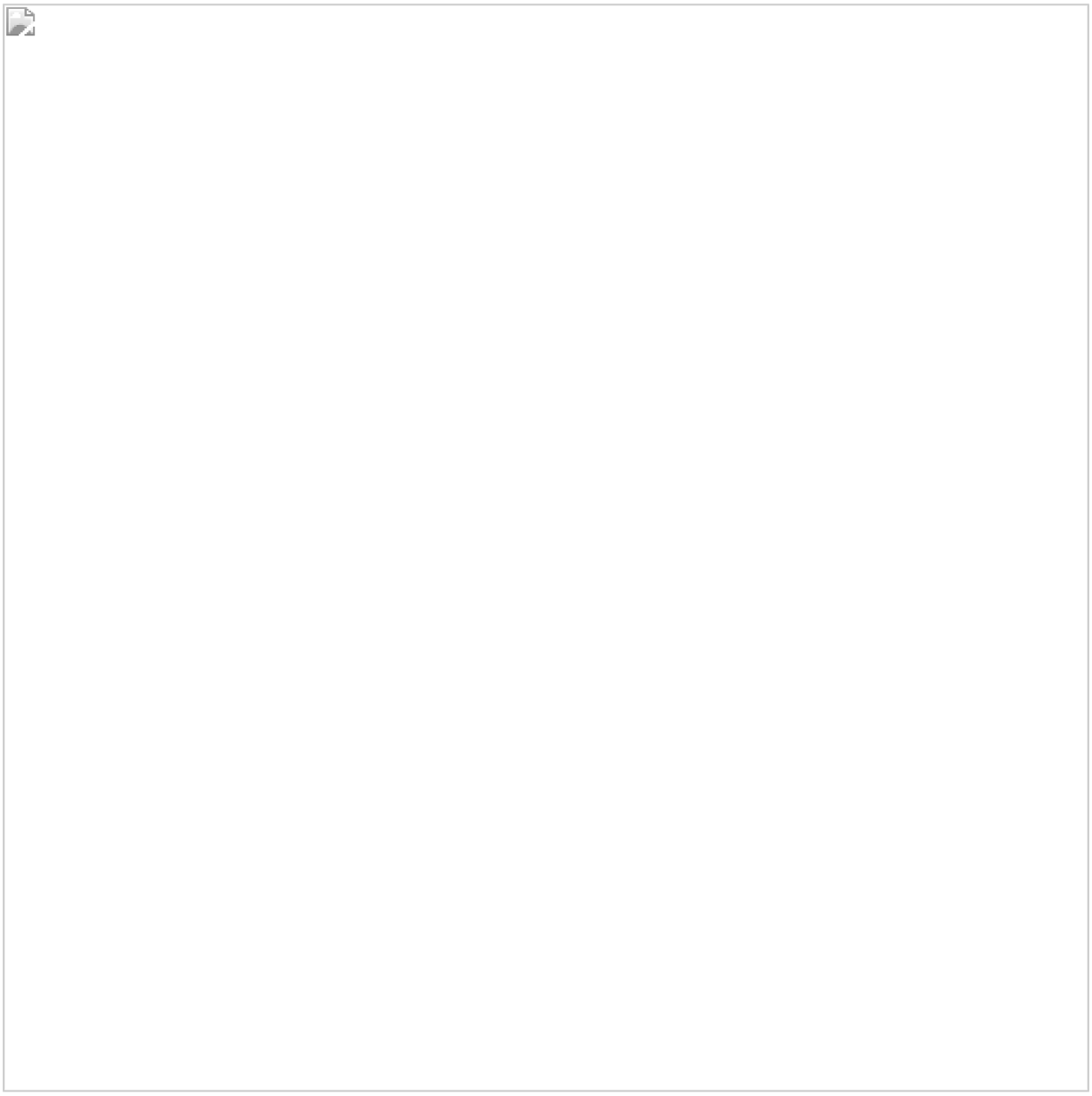
The archer had a horse he could talk with. If you had a friend like that, what would you ask first?

This book belongs to _____

The Fire-Bird, the Horse of Power, and the Princess Vasilissa · another picture



A Silent Forest



One day, in the green time of the year, the young archer rode through the forest on his horse of power. The trees were green, there were little blue flowers on the ground, and the squirrels ran in the branches. But no birds sang.

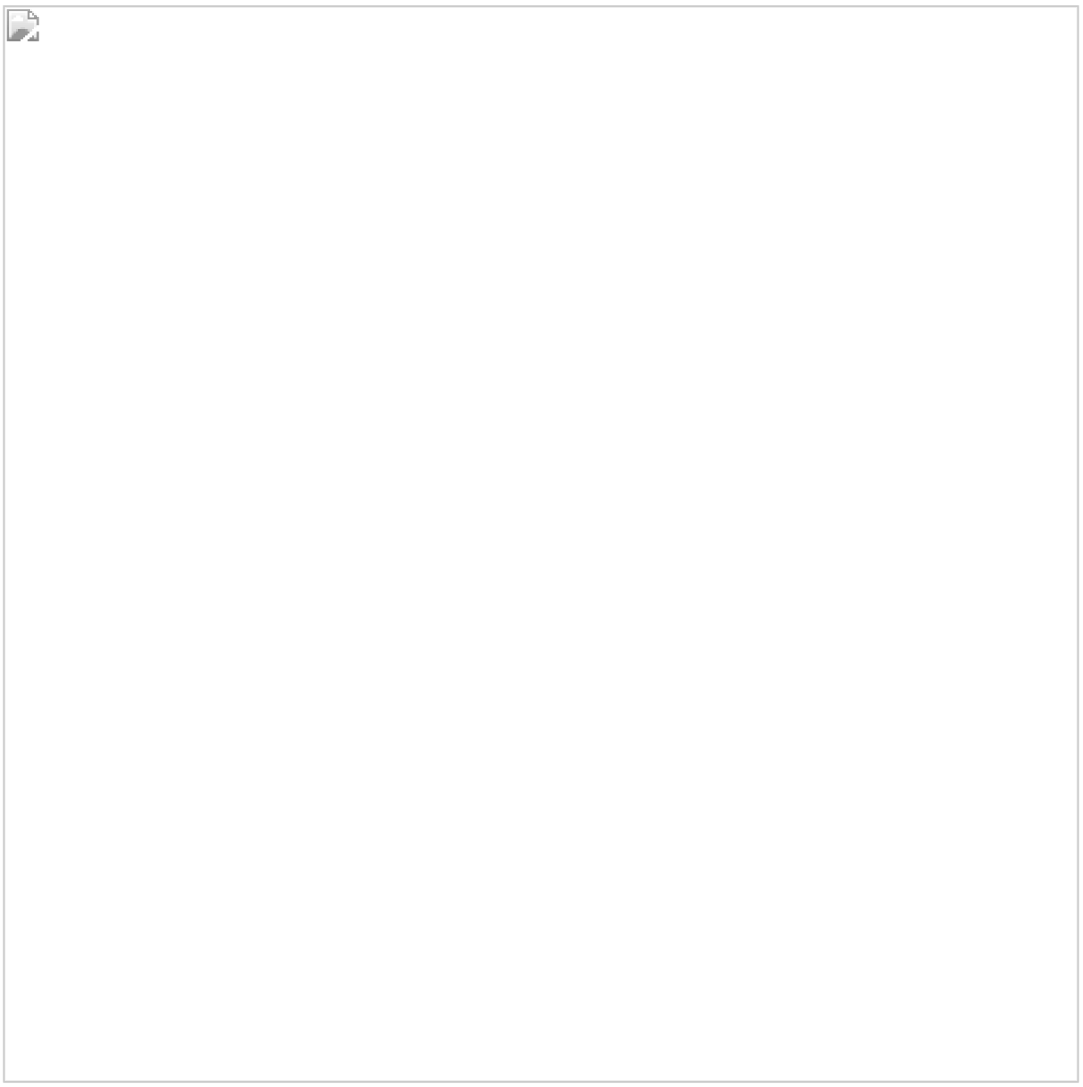
“What has come to the birds?” said the young archer.

He had scarcely said this when he saw a big curving feather lying on the path. It was larger than a swan's, larger than an eagle's, and it glittered like a flame. It was a feather of pure gold, from the burning breast of the fire-bird.

TALK ABOUT IT

The forest was silent. What do you listen for when you are outside?

A Silent Forest · another picture

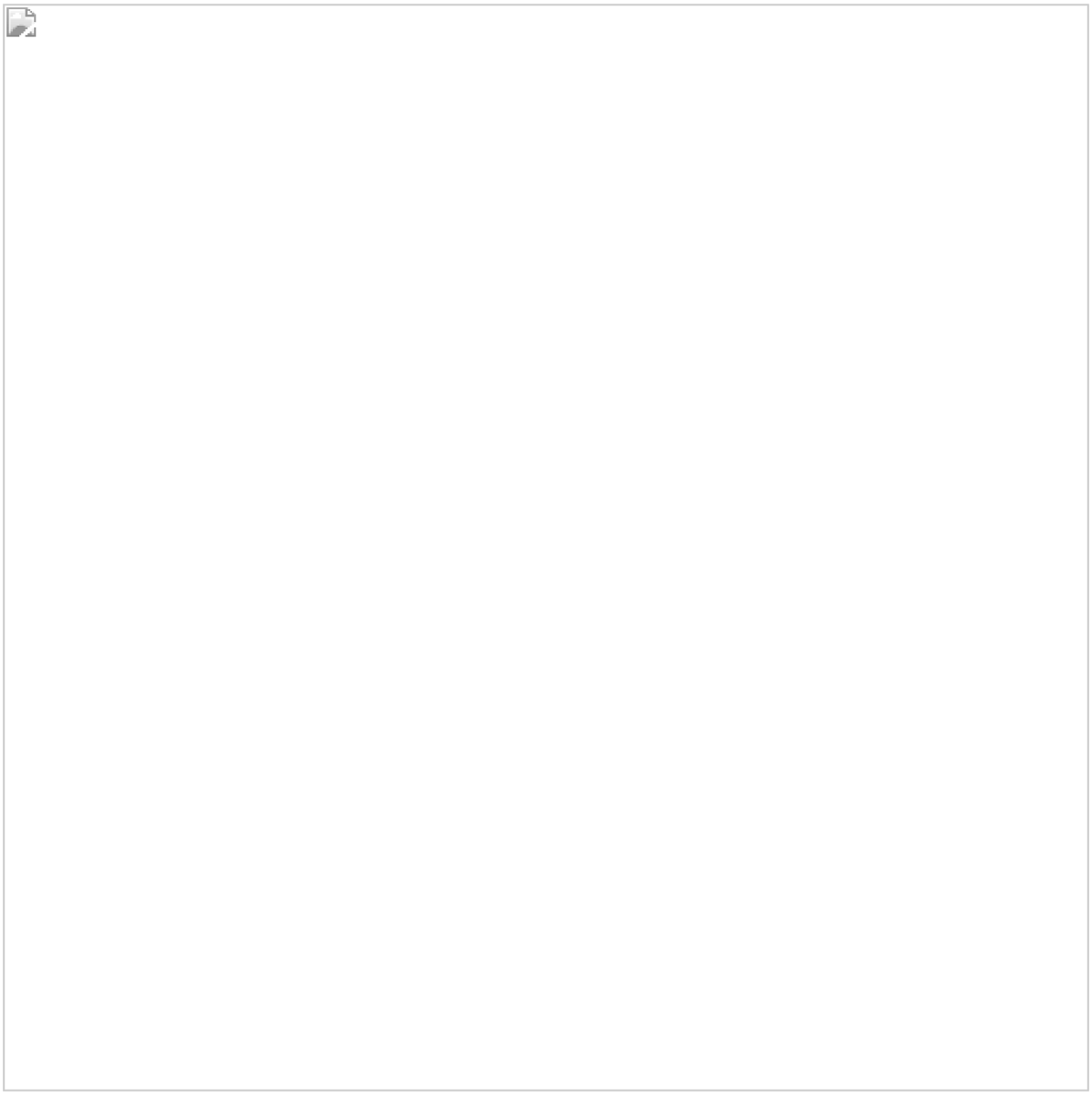


Think about it

1. What did the archer find lying in the path?

- ○ A silver key
- ○ A golden feather
- ○ A red ribbon

The Golden Feather



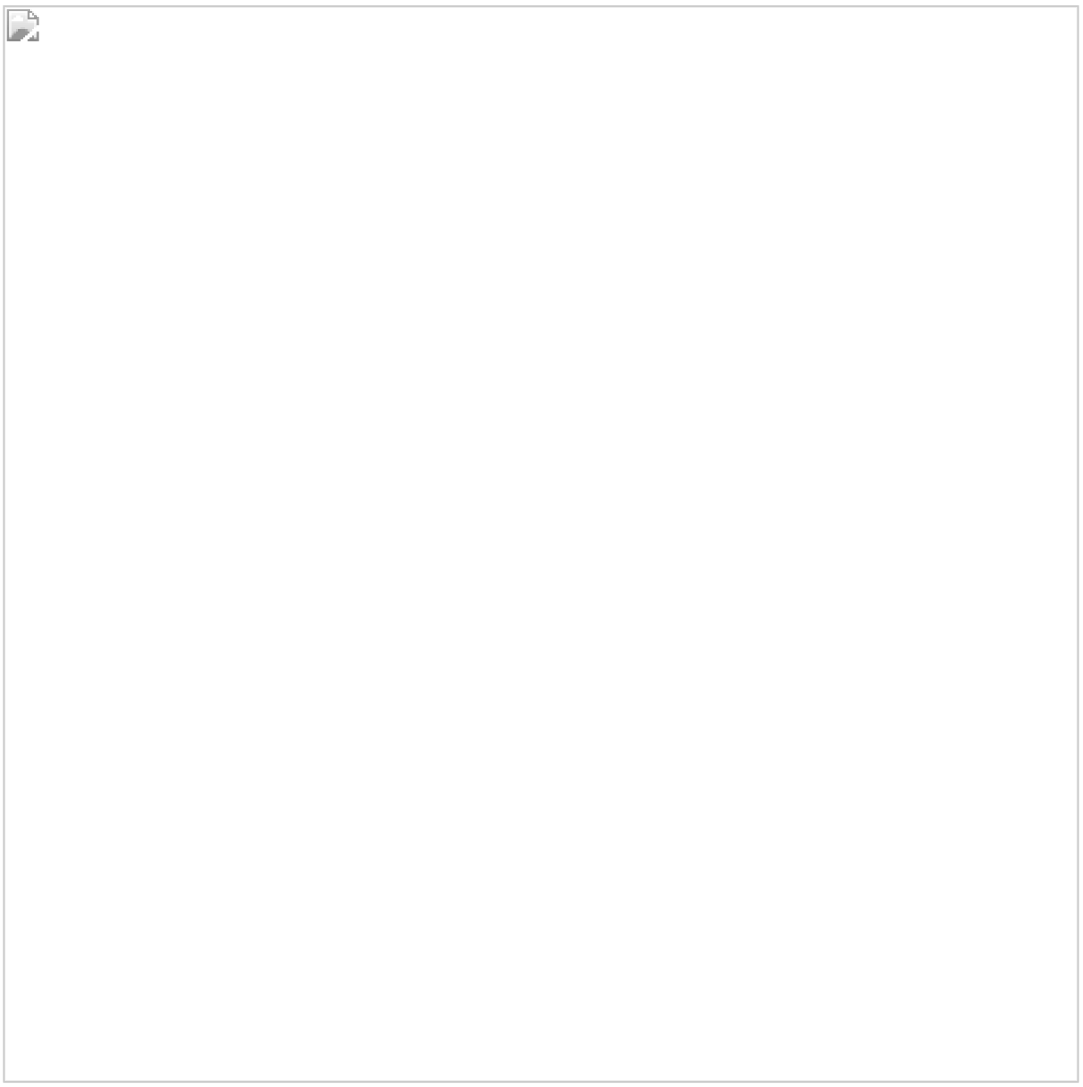
The horse of power spoke. “Leave the golden feather where it lies. If you take it you will be sorry for it, and know the meaning of fear.”

The archer wondered whether to take it. He thought, “If I take it and bring it to the Tzar my master, he will be pleased.” The more he thought, the more he wanted to carry it to the Tzar.

In the end he did not listen to the horse of power. He jumped down, picked up the golden feather, and galloped back to the palace of the Tzar.

TALK ABOUT IT

The archer wanted to please the Tzar. Have you ever not listened to good advice? What happened?

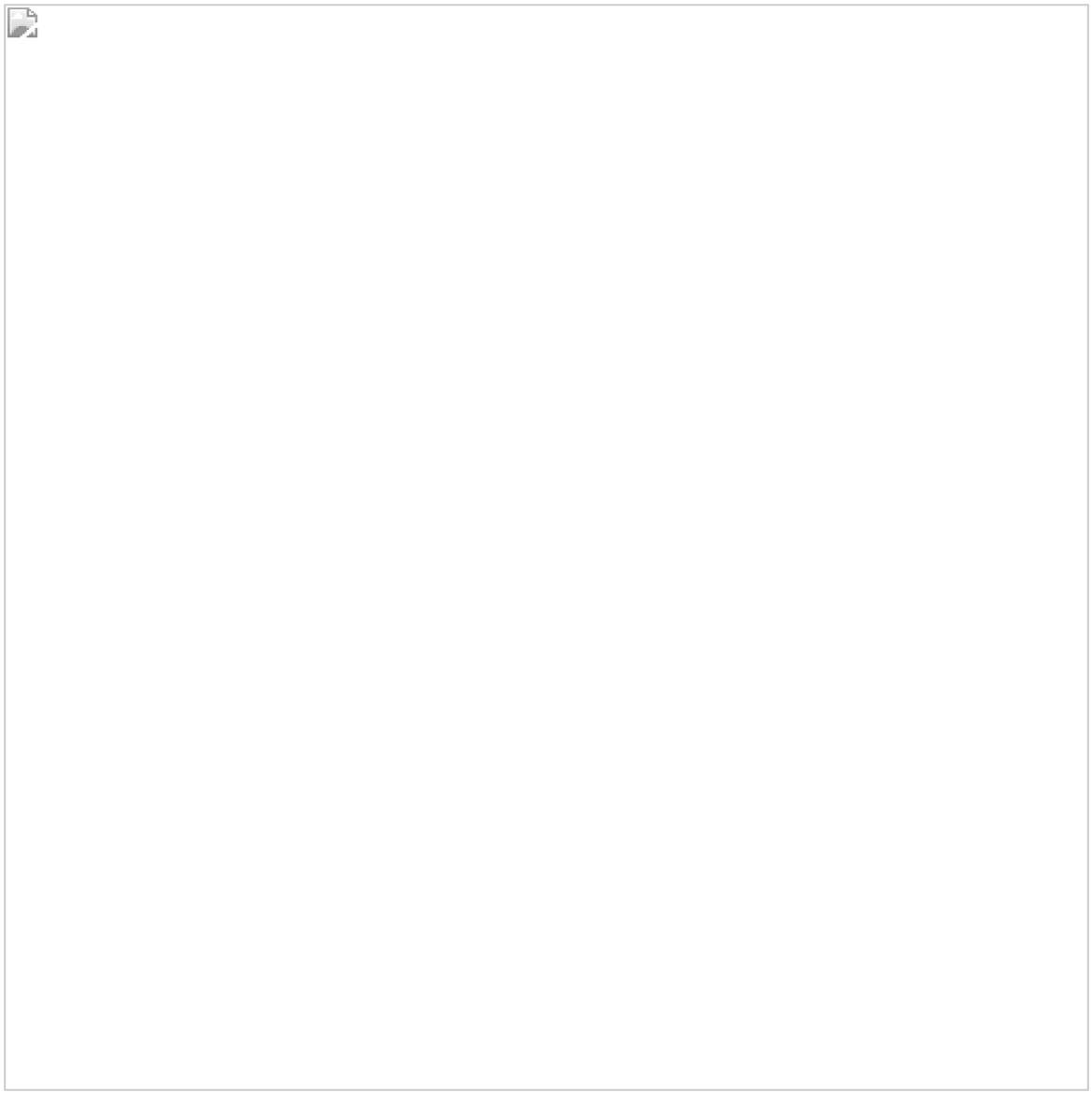


Think about it

1. What did the horse of power tell the archer to do?

- ○ Take the feather
- ○ Leave the feather where it lay
- ○ Bury the feather

Bring the Bird Itself



The archer bowed. “O Tzar, I have brought you a feather of the fire-bird.”

“Thank you,” said the Tzar. “Bring the bird itself, or, I swear by my sword, your head shall no longer sit between your shoulders!”

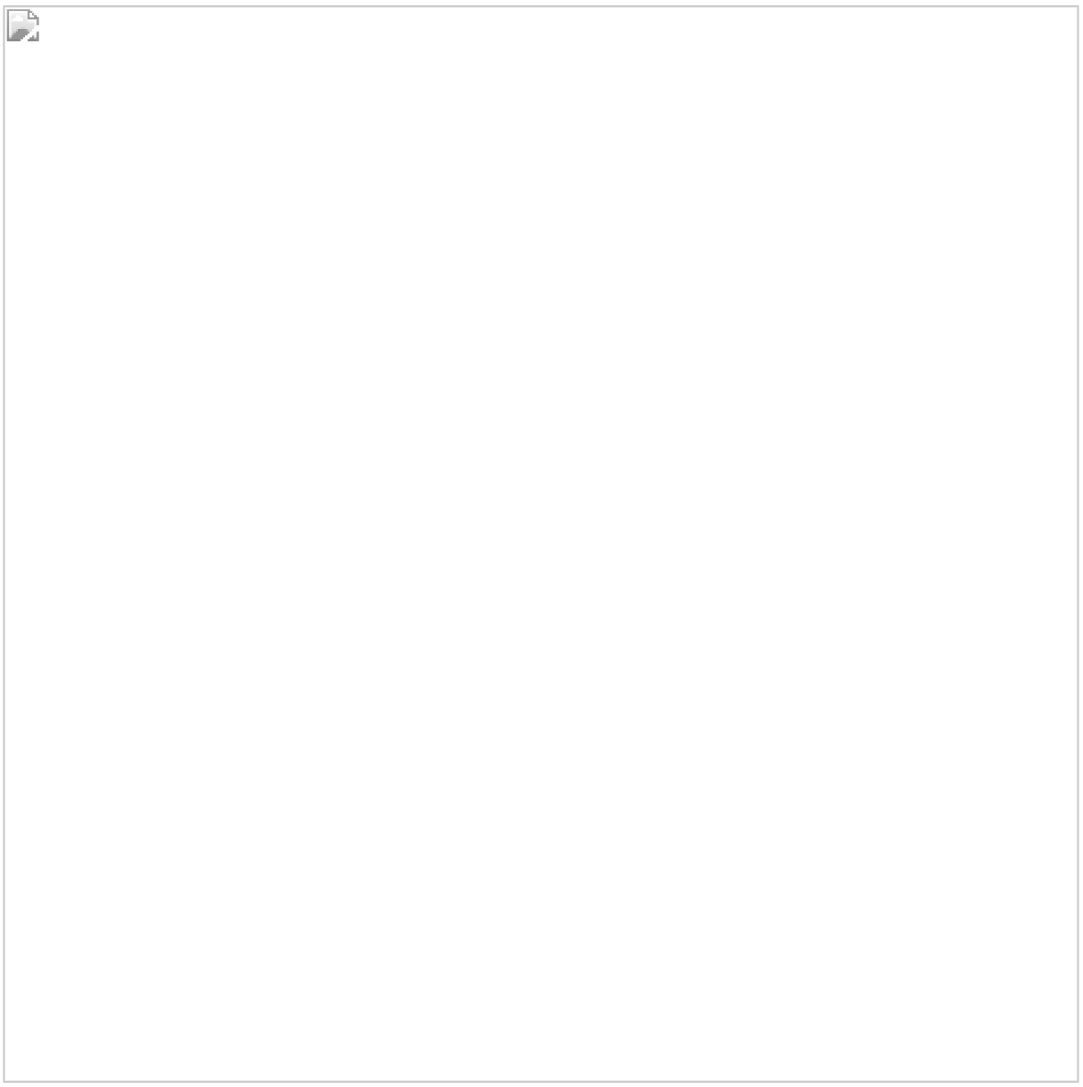
The archer wept, for now he knew what it was to be afraid. “Master, why do you weep?” asked the horse of power. “Do not be frightened yet, and do not weep. The trouble is not now; the trouble lies before you.”

He told the archer to ask the Tzar for a hundred sacks of maize, scattered over the open field at midnight.

TALK ABOUT IT

The archer cried when he was afraid. What helps you when you feel afraid?

Bring the Bird Itself · another picture

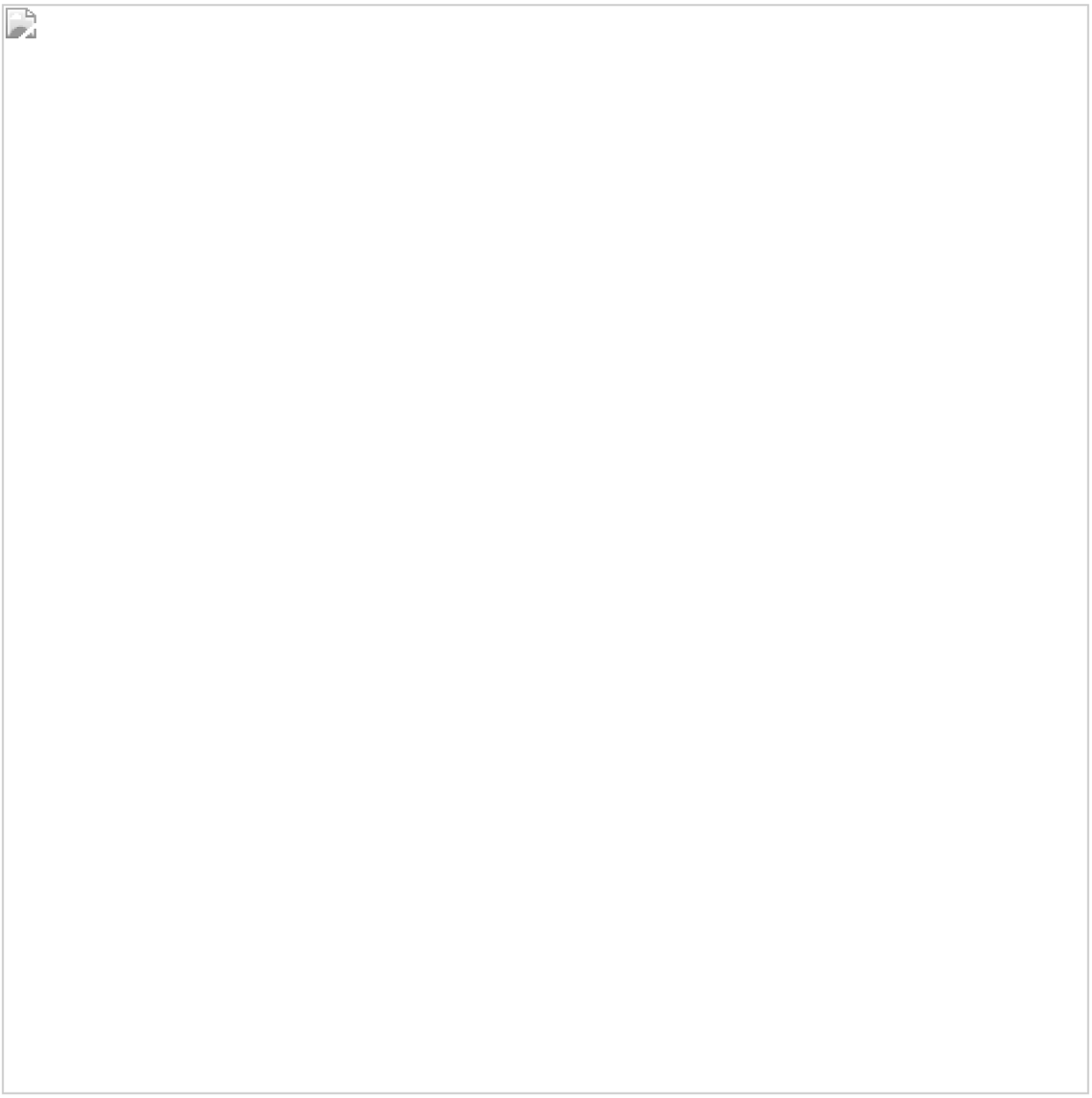


Think about it

1. What did the horse tell him to ask the Tzar for?

- ○ A hundred sacks of maize
- ○ A silver boat
- ○ A golden cage

The Fire-Bird in the Field



At the first redness in the sky, the archer rode to the field, scattered all over with maize. He let the horse loose and climbed into a great oak to hide.

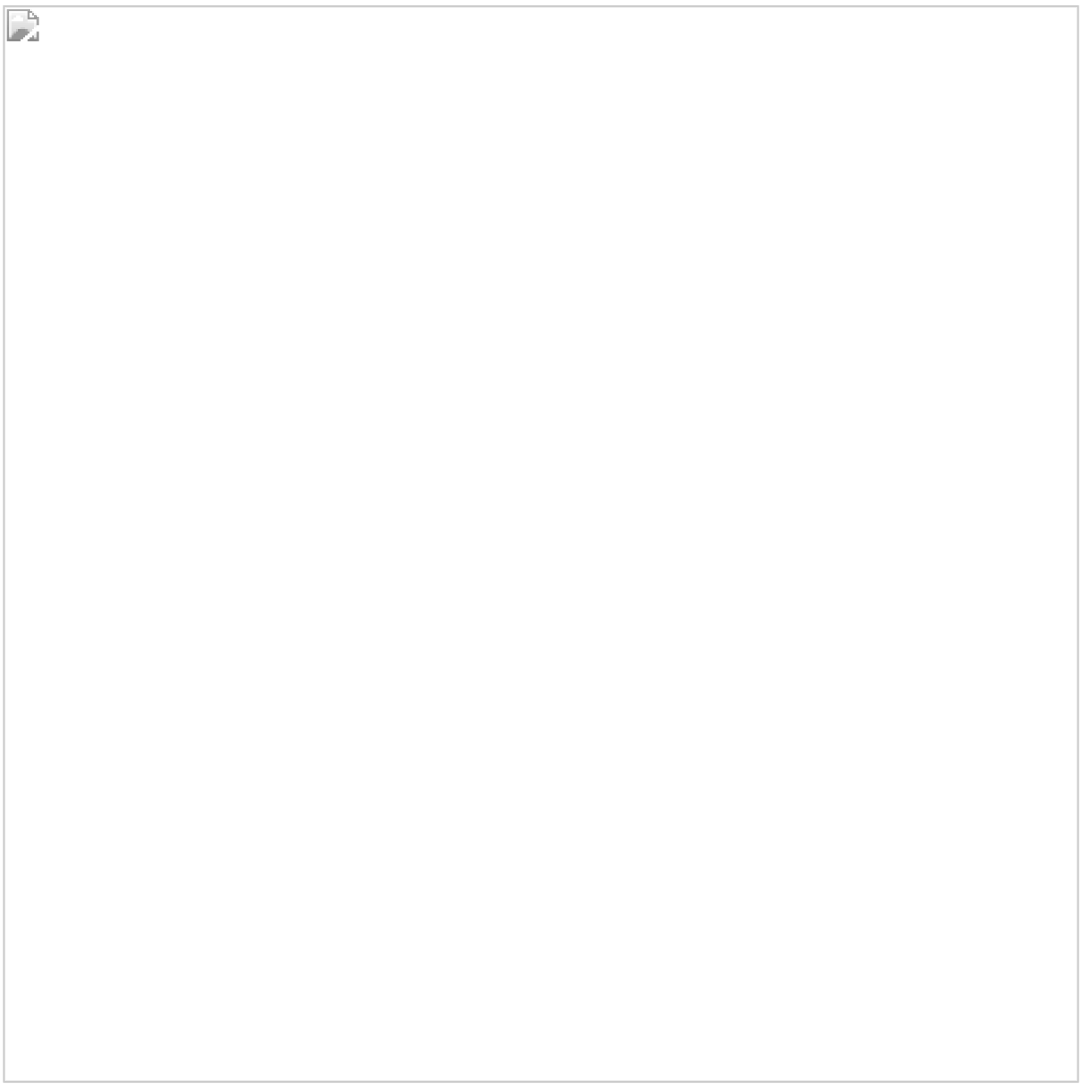
There was a noise in the forest and a mighty wind, and the fire-bird came flying from the other side of the world, huge and golden and flaming. It dropped down to eat the maize.

The horse of power wandered nearer and nearer, then suddenly stepped on one fiery wing and pressed it to the ground. The archer slipped down, bound the fire-bird with three strong ropes, and rode with it to the palace.

TALK ABOUT IT

The archer and his horse made a plan together. What is something you did with a friend that you could not have done alone?

The Fire-Bird in the Field · another picture

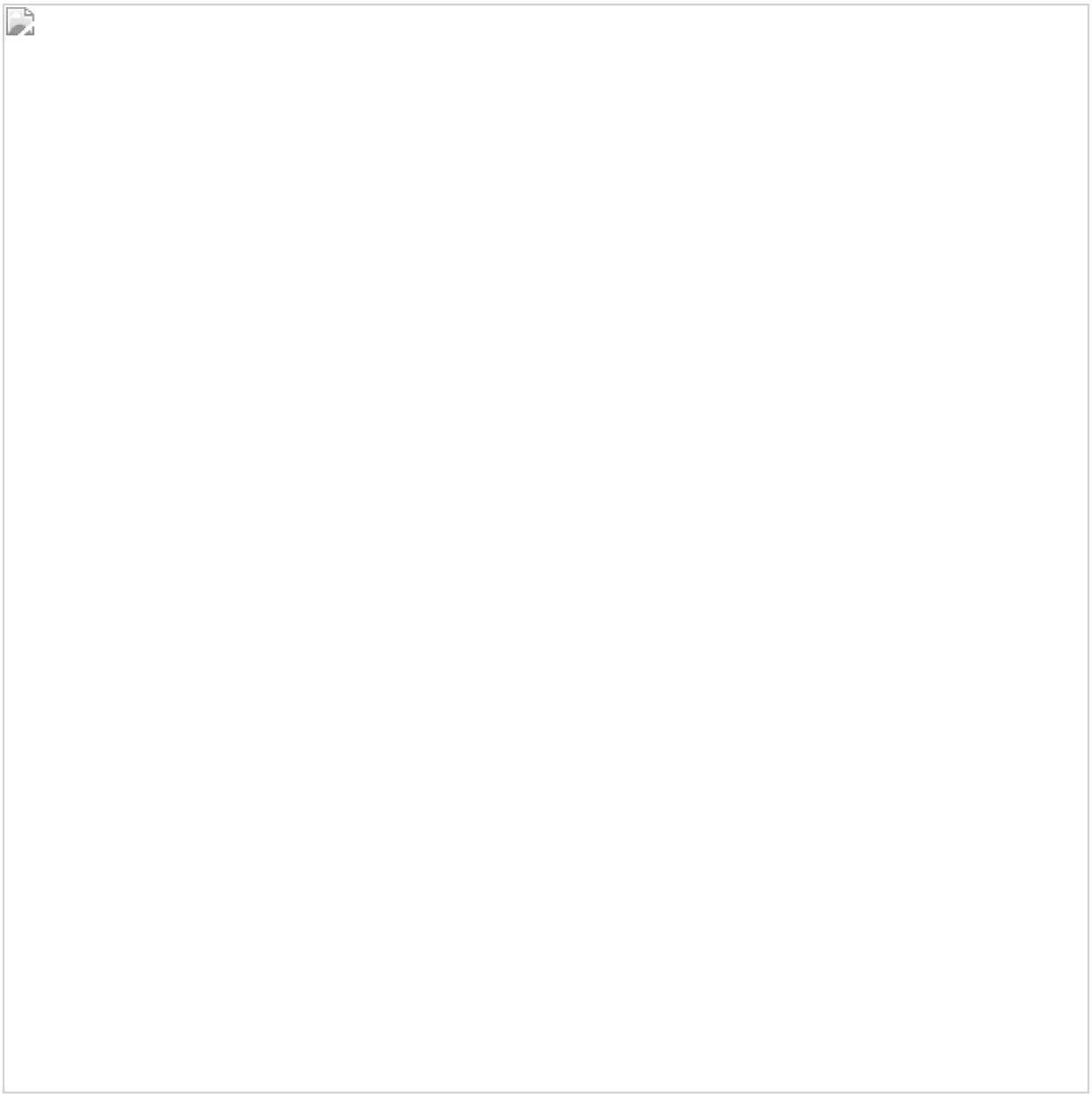


Think about it

1. Where did the archer hide while the fire-bird ate?

- ○ Behind a haystack
- ○ In a great oak
- ○ Inside the horse's saddlebag

A Bride from the Land of Never



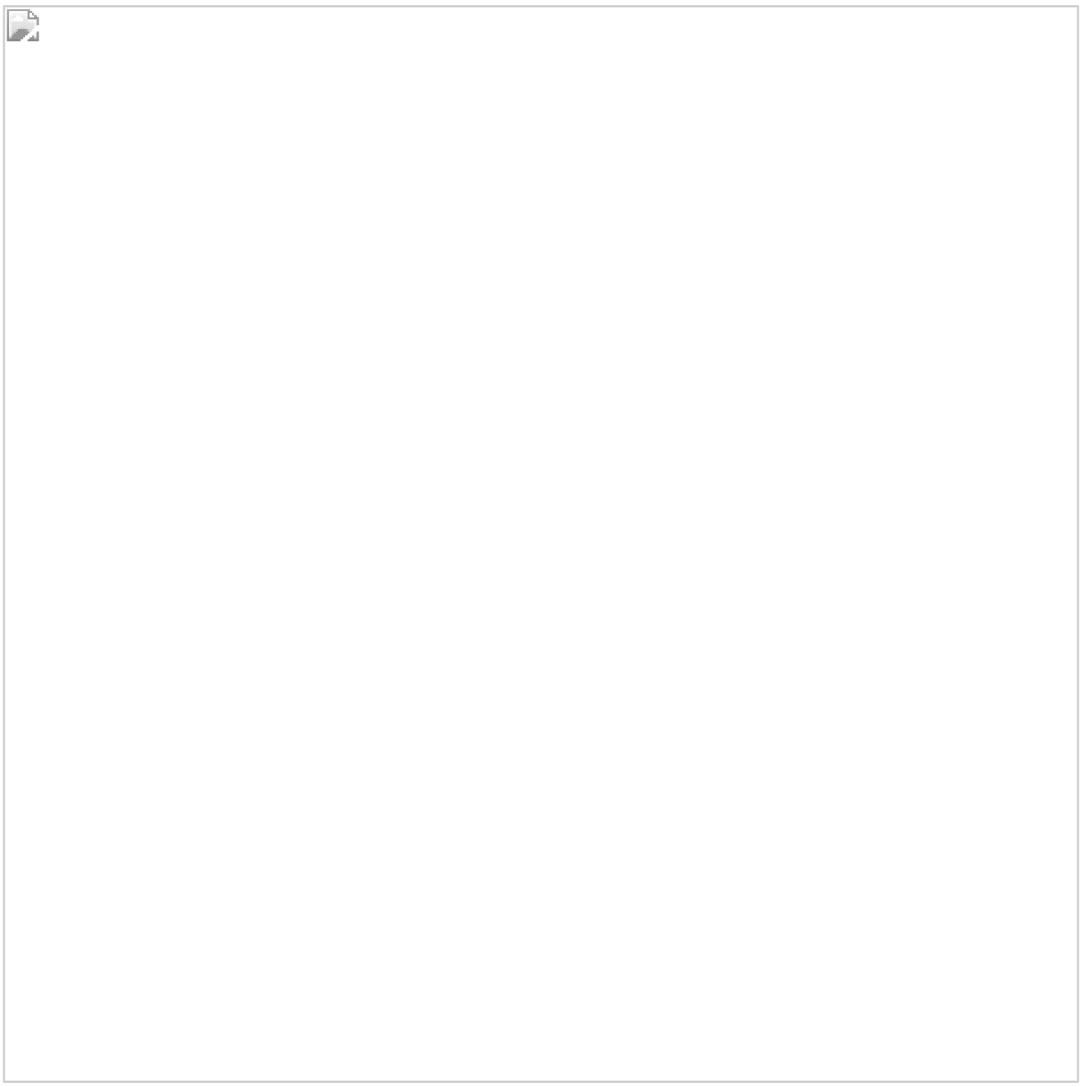
The Tzar laughed with pride at the fire-bird. Then he said to the archer, “As you have known how to take the fire-bird, you will know how to bring me my bride. In the land of Never, on the very edge of the world, lives the Princess Vasilissa. I will marry none but her.” If the archer failed, he would lose his head.

“Do not weep--do not grieve,” said the horse of power. “The trouble is not yet; the trouble is to come.” He told the archer to ask for a silver tent with a golden roof.

TALK ABOUT IT

The Tzar gave the archer one hard job after another. Was that fair? What do you think?

A Bride from the Land of Never · another picture

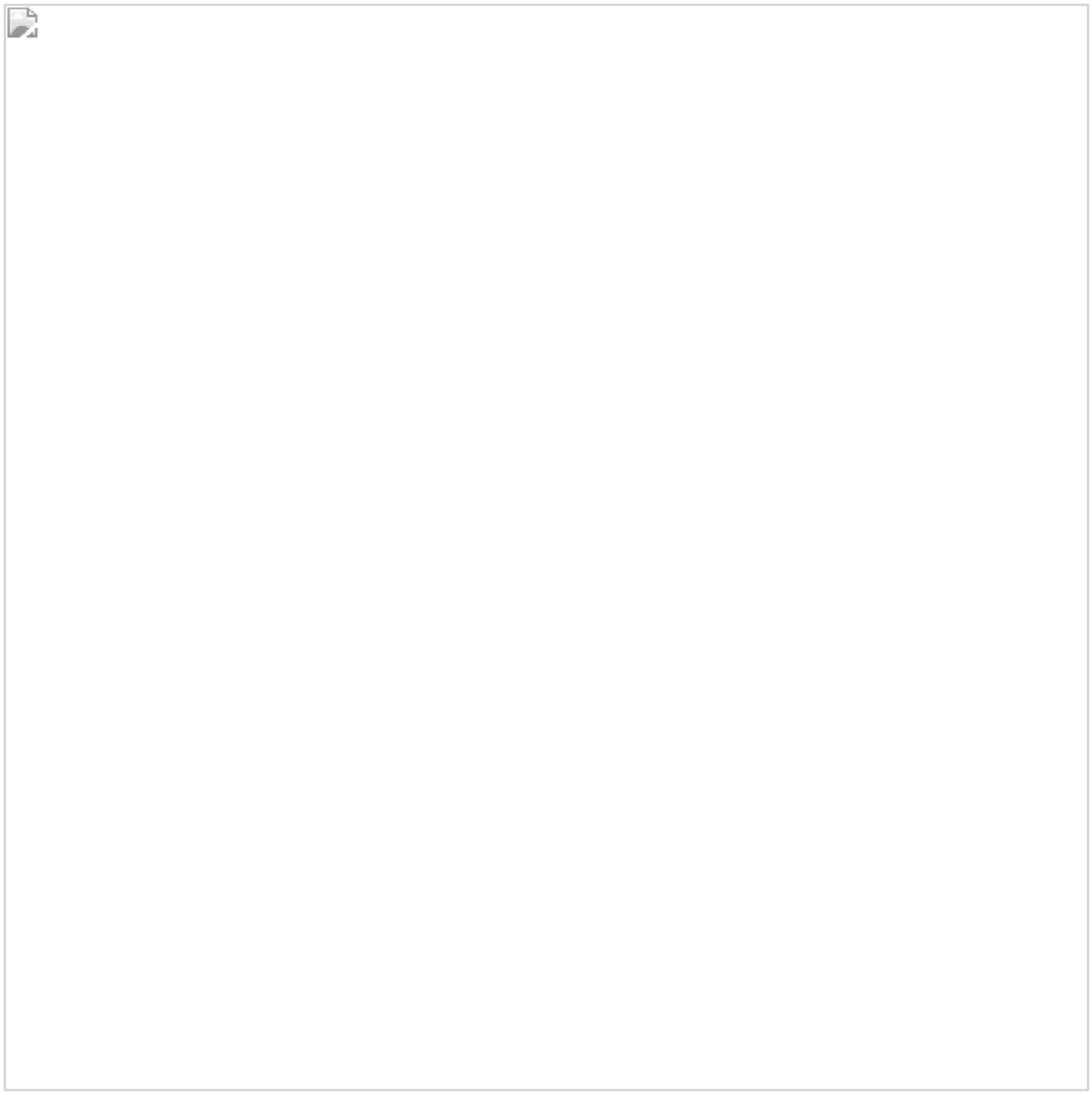


Think about it

1. Where did the Princess Vasilissa live?

- ○ In the land of Never
- ○ In the Tzar's own palace
- ○ In the green forest

The Silver Tent



The archer rode many days and nights to the edge of the world. On the sea was the Princess Vasilissa in a little silver boat, rowing with golden oars.

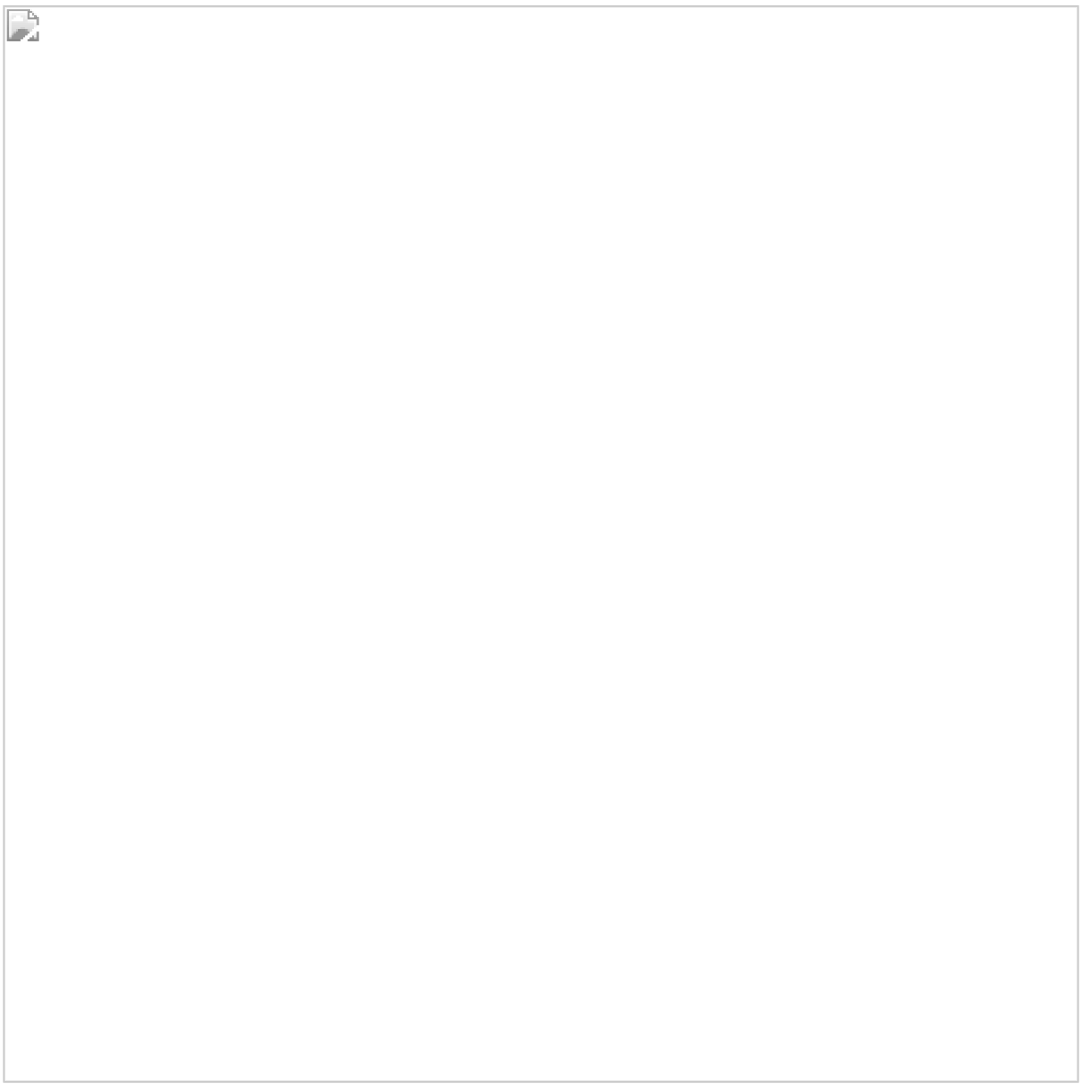
On the shore he set up the shining tent, laid out tasty dishes and rich wine, and sat down to wait.

The Princess saw the tent shining silver and gold in the sun and rowed nearer. At last she stepped out of her boat and looked in.

The archer rose and bowed. “Good-day to you, Princess! Be so kind as to come in and take bread and salt with me, and taste my foreign wines.”

TALK ABOUT IT

She came because the tent was beautiful. What makes you curious enough to go and look?

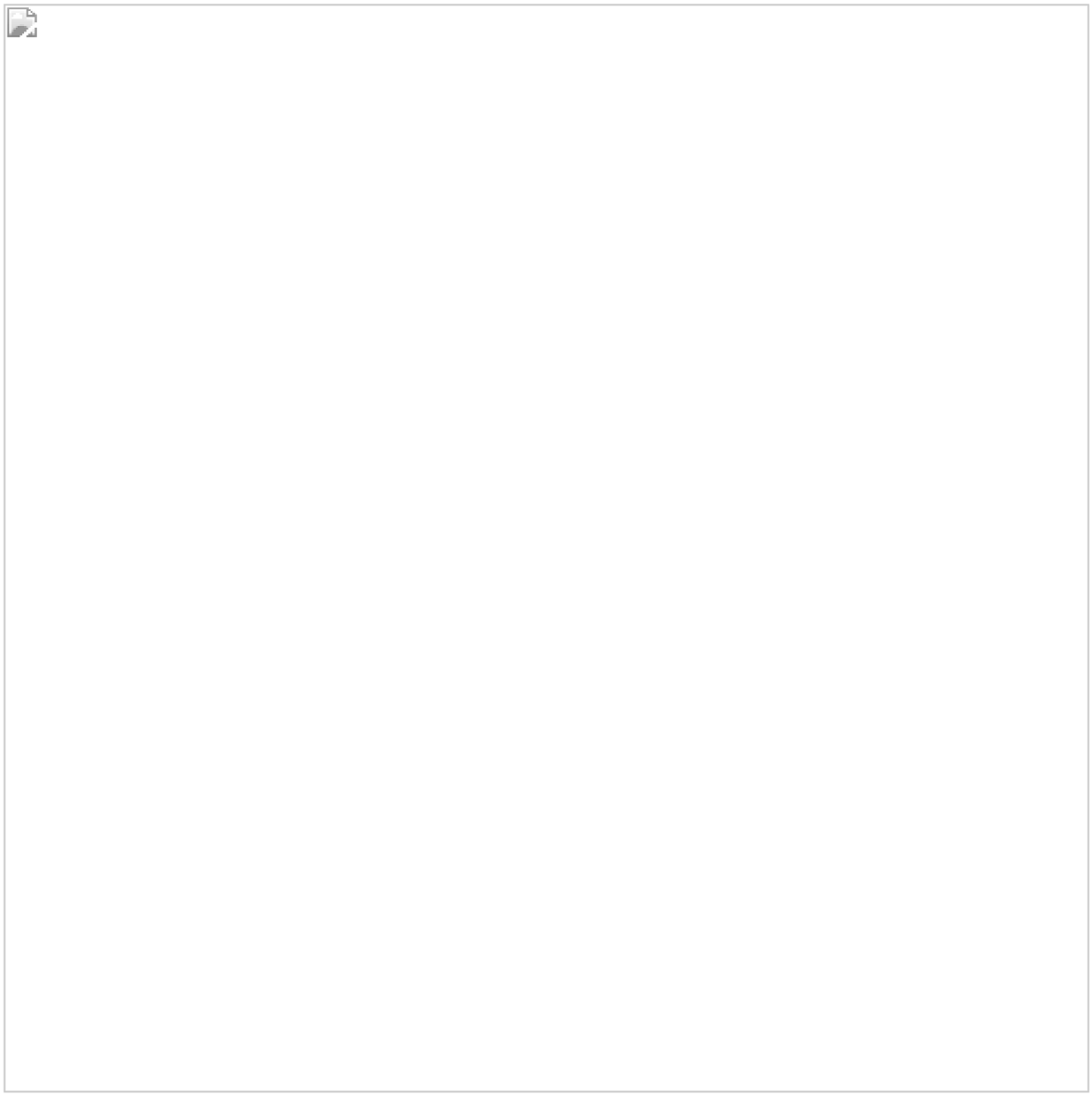


Think about it

1. What was the Princess rowing with?

- ○ Silver oars
- ○ Golden oars
- ○ Wooden paddles

The Princess Falls Asleep



The Princess sat down with the archer and drank from a golden goblet of the Tzar's wine. But this wine was heavy, and her eyes closed against her will, once, twice, and again.

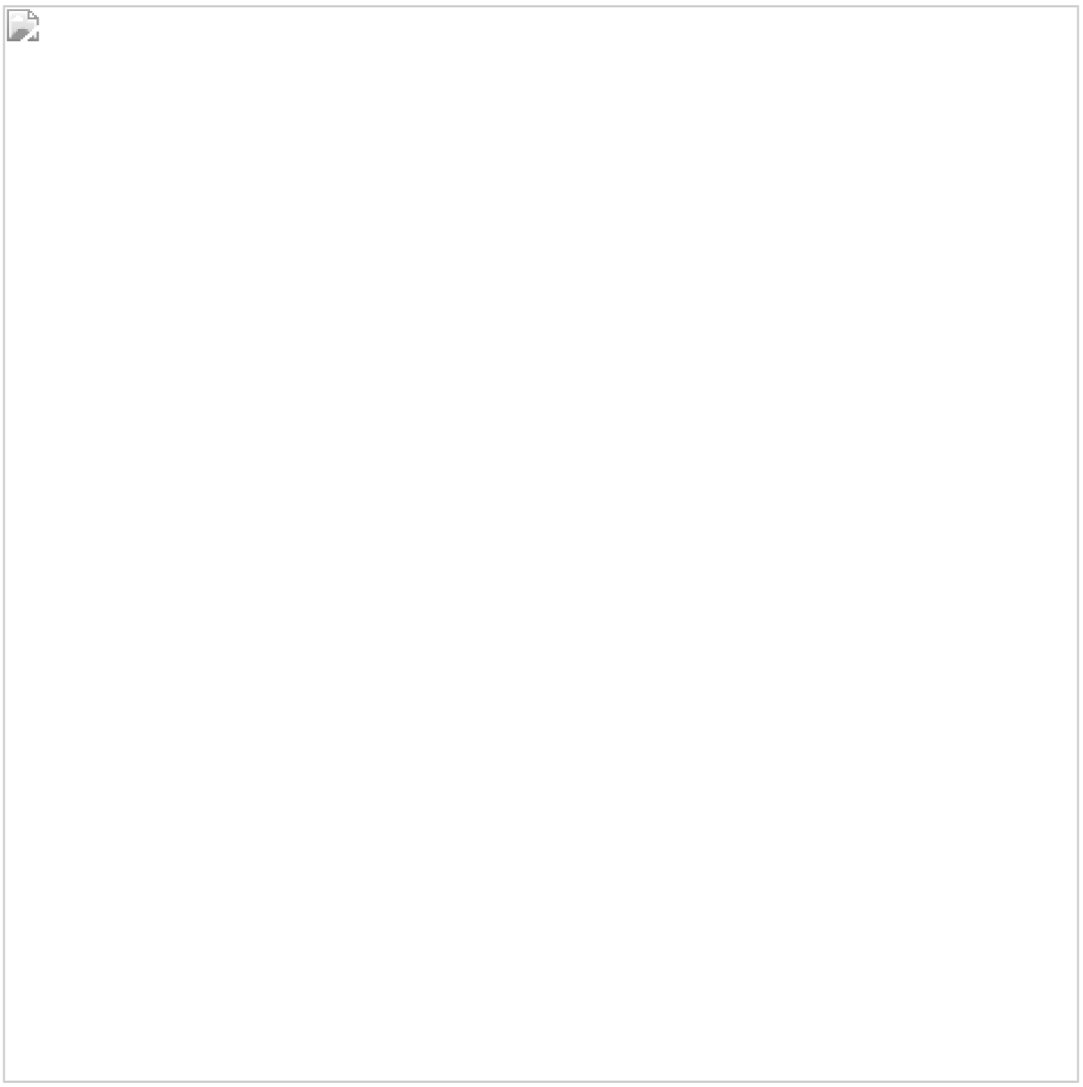
“Ah me!” she said, “it is as if the night itself had perched on my eyelids, and yet it is but noon.” The goblet dropped from her fingers, and she fell asleep.

Quickly the archer called the horse of power. He lifted the Princess and leapt with her into the saddle. She lay like a feather in the hollow of his arm and slept, while the iron hoofs thundered to the Tzar's palace.

TALK ABOUT IT

The Princess did not know the wine would make her sleep. What do you think about that?

The Princess Falls Asleep · another picture

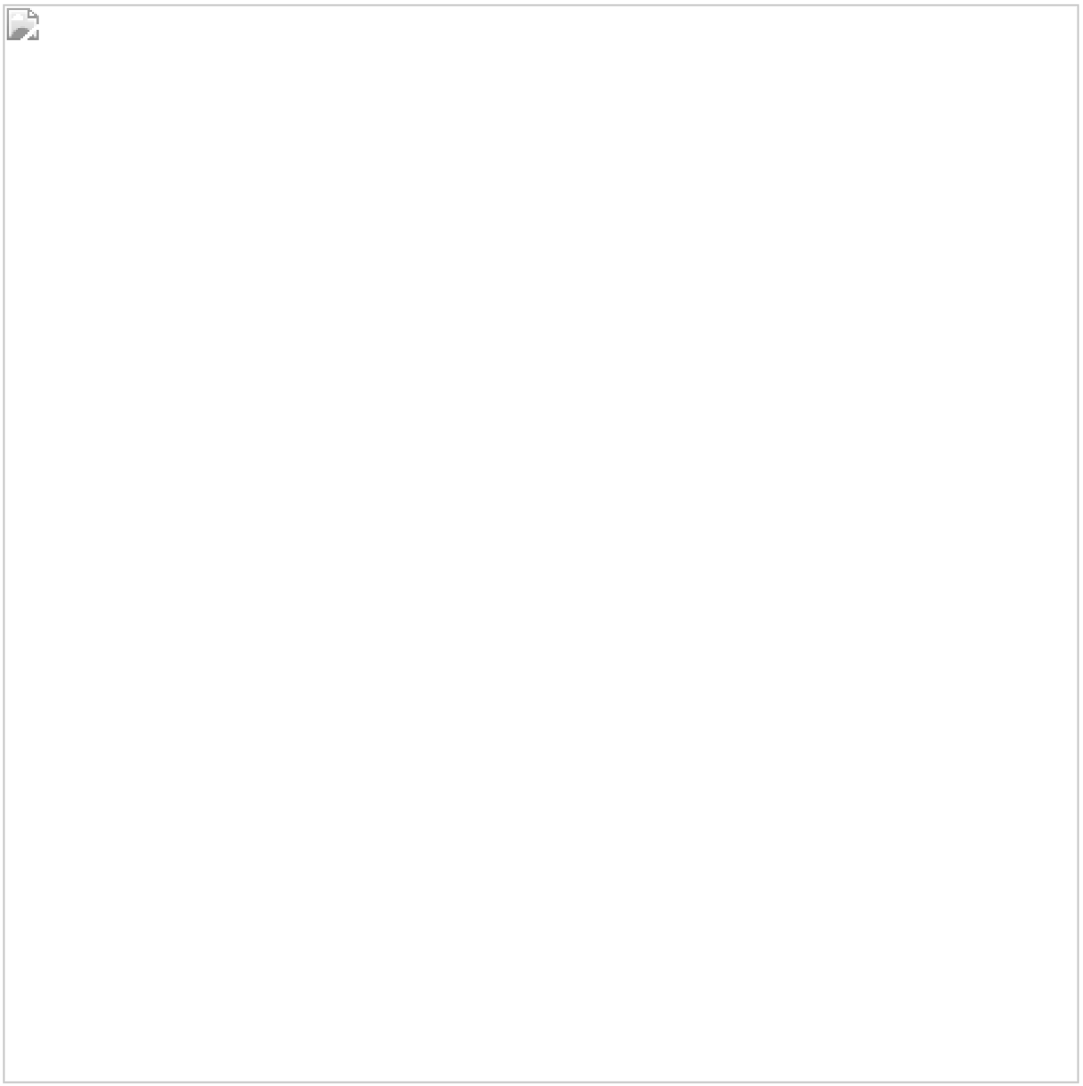


Think about it

1. What made the Princess fall asleep?

- ○ The heavy wine
- ○ A long walk
- ○ A spell from the horse

Bells and Trumpets



“Go, sound the trumpets for our wedding,” said the Tzar. The noise woke the Princess. “And where, oh, where is the blue sea, and my little silver boat with its golden oars?” she asked.

“The blue sea is far away,” said the Tzar, “and for your little silver boat I give you a golden throne.”

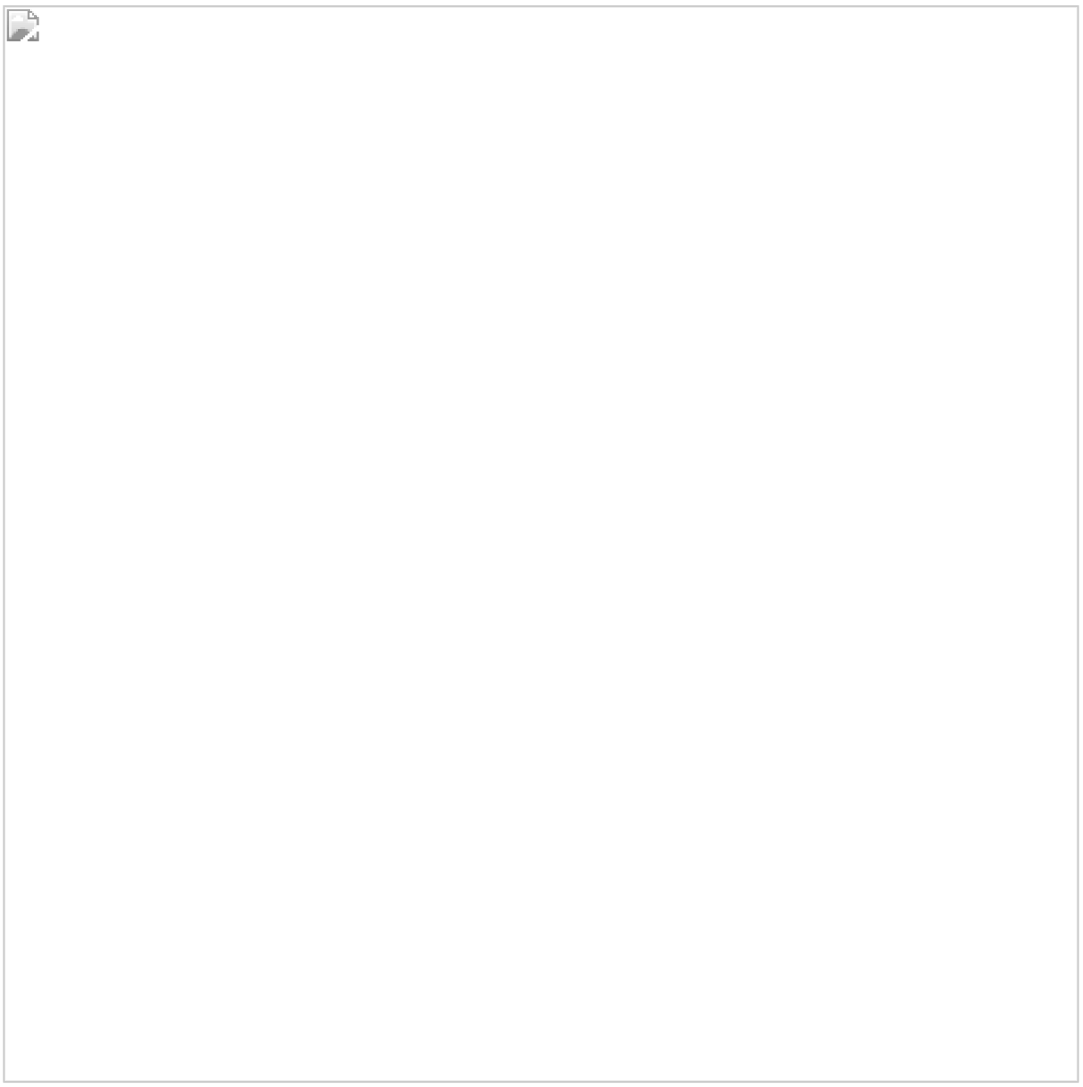
She turned from the old Tzar and looked with love at the young archer.

“In the middle of the deep blue sea lies a great stone,” she said, “and under that stone is hidden my wedding dress. If I cannot wear that dress I will marry nobody at all.”

TALK ABOUT IT

The Princess had her own wishes. How do you think she felt about being taken from her boat? What would you want?

Bells and Trumpets · another picture

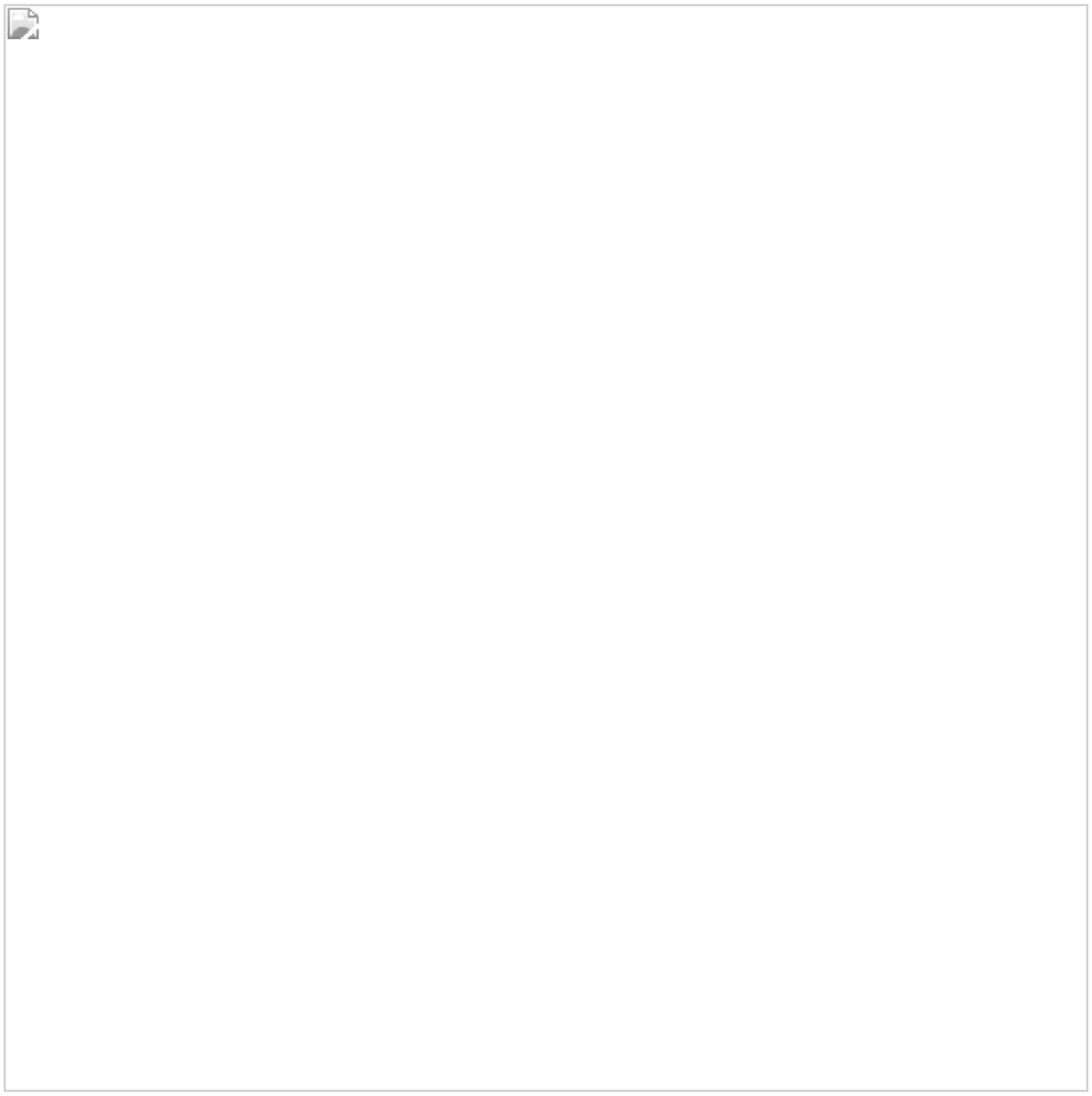


Think about it

1. What did the Princess say was hidden under the great stone?

- ○ Her golden crown
- ○ Her wedding dress
- ○ Her little boat

The Lobster Tzar



The Tzar sent the archer to fetch the dress, or lose his head. “There is no way of escaping death this time,” said the archer, for he loved the Princess himself.

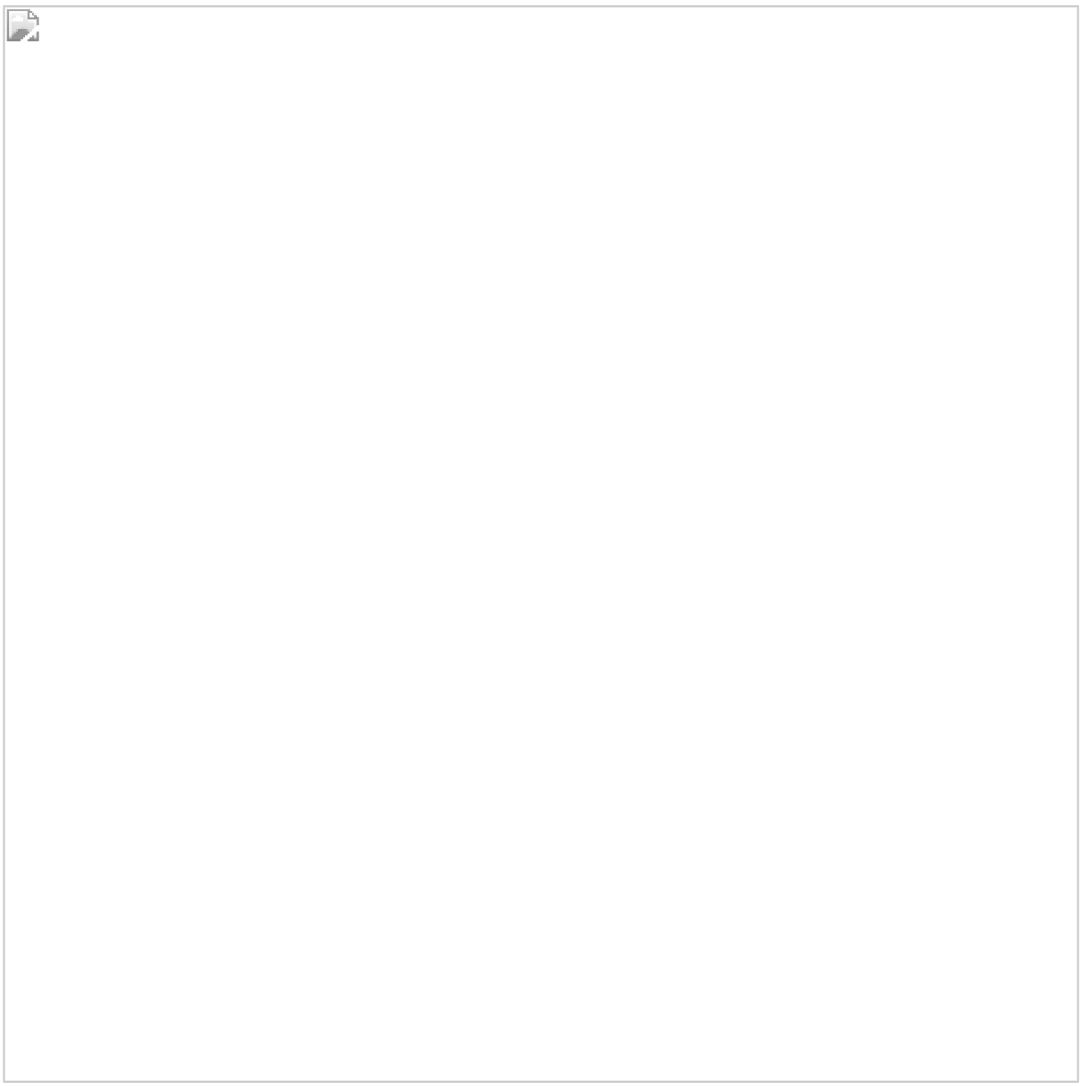
“Do not be afraid,” said the horse of power, and they galloped back to the edge of the world.

There a huge lobster, the Tzar of all the lobsters, was crawling along the sand. The horse set an iron hoof on his tail.

“Let me live, and I will do whatever you ask of me,” cried the lobster. So the horse lifted his foot and asked him to bring the wedding dress from under the stone.

TALK ABOUT IT

The horse let the lobster go once he promised to help. What do you think of that?

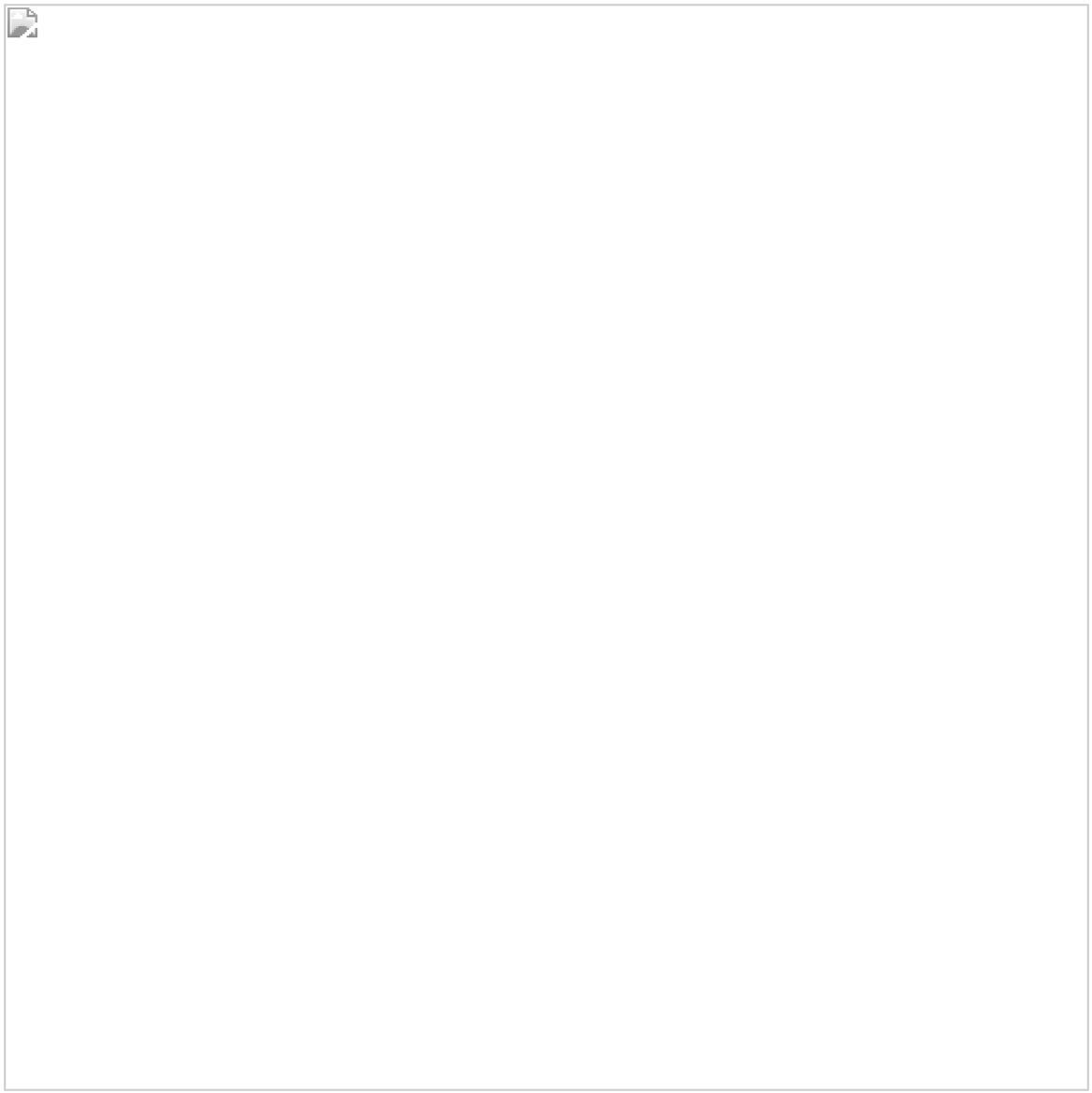


Think about it

1. Who brought up the wedding dress?

- ○ Thousands of lobsters
- ○ A sea bird
- ○ The horse of power

The Golden Casket



The lobster cried out in a voice heard all over the deep blue sea, and lobsters in thousands came to the shore. The oldest sent them back into the sea.

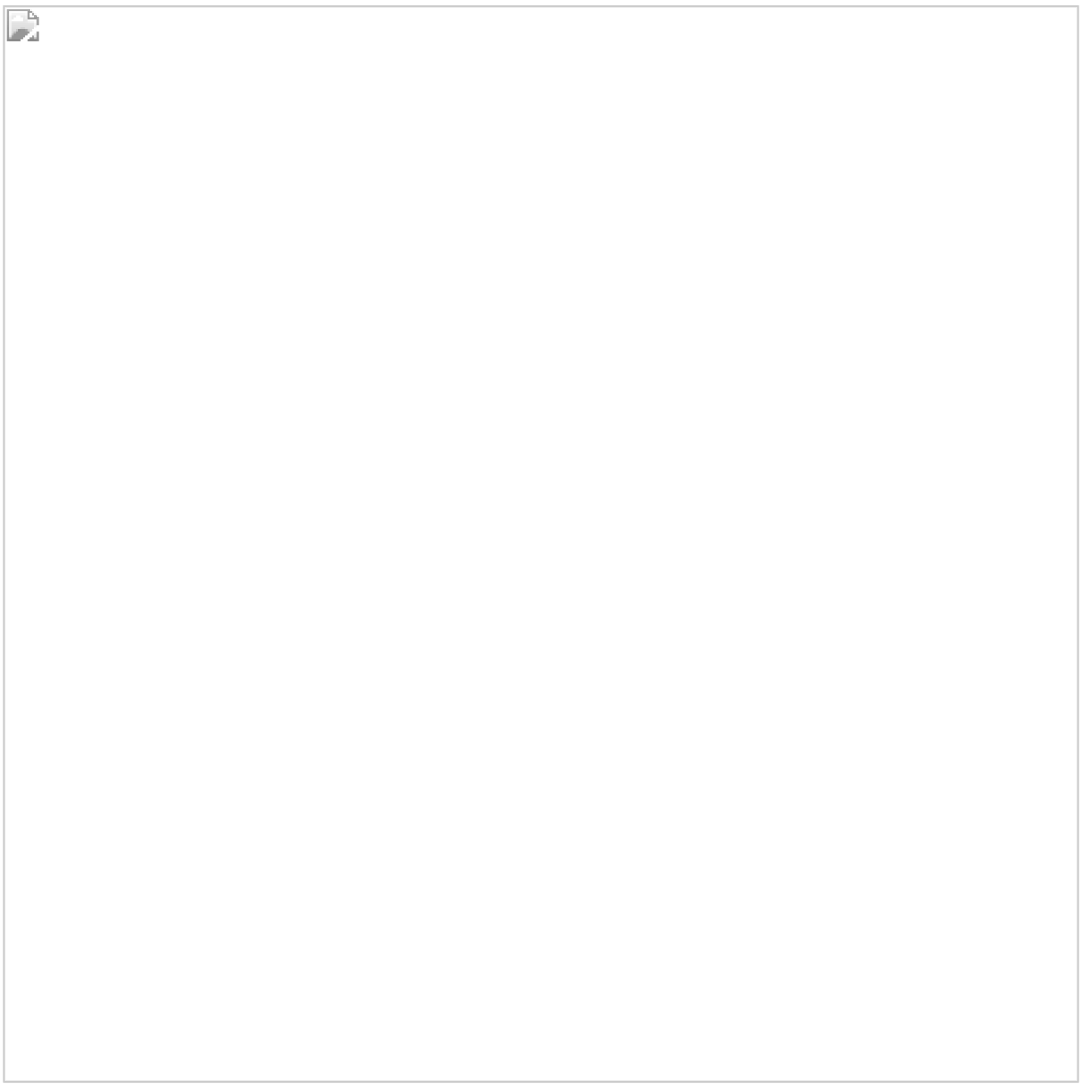
After a little time they came again, bringing a golden casket with the wedding dress of the Princess Vasilissa.

The archer took the casket and the horse galloped back to the palace. The Princess went into an inner chamber and came back in her wedding dress, fairer than the spring itself.

The Tzar held out his hand. But she would not take it.

TALK ABOUT IT

The lobsters came when their Tzar called. Who comes when you need help?



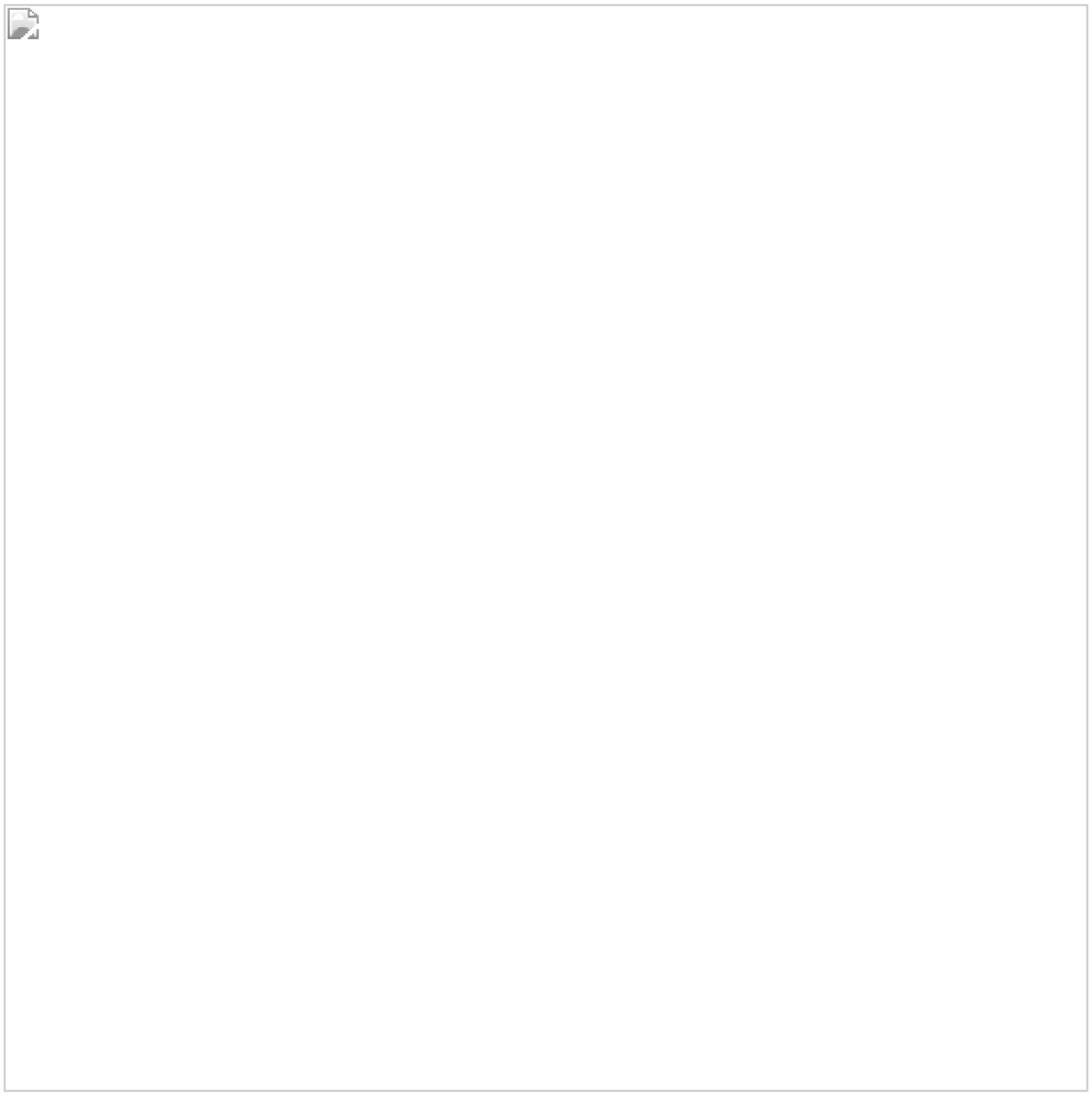
Think about it

1. What was the wedding dress kept in?

- ○ A silver chest
- ○ A golden casket
- ○ A wooden box

2. Why do you think the Princess would not take the Tzar's hand?

The Cauldron



“No,” said the Princess; “I will marry nobody until the man who brought me here has done penance in boiling water.”

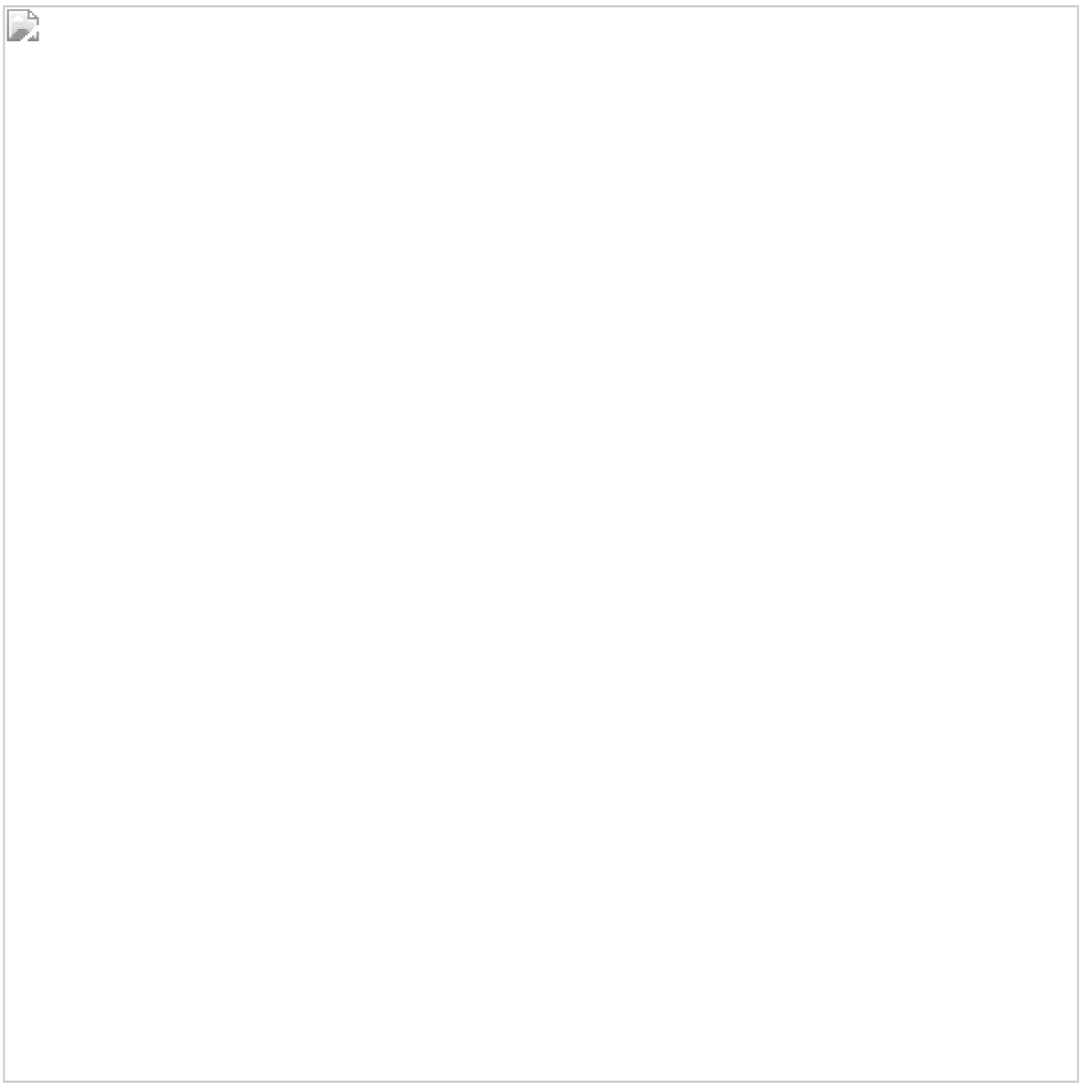
The Tzar ordered his servants to throw the young archer into a great cauldron of boiling water. “There was no gratitude in the mind of that Tzar.”

“Suffer me, before I die, once more to see my horse,” said the archer. “Let him see his horse,” said the Princess.

“Fear not,” said the horse, “the end of these things is better than I thought. When they are ready to throw you in, run boldly and leap yourself into the boiling water.”

TALK ABOUT IT

The archer was told to be brave and trust the horse. When is it hard to trust someone?

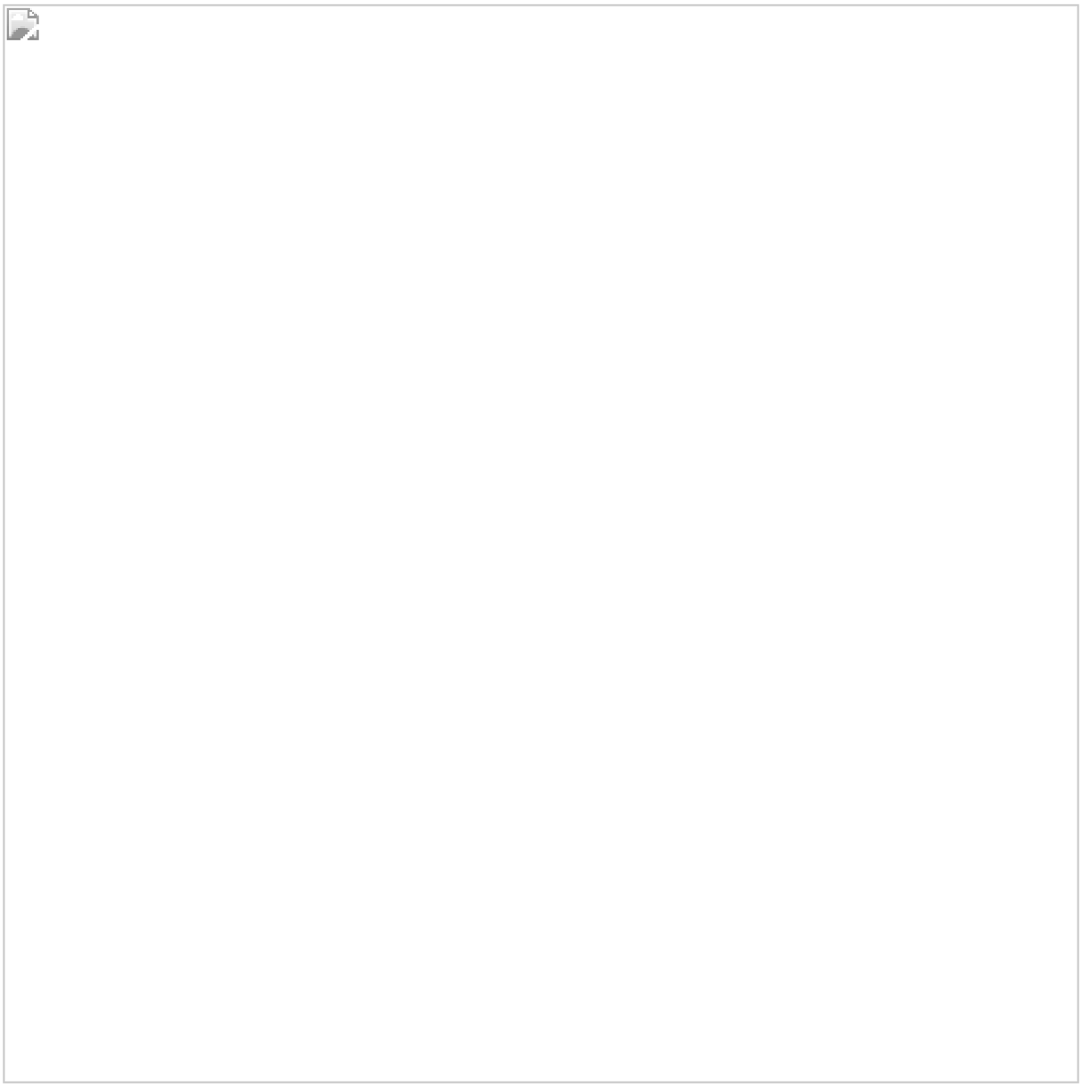


Think about it

1. What did the archer ask to do before the cauldron?

- ○ Eat a last meal
- ○ See his horse once more
- ○ Write a letter

A New Tzar



The Princess went and waved her hand above the cauldron. “And some say there was something in her hand, and some say there was not.”

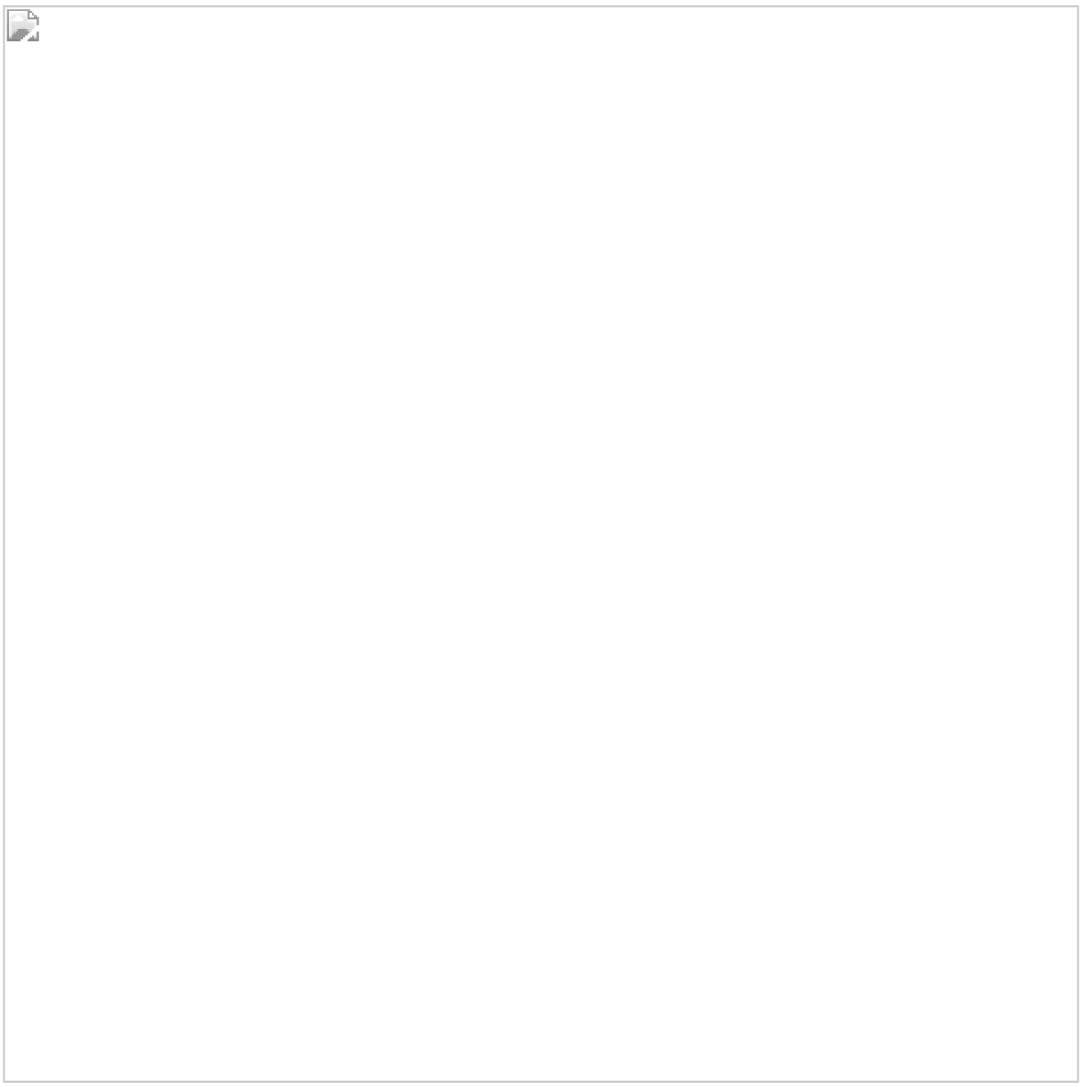
The archer leapt boldly into the cauldron, and leapt out so beautiful a youth that all who saw cried aloud in wonder.

“This is a miracle,” said the Tzar, and climbed in to become beautiful too. He did not come out again.

They made the young archer Tzar. He married the Princess and lived with her many years in love and good fellowship. He built a golden stable for the horse of power, “and never forgot what he owed to him.”

TALK ABOUT IT

The archer built a golden stable to thank his horse. How do you say thank you to someone who has helped you?



Think about it

1. What did the archer build for the horse of power?

- ○ A silver bridge
- ○ A golden stable
- ○ A tall tower

2. The Tzar copied what he saw. Do you think that was wise? Why or why not?

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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