

## Once Upon a Time...in a Summer Program

Contributed by Administrator  
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The Learning Center Network is excited to include a whole week on local Roma Fairy Tales in this year's Summer Program. Roma culture is rich in story telling tradition which is why we have invited local residents to come and read the stories to the children. During this week of the program the students will explore different fairy tales while learning that all over the world fairy tales follow similar patterns and looking closer at the characters involved. Below is one of the fairy tales the children will study which is credited to Nazife Krasni i from Obili , born 1900 died 1984.

Â Â THE CROCODILE Once upon a time, three poor brothers lived in a dilapidated cabin. They tried to change their lives by offering their services. They sailed the sea and found one stone. Another world was hidden under the stone in which a crocodile lived. The stone was large and hard to move, but somehow they managed to move it. The youngest brother went in first, followed by the other two. When they approached they saw the crocodile's wife milking the sheep. Seeing them she said "Do you know where you are? The crocodile live here. He is going to eat you!" They all answered at once: - We are not afraid. They went to the crocodile. He looked at them and said: -Such luck! I will have something to eat. Outside there was a big fire so the youngest brother took a steel spear and quietly put it in the fire. Around midnight, two brothers fell asleep. The youngest brother grasped the heated spear and took the crocodile's eye out. The crocodile started squirming with the spear stuck in his eye. The noise woke the other brothers up, so they all ran away, getting out of the stone hole. They placed the large stone back in its place. They went to the Czar to work as his servants. The oldest brother took the garbage out, the middle one looked after the sheep and the youngest was setting czar's horse and wagon whenever he would go for a walk or a long journey. The other two brothers hated him as he had the easiest and cleanest job. One day they told the czar that the crocodile had a better horse and bigger ring than him. It was as big as his head they told him. They convinced him that only their brother could bring him the horse and the ring. The czar called the youngest brother and said: - I have heard that you are very brave. Therefore I order you to bring me the crocodile's ring. The younger brother answered: - How can I bring you the ring when I dare not approach him? - Surely you can, and you must go and get me that ring "said the czar angrily. - Please czar give me your best horse. - My best horse is Djogo " replied the czar. They entered the stable together. The czar ordered the horse: - Take good care of this man, and if you cannot bring him back alive, do not return home either. The young man mounted the horse and left. When they reached the sea the horse could not cross it. The young man wanted to board a ship but the horse was scared. Then he took a few steps backwards and flew over the sea. Soon they reached the stone. The young man tried to move it a few times but could not. He sat and thought. Since the young man was troubled, the horse used his strength and moved the stone with his foot. He stayed by the opening. The crocodile was asleep, but when the young man entered he smelt a human being, woke up and said it to his wife. She replied: - I lay beside you, husband, and I smell like a human being. - For years I have been living with you and never noticed the human smell. After that, they went back to sleep. The young man secretly approached the crocodile, fearing that he would wake. He took the ring off his finger. Then he got out, mounted the horse and went towards the czar's gate. Arriving to the czar he gave him the ring. His brothers however went to the czar again and told him about the crocodile's horse. - Send our brother to bring you the crocodile's horse. As we already told you, your Djogo is pretty but his horse is much prettier. Hearing these words again the czar believed them and got upset. He called the youngest brother again and ordered him to bring the crocodile's horse back. The young man cried claiming he could not fulfil this request. How was he to bring such a horse? The crocodile may notice his presence and kill him. Having no other choice, he finally accepted. He mounted the czar's horse and went. When they arrived they noticed they forgot to put the stone back in its place. The horse waited by it again. - Wait here " said the young man. He went inside and slyly came to the crocodile's horse. He started talking to him, asking him what kind of food he eats. The horse answered: - Barley and corn. - You fool! If you were mine you would eat rice instead of barley and corn. The horse got upset, and the crocodile woke up and entered the stable. He hit the horse a few times and went back to sleep. - What kind of master hits you? If you were mine I would never hit you, but take very good care of you. Somehow he persuaded the horse. - Here is a hook, release me. In this corner on the left side are the bridles and harness. He took them and saddled the horse. The crocodile's horse knew a way for them to easily and unnoticeably escape. When they left the crocodile's house the horse started flying and soon they came to the stone. When the two horses met, the young man told the czar's horse: - You go first. I know the way and will mount the crocodile's horse. They arrived, the young man handed the crocodile's horse to the czar, leaving everyone speechless. His brothers envied him, they were not happy that he had returned. - You will have one more assignment. I want the crocodile as well. In return I will award you " said the czar. - Your highness, how can I bring the crocodile? This assignment I cannot fulfil. - No arguments about it. If you do not do it I will decapitate you! Being beside himself, he had no choice, but to accept the assignment and leave. He went with tears in his eyes. When he arrived he started cutting down the trees and making a large coffin. He also took chains with him. At that moment the crocodile showed up. - What are you doing in my forest? Who let you cut down the trees?- he asked. The frightened young man answered: - Your cousin died. He was this big and this long. I do not know whether the coffin will fit him. - If it is for my cousin, I shall try it myself. The young man had everything ready. The crocodile went in on his own, not being forced nor beaten. The young man pulled the lid and nailed the coffin. He chained it. The crocodile was shouting: - Where are you taking me? - Nowhere - Why did you chain me? - You went in yourself " said the young man laughing. When they arrived, whoever saw him was terrified. Everyone agreed to name the young man a czar and marry him with the czar's daughter. So they got married. Hearing about it his brothers ran away, fearing that the young man would find out about their conspiracy.