

The Origin of Brother Ivan

By Lisa VanPatten

Long ago, in a remote Russian Monastery lived a humble monk named Ivan. His days were spent in quiet reflection, seeking the meaning of life beneath the heavy weight of his robes. As he gazed outside the frosted windows blinded by the endless snow of winter, his brother's—content with the simple rhythm of their existence—often ask him why he pondered so deeply. But Ivan could not reveal the emptiness he felt in his heart and a lack of purpose that lingered just beneath the surface.

One frigid winter's night, while the monks slept, a voice called to Ivan from the wind. "Brother Ivan, look within," it whispered, "and seek your life's purpose." In that moment, a vision appeared before him—a winding dirt path vanishing into a veil of mist. Ivan, confused and frightened, could neither see where the path led nor understand the meaning of the vision, and so fell back asleep. But when morning came, he awoke with a resolute heart, determined to leave the monastery and embark on a journey, wherever it might lead, to find his purpose.

Meagerly dressed, Ivan was ill-prepared for the perilous journey and bitter cold that awaited him. As he trudged through the forest, the relentless wind howled, and the snow stung his skin like needles. Exhausted, dehydrated, and on the verge of collapse, he began to question his quest. Just as his strength was fading, a light appeared in the distance. As he drew closer, he found himself standing before a small tavern.

A kindly man, his face weathered but his eyes filled with warmth, hurried outside to greet him. "Come in, brother," the man said, wrapping Ivan in a blanket and guiding him to a seat near the crackling fireplace. "I am the Tavern Keeper; you look as though you've come a long way."

From the back room, the Tavern Keeper emerged with a large stein and set it before Ivan. "Drink this," he said with a knowing smile. "It will awaken your soul."

Parched and weary, Ivan took a sip. Warmth coursed through his body, and a deep sense of renewal washed over him. The Tavern Keeper laughed heartily, "Ahh, what did I tell you? It has awakened your soul, has it not?"

Seeing that Ivan had nowhere else to go, the Tavern Keeper offered him a place to stay in exchange for helping at the Tavern. Over time, Ivan became not just an assistant but a master brewer, creating some of the most beloved beers in the region. His crowning achievement was a Russian Imperial Stout—rich and complex, with flavors of dark fruit, roasted coffee and chocolate that seemed to speak directly to one's spirit. A spirit that once gave him the courage to embark on his journey.

The tavern soon became a hub where the townspeople gathered. A place filled with warm laughter where patrons shared their stories over pints of the stout that Ivan crafted. They spoke of challenges they had faced but overcome and the dreams they were still pursuing.

In these moments, Ivan realized his true purpose: not merely to brew beer, but to create something that would inspire others to embark on their own journeys, pushing through hardship to discover their full potential and achieve their ultimate goals in life.

And so, Brother Ivan's legacy was born - A Russian Imperial Stout that carries within its depths the mystery of life's purpose, waiting to be discovered by those souls eager to take that first sip.