

RUSSIAN FOLK TALES

Retold by Ian Harkness

Illustrations

by

*the students of Murmansk Art School
for Children*



EOS PUBLISHERS

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The Tale of Ivan-Tsarévich, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf

In a land far far away, there once lived a mighty ruler called Tsar Vyslav Andronovich, who had three sons, Dimitri-Tsarévich, Vasily-Tsarévich, and Ivan-Tsarévich. The Tsar had a wonderful garden with many rare and magnificent trees, so that there was none that could compare with it in any other tsardom. One of the trees was especially beautiful and the Tsar loved it most of all, for it was an apple tree that bore apples of gold.

It happened one day that the Firebird began to visit the Tsar's garden. Its feathers were of gold, and its eyes were like the crystal of the East. Every night it would fly into the garden, pluck several of the golden apples, and then fly away again. This saddened Tsar Vyslav greatly. He summoned his three sons to him and said, "My dear children, which of you will keep guard in my garden and catch the Firebird? He who



The Firebird
Vera Seyaleva 5 yrs

captures the firebird alive, will receive half of the tsardom in my own lifetime, and the whole of it upon my death.”

The three princes, the Tsareviches, answered in one voice, “Our father, Your Imperial Majesty, we will with the greatest pleasure catch the Firebird for you.”

On the first night, Dimitri-Tsarévich kept guard under the golden apple tree. But he soon fell asleep and didn’t hear the Firebird, which flew quietly into the garden, plucked many of the golden apples, and then flew away again into the night. In the morning, the Tsar summoned his son and asked him, “Well, my dear son, did you see the Firebird this night or not?”

The Tsarévich answered, “No my father, gracious sovereign, this night the Firebird did not come into the garden.”

The next night it was Vasily-Tsarévich’s turn to keep guard under the golden apple tree. But after one hour had passed he too was soon sleeping so soundly that he didn’t hear the Firebird fly into the garden. It perched in the golden apple tree and plucked many of the golden

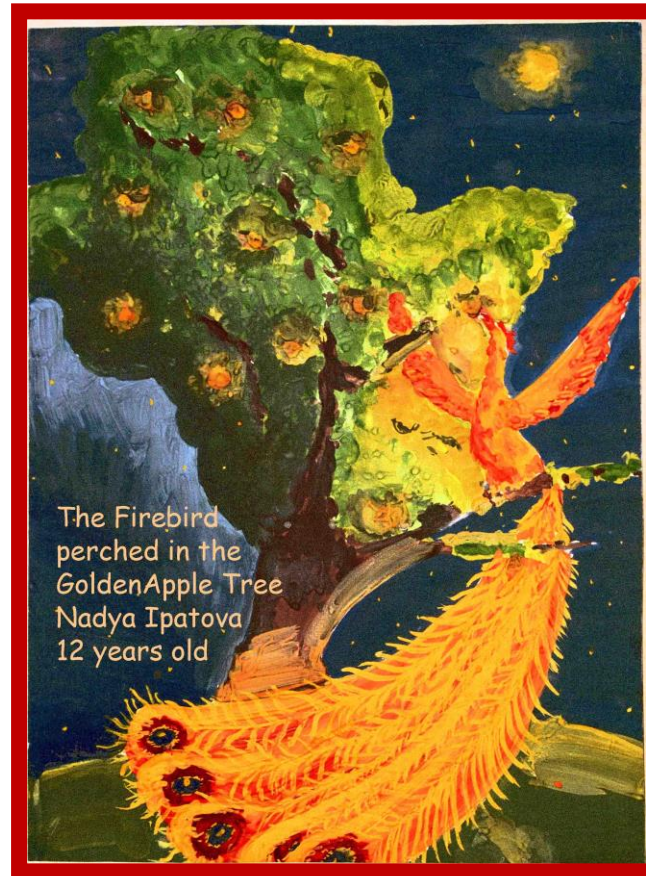
apples, then flew away again. The following morning, the Tsar summoned his second son and asked him, “Well, my dear son, did you see the Firebird this night or not?”

The Tsarévich replied, “Father, gracious sovereign, this night the Firebird did not come into the garden.”

On the third night, the youngest of the princes, Ivan-Tsarévich, kept watch under the golden apple tree. He kept guard vigilantly, first one hour, and then another. Finally, after the third hour the whole garden was suddenly illuminated as if by a thousand candles. It was the Firebird that had come to roost in the apple tree and was picking the golden apples. Ivan-Tsarévich crept warily under the Firebird and seized the bird by its tail feathers. But the bird tore itself loose from his grip and flew away. Ivan-Tsarévich was left holding a single bright, fiery-red feather. In the morning, as soon as Tsar Vyslav was awake, Ivan-Tsarévich went to his father and gave him the feather from the Firebird’s tail. Tsar Vyslav was overjoyed when his youngest son gave him the feather from the bird, which was so marvellous that it glowed in

the dark like a myriad of fireflies. The Tsar kept the feather in his jewel chest as something which he would treasure forever. But the Firebird never again returned to the Tsar's garden.

Tsar Vyslav summoned his sons once again and said to them, "Dear sons, ride out into the world and seek the Firebird. The one who captures it and brings it back to me alive will be given what I promised to you earlier, half of my tsardom while I live and the whole of it on my death."





Nastya Petkevich
16 years old

The two brothers, Dimitri and Vasily, were envious of their younger brother, Ivan, because he had snatched a feather from the Firebird's tail and given it to their father. They were therefore quite happy when they set off together with their father's blessing in search of the Firebird, and without their younger brother.

Ivan-Tsarévich had also asked his father for permission to seek out the Firebird, but the Tsar didn't want to lose the companionship of all of his three sons, and therefore wanted to hold him back. But Ivan was so insistent that in the end his father was forced to give in to his pleas and let him go as well. Ivan-Tsarévich received his father's blessing, mounted his horse, and set off on his journey.

He rode near and far, high and low - who knows how far it was, since a tale is told long before a deed is done. At last he came to a wide-open field with green meadows. In the field stood a stone column upon which these words were written:

*He who goes straight,
Shall endure trouble and strife.
He who passes to the right,
Shall have health and life,
But his horse shall be slain.
He who passes to the left,
Shall himself be cleft,
But his horse shall have life.*

Ivan-Tsarévich read the inscription, and took the road to the right, thinking to save his own life, though his horse might be slain.

He rode first one day and then another, when on the third day an enormous Grey Wolf suddenly appeared before him and said, “Hail to thee Ivan-Tsarévich! You read the inscription on the column that your horse would be slain, so why then did you ride this way?” Upon speaking these words, the Wolf cleft the horse in two, and then ran off.

Ivan-Tsarévich was very sad and wept bitterly over the death of his horse. He continued on foot for a whole day and grew very weary. He was resting when the Grey Wolf suddenly reappeared and said, “I pity you Ivan-Tsarévich, tiring yourself out like this on foot. Come, sit up on me, on the Grey Wolf, and say where I shall take you and why.”

Ivan-Tsarévich told the Grey Wolf where he wanted to go, and the Grey Wolf darted off, swifter than any horse. In a single night he took Ivan-Tsarévich to a stone wall, stopped, and said, “Now, Ivan-Tsarévich, jump off me - off the Grey Wolf and climb over this stone wall. There is a garden behind the wall, and in the garden hangs a golden cage in which the Firebird perches. Take the Firebird, but whatever you do do not touch the golden cage, or you will be captured for certain.”

Ivan-Tsarévich climbed over the wall and saw the Firebird sitting in its cage of gold. He took the Firebird out of its cage, and was just about to return when he thought to himself, “Why should I take the Firebird without its cage, because then I will have nothing to carry the bird in!” But as soon as he touched the golden cage, the palace erupted with a

clangour and a clamour,
as if there had been an
invisible thread attached
to the cage. Trumpets
blasted and drums
thundered, and the
guards came running and
took Ivan-Tsarévich
captive.

They led him to their
Tsar who was called
Dolmat. Tsar Dolmat was
furious at Ivan-Tsarévich,
and cried in a wrathful
voice, “Just who do you

think you are to come here stealing young lad? Are you not ashamed of yourself? What country do you come from and what’s your name?”



Ivan took the Firbird out of its cage
Nastya Petkevic, 16 years old.

“I come from the land of Tsar Vyslav Andronovich, and am his youngest son, Ivan-Tsarévich,” he answered. “Your Firebird used to fly into my father’s garden every night, and steal the golden apples from the apple tree that my father loves most dearly. This saddened him greatly, and for this reason he has sent me to seek out the Firebird and bring it back to him.”

“Well, young Ivan-Tsarévich, if you had only come to me with honest intentions, I would have gladly given you the Firebird! But now how would it look, if I were to proclaim in all the tsardoms that you had dealt so dishonestly with me! However, be that as it may, listen to what I have to say to you, Ivan-Tsarévich! Cross thrice-nine lands into the thrice-tenth realm, and obtain for me there, from Tsar Afron, the golden-maned horse. If you can do this one service for me, I will forgive your offence and gratefully give you the Firebird in its golden cage.”

On hearing this Ivan-Tsarévich felt utterly miserable. He left Tsar Dolmat, and made his way back to the Grey Wolf. The Grey Wolf greeted him on his return, “Hail to thee Ivan-Tsarévich!” Ivan-Tsarévich

told the Grey Wolf everything that had happened. The Wolf reprimanded him and said, “Why did you not heed my words, I told you not to touch the golden cage?”

“I admit it, I stand here guilty before you,” answered Ivan-Tsarévich.

“Well, so be it, what’s done is done. Climb up on my back, on the Grey Wolf, and I will take you wherever you wish to go.”



Ivan-Tsarévich mounted the Grey Wolf, and they rode off as swiftly

as an arrow. They ran swiftly, perhaps it was near, perhaps far, but by nightfall they came to Tsar Afron's palace. The Grey Wolf said to Ivan-Tsarévich, "Go to the white-tiled stables and take there the horse with the golden mane, but do not touch the golden bridle hanging on the wall."

Ivan-Tsarévich entered the white-tiled stables and took the horse with the golden mane. But when he saw the golden bridle hanging on the wall, he became fascinated by it and took it. But as soon as he touched the bridle, the palace erupted into a clamour and clangour of trumpets blasting and drums thundering. The palace guards awoke and came running, seized Ivan-Tsarévich, and took him before Tsar Afron.

Tsar Afron was very angry at Ivan-Tsarévich, and said to him, "Who do you think you are, to come here thieving like this? What land do you come from, and what do they call you?"

"I come from the land of Tsar Vyslav Andronovich, and am his youngest son, Ivan-Tsarévich," he answered.

“Well, young Ivan-Tsarévich, if only you had come here to me with honest intentions, I would have gladly given you the horse with the golden mane. But now how do you think it would look, if I were to proclaim in all the tsardoms that you had dealt so dishonestly with me! However, Ivan-Tsarévich, listen to what I have to say to you! I have loved Yelena the Fair with all my heart for a long time. Cross thrice-nine lands into the thrice-tenth realm, and bring her back here to me. If you can do this one service for me, I will forgive you and make you a gift of the golden-maned horse.

Ivan-Tsarévich left the palace and began to weep bitterly on hearing these words. He returned to the Grey Wolf who greeted him, “Hail to thee, young warrior!” He told the Grey Wolf everything that had happened, and the Wolf reprimanded him and said, “Why did you not heed my words? I told you not to touch the golden bridle?”

“I stand here guilty as charged,” answered Ivan-Tsarévich.

“Well, so be it,” said the Grey Wolf. “Sit up on my back, on the Grey Wolf and I will take you wherever you wish to go.”

Ivan-Tsarévich mounted on the Grey Wolf's back, and the Wolf rode off as fast as an arrow. They arrived at last in the tsardom of Yelena Tsarevna the Fair and came to the golden palisade, which surrounded the magnificent garden of the palace. "Ivan-Tsarévich, climb down from my back, off the Grey Wolf and return along the road upon which we came and wait for me there in the open field under the green oak."



Yelena the Fair
walked in the garden
with her ladies-in-waiting

Katya Antal
11 years old

The Grey Wolf sat near the golden palisade and waited for Yelena Tsarevna the Fair to come into the garden on her evening walk. When the sun was setting, she came into the garden accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting and attendants. When she came to the place where the Grey Wolf was hiding, he sprang up, and snatching the Tsarevna he ran off with her as fast as he could. He ran back to the open field where Ivan-Tsarévich was waiting by the green oak, and said, “Ivan-Tsarévich, come and sit on my back, on the Grey Wolf,” and with both of them on his broad back he sped off to the palace of Tsar Afron.

All the ladies-in-waiting and attendants who had been walking in the garden with Yelena the Fair ran into the palace and raised the alarm. The men-at-arms set off in pursuit of the Grey Wolf, but no matter how fast they ran, they couldn't catch up with the Wolf, so all returned home again.

As they rode together on the back of the Grey Wolf, Ivan-Tsarévich fell in love with Tsarevna Yelena the Fair, and she with him. When the Grey Wolf arrived at the palace of Tsar Afron, Ivan Tsarévich was very

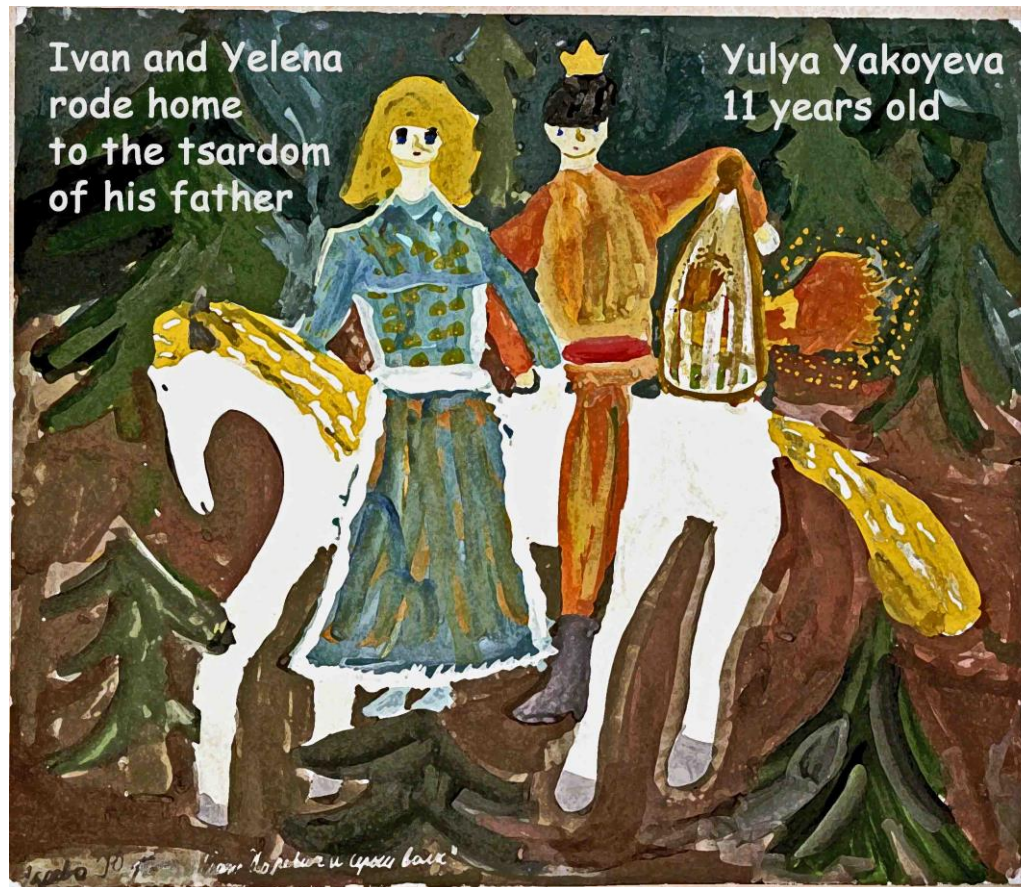
sad and wept bitter tears. The Grey Wolf asked him, “Why are you so sad, Ivan-Tsarévich?”

“How can I not be sad and grieved, Grey Wolf? I love Yelena the Fair dearly, and now I must give her up to Tsar Afron in return for the golden-maned horse. If I don’t do him this service, he will dishonour my name throughout all the tsardoms.

“I have served you well until now, Ivan-Tsarévich,” said the Grey Wolf, “and will continue to do so, so listen to what I have to say! I will turn myself into the Fair Yelena, and then you will take me to Tsar Afron and give me to him. In return he will give you the golden-maned horse. The Tsar will take me as his queen, and then you will be able to mount the golden-maned horse and ride far away. After some time I will ask the Tsar to allow me to walk in the garden with the ladies-in-waiting. You have only to think of me then Ivan-Tsarévich, and I will re-appear before you in my true form once again.” As soon as Grey Wolf had said this, he struck the dank earth and turned himself into Tsarevna Yelena

the Fair. Ivan-Tsarévich went with the Grey Wolf, who was now in the guise of the Tsarevna, and they sought out Tsar Afron.

The Tsar was overjoyed when he clasped his eyes on the beautiful Tsarevna, whom he had for so long desired. He gave the golden-maned horse to Ivan-Tsarévich as he had promised.



Ivan-Tsarévich rode off on the horse and quickly found Tsarevna Yelena. The Fair Yelena sat up on the horse together with the Tsarévich, and they rode off together towards the palace of Tsar Dolmat. The Grey Wolf, who was now in the guise of Tsarevna Yelena, stayed together with Tsar Afron first one day, then another, and on the third day asked leave of Tsar Afron to walk in the garden with the ladies-in-waiting.

Meanwhile, Ivan-Tsarévich and the Tsarevna had almost forgotten about the Grey Wolf. But when the Tsarévich suddenly cried, “Oh, where is Grey Wolf?” then the Wolf appeared from out of nowhere and stood before him.

The Grey Wolf said, “Sit on me, Ivan-Tsarévich, on the Grey Wolf, and the Fair Tsarevna can ride on the golden-maned horse.”

They all rode off together towards the realm of Tsar Dolmat. When they reached the Tsardom of Tsar Dolmat, they stopped some distance from the Tsar’s palace. Ivan-Tsarévich began to plead with the Grey Wolf, “Listen to me, my faithful friend, Grey Wolf. You have helped me so far, and it would help me still more if you could turn yourself into the

golden-maned horse.” The Grey Wolf agreed and struck the dank earth with his paw, turning himself into the golden-maned horse. Ivan-Tsarévich left the Fair Yelena in a green meadow, sat on the Grey Wolf, and they rode towards the white-stoned palace of Tsar Dolmat. When the Tsar saw Ivan-Tsarévich come riding on the golden-maned horse, he was overjoyed. He kissed him on his smooth cheeks, took him by his right hand and led him into the white-stoned palace. Out of pure joy, Tsar Dolmat ordered that a feast be prepared. They all sat around the oaken tables, which were covered with chequered tablecloths, and ate, drank and made merry for two days. On the third day, Tsar Dolmat presented Ivan-Tsarévich with the Firebird in its golden cage. The Tsarévich took the Firebird, left the palace and found the Tsarevna waiting in the green meadow with the golden-maned horse. They mounted the golden-maned horse and rode back towards the land of his father, Tsar Vyslav Andronovich.

Tsar Dolmat went riding the next day on his golden-maned horse into the open fields. When he was at some distance from the palace, the

horse suddenly reared up and threw the Tsar, turning itself back into the Grey Wolf, who then ran off swiftly. The Grey Wolf soon caught up with the Tsarévich and Tsarevna on the golden-maned horse. “Sit on me, Ivan-Tsarévich, on the Grey Wolf, and the Fair Tsarevna can ride on the golden-maned horse,” said the Wolf.

Ivan-Tsarévich sat on the Wolf’s back, and they set off together once again. They eventually reached the spot where the Wolf had cleft the horse of Ivan-Tsarévich in two. The Grey Wolf then said, “I have served you well, Ivan-Tsarévich, but now I must leave you. You have the Firebird, the golden-maned horse and the Fair Tsarevna Yelena, and I can serve you no more. Fare thee well, and good luck on your journey home!” The Grey Wolf ran off into the dark forest. Ivan-Tsarévich was very sad at seeing him go and wept bitterly. After a time he regained his spirits, and together with the Fair Yelena he rode off on the golden-maned horse carrying the Firebird in its golden cage.

The Tsarévich and his bride to be were not far from the tsardom of his father, but he and the Tsarevna were both very weary, and decided

to rest at a spot not twenty leagues from his father's palace. They stopped, dismounted from the horse, and lay down to rest under a tree. Ivan Tsarévich tied the golden-maned horse to the tree and took the cage with the Firebird with him. The Tsarévich and the Tsarevna lay on the soft grass together, engaged in loving intercourse, and then fell asleep in each other's arms.

Now it chanced that as fate would have it, at this time the brothers of Ivan Tsarévich, Dimitri and Vasily, were also returning to their father's Tsardom, after searching in vain for the Firebird in different lands. They happened upon the sleeping couple under the tree. Seeing the Firebird in its golden cage and the golden-maned horse, they were filled with a deep envy of their younger brother, and decided to slay him. Dimitri took his sword out of its sheaf and cleft Ivan-Tsarévich in two. The brothers then roused the Fair Tsarevna Yelena and asked, "Fair maiden, from what tsardom do you come and what do they call you?"

The Fair Tsarevna, seeing Ivan-Tsarévich dead on the ground, spoke with bitter tears, "I am Tsarevna Yelena the Fair, travelled from afar,

and the promised bride of Ivan-Tsarévich whom you have just slain. Had you been men of courage and honour, you would have challenged the Tsarévich to fair battle, rather than slay him while he lay sleeping, like the cowards you are.”

Tsarévich Dimitri brought the point of his sword to the breast of the Fair Tsarevna and said, “Listen, Yelena the Fair, you are now in our hands. We will take you to our father, Tsar Vyslav Andronovich, and you will tell him that we found you and the Firebird and the golden-maned horse. If you refuse to do this, we will kill you here and now.”

Tsarevna Yelena the Fair was frightened for her life, and swore to do as she was told. Dimitri and Vasily cast lots to see which of them should have the Fair Tsarevna and which the golden-maned horse. It came out that the Tsarevna should belong to Vasily and the horse to Dimitri.

One day when the Grey Wolf was roaming these very same paths, he came upon the dead body of Ivan-Tsarévich. The Grey Wolf was deeply saddened by the sorry sight and wanted to revive the Tsarévich but didn't know how. He suddenly spied a crow and two nestlings sitting in

their nest in the treetops. The Wolf hid behind a bush and waited for the crow to descend. When the crow and the two nestlings flew down from their treetop nest, the Wolf pounced upon them and threatened to tear one of the nestlings in two. The crow flung himself on the ground and pleaded, “Do not touch my child, it has done you no harm.”

“Listen, crow, I will not touch your son if you will do me this one service. Fly across thrice-nine lands into the thrice tenth realm and bring me back the Waters of Life and Death.”

The crow said, “Grey Wolf, I will do you this service, if only you spare my son.” When the crow had spoken these words, he flew away.

On the third day the crow returned with two phials. In one was the Water of Life and in the other the Water of Death. He gave these to the Grey Wolf. The Grey Wolf took the phials, tore the nestling in two, sprinkled him with the Water of Death, and the nestling grew together. Then he sprinkled him with the Water of Life, and the nestling shook himself and flew away.

The Grey Wolf sprinkled Ivan-Tsarévich with the Water of Death, and his body clove together. He then sprinkled him with the Water of Life, and Ivan-Tsarévich stood up and said, “Oh my, what a long sleep I’ve had!”

“Yes, Ivan-Tsarévich, you might have slept for ever had it not been for me,” replied the Wolf. Your brothers murdered you in your sleep, and robbed you of the Fair Yelena, the golden-maned horse and the Firebird in its golden cage. You must return at once to your father’s palace as quickly as you can. It is today that your brother Vasily intends to marry your bride, the Fair Yelena, so climb up on me, on the Grey Wolf, and I will take you there.”

Ivan-Tsarévich sat on the Grey Wolf’s back, and the Wolf carried him swiftly to the palace of Tsar Vyslav Andronovich. The Wolf stopped outside the walls, and the Tsarévich slipped down off his back and walked to the palace. He found his brothers sitting at the table feasting with the Tsar, and Tsarévich Vasily was seated next to Tsarevna Yelena.

When the Tsarevna saw Ivan-Tsarévich, she jumped up at once and began to kiss his sweet lips and cry out, “O my beloved bridegroom, Ivan-Tsarévich, this is he, and not that other who sits at the table.”

Then Tsar Vyslav stood up and began to question the Tsarevna closely.. The Fair Tsarevna told him the truth about everything that had happened.

The Tsar was greatly angered with his two eldest sons, Dimitri and Vasily, and had them cast into the darkness of the deepest dungeons.

Ivan-Tsarévich married Tsarevna Yelena the Fair, and they lived their lives lovingly, so that one was never seen without the other.

Russian Folk Tales
Retold by Ian Harkness
From a literal translation by Natasha Harkness
from A.N.Afanasyev's collection

**The illustrations were painted by the pupils of
Murmansk Children's Art College**

Susan Nordskog and Laurel Mittenthal edited the text

"The Dead Princess and the Seven Knights" by Alexander Pushkin
Translated by Peter Tempest.

Murmansk Art College for Children

I visited Murmansk in North West Russia on several occasions, when teaching English at Finnmark University College in Northern Norway. I had heard through friends of the special type of art colleges for children that exist in Russia. I had also heard that both the pupils and the teachers at the Children's Art College in Murmansk were especially gifted. I had seen evidence of this in a book of Russian folk tales published in Norway, *Ivan tsarevitsj og den grå ulven*, illustrated by the pupils of the college.

With the idea of producing a similar book in English, I decided to visit the college, and was kindly shown around the different departments by the principal, V.K. Chebotarj, and a teacher, I.N. Korobova I.N; I was also shown around another department of the college, by L.V. Marakulina.

The college's principal and the teachers showed great interest in cooperating on a book project using the children's paintings to illustrate a book of Russian folk tales. With this intent, the children at the college were asked to illustrate a number of Russian folktales, one of them being Father Frost, or Morozko, as he is called in Russia.

Murmansk Art College for Children was founded in 1966, and was the first school of its kind to be built north of the Polar Circle in Russia. At the present there are 350 pupils enrolled at the college. The students receive a primary art education, learning the basics of painting, drawing, sculpture and composition. They also study art history. The illustrations in this folktale form part of a larger collection based on Russian folk tales. This collection has been exhibited in both Russia and Norway.

Ian Harkness

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