

## Yemelya the Fool

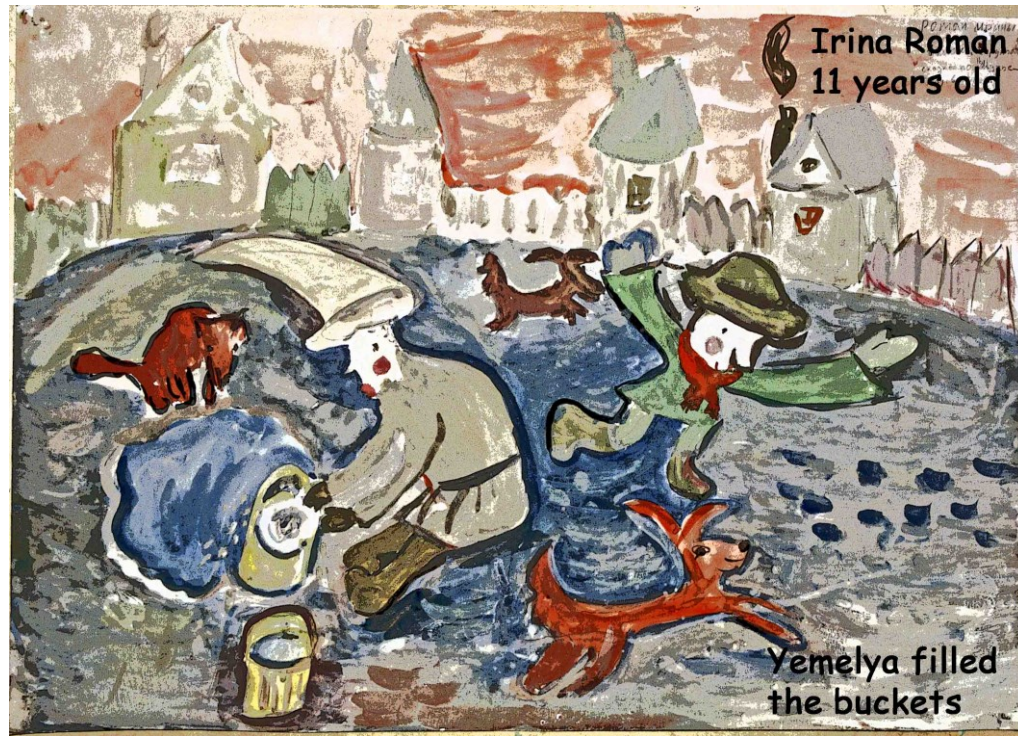
Once upon a time, there lived three brothers. Two of them were clever, but the third, called Yemelya, was thought to be a fool. One day, Yemelya's brothers decided to go to town to purchase some wares.

“While we're away you must listen to our wives and obey their every command. If you do as you're told, we'll buy you a red caftan, red boots and a red shirt, ” said the brothers.

“Very well, I will obey everything they say,” Yemelya replied.

No sooner had the brothers gone to town though, than Yemelya went to have a rest on top of the stove, which was his favourite place.

“What are you lying on the stove for, you lazy good-for-nothing! Your brothers have promised you presents if you obey and help us! You could at least go and fetch some water,” scolded the sisters-in-law.



Yemelya took the pails and went to the fetch water at a nearby river. He cut a large hole in the ice, filled the buckets, and set them down. In one of the pails was a large pike. “I’ll fry this pike and eat my fill,” Yemelya thought to himself.



“Don’t eat me, but throw me back into the water, and I will give you what you desire,” said the pike in a human voice!





Lyosha  
Zabolotny  
14 years old

**"Throw me back into the water."**

"What could you possibly give me," he asked the fish?

"Just utter my name, and whatever you desire shall be yours," said the pike! Say for instance:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,  
Go buckets home by yourselves  
And stand in your places.*

Yemelya threw the pike  
back into the water.

He then uttered the words,  
like the pike had said, and the  
buckets went home by  
themselves and stood in their  
places.

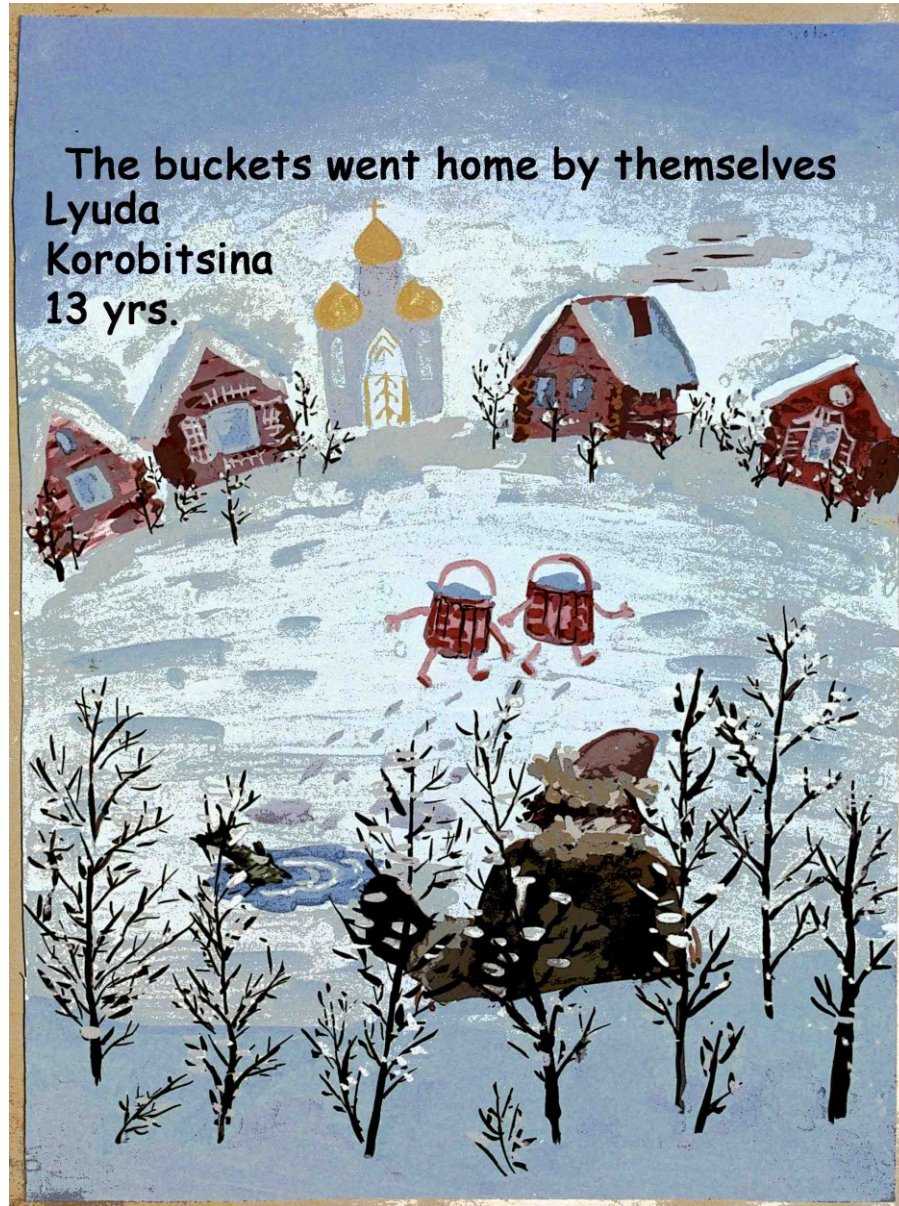
This amazed the sisters-in-  
law, who were watching. “Perhaps he is not the fool we thought him to  
be, when he can make the buckets walk home by themselves,” said one  
sister to the other!

Yemelya went home, and lay down on the stove as usual. Once again,  
his sisters-in-law scolded him, “What are you lying down on the stove





for fool when we don't have any firewood. Go to the forest and chop some!"



Yemelya took two axes, climbed on the sledge, but didn't harness the horse. Instead, he said:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,  
Drive into the forest, O sledge!*

The sledge moved off at a rattling pace, as if pulled by a team of horses. On the way to the forest, Yemelya rode through the town, and his horseless sledge was travelling so fast that it bowled over many of the people who were out walking that day.

“Stop him! Catch him!” the townspeople shouted. But the sledge was travelling at such a speed they couldn't catch him. Once in the forest, Yemelya climbed down from the sledge, sat on an old tree trunk, and said:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,  
One axe fell the tree, the other chop the firewood!*

The wood was soon quickly chopped and piled on to the sledge. Yemelya then said to one of the axes:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,*

*Go, axe, and cut me a cudgel!*

The axe went and cut him a cudgel, and the cudgel came and lay on top of the sledge. Yemelya climbed up on the sledge, and it moved off in a homewards direction. He drove back through the town, where crowds of people were lying in wait for him. They caught him, and started to beat him. Yemelya then said to the cudgel, in a low voice:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,*

*Beat these people black and blue!*

The cudgel sprang up, beating and thumping a great number of people, who toppled to the ground like sheaves of corn! Yemelya escaped and drove home, where he stacked the firewood and once again lay down on the stove.

The men of the town petitioned the Tsar to seize Yemelya.

“We must try and trick him! Our best plan would be to promise him a red caftan, red boots and a red shirt,” they agreed.



**Dima Plotnikov  
13 years old**



The Tsar's guards were sent to fetch Yemelya whom they found sitting on his stove as usual. "If you go immediately to the Tsar," they said to him, "he will give you a red caftan, red boots and a red shirt." Still sitting on his stove, Yemelya said:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,  
Up stove, and away to the Tsar's palace!*

The stove moved off by itself in the direction of the palace, and Yemelya soon arrived there. The Tsar was going to put Yemelya to death, but his daughter, the fair Tsarèvna Marja, took a great liking to Yemelya. She begged her father to let her marry him. The Tsar became enraged at his daughter's preposterous idea. He let the couple be wed, but ordered them to be put into a tarred barrel and cast into the sea.

After the barrel had floated on the sea for a long time, Marja begged her husband to do something. Yemelya said:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,  
Cast this barrel upon the shore,  
And let it be torn apart!*

They climbed out of the barrel, and Marja then implored Yemelya to build some sort of house they might live in together. Yemelya said:

*At the pike's command, by my own request,  
Let a marble palace be built,  
And erect it next to the Tsar's palace!*

The next morning, the Tsar saw the new palace next to his own, and sent an emissary to find out who was living there. As soon as he learnt that it was his daughter who was living there, he demanded that both she and her husband appear before him. Yemelya and his wife, Tsarèvna Marja, went to the palace of the Tsar. The Tsar pardoned them, and they all lived happily together, and prospered as well.