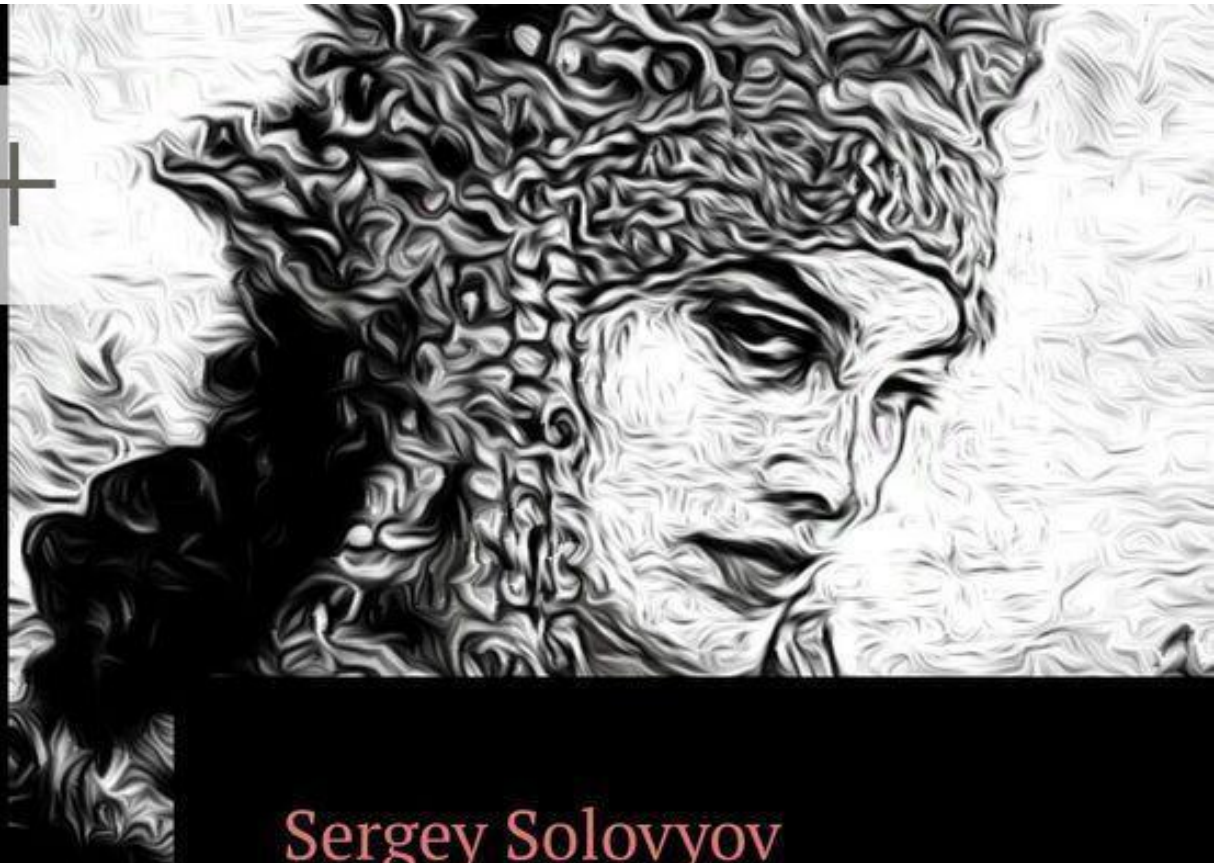


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Sergey Solovyov

# The Dead Princess and the Seven Dreams

IMMORTALS

Sergey Solovyov

**The Dead Princess and the  
Seven Dreams. Immortals**

«Издательские решения»

**Solovyov S.**

The Dead Princess and the Seven Dreams. Immortals / S. Solovyov —  
«Издательские решения»,

Cold, vast spaces of the Ob River, huge islands of the Student Sea — this is the arena of adventures of the heroes of this book. The time of action is the era of the Bronze Age, mysterious and formidable, but even here the heroes of the story were able to show all their strength and openness of their hot hearts. For real people, the impossible is not possible. The witch, the true mistress of the North, protects and punishes the inhabitants of these places. And her strength is the living dead.

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# **The Dead Princess and the Seven Dreams Immortals**

**Sergey Solovyov**

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**From the Author**

**This book tells about the time of the Bronze Age, about the Priob of that legendary era, but even more about the people who lived then, with hot hearts, strong and bold, who, by the will of fate, became the ancestors of the peoples of Russia.**

**This is the first of the «Legends of the North» series of books.**

*The world is like a day: Light replaces darkness.*

## Preface. Ice and fugitives

The white wolf slowly cowered after a detachment of people, his paws did not get stuck in the snow, but the crust did not scratch the pads either. Sometimes, lifting up his black nose, and sniffing, the predator tried to catch smells, and twisted his shaggy head, trying to catch the wind. The beast did not understand what was the matter, but tirelessly followed the people along the frozen bay. He almost deliberately caught the eye of travelers wrapped in furs, but those sitting on three sleighs, into which two deer were harnessed, did not pay attention to the furry fellow traveler. People sometimes dismounted, giving animals a rest, and they themselves walked, holding on to a sleigh rolling on ice sprinkled with snow. The wolf saw how the caravan left a rut in the snow, sprinkled with sea ice. People wrapped in furs walked and walked, for quite some time, and when the deer had already rested a little, got into the sleigh, and then the wolf ran after them, so as not to lag behind. The beast remembered that the island was not so far away, which could not be reached in a short summer. The travelers got on wide skis, only one person sat motionless in the sleigh. And for some reason it smelled like a dead man. For some reason, people did not need rest, and even the polar night was not a hindrance to them. He lifted up his shaggy head, and saw the splashes in the sky, and the crackle emitted by the sky. Another beast would be frightened, one that does not come from here, but the white predator was accustomed to heavenly lights. But he himself was tired, and was terribly hungry, the wolf huddled in the gap between the hummocks, covered his nose with his tail, and settled down to rest, because he still did not wait for the scraps of a human meal, which he hoped for. The beast was a little forgotten from hunger, but the faithful black nose even in a dream warned him about strangers. The fierce beast instantly started up, spun around, opened his eyes and sharpened his ears, hoping to live. This time, fate was kind to him. Another detachment of people settled down on a halt, some lit a small fire, and other people stood nearby, with sticks in their hands, and they were dangerous in appearance, it's true, but they smelled quite familiar, smoke, flesh. The polar wolf hid, and began to patiently wait until people finished the meal, he sniffed, and licked his lips, the travelers ate good cod and very tasty salmon. It was only necessary to take care of two dogs, with tails amusingly twisted into a circle, and wait for their share. Soon the people moved on, and the wolf stuffed his belly with delicious scraps until they froze, and hid the rest of the pieces, which would have been what he had on the way back. He ran to the track from the sled, and moved on and on, because he was drawn to those people who were walking north without stopping. Some time passed, the beast was finally full, and he was even pleased with the snow, gradually pouring from the sky, he caught it with his open mouth, and suddenly, he was simply amazed at what he saw.

Towards him, without dismantling the roads, and not noticing anything around him, the hunters, those who fed him with the remnants of their meal, fled with skewed faces. Someone went skiing, trying to roll into the distance faster, another, ran, stammering over a step, on snowshoes. The wolf jerked forward, and the hefty hunter, in a jacket made of the skins of his brothers, almost stepped on his head. Gray managed to jump away from the sleigh, with luggage lying sideways, rolling without riders after the fugitives. I ran even forward, and finally reaching the stone

island, the beast suddenly felt like in childhood, when the mother dragged him by the scruff of the neck, he immediately rolled up his paws, trying to get to the ground, squeezed the tail between his paws in reverence, but did not feel any smell of a living creature. It was raised higher a very strong female hand, he lifted his face to see who it was, and howled with wild fear.

— Hey, Gray Fuzzy. What are you afraid of? I won't eat you, «the woman said in a low voice without expression, slightly shaking the beast, knocking the falling snow off her skin.

The wolf pressed his ears, looked at the northerner again with his golden eyes, and howled even more puffily, and there was a reason.

The beautiful woman had a face as if sculpted from white marble, blue lips and eyes blacker than the polar night, and what was even worse, she did not smell like ALIVE, but not like Dead.

## Van and Alena

Elga released her hands from the young man, and the one who got up from the box did not become alive, but was not even more dead. The soul of the Guardians of the World Tree, the Kingdom of the Dead, the Divine Twins did not let go, and made it even worse, and Python made her inanimate or dead, and the Great Sorceress became the Dead Princess herself. Her eyes turned black, her lips turned blue, she did not need food, only drink, and she touched her face, — she violated the covenant not to revive the dead, and was punished, but not only she was punished, but the whole tribe. She and her servants fled to the North, she, and the seven Magi, who also became Neither-Alive-nor dead, always dreaming, and their faces became like ice, and their eyes became like night, — the mother told her grandchildren, twins, huddled under a bearskin, the old-old legend of their people.

— And then, — the boy quietly asked, clinging to his sister, and burying himself in furs deeper, so that he and Alena could only see out their eyes, glistening in the semi-darkness of the house, like two blue ice floes.

The woman adjusted the lamp, and put on the coals a bronze cauldron on three legs, their greatest value. It began to cook stew from stocks of frozen cod, brought by the older brother of the deceased son, the father of the twins. Their mother drowned with her husband in the Studen Sea when they were fishing for whales. Farne would often give fish a lift, and the ice cream milk and butter had their own, and all supplies were stored in a stone cage under the house. All families of northerners had incredible reserves, for a year, or even two, you never know what could have happened — crop failure or worse.. Fortunately, the icy land kept everything well, it was only necessary to watch out for arctic foxes, but the faithful dogs did not let them down. Their yard dogs, Zleika da Zubok, were sitting in a fence, next to the basement, and Zima did not let them into the upper room, but the twins, if the mother was not at home, were dragged to a warm house.

— Baushka (Grandma), and the dogs are not cold, — without pronouncing the letter, Alena asked with a thin voice, wrapping herself in furs.

— No, now it's not cold for them, — Winter answered, — there will be a strong frost, let them spend the night in the canopy.

— What next, then about Elga? Wang said impatiently, looking at his grandmother, tell me.

— They settled on the northern island, it is now called Hidden, and they live there, like Pryakhi on Alaty, in a mountain cave. On the way, they tried to capture them, and burn them, as Seven ordered, but the bravest hunters fled headlong, only meeting with the Ice Princess. Neither-Living-Nor-Dead can be killed by anything, they are already inanimate. They live there, they don't touch anyone, and we have no evil from them, but everyone is scared of them. Only a few times the most desperate relatives tried to bring hopelessly sick people to Elga, but everyone drowned in the sea. The ice princess herself often happens on Gandvik, she helps badly, she cured everyone there, and did not ask for anything in return. Pomors themselves carry gifts to her. But only the Seven Chosen are allowed, but then, if one of the cured dies, they are buried in a special way so that the dead do not offend the living.

«But it has become easier to live,» said Zima, grinning, our leaders and elders, all the neighboring and distant tribes obey, with great respect the messengers from them come. Previously, it happened, and there were swars, fights among themselves, but now Elga said — It is impossible, no one dares to disobey, although someone happens, the discord starts, — and she grinned, — but quickly reconcile. So we, the Hans (geese), or we are also called the Huns, cannot start swars among ourselves.

«How are they buried in a special way?» Wang asked, «not like everyone else?»

«By the dead, after nine days,» she said slowly, looking into the fire, and the tongues of flame were reflected in her eyes, and she clenched her hands so tightly that the knuckles of her fingers

turned white, — the magi cut off the feet of their feet and hands, so that the Dreaming would not raise them from the dead, and after a year they would mix their bones, — and she lowered her head, — Stop telling fairy tales, it's time, everything is ready, but we will sleep.

— Geese, geese,» the grandmother began, smiling.

— Ga- Ga — Ga, — the children sounded like geese, smiling at the top of their mouths.

«Do you want to eat?»

— Yes, yes — and the twins ran, throwing back the blanket, to the table.

Winter put wooden misis and wooden spoons on the table. The children jumped on the bench and grabbed spoons, looking around the table with impatience, and the boy even looked into his plate, but it was still empty. Winter scooped up the brew, which exuded a pleasant aroma of fish and dry spicy herbs, and the village is nearby.

— There is no bread today, but there are a lot of fish, eat while it is hot, — said grandmother, and the twins cheerfully pounded with spoons, cracking down on food. The stew was delicious, and the children were not capricious, so they finished everything, even licked spoons and bowls.

— Let's sleep, — and grandmother extinguished four lamps and left only one to burn.

Wang tossed and turned for a long time, covering himself with fur and so on, all imagining Elga on a distant island in the Studen Sea, how is she there? Does she have children, and will he see the Dead Princess?

## Snow Maiden

The family woke up, everyone washed themselves with water from a clay jug, and the grandmother fed the children with the remains of dinner, and set the food for the dogs from the stocks of frozen fish. Cereal and Zubok waved their tails, got up on their hind legs, trying to get the front to the woman, then the shaggy defenders greeted the children, Alena laughed, dodging the tongue of the dogs, striving to lick her face. For the winter, cattle breeders descended to the sources of the Ob, in order to preserve the nurse cows, almost no one remained near the bay, it was too cold there in winter. The people of the union of their tribes, the Ghants and Mansi, have lived here for a long time, and their allies, the tribes of magicians, Mards, Uars and Wends, Sindh, Danes and Skolts, lived to the west, some on the Dvina, and some on the Kama and Upper Volga, sometimes simply called the River (Ra). Soon the holidays, comedians, hunters from the Puran clan went to get the bear, and after three days everyone was waiting for a big feast. The men went to the forest to hunt with songs, wearing masks so that their progenitor would not recognize them. The hostesses checked the stocks, thinking about what to cook and please relatives, prepared ritual masks, the young men harvested wood for fires, the girls checked new clothes, beautiful knitted clothes, preparing the best outfits with embroidery of their kind.

The boys fiddled separately, soon they will be prepared for initiation, how to deal with horny and strong cattle — horses, deer and bulls, how to cut sheep. And when they reached the age of fifteen, they were waiting for a trial — bull games, where the future man needs to sit on the back of a bull. So they jumped over stumps, shot from children's bows, and much more, some were taught to ride chariots, to control horses. Now, in turn, they followed the horse, standing on skis, holding and driving the horse with a long bridle. Wang, in his turn, also rushed standing on wide skis past the girls, hoping to attract their attention, but they were busy with their business, only Zubok and Zleika ran after him a little in the melting snow.

Alenka played with her friends at the edge of the forest, in the glades of which the white cover of the earth had already descended. Spring was coming. The place was next to the river, the girls were guarded by two dogs lying next to the children in a dry place, and lazily putting their muzzles on their paws. Likes perked up, raising their ears, jumped up, but did not bark, sensing someone else's nearby. Suddenly, at the edge of the forest, next to the houses of their kind, not far from the river, a girl came out, going fearlessly straight to the children. Alena was still fiddling with the doll, and her friend, Zarenka, pulled her by the sleeve of her fur jacket, and Mila gasped, turning around, only the imperturbable Krasa continued to dress her doll. The dogs jumped up and rushed to the stranger, and the girl only managed to shout loudly:

— Back! To me!

But the dogs only wagged their tails furiously, but looked into the eyes of the stranger, sniffed her hands, and calmly walked next to her. She walked towards them with a floating gait, a very tall, young girl, about fourteen years old, dressed in fox furs, very beautiful, and with dazzling blue eyes and very blond hair, but with a strangely motionless pale face, on which a slight smile played, rather inspired by a gust of wind than a good mood. She went up to the girls, and the first said hello:

— Be sound, girls. Have a nice day.

— And who will you be, Light... — Mila began the first, getting up, but not letting go of the doll from her hands, — where are you, what kind of tribe are you? — she said memorized words with which strangers were greeted.

— I forgot, — the girl smiled weakly, and spread her arms powerlessly, — and call me Snow Maiden.

— I m- Beauty.

— I'm Mila.

— I m-Alena.

— I m — Zarya.

The girls called themselves, and came up without fear to the guest they did not know. You won't see embroidery under a fur coat, and you just won't understand how to identify it without seeing generic signs, and temporal rings, and gold earrings, all this is a common pattern for all Hans.

— And who is it? — the voice of Winter, Alenina's grandmother rang out, the woman came up, putting her hand on the handle of the dagger hanging on the belt.

— It's Snows, she's lost, 'her granddaughter explained turning to her mother.

— Where are you from, Svet Snegurochka, from what distant edges? — Winter spoke politely, hoping to understand the truth by the guest's words.

— I, — the girl thought, — from the Northern Isles, a kind woman.

— My name is Winter.

— Light Winter, I am from the Northern Isles, wanted to see the country of ancestors.

— Come with us, Snow, in my house for you there are fish, and honey, and a place to sleep.

The children collected their unwise property, put everything in the cakes, throwing them behind their backs. Wicker soums were convenient, and hands are free, you never know what can happen in the forest.

They all went together to the village, did not speak on the road, but Alena looked after the guest, you never know, a stranger. She looked even more at Snaga's gait.

«It goes as if the duck is swimming, but so deftly and okay, and does not slip, and did not even soak the hem»: the girl thought to herself — «I need to get used to it too, otherwise I'm not a beauty, snub-nosed, and my mouth is big, everyone is teasing with a frog,» Alena sighed bitterly again.

The snow maiden looked a couple of times at the face of the sad Alena, and said:

— Do not twist, five years will pass, you will not have a break from the grooms, remember my words.

— If so...

Snide girlfriends laughed, hiding smiles, covering their mouth with their palms, but their eyes betrayed their fun: «How, the frog will become a beauty.»

— Alena, go ahead to Ore, ask that the guest and I would accept, — and the woman again meticulously looked at Snow.

The sky was cloudy again. They walked past pines and spruces, green and in summer and winter, glades from snow were visible on the ground. Alena quickly went to the witch's house, trying not to step into the mud, fulfilled her grandmother's order, but did not understand why all this was, I thought it was good for my brother now, fishing, looking for fish under the ice with older friends, they would find, there would be a lot of fresh food for everyone. So house after tyn is low. The house of the witch, one of the Seven of their tribe, was overgrown, the witch did not live among people, although people came to her, asking for help and treatment. The girl came up, and holding the cereal by the leash, so as not to rush at the owners, knocked on the gate. Dogs barked in the yard, and easy steps were heard. The gate was opened by a girl of the same age, a pupil and novice of a witch.

— Good day, Dubrava. My grandmother sent me, you have to run back, warn Ora that she wants to come with a guest.

— And hello to you, Alena,“ and the girl bent down to stroke the dog, she just waved her tail, poking her nose into Dubrava's palm, „you will come again,“ she turned to the dog, „I will treat you with something.

— Well, we went, see you,» said the guest, and quickly went to her grandmother.

At the turn of the path, only Winter and Snow were already walking, and Zubok was twisting next to the guest, and all Alena's friends went home. My granddaughter understood that my grandmother was afraid, everyone is now afraid, no matter how unrecognized someone comes from the Dead Princess. Winter only therefore sent to the witch Alain, so as not to bring Evil home herself,

but on the way she let go of her daughter's friends, so that they would go home and not hear too much, and not spread evil gossip.

The witch's house was ordinary, like everyone else, made of logs, and at the bottom there was a lining for stocks, so that a wooden staircase led up, and the house with the yard was surrounded by a fence. The witch had three children of her own, and two students. But her husband died in the north sea, drowned when the fishermen's boats turned over. Even for witches, fate is not always merciful. Winter knocked, and they opened it, the bolt was opened by a girl, about twelve years old.

— Hello, Dubrava. Now in the students of Ora? And where is Podaga?

— Yes Baba Zima, now here. And Podaga helps the mentor to disassemble herbs. Vedunya said that I was a student, and my mother and father sent me to study. I will also treat people. Come on, Ora is waiting for guests. Tie the dogs here, at the gate.

Winter tied Cereal and Zubka, and the girl closed the gate behind them on a bolt and led them to the house. Near the door of the house were the children of the witch, daughters — Malina and Uta, and Uar, son, Jr. He concentrated on carrying a clay toy wagon, and at the same time nozzles are important. The girls were fiddling with rag dolls, they were without painted faces.

— Hello, Raspberry and you, Uta. And hello to you, Wear. And mom upstairs? she asked the children, distracted from important matters for the sake of the guests.

— Yes, — answered the eldest, Malina, — she understands herbs with Podaga.

— Thank you, — and Zima took out of her bag a honey gingerbread and gave it to the children.

Already the owner's dog, a white husky, came running to meet, Zima did not pay the slightest attention to the family, but Snaga sniffed everything, at first incomprehensibly, then she did not leave the girl, and she thoughtfully stroked the dog. Dubrava approached them.

— Come on, she's waiting for you, said the novice.

— Alena, stay here, talk to your friend. Why should you drag yourself upstairs, and Snega and I will quickly return, — the grandmother said in a whisper, bending over to her granddaughter.

Alena looked at her grandmother and pretended to believe her. In my heart I felt that my grandmother was cunning, but in agreement she nodded her head, doing what was said.

Winter and the girl climbed an oak staircase made of halves of a log. The columns of the stairs were decorated with skillful carvings and painted with ocher, so that the stairs were exactly Red. The floorboards creaked slightly, but the door to the upper room was opened to them, and they entered the house, illuminated by the dim rays of the sun, breaking through a bull bubble stretched over the window frame. The hostess sat in a chair, but stood in front of the guests, ritually bowed to the belt, taking out the ground with her fingers of her right hand.

— Will you be healthy, Light Winter?

— All is well, and children don't get sick, yes Ilios and Summer gave me an addition in a family, — and she nodded on Snow, — her name is Snow Maiden. Do mercy, indicate the fate of the girl, — Zima asked her.

— I guess, — Ora sparkled with her eyes, — you know for yourself, the Snake needs a gift.

— Here, take it, — and Winter extended the witch's golden ring with a bow.

— Generously.

— Come, Snow Maiden, and sit next to me.

The witch approached the supplier, took a silver bucket, and took out a leather bag with shaggy lamb bones, on which signs for fortune telling were applied. She closed her eyes, and poured the bones into a silver bucket, and shook it three times.

— Snows, come to me, «Ora told the maiden.

The girl turned her head to Zima, raising her eyebrows quizzically, while the woman nodded her head in response.

«Come here, it's not evil for you. Close your eyes, and take out only three bones in a row each time and put them on the table.

The snow firmly closed its eyes, and took out three bones, and put them on the table, then again, and again. Ora just looked at them, shuddered, and her legs buckled, and she grabbed the oak table with her hand so as not to fall. The witch quickly threw an embroidered towel on the tabletop, covering the bones from the guests' eyes, and smiled, first stretched, and then a light and some kind of guilty smile.

— Everything will be fine with you Snow, you want, come to me tomorrow, signs say that you are a born witch, I will teach you. And let Alena hello. I will tell you about the secrets of herbs, how to treat people and animals.

— And you are Winter, do not worry about your adopted daughter, there is no Evil in her, but you take care of her and do not let go of yourself.

— Ora, what is there, — Winter took a step forward, pointing with her hand to the signs covered with a towel, — tell me the truth, all without melting, — her heart contracted, suspecting the unkind.

— You know, Winter, I studied with Mary on Alatyr, with the Chosen, I can't lie.

Winter lowered her eyes to the floor and squeezed her fingers convulsively. Yes, she could not lie, but she did not say the whole truth. Let Snows learn from her, everything will be under the supervision, and the girl will become a witch, and the family will be honored, and the benefits are considerable, and you see, the danger that Ora saw will pass her.

— All right. But if I understand what myself, then I will go to Mara with Snega. Let's go, Snow Maiden home.

— Something is wrong, are you not happy with me? — jumped up and squeezed her lips into a thread, the girl blinked blue eyes, not understanding what was the matter, — then I'd better go back to the forest.

— No, — and Winter grabbed her hand, — what forest? I will stay, the house is big, there is enough space. And the witch does not want you evil, she calls to study.

— Well, — the forest guest smiled, — I will study the forces of herbs of different kinds, and treat people.

## Houses at Winter

— So a dear house appeared, — Alenka exclaimed, and ran to the gate with the dogs together, but Cereal and Zubok came running first, and went to sniff the yard, were there any strangers? Calmed down, and returned to the hostess, showing, isn't it time to feed them?

— Yes, I see, now I will bring you a stew, — said the woman, battering the wool on the scruff of both. Snow looked at one of the dogs, he began to hold his right front paw in weight, Zubok limped a little.

— What's wrong with him? 'the guest pointed at the dog.

— It will heal quickly, pricked to see, paw in a clearing.

The guest sighed, pulled Zubka to her, Zima took the dog by the scruff of the neck, you never know what, but the dog behaved calmly, which was surprising — the girl was completely unfamiliar to him, and the dog only poked his nose into her hand. The woman looked at Snow, she took the dog's paw, ran her fingers over it, and jerked the sliver out of her paw, then the girl froze, turned a little pale, and the blood stopped oozing from the wound on her paw. And after a second, Zubok was already stepping on the girl's thigh, and tried to lick her face, she dodged and laughed. She got up and staggered a little, smiling weakly and helplessly, grabbed the wall of the house, but after a moment she came to her senses.

Winter opened the door, lit a fire from an oil lamp in a bronze basin of water, so that there would be no fire in the house. The woman rose, holding a burning lamp in her left hand, and her children and guest followed her. The woman opened the door, bending down habitually, and the door, covered with felt, let everyone home. The mother of the family kindled the hearth, the smoke pulled into the hole under the roof, it became warmer, but it was still cold.

— Sit down Snow. I even have smoked meat — and she moved a bowl of aromatic meat and a knife to the girl.

— No, I won't, — the girl moved away from the plate in fright, — maybe there are fish or mushrooms?

— Well, look, — the woman took out a pot with a cooled stew from the underbelly, took out spoons and four wooden bowls, poured a boiled ear.

The children looked at the food, took off their hats and pulled off their fur coats, Snoya also took off her scarf from her head, a fox fur coat, remaining in a knitted dress with unfamiliar patterns and a fur sleeveless jacket. Children and Zima herself dressed the same sleeveless clothes.

— Eat for health, — the mistress of the house solemnly said, and everyone earned concentrated spoons. When they finished their meal, the woman took out the honey, poured it into small dishes, Alena and Wang smiled, pulled a treat to themselves.

— You eat, I will tell you a fairy tale about Purusha.

Children, already almost adults, looked up at their grandmother, but they did not let go of honey, they were already concentrating on licking spoons.

— Purusha was destined to create a new life on earth, and Ilios and Lada decided to give him a wife. And the apple tree grows there, but not simple, but the apples on it are gold, and Purusha stood under the apple tree, and the girl came to him in different guises. At first Krasa- girl came with a rod of power, promising great power, but the young man did not want such a fate. Krasa came to him, a girl with a weapon-rich expletive, promising that he would defeat everyone, and this was not what he was seduced by. And a girl came in all the brilliance of her beauty, promising him endless Love, and tore off an apple for Purush, divided it, and descended to the earth in human form with beauty-girl, Love, and all people are now their descendants. So Love has given rise to all life on earth.

I listened to snow attentively, did not interrupt, finished honey, washed down with herbal infusion.

— Thanks for the dog, Snows. How did you treat her? Zima asked with hidden concern, putting the spoon on the table.

— I don't know, — the girl didn't understand, — and you don't have anything?

— Seven on Alatyr, and Pryakhi, probably can only be treated this way. They say that Elga, the Ice Princess, could have done this, and Winter said so, and out of the corner of her eye she noticed how Snow shuddered.

The woman was seriously scared. Suddenly a girl from ice giants. Everyone milked, Van licked a spoon, and Alena had already put hers on the table. And there was only one way to check, Winter sighed, took a bronze knife. Snow's hair was cast in silver, and she was not gray, and her hair color was so extraordinary, ashy. The braid was draped behind her back, adorned with a double-helix hairpin, and hanging from a ribbon tied around her forehead were temporal rings. Winter approached her from behind, jerked out a bronze knife, threw it up to strike, then seemed to flinch, and dropped the blade on the floor, Snoya heard, quickly turned around, but did not understand anything, quickly bent down, and unsuccessfully, or vice versa successfully, grabbing the blade with her fingers, cut them.

The woman watched fascinated as small wounds swell with drops of blood, scarlet pearls drip to the floor, and Snows tries to lick them from the palm of her hand.

Winter sighed with relief, her heart stopped shaking, but her legs became as if stone, she breathed often, often, leaned on the table. It was as if something was pressing on my heart, not letting me breathe.

— What's wrong with you, grandmother, — Alena ran up to her, hugging.

— All is well, granddaughter,» the woman replied happily.

Everything was really good, because the blood was all red, it was not their ice people.

## Snow Maiden learns

The children finally finished everything too, ran to wash, and Alena then decorously brought washed and cleaned dishes.

— Go to sleep, and to you Snow, here on the bench to bed, it is wide with us.

Winter brought wolf furs from the chest to the basement, climbed the steps hard, grabbed the door jamb, trying to catch her breath, went to the bench, laid furs, and a good bed turned out. She put a sheet knitted from thin linen on top. The woman corrected everything, got up, again trying to breathe, but there was not enough air, finally put it down, examined everything again, beautifully, which means that the guest will like it. Now Snoya looked at the hostess with concern, without asking, grabbed her wrist, listened to her heart beating.

— So, — only she said, and her face became preoccupied and anxious, — sit down nearby and do not think about anything now.

Winter sat next to the bench, the girl touched only two places on her body and the woman fell into oblivion, only felt the heat inside herself, and that her heart no longer hurts when she woke up, opening her eyes, she shuddered with fear.

In the twilight of the room, illuminated by one oil lamp, stood an unfamiliar girl with a white face, not shaded by either a smile or a small wrinkle. She had black, invisible eyes and moved in small steps, groping the wall. Hearing that Winter was up, she turned to her voice, putting her hands with spread fingers in front of her.

— What did you do, I helped, but I did not save myself, — said Winter and cried, grabbing Snow's hand, sitting on her bed.

— Do not be afraid, Winter, — the girl said in a whisper, — this will pass soon, — you just be silent, do not tell anyone.

— Where did you get that?» the woman continued with tears in her voice.

— My heart doesn't hurt, does it?» — said Snow in a whisper, — and you don't need to know the rest,

— You need to go to Alatyr, to Pryakh. They will teach everything, and how to avoid troubles.

— What I didn't see there, in this grief sit? Lock up, but not let out. I want to learn from Ora. Herbs, decoctions, flowers, berries, birds sing... I have never seen them...

The next morning, when everyone woke up, Winter looked anxiously at Snow, she had everything, as before, a cute freckled face, blue eyes, she nodded to the woman, removing the sheet from her shop.

— Good morning, grandmother, — Alena ran up to her, — what are you looking like on the Snow?

— I went to drown the bath, — said Zima, turning to her granddaughter, — first we, and you Van, will wash after us. Bring water from the well, prepare five buckets, and twenty logs of firewood, in reserve.

Grandma prepared a bath, it was heated hot when everyone was undressed and Snega's body was covered with tattoos, like a witch who had gone through the worst dedication — snakes covered her arms and legs, and her back was decorated too.

— What is it with you, granddaughter, — asked Zima, — everything is decorated, and the drawings are completely Vedic.

— I don't remember, grandmother, only ice and stones I remember.

— You, Alena, do not even tell your brother about it, — the grandmother ordered her.

— Come on, wash. Lie down, Snow, now I'll take you with a broom.

The woman washed one granddaughter for a long time, and then the other, washed herself, and wrapped the children in sheepskin coats, brought them home.

— Granddaughter, and you run to wash. It's hot and hot water is waiting for you.

The boy quickly ran to the bathhouse until he cooled down, and Zima took out clean shirts, changed clothes herself and dressed the girls.

— Everything is fine, granddaughter, come here, I will comb your hair, — and she sat the girl down, and Alenina began to comb her blond hair with a frequent comb.

He managed to wash himself and Van, approached them, looked at them like that, and said:

— And mine, grandma?» Also combed.

— And you are childish, and there is nothing to comb, — the grandmother smiled, looking at the rare curls of her grandson on a shaved head. As the test passes in four years, he will have a mop of hair on the back of his head, and will become a leader — he will not cut his hair at all.

She looked at them, laughed, took her silver mirror, and began to comb her ashen hair with a comb with two geese carved on it. Having finished, both girls, younger and older, went to Ore to adopt wisdom that is not known to everyone. Wang sighed, felt his almost shaved head, and dressed, went to the mentors.

They began to teach not only Snow, but also Alena, who asked for it, and Van was taken away by the mentors of the clan, to teach all sorts of tricks, but wisdom, which are already necessary for shepherds and hunters to warriors. How in the forest it will not get lost, where to find food, they also did not forget about military affairs, and about medicinal secrets — an understanding of herbs, mushrooms, and how to look for the way through the stars.

Van began to teach Liszt, not only to shoot from a bow, but also to handle a club, an ax, a dagger and weapons of a few — a long bronze sword. Together with him, his friend Vett was engaged, the boy met other otrokami Respa, Gard and Gast and Safrak. The sun rose, and obedience began, future soldiers in the morning ran, jumped, threw a dart and learned to keep fire, which is also important, because it was a matter of life and death on a campaign in winter. The leaf showed how to set traps, and read the traces of animals in the forest, and how to confuse hunters and warriors, and to build a shelter in the forest both from the cold and from the rain. He taught and read generic embroideries on shirts to read, and how to communicate with strangers and not offend your own in conversation. He also showed the usual signs of writing for all relatives, so that they could send a message on a birch bark or a wooden board or read a message. The mentor and teacher of all the young men Zigi put Glom, an experienced warrior and one of the elders.

Snow's classes were not easy either. Ora told and showed her herbs, and how to handle them, taught both secret runes and ordinary writing, how to guess how to throw lamb bones with secret signs. She began to go with the girl to the forest, showing herbs and flowers, mushrooms, and what bark, what trees are suitable for treatment. Dubrava and Podaga also worked with them, they also looked after the mentors' children. Alena also remembered everything, and helped both, but she was also busy with household chores — helping her grandmother to watch the cattle, and the housework too.

## Boat from Alatyr

Three days passed quickly, and the best hunters walked through the village, showed the skin of the bear and its head, and loudly glorified the owner of the forest, the ancestor of people. Ahead was Bor, the magician of the tribe, tapping a staff, with a clubfoot skin draped over his head. The hostesses began to prepare a treat, because spring was approaching, the cold was leaving, the cattle were giving offspring, and everyone was happy with a new life.

The Huns poured out into the street, dressed in masks, no matter what their bear recognized, danced, presented the hunters with pies, and finally the Purans went into the forest to cook ritual food from boiled bear meat. In the evening, the whole tribe, dressed in masks, sat down at the bowls with boiled meat, eating sacred food, and then, according to ritual, came to the Bor tables.

— Who eats bear meat? asked the Magi in a menacing voice, and shook him with a staff.

— Not us,“ people answered in unison, „they eat crows, bite meat, swallow veins, eat skin.

— Well, I'll show them, — and Bor ran away from the forest clearing.

People milked the meat, sitting still in the cold forest, so that there was not a piece left, and silently, necessarily silently, went home, and between the houses Bor walked and growled all night, depicting the beast eaten. The next morning, the whole village, people dressed up in mourning clothes, and carried the bones of the beast, on a stretcher, into the forest to bury. The bones of the bear were lined with birch bark, decorated with spruce branches, and solemnly laid in a hole under a tree.

Finally, everything was over, the Huns-Hans stood in festive clothes by the river, and then a hunter rushed in on a deer, all out of breath, and approached Zigi and Bor standing nearby.

— The boat is going along the Ob, from Alatyr, the sail is red,“ he said, interrupting to catch his breath, „last year they came on a sleigh...

— As they can, so they pass, — Zigi stood up for the envoys, — everything is better on the boat. In the lower reaches of the Ob, they walked on a sleigh, and the boat, it was light, also put it on a sleigh, and so they hurried.

— Yes, the servants bring a new fire from Alatyr. Zigi, lime the hostesses, let them blow out the old fire, Novy came from Alatyr.

— Well, Magi, — Zigi nodded his head, called the boy, and he sent turquoise, who began to walk, screaming, past the courtyards, so that they would extinguish the fire in the foci.

At the pier, a crowd of people met, and men, women, children, and already ropes pull the boat to the pier, and first they demolish the novice from Alatyr in their arms, and behind her two soldiers carry a stretcher with a sacred clay vessel braided with a vine. Hundreds of eyes looked at this, because under the clay cover was stored the New Fire, obtained by the Spikes, and no one knew how they did it. The stretcher did not stand for long, they were picked up by Lind and Zigi, the leaders of the Huns and Mans, the important Bor was ahead, tapping his staff, followed by the selected Veduns of the Huns and Mans, and the other five tribes, with the same vessels, but empty. So they came to the sanctuary, surrounded by tyn, knocked on it three times.

— Who are you? — the servants shouted, without opening the gate, — and with what came to us?

— New fire is granted to us, open.

— Will always be open to those who ask, — said the ritual words of the ministers, and the carved gates were wide open, and bowed low to the new fire.

Zigi and Lind carried the sacred burden behind the fence, leaving a stretcher on the threshold of the temple, and left the land of the sacred place. Bor himself brought the pot storing the fire inside the carved temple, with wooden carved columns painted ochre scarlet. Many artists worked for many weeks to create such beauty. White smoke rose above the roof of the temple, a sign that a fire of sacred coals from Alatyr had flared up. The magi of the union of tribes passed inside, filling their

vessels, also braided with ivy, with the fiery embers of newborn fire, and going, accompanied by enthusiastic youths, to their villages. After that, Bor came out with a large vessel filled to the brim with burning coals, and the servants went with this burden to the houses of the Hun village, endowing people only with the born Fire, cleansing the souls and hearts of people. In other villages, Bor also sent youths with coals from the sacred fire, so that no one would feel deprived. New smoke was already rising above the houses from the hearths, ignited by hostesses from the coals of Bora, and preparing a festive meal on a new flame.

Zigi invited the envoys from Alatyr, two soldiers from the mouth of the Ob. The novice girl, adjusting the hem of the dress, dusted him off from dust and litter, and wrapped herself in a fur coat, looked at the greeters, and could not take her eyes off the three youths, two girls and a young man. She looked painfully into the face of the tallest and most beautiful girl, and now she herself went to her, the same familiar floating gait. The novice's eyes opened, and the pink mouth was ready to pronounce the name, she recognized her...

«Be quiet,» the acquaintance hissed rather than said.

— Ella, are you here? We thought you drowned, everyone was so sad... Mara only talked about you, and so did Pryakhi... After all, you already went to the cherished cave, passed the initiation, — and she looked at Ella's wrists, — and you do not wear bracelets...

— Don't tell anyone, Tara, you have to... Spinners will be forced to return, and there it is not far from trouble... Swear you won't reveal me... I helped you... I have never seen all this beauty — and she looked around the Ob coast, — Trees, flowers, grass, butterflies... I haven't seen it yet, but they say it's very, very, beautiful.

— Then you saved all of us in the boat, we didn't breathe anymore... pulled out of the sea of drowned... But... — and Tara thought, and grinned, — you, Ella, give yourself out. Like you, how will you hide? You can't run away from yourself.

— Thank you, — the Snow Maiden blossomed — Ella, — not a word to anyone, Tara.

Zima and Alena approached them, Van went on business with Respe and Vett to help spread new fire to their homes.

— Hello girl, — Winter bowed to Tara, — stop with us before you go back. The bath is heated, you will wash from the road.

— Thank you, I will be glad, — the girl nodded back, and raised her travel tusk from the ground. They all walked together from the pier, treading carefully on the melting snow, trying not to soak their feet at this time, the time of thaw. Winter and Tara walked ahead, and Snow lagged behind, and Alena with her.

«So your name is Ella,» the girl whispered, «and you are already a dedicated witch, at fourteen?» And are you from Alatyr? — and her big mouth was preparing to speak incessantly, and her eyes betrayed the girl's extreme amazement.

«Don't give me away, Alenka! I didn't do anything bad to anyone, I don't want to eyelids in a mountain cave! Pryakhi would not have let me out with good from Alatyr, I had to run. I hid in a boat that brought supplies to the Vedunas. So I got there. And my name is here Snow, so you call...

— Good, because that's the name... — the girl just said, — They don't call anyone... Ella is the guardian of the kingdom of the dead.

## The Mystery of Ella

«You promised,» the girl said imperiously, taking Alena's hand in her own, «swear that you will not tell anyone, not even your brother and grandmother about me.»

— Well, — Alena said sadly, looking at Ella from under the edges, — then will you tell me how it is on the Island? And why didn't they let you out to people?

— They were afraid for me, — and she led with her shoulder, — and all this is not so good, Alena. You will follow that path, you will not stop, you will learn from Ora, you will get used to treating people, and you will not be able to refuse help to anyone. And then, — and she lowered her eyes into the melting snow, — you will feel everyone's pain, and so on without end, — and she turned her gaze to the trees in the forest, — And then you can see something else...

— What is it?»

— Their... One of the Twins, — Ella had already fallen into half-asleep, and clung to Alena's hand, her eyes did not see her, they were pulled by a haze, — in a dream... They only come in a dream, whom they want to experience... You can't go wrong... The white marble face is like inanimate, then the head burns with fire... So, noticed... If the brother came, then nothing, then he must change something in the world of people... But if the sister... Then you will not live long, and you will do something for people, you will save or protect, but soon the Sister will take to her.

Alena looked at the named sister without stopping, and even in such cold weather she soaked up, even in a warm sheepskin coat, and listened and listened to what the girl who had fallen into unconsciousness was saying. I only swallowed convulsively, afraid to miss even a word, listened to everything and remembered what such a young, but already great witch says. And she began to understand what her grandmother told her about the knowledge of knowledge — that it was not easy, and hard work, not everyone could handle, and in strength. They approached the house, and the girl shook Snow by the shoulder.

— Wake up the Snow, they will notice that you are not in yourself.

— What? Did I fall asleep? — the girl asked, pulling her palm out of Alenina's hands.

— For a second, see, tired of the road too.

— Well, thank you for not letting fall into the snow, or even into a cow cake, that would be funny to everyone, — and she smiled, — and you, Alenka, remember the oath. And I will help you in everything, do not doubt.

— All right.

They all entered the house together, Van sat at the hearth, followed the young Fire, putting dry branches, Winter battered his curls on his head, and went down to the basement, for smoked fish. She returned and took a guest from Alatyr to the bathhouse. The novice washed quickly, Winter spent her, and met, gave a clean, and sat at the table, in an honorable place. My grandmother laid out dishes on the table, bowls and spoons, drinking vessels, everything was made of wood, and lit two more lamps. She put the fish in bowls, pushed Tara's food, put it both for the children and for herself. Poured on buckets and honey, instead of the usual herbal infusion, for the sake of the holiday, and dear guest.

«All with great triumph,» and she lifted the wooden bucket up, «and for all of us sitting together at the same table.

Finally they ate, and then Winter bedded the guest on a free shop, putting wolf warm furs, and Tara went to bed. Only a small lamp remained burning in the upper room, reflecting the light with a bronze mirror, and everyone had dreams, but only Alena could not sleep, after what she heard, and at night Tara coughed a lot, but then fell asleep again.

Everyone got up in the light, washed their face, but the girl noticed how Snega looked at Tara, with pity and anxiety, then approached her, she only began to deny and shake her head, disagreeing with something, and Zima and Alena heard Snega's words, already said loudly:

— You will die soon, you likhomanka.

— What? — Winter jumped to Tara, — Snow will cure, Tara, do not refuse or deny her, although she is young, but she knows a lot about witchcraft. Since she said, then everything is so.

— I agree, — said the novice, — if you say where I learned about my illness.

Snow looked at her for a long time, then looked around everyone in the upper room, got up, went to the hearth, and holding her hands over the fire, as if frozen, turned her head and answered.

«I saw it in my sleep. I see those who are close, sometimes in a dream, only my face. And if there is some kind of disease, then the place of the disease seems to be covered with a black stripe. So you have it, Tara. Black stripe on the chest, and remember — I'm not wrong.

«I didn't know... 'she began uncertainly, 'if so, heal. But not a word to others, «she said, looking around everyone in the upper room, and they nodded their heads in agreement.

— Winter, — said Snow, — make an infusion of linden, and I need honey. And you Tara, sit next to me, don't be afraid of anything.

The novice sat down nearby, Snoya put pressure on a couple of points on the girl's body, plunging her into sleep, and she herself put her hands on the guest's chest and covered her eyes. Everyone sitting in the upper room could not look away from this — the adopted granddaughter turned white in front of her eyes, became like an ice block, her eyes turned black, and her lips turned blue, and the nails on her fingers squeezing the novice's shoulders became blue. Snow in exhaustion sat on the bench, with his back to the wall of the house. She breathed, as if she had run all the way to Yamal, and caught the air with her mouth open. When she opened her now invisible eyes, and tried to stand up, she almost fell to the floor, and Wang caught her by the shoulders, and in response she only smiled powerfully, and looked sideways, past him, with her blind black eyes. Tara just opened her eyes, touched her sides and chest in disbelief, sighed convulsively and looked at Snow with fright.

— What's wrong with you?

— It will pass, the witch answered confidently, — tomorrow everything will be fine with me, — added Snow, — always so, Tara. Every time.

All the household looked with hope and pain at the unfortunate witch, who clung to the wall with her fingers, reached her bed, sat on it, and sighed in exhaustion. Again Van ran up to her with a ladle of honey.

— Drink, at least you will gain strength, — and put a drink in her hands. I drank snow to the bottom, smiled weakly, looking sideways from the young man.

«Thank you,» she said.

— Nobody about it a word, — said Zima, strictly looking around all the family, and she herself remembered, and did not forget, how this girl cured her.

— Of course,» Wang muttered, looking around the others.

— We won't tell anyone, — Tara and Alena answered in one voice.

— Lie down, rest, — and Zima laid the witch, covering her with a fur cover.

Both the guest and the home winters went out to walk through the village, where the mummers began to walk. Someone attached horns, and hair from urine, men dressed as women, and women put on men's clothes, hiding their faces under birch bark and wooden masks. They sang scabby ritual songs, glorifying spring and a new fire in the hearth. Tara liked the village, but in the morning she had to return to Alatyr, go by boat on the Ob back, and where to go on a sleigh. Winter opened the gate, then the doors of the house, everyone climbed the stairs to the upper room, and there the already cheerful smiling Snow was making dough, preparing to bake pies. She looked cheerful, her freckled nose was stained with flour, ashy hair, pulled into a braid, covered the kerchief, and shirt sleeves were rolled up to

elbow. And everyone noticed her Vedic tattoos of snakes tangled in tangles on her forearms. It was so... unusual. A girl at fourteen, and the strongest sorceress, and as if nothing had happened, creates pies, although an hour ago she was blind and exhausted on the bench.

— Come on, granddaughter, I'll help, — Zima spoke hastily removing the sheepskin coat, — And you, Alenka, take care of boiled eggs, cut sauerkraut. Smaller! And put it in a large bowl. Van, go to the basement for soaked cranberries.

— Here, with pies, Snegurka, strength is not needed, and your witchcraft will not help, — she looked anxiously at the tattoos on the arms of the young witch, — here love is needed, but patience. Here, now roll out the dough with a rolling pin, sprinkle with flour. Great, clever. Granddaughters, where is the filling?

«Now, granny,» Wang and Alena shouted, and carried bowls of cranberries, chopped eggs and finely chopped sauerkraut and smoked fish. Tara also undertook to help, sporingly cutting fish for pies and removing bones from meat.

Soon everything was ready, and the pies went to a hot, already heated oven. After an hour, the treat was ready, and at least there was little flour left, but the holiday is a holiday, and the table must break from food on such days, otherwise luck will leave home. So in the evening on the bowls lay pies with fish, and with cabbage and eggs, and with cranberries. Zima put the put honey on the table, pouring a little to the children, and Tara and herself a ladle.

— To you Snow, you will not say that you are small yet, — and grandmother laughed, and poured her into a larger bucket.

The girl only looked up in response, opened her mouth, about to answer, but blushed and did not say anything, and Alyona, seeing this, pushed her brother in the side, but he could not tear himself away from the treat.

The meal was cheerful and satisfying, the pies were a success, and the honey was excellent, fragrant and persistent.

«I'll tell you about Alatyr Island,» Tara began, «they live there in the mountain caves of Pryakha, number three, witches, whose names are a secret, no one knows what their name was. If the hour comes, and one of them dies, they bury her in caves, deep in the mountain, where the ice does not melt, and there they lie, in ice coffins. Novices help them, and Mara lives there, she keeps order on the island, and she has seven novices waiting for initiation in a secret cave, and they don't talk about it, and she quickly looked at Snow, and then Mara lets them go and takes new students. Men have no move there, they stay in a guest hut on the shore, and no longer than three days. These are those who accompany the novices, and bring supplies to the island, and take the Holy Fire, as I have now arrived at you. There are no forests there, there are only stones around, rare shrubs grow only. But still, witches live, fish are caught, nets are put. There are a lot of fish, it happens in winter, and polar bears wander in, they hunt seals. Winter is there nine months a year, and in summer the sun does not set, and in winter it does not rise. In the sky in winter, such flashes are multi-colored — horror, and cracks, and thunders like a thunderstorm.

Van and Alena heard the story of what places there are! I listened to the snow, sighed, and covered the sadness with a fish pie, and washed down with honey.

— It's cold, there are no flowers, ice and stones, — Snow inserted into the story, — and the birds do not sing.

«A holy place,» Tara added, looking reproachfully at the witch, «the best mentors live there.

— If only this, — sighed Snow, — and there are no mosquitoes. Almost.

And in the morning everyone went to see Tara off. In parting for curing Snow, she presented a twisted bronze bracelet. They stood staring at each other, never knowing if they would meet again if fate and chance helped. At the pier, the leader Zigi had already brought the rowing warriors who were visiting him, and the youths brought gifts for the guests — a barrel of honey, fur, a large ace with wooden utensils. The merrymakers put the belongings in a boat, skillfully distributing the cargo, so as not to interfere with turning oars.

— Thank you, girl, — she said, and whispered in her ear, — on Alatyr I will not reveal your secrets, where you are buried, I will not tell anyone.

Snow brightened her face, kissed Tara back, helped her into the boat, and waved her handkerchief goodbye for a long time, watched the boat move away with each wave of oars, and the blue waters of the river carry her to the mouth.

## Apple tree bloomed

Day after day, Snow went to Ore, comprehend wisdom, got acquainted with her children, two daughters, Malina and Uta, and son Uar. The novices of Ora, Dubrava da Podaga, did not cherish souls in the student, who herself showed them a lot of new things. Alena diligently remembered what her named sister was teaching. So imperceptibly and warmth approached these edges, finally snow came down, they met geese who arrived from the South. Winter and her grandchildren worked in the home garden, digging up the ground with wooden shovels, and her grandmother planted beets, cabbage, and carrots. So spring came, and beautiful apple trees bloomed in the garden, planted by Winter's husband. But one of them did not bloom in any way, despite all the care. Ash was poured to its roots, and eggshells, and horse manure went into business, but nothing helped. Winter and Snow walked past the trees, the girl was all outlandish — she was careful approached trees, stroked leaves, tried to catch the aroma of blooming inflorescences. At one branch, she frightened off the bumblebee, from an alarming buzzing, and then, suddenly, she began to curl around the girl, and two more flew in with a dozen, the same fat and beautiful, with a bright orange-black color, circling around her in dance. The young witch did not pay attention to the buzzing insects, and did not drive them away, and they did not leave her, and went from tree to tree with a buzzing retinue.

— And on this why there are no leaves or flowers? — asked a misunderstood girl, — what happened?

— It's frozen, probably. We'll have to cut it down, — Zima said reluctantly, — for many everything froze out the winter before last, we, you see, only one tree died. Ora also got sick.

— Now, — said the witch and went to the tree, began to stroke her bark, touched with sensitive fingers, as if listening to the apple tree breathing. So she stood, hugging the tree, touched the large branches that looked like the hands of a man. — Everything is fine, she slept, — and the glory laughed, — froze and fell asleep. Will wake up tomorrow. And then I will look at the apple tree at Ora's, wake up if necessary.

— All that you are joking, granddaughter, — taking it for a joke, said Zima. — Let's go, it's necessary to prepare for dinner, and Van will come running, and Alena will come from Ora.

— Let's go, — Snegurochka (Snow maiden) agreed.

They returned home, lit embers in the hearth, warmed up the pot with the remains of dinner, and Alena soon came. Alena came cheerful from Ora, hung her sum of wiped skin, sat down on the bench next to her grandmother, and kissed her.

«Let's eat,» she suggested, «it's time already,» and she made a serious face, pushing the bowl towards her while empty.

— Wang didn't come after all, — grandmother noticed, — let's wait.

— He injured his leg, — she said lingeringly and in a very quiet voice, it seemed, thinking and listening to herself, Snow, — not much, — and she shook her head, — now I will lie down.

Below there was a knock on the door, and Zima and Alena rushed down to open. They met Vett, supporting Wang by the shoulder, standing on one leg, leaning on a stick.

— Hello, Vette, — said my grandmother, — thank you for helping Van. What happened?

— Yes, grandmother Zima, he flew off the wagon, broke. But we wrapped our leg up, List said he would pass soon.

— Sit down, eat with us, young man, Zima said.

— It is necessary to go home, — he crumpled, looking around at the girls, — they are waiting after all.

— Well, you go home, Vett, otherwise your mother and father are worried about you. Thanks, again.

— Okay, I'll go, — Vett said reluctantly, — get well, — he wished goodbye to a friend.

— Happy, Wang told him, thank you.

Winter and Alena helped the young man climb the narrow stairs up, and he cried out only three times. In the middle of the room stood Snow, carefully looking at the sick.

— Put him on the bench, and lift the leg, his knee is broken.

Winter sat down her grandson, and she herself went for a bronze basin with hot water and a clean rag, Alena remained to look for treatment.

— How did you know? — Van said doubtfully, trying not to gasp when the witch touched his knee, which had already begun to swell and turn blue. Winter put a basin next to it, and Snow, sighing, concentrated and put her fingers on the joint burning with fire. The young man felt the heat inside, as if someone had lit a fire in his leg, and now, the pain let him go. Nearby sat the very pale Snow, her lips were bloodless, and her eyes darkened, but remained blue. She breathed often, often, Winter ran up to her, and Alena brought a bucket with a drink.

— Granddaughter, how are you, — said Zima, kissing the girl on the cheek, and carefully looked at her pale face.

— Everything is fine, — she said, rubbing her hands nervously, — it's good that we almost immediately treated our brother.

— Thank you,» Van said, «tomorrow I will go back to Glom and List, I will definitely stay on the wagon now.» The chariot will be taught to ride tomorrow, and rule the horses..

«You'll sit at home, from a week,» the strict grandmother told him firmly, leaning both hands on the table, and looked at him adamantly, «so that Liszt would have questions?» How, they say, is your grandson, and immediately cured? — she mimicked the mentor of the youth, — And who cured him, angry,? — she mimicked her neighbors, — Sit at home. Now I'll wrap my leg with you so that it would look thicker, like swollen, and take a stick in my hand, and try to walk in my yard without a stick, I'll lock it up alive in the upper room.

— And what, Bauska (Grandma)?

— What, what, — Alena mimicked him, — think about Snow, give her out like that. How did you run so fast, but only barely walked — and with one leg, Vett dragged him, almost on the hump, — she threw up her hands in an adult way — only the leg was all blue, and tut- once! And healthy, that's a miracle happened! And someone helped??? And she nodded at the named sister.

— That's right, Alenka says. A week with a rag on his knee, and silent about everything. — the grandmother sentenced, and strictly looked at the incomprehensible grandson.

— Okay,» Van said, annoying about the female dominance of the house, «for the sake of Snow, of course, sit down.» And sadly hung his head.

Soon the whole family was able to sit at the table, and the hunger was satisfied with unwise food, and went to bed. The next morning, after eating, Winter got hooked on Snow.

— Granddaughter, you are a witch doctor, without a doubt the best. But what about the apple tree? — and she smiled slyly, thinking how she would make excuses — let's go take a look?

— Let's go, grandma, — the granddaughter immediately agreed, — and we'll walk Van.

— Let's go, we'll walk through the garden, — grandmother called everyone to the air, and went to the window. But nothing much was visible through the bull bubble of the window, only light penetrated, and the woman only sighed.

— Have you forgotten the stick? — Zima noticed and looked at Wang, he looked back from under her, and showed his crutch on his outstretched arms — okay.

We went down the stairs, the boy sighed heavily all the way and deliberately puffed.

— You puff with others, and here, with us why? his sister made fun of him.

Wang did not say a word to his malicious sister, only rolled his eyes to the ceiling, and diligently leaned on the stick. The weather was beautiful, the sun was shining, and the whole garden was in bloom, they walked along the grass, and Winter was looking forward to Snegurochkin's

disappointment, and picked up words. to mitigate the failure of the girl. Snow went forward, and her joyful laughter was heard.

«Here, come here!» she shouted, and Wang jumped on one leg and crutch, ran forward the fastest, and his cry rang out:

— Look, the old apple tree has blossomed!

## Winter holidays

Summer passed without incident, only the adopted granddaughter was infinitely happy every day. This year, the Winter family remained in the South, and did not go to the North, they wanted to show the girl all the colors of summer. She looked, it seemed, at all the berries, tasted each one, learned how blueberries differ from strawberries. I tasted apples from each apple tree, remembered all the flowers in the forests where I went with Ora, accompanied by dogs. In the garden, the mentor cured her apple tree. Autumn came, fermented cabbage grown in the garden, put carrots and beets in pits with sand and air, onions hung in bundles under the ceiling of the house, something from the fruits of the earth was dried for the winter. They collected mushrooms, especially Ora gained a lot of mushrooms, dried a lot, and salted which in wooden tubs. I saw snow salted mushrooms and dried, brought to Alatyr, but growing in the forest, I saw here for the first time. Everyone remembered how she was trying to recruit the most beautiful of them — fly agaric, they were convinced by violence that they were poisonous. And then, she began to type herself, so much so that everyone was surprised, and she laughed, and said that now she finds them by smell, and she herself realized that grebes, similar to ordinary mushrooms, are terribly poisonous.

In winter, pastoralist tribes descended back to the south, where the steppes began. Soon there was already a Kolovorot holiday, people tied ribbons to fir trees, decorating them, the hostesses prepared a festive treat for their families. Winter, now recovered, after the treatment of Snow in the spring, Sporo worked at the oven, prepared pies for treats. The youth went to see the festivities, the three of us went.

— What, Snow you look around, — asked Alenka, — have you seen this on your islands?

«No..» she said, looking at the guy who was skiing behind the horse, holding on to his bridle, and only the snow creaked under the skis, and the people laughed, skipping the rider.

Zigi decided to arrange races, and in this way — on skis for a horse, and in the old fashioned way, on skis for a deer. The leader tried to hunt his fellow tribesmen for horses, although the deer were, of course, more familiar to people.

«Alenka, don't tell your grandmother, I also participate in horse racing,» the lad whispered to his sister.

— Scolds, but how do you break?

— Good snow, you look, will cure, — Van remarked mischievously, — and she learns from Ora, she knows a lot about all the herbs.

— You are still careful, — the girl noticed, — and I can't refuse treatment all alone.

— Okay, I went, — Wang became serious, — the horse is kind, and my skis are good.

— We will wait, — said the sister, taking out a bag of nuts, and pouring half of Snow, — everything is more fun than just watching and waiting.

Meanwhile, eight participants gathered at the initial line, their horses were held by the bridles, and the competitors themselves stood on skis, holding the reins of their horses. The signal was to be given by Glom, wrapped in a sheepskin coat, and wearing a felt hat with long ears wrapped around his throat and felt boots. Finally, he waved his hand, the assistants let the horses go, and the drivers, clicking the reins, began to chase the horses, and they immediately took them to the canter, and one of the riders, the unluckiest, lost his balance and flew into a snowdrift, and the horse ran after everyone, already without a saddle. Snow rushed to help the youth, and helped him get up. The skis were broken, and a thick sliver stuck out in the young man's felted boot. The boy turned white in pain, but with the beauty he only clenched his teeth, and did not scream, trying to smile. Snow looked at it with concern, but here then the relatives of the competitor ran up, and they took him home. Suddenly one of the men looked at the brown-haired girl, and scratching his forehead, said:

— Yes, this is the eminent student of Ora. Girl, do mercy, look at the wound of our Orm. Our house is nearby.

— Well, — Snow just answered, — Alena, I quickly, just go look, and I'll come back right away...

— All right, sis. I'll wait. Alyona nodded.

It was not far from the house, Snow rose up the seedling, removed the sheepskin coat, leaving felt boots. Orm was also removed from the sheepskin coat, and he sat on the bench, and a woman sat next to him, probably his mother, and looked at his whitened face.

— Is your name Snow? — the woman asked, — Do mercy, look, Slavnitsa, that Orm has a leg, he has one son left. My name is Mila, I am his mother.

She came up with snow, felt the wound through a felt felt felt felt felt, pulled out a dagger from the scabbard on her belt, ripped open her leg, left a sliver, was afraid that a large vein had suffered. She also ripped open her leg, cut the fabric carefully, so as not to injure the already wounded one more time. Exposing a sore spot, slightly oozing with blood, and with a wooden point sticking out in the wound, the girl put her sore leg on the bench, raising it higher.

— Mila, give a leather belt, a bronze basin, hot water, dry plantain — and she carefully felt the vein. exactly, the piece of wood tore a vein, and if without a tourniquet, the guy will bleed to death.

The woman brought a belt, Snea pulled her leg in a jerk, but so as not to break even more, she quickly pulled out the tip, Orm just managed to gasp. Blood poured into the bronze pelvis, but not much, so, a thin red line on the white leg. Snow tried so that Mila would not notice anything, focus, and stop the blood at all, only felt how noisy in her head. She began to bandage, imposed a plantain, wrapped the wound with a clean rag, but the waves still thundered treacherously in her head. She saw now too badly, only distinguished the general contours, everything in front of her was like in a thick fog.

— Well, I'll go, — and the violence did not fall, and her legs were bent, — everything will be fine with him. — and smiled, trying to show that she was doing well.

«What's wrong with you girl,» Mila looked frightened at the black eyes of the witch, «what's wrong with your eyes?» Are you blind?

— I don't like blood, — the girl said firmly, with difficulty dressing a sheepskin coat from the third time, not falling into the sleeves with her hands.

— How did you stop the blood? Without you, I would have bled, thank you, — Mila quickly said, helping the girl get dressed, — and even though you are from ice people, I don't care. Since I saved my son, then you are not evil. This is for you — and she put a silver bracelet on the girl's hand and kissed — thanks again. You don't take care of yourself, you help others. If you need, my husband and I will always help.

«Who is he?»

— Magi is the first, Bor, — Mila proudly said, — I will take you to your named sister.

Mila dressed, and took the glory by the arm.

«Hold on to me, and fear no one,» the woman said firmly.

When Mila and Snow arrived, the girl had already seen, and Mila said goodbye to her, kissing both cheeks. But the races were already over, and Wang, standing next to Vett and Alena, proudly showed the award-fighting bow given by the leader Zigi himself.

«Where were you?» asked the distressed Wang, «you see, I won,» and handed Snega a bow, and his horse, known for its hole, curiously sniffed Snaga's ear, and rubbed against her cheek, from which she laughed.

— She treated Orm, he suffered at the beginning of the race, — Alena stood up, — without her he would have bled to death.

— Well, if so, — Wang was embarrassed, still fiddling with the bow kibet, not knowing where to put his hands.

— And let me try, — asked Brother Snow, — like you, ski behind a horse to ride.

— Granny will beat me... — Van said doubtfully, — what if what happens?

— Yes, we won't tell her, — the witch who came to her senses laughed, — come on skis, and hold the reins, and hold the horse for now, so that she wouldn't jerk off in time.

— Okay, — Van said doubtfully, putting his skis in front of the girl and bending down, helped fix the fasteners, and Vett held the horse by the bridle, — maybe Vett will lead under the bridle, ride you?

— Let Vett ride you,“ Snow laughed, picking up the reins, „went, and she clapped with long reins, sending the horse forward.

First, the coward took a step, then, deftly going over with his hooves, and fervently lifting his tail, he switched to a lynx, and then a light gallop. Snow deftly stood on skis, and the Huns accompanied her with surprised glances — how is it, the girl rules the horse like that? For them, it was not a curiosity that women run sledges, ride deer, rule carts drawn by oxen and horses. But here, it was wild. And so, the witch rushed, flakes of snow flew out from under the hooves of the horse, she deftly traveled around the trees, and having traveled around the village, she returned to the standing Van, Vett and Alena, next to which a crowd of curious people gathered.

— I have never seen such a thing,“ said the admiring Vett, spreading his arms, „you rule a great horse, and you stand on skis.

Snow stroked the neck of the horse, he snorted rather, responding to affection. The girl took off her skis, gave it to her brother, and the reins were taken by Vett, who took the cowboy to the stable.

Then people unfamiliar to Snow rode on deer, and it was funny to watch a small deer drag a tall man on skis. Deer ran through the snow faster than horses, less hooves fell into the crust.

In winter, it quickly darkens, but there was no cloud in the sky, so now a pale moon illuminated the earth. Huge shadows from a dim night star covered many objects or gave them an absolutely incredible look. A pile of snow in the yard seemed like a huge dragon, and a willow wattle was a ship from the Student Sea. Children sculpted snowmen in the courtyards and on the streets, and then staged fights, throwing snowballs at each other. The mummers began to walk around the village, asking them to thank them for a generous evening. Residents, laughing, threw all sorts of things into open bags, more food. It was already evening, and people had not gone to bed yet, all rejoicing at the sunny day that was beginning to grow. The holiday continued, the light of oil lamps and rays burned in the houses.

The next morning, they knocked on the door of Winter's house with a staff, the woman went down to open it.

— Happy holiday, you light Winter, and your grandchildren and granddaughters, — a loud voice spoke, there was a noise of steps, and the mistress entered the room, and after her the Boor with his wife Mila and son Orm rose up, and the lad dragged a heavy bag, — these are gifts to you, — and Bor began to get gifts out of the bag, — This is Snow, a new knitted scarf, and a hat with long ears, no matter what freezes. Grandmother a new fur fox sleeveless jacket — and, laughing, Mila gave a gift with a bow.

— The future warrior has new skis, and the beautiful girl Alena, a woolen scarf, and your grandmother Zima — and he gave the beauty of any house from the bag, a bronze cauldron with four legs. Everyone looked at bronze art, it was not just a household item, but a thing decorated with many figurines of deer, in the form of which the hands of a cauldron were cast, griffins digging their beaks on its walls, and the legs were made like griffin paws. The boiler was still shiny, it was new, and did not have time to be covered with patina and soot of fire. And Bohr's wife put a luxurious kokoshnik decorated with river pearls, with a lying crescent of pure silver in the middle, and then the woman came up and put the gift in Snaga's hands.

— Let's try on, beautiful girl, — and Mila strengthened on the head of the young witch miracle-cleaning.

A small height, three fingers, he inexpressibly painted the girl. She flushed with pleasure, freckles became even more noticeable, and laughed, and reached for her silver mirror, to look. She turned and so and so, everyone looked in admiration at her beautiful face.

— Very beautiful, girl, — confirmed the opinion of the rest of the Bor, and everyone in the upper room nodded their heads in agreement.

— Thanks, Bohr, for the gift. For the boiler, especially. Only we have nothing to give up, — Zima answered with embarrassment.

— Your granddaughter named gave away, Orm, my son, saved her life. So I would have bled to death. I can't imagine how she could, and looked at her wife in an experimental way, but she did not raise an eyebrow in response.

— Skill, the main thing here, Bor. You also nurse people with herbs, and you can drive the reckless driver away, «his wife told him, smiling,» and enough for you to look for bad everywhere, «she said without a smile.

«There is already a pink scar on the wound, Mila,» and he squinted at Snow, as if he wanted to see something unknown and scary.

The girl got up, looked at the magician with a strange half-smile, took a knife, and cut her index finger with it. Four pairs of eyes kept looking, first at the band on her finger, then how it turned red, and finally a DROP OF RED BLOOD fell to the floor.

— Sorry, Snow Maiden, — and, sobbing, fell on Mila's lap, — forgive my husband, and my son, and me, unreasonable, — and continued to cry, not letting go of Snegi's sundress. The girl was terribly embarrassed, turned pale, then blushed burning, tried to free the floors of her clothes, and began to hastily lift the woman from the floor, holding her under her elbows, and squeezing her finger so as not to stain the festive outfit with blood. Bohr was embarrassed, not knowing where to put his eyes.

— Sorry, beauty girl, — and bowed in the belt, as he had not bowed to anyone for twenty years, — to be afraid of everything... What if you're the Icemen? Or did the Ice Princess send you? Forgive us all for the sake of the Guardians of the Tree, and more than all of me, «he said, cradling his sobbing wife. Orm looked at the girl in admiration, and did not hide it.

— Stay with us, taste the treats, — suggested Snow, speaking in such a way as to remove the awkwardness and resentment hanging in the air, and the grandmother nodded, agreeing with the wise granddaughter.

— Sit down at the table, dear guests — and sat down at the table in the best place, moved a bowl of deer stew to them, and poured honey into the buckets. Near the village of Snow, without removing the gift, and Winter put her fish, and Alenka and Van are also deer.

— You cook well, Winter, venison with lingonberries is amazingly good, — said Bor, wielding a wooden spoon, — try it, Snow.

«I'm a fish,» said the girl, separating the ridge from the boiled cod, «I don't eat meat.

— Well, that's it, once again with the holiday, and separately we will drink for you, young witch, — Bor proclaimed, — and do not hold a grudge against me. I am not evil. To be afraid of everything — he grinned bitterly — and for a long time to be afraid, since Elga turned. And there are no wars, and terrible diseases, yet she, undead from the Forbidden Island, did it. And to be honest, not Zigi, not our neighbors to be afraid of our soldiers, but to be afraid more of death fierce, if suddenly the immortal sorceress Elga gets angry with them.

The snow drank honey, and lowered her eyes into the table, smiling faintly, only furtively looking at the guests. It seemed that she wanted to run away from here than to listen to it. Suddenly she raised her head, wanting to say something, and did not say.

— And what happened? — doing round eyes, vied with each other asked Van and Alain, — tell me, Bor.

— It was a long time ago... Two hundred years ago... — he said, picking up the words of the Magi hard, — The strangers attacked, we fought back, it was hard, and Elga came from the Student Sea... With the army...

«And what kind of men?» asked the impatient Wang, even despite the venison in the bowl, which smelled just magical.

— Inanimate, — reluctantly, as if pulling out words with ticks, said the magi, — Elga raised the army of the dead, and at night the inanimate warriors killed all the enemies. She erased all enemies to dust, only bloody streams remained, then she came, bowed to people, and her terrible army disappeared, but there were thousands of her soldiers. Well, many, warriors, put a sign on their forehead, on the transfer. That when they die, she took them to her army, to Her Kingdom, to the Forbidden Island.

— Where did she hide them,» Zima asked, also breaking away from food, «so many?»

— Nobody knows,» Bohr said slowly, looking into the fire of the hearth.

## Fears of Bors

In the evening, Bohr and his wife, Mila, returned to their home. Their novices, disciples of the Magi of the tribe, opened the gate to them. Bor took to his training two or three boys, intelligent, fast in mind, capable of herbalism. I never invited more than three, believing that it is impossible for a mentor to show wisdom to many at the same time, the direct communication necessary for the transfer of knowledge is lost. Three of the Seven Magi of the tribe were his disciples, and then, as they should, all passed the Initiation on Alatyr. He remembered this day, as he himself threw bones with ancient runes, and one of Pryakh interpreted them. Bohr did not tell anyone about the prediction, and about how he visited the cave, where Time himself asked how he went there, and now he often dreamed of that day — he wanders between multi-colored columns, and finally finds the cave, passes over the polished floor, and touches or rather, plunges with his hand into Something, and this Something asked him questions, and he passed the test by responding that he was only human. And here, in misunderstanding, trying to see what he could not yet understand, but felt some kind of unknown, it was connected with the find that came from the forest. No, he was happy that she saved her only son with Mila, but how? How did she do it? Many witches and witches tried to repeat this, but could not. Only one thread, one thought tormented him — his grandfather told him, and his grandfather told him that Elga was capable of such miracles, in that distant battle with strangers, cured even the dying. Yes, so ice princess, the lord of the dead. Elga was here a hundred years ago, the strife took away. Magi Preya, his great-grandfather, the leaders did not obey, they say, who is the Magi? He monitors customs, protects people, and they, the leaders of warriors, defenders, why should they be admonished by some magician? But he warned that Elga was not a stranger, she would feel, come to humble. So what? She killed the skolt leader with one finger when he began to contradict her, and became her servant forever. Who is Snow? And kind, for sure. And bold, and it is. Orma cured, did not ask for anything, in an incomprehensible way, and there was no scar left. And Mila is silent, which was really, and the son slept, did not see anything. Bor squeezed the staff still firmly in his hands, and got up to think. It's good here, in the upper room it's warm, hot, you can catch your breath here. But still, it's good that the blood is real, red, the girl, like people, means she is not from ice giants.

He still wandered around the snow-covered courtyard, trampling the paths with felted boots, rolling chilly into a sheepskin sheepskin coat, and adjusted his hat, tightening its ears around his neck so that the wind would not blow out. It snowed, falling in soft flakes and on the head of the magician, and on the gable roof of his house, and without lingering, rolled down the shingle.

«That's it, snow goes to snow, and people to people,» Bor thought, and did not know yet how to solve this riddle, and then it dawned on him that he needed to talk to Dubrava and Podaga, Ora's novices. And as soon as it becomes clear, you see, they will help to send news to Alatyr, although they did not want to contact them and ask them for anything. They hide- You cook well, Winter, venison with lingonberries is amazingly good, — said Bor, wielding a wooden spoon, — try it, Snow.

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«I walked up, Bor,» said Mila, «sit down, eat.» — and the wife put on the table pies, and stewed venison with lingonberries. — Orm, sit down to eat at the table!

— Now! — their son shouted, and quickly sat down at the table, laying down unfinished new onions along the way, which still had to be pasted over with birch bark.

— Son, do you remember what Snoya did when she treated you?

— No, I cut the felt boots and pants, touched the neck, and I fell asleep immediately, but I woke up — my leg was wrapped, there was little blood in the pelvis at all. Yes, I told you how many times.

«Mila, did you see what?»

— Yes, I ran after the pelvis, and came back — everything is fine, — and she shrugged her shoulders, — why did you get attached to her! The blood is red at the glory, what are you? — and she already looked evil at her husband, — or it's bad that she saved our son from death, — and she rested her hands in the belt, putting her elbows to the sides, preparing for a quarrel.

— What, you're a wife. — the Magi was taken aback, — But who is she? Where did it come from? You ask your friends, maybe someone will hear something.

— This is different — and her voice warmed up — I'll talk. Maybe Ora will tell his friends what, Zae da Nege.

— She's good, kind and beautiful, what are you, father? — said the son, — she happens to come to look at our lessons together with Alena, and Van- you can't say a bad word about him.

— Eat come on — and the wife moved the pies to her husband. «Did you like the girl?» she said, smiling, to her son.

— She doesn't eat meat, — Bohr remembered, taking a pie in his hand, and thoughtfully biting off a piece of it, — but she eats pies, — and smiled happily, remembering, — like the Spikes. At least something. So, she also gave a lock...

The next morning, according to custom, the Magi went to congratulate the leader at his house. Novices behind him carried gifts as usual. Nothing unusual — fish and mushrooms, and in response Zigi will give away the same. The novices remained in the human, and Bor went up to the leader.

— Happy holiday, you Zigi.- and bowed to the leader.

— And you, Bor. — and also bowed to the magician, — Will I say hello to the family?

— Everything is ok. Did you hear that my son suffered, but the witch is a student, saved him?

— Quite a lad, see, but Ora learned it well. We were lucky with the new witch.

— Are you lucky? And not what werewolf? Did Ora teach her? I don't remember that she would cure so much. — Bor frowned, — well, colds, wounds are not severe, yes, she knows how. Childbirth takes well, also true. But this? — doubted the magician.

— Almost a year has passed, Veda, and misfortunes have passed us, neither diseases, nor pestilence, cattle does not get sick, which means that evil has not come to us.

— You yourself know, — the magician sighed, — who does all this, decides everything, and protects us, and we all, and everyone around us lives in fear.

— Elga, — the leader sighed, — everything is not so bad, Magi. The tribe has grown tenfold over the years.

— It became more difficult with food and grazing for cows. Have you heard that again the Wends quarrel with the Danes?

— No,» the leader answered, «there are unoccupied lands on the Dvina.» We will send hunters there, we will agree. And below, according to Kama, our old allies live.

— With this okay, Zigi, but what about Snega and me? Maybe we'd better go to Alaty?

— As long as there is no evil from her, and we have no quarrel with her or with the Spikes. And I realized what you were driving to, Magi, — the leader grinned curiously — that she was from ice giants, from Elgin people? And then there is no need to anger the Ice Princess, if that's for sure from her. Yes, I heard — and he grinned — she shed Red Blood, not Ihor. And you need to look after, you never know what.

— Here I am about that, — the magi enlightened, — Let's look after. And how are yours, home? Wife, children?

— Everything is fine with Nara, Fat learns from Liszt, Zell will go to him the next year, while the traps of the house make every beast, but Gilda... Already that year does not get up... — Zigi said sadly.

— Or maybe... — and Bohr looked expressively at the leader.

— You about Snow, like me, so you thought? Zigi answered him in an instant.

Magus nodded his head, and all broke into a satisfied smile.

## Gilda cure

— I myself will go to ask her, I will take my vigilantes, two or three for honor, and gifts for Winter and Snow, and I will not forget the grandchildren.

— Try to invite to your house to your house, or ask to be present at the cure of your daughter. Just don't tell your wife, otherwise suddenly nothing will come of it — and the magician sighed blankly.

«That's right. So, Nara is not herself. I will say, I took my daughter out, take a walk, ride a sled, look at a snowball, show myself.

«Will you take me with you?» Bor asked with little hope, I will not say a word. You won't regret it, chief.

«Better not,» he said, thinking, Zigi, «who knows how everything will turn out.» Okay, I'll go to my wife, and I'll send gifts to collect the youths, and I'll go to Snaga with a scarb.

— Well, I'll go home to my family. Joyful days, and the son survived.

«Greetings to them and a bow from me. Zigi added.

Magus hastily gathered himself and went out, and Zigi went to his wife in a cell. The wife sat and embroidered a towel, often putting her palm to her forehead, and winced in pain.

— Nara, what did I want... I'll go, I'll ride Gilda on a sled, everything will be more fun for her...

— Go... Thank you... — his wife answered him with a weak voice, holding on to his sore head.

The leader hurriedly left his wife's chambers, and went to his daughter's room. There was a nurse with her all the time, from the distant relatives of Nara. An elderly good woman, her children grew up, and now they live in Yamal, they hunt whales, in the sea all the time. So they left the mother in the care of his wife, and she began to look after their weak daughter. Zigi was not happy with the Light, what a lot of help from her, and her daughter fell in love with them, and her temper is not evil.

The husband and wife quarreled, asked Zigi's wife to tearfully go to Gandvik in winter, when Elga was visiting her lands there. Yes, the leader did not even want the Dead Princess to bow that she would heal Gilda. And here, in the upper Ob, in Varta, according to the old memory, Elga does not go, he remembers resentment, but does not take revenge, no.

— Hello, daughter. Let's go, I'll sled you. Not cold in the yard, snowball, very beautiful.

— Thank you, now Sveta will help to dress, — Gilda gladly agreed.

The leader carried his daughter dressed in warm clothes in his arms, and put her in a sleigh, but the sleigh was special, he pushed them from behind, holding on to special handles, so that he could follow his daughter tied to the sleigh with a belt. Previously, there were ordinary ones, but once Gilda fell from the sled, her father did not watch. And then she cried for two days, but not from pain, because she fell into the snow, but from resentment that she was so weak. Three dozen soldiers walked behind him, and carried on a sled lar with gifts for the witch. Zigi pushed the cart, smiled in response to the joyful Gilda, who finally got out of the boring tower, from which she rarely left in winter, others are busy, and she cannot get up from the bench alone and not go outside. The father thought that he would tell Snega that he would not refuse, and he dreamed of everything to himself, something good should finally come for his daughter, and for him and his wife. Moreover, what a holiday.

Gilda looked around, because we left the yard, and where did her father take her? And at least in the forest, the girl thought evil. Faster to die than to live like that. Death is not fierce from the cold, she thought, closing her eyes.

Soon the house of Winter appeared, one of the soldiers knocked on the gate, deaf blows were heard far away, two dogs barked, and a boyish voice asked:

«Who's here on Bright Day?»

— I, this, Zigi, visit you on a holiday, and I want to ask.

The boy, dressed in a sheepskin coat, opened the gate, quickly looked around at people, and to say that he was surprised is to say nothing.

«Hello, Van,» Gilda said in a gentle voice, opening her eyes, «will you let us in?» Father brought you gifts — and looked back at his father, smiling.

«Thank you,» said the taken aback boy, «and happy holiday to you.»

«Van, call your grandmother and Snow,» the leader said in his ear, «not a conversation for other people's ears.» — and put his hand on his shoulder, nodding for importance.

«Okay,» Van said immediately, blushing, and rushed into the house.

«It's beautiful,» Gilda said to her father, «but where did Van run?» 'she said, blushing.

— What did you like? Zigi laughed, a prigozhe lad. Yes, they were unlucky with their sister. You see how it happened to your father-mother — drowned in the Studen Sea, the red beast was mined.

Then hastily dressed Winter and Snow came up, going hard, already with tense faces who did not know what to expect. Zigi went to meet them with a quick step, with a sled in front of him and rolled his daughter.

— It is necessary to talk, with you, Slavnitsa, — he turned to Snow, bowing to her, — we will step aside. Gilda, «he leaned towards the girl,» I'm next to here.

A daughter with a serious face nodded to him, and the leader approached Snow, and they moved away from the others. They walked together, so that no one would hear them, and the girl will look back at her grandmother, and waved her hand, everything is fine, they say.

— I want to ask you, the witch, — and he sighed heavily, lowering his eyes, — not as a leader, but as a father. You see how much grief we have — Gilda immobilized, pity her, not me. Take it to cure, I will not regret anything, I brought rich gifts. Do mercy.

— Zigi, — and the girl turned painfully red, — I cannot refuse treatment to anyone, such is my lock. But it may not work for me. Go to Gandvik, Elga does not refuse help to anyone who asks for her.

— I can't, — and suddenly the leader blushed, — if you fail, then...

— Then, Zigi, — and Snezha looked at him with her eyes, which became like sharp ice floes, — and you swear that you will not send me there without Alatyr and will not allow anyone to send me there. And my other voice is for life and death- Swear that you will not ask to resurrect anyone, no matter what happens.

«I swear,» the chief muttered, feeling his hands and feet cold, «don't be afraid, girl.

— I'm not afraid of anyone in the whole world, leader. And now you will stop being afraid. If only I didn't get scared. — and she approached him, — Take your daughter in your arms, and let's go upstairs to the upper room.

Zigi picked up Gilda, Zima went ahead, with a stone expression on her face, followed by Snow. In the canopy, as if nothing had happened, she dusted off her boots, grandmothers and guests with a broom, smiling at that Gilda.

— Van, Alena! — Winter shouted, — go, the youths of the leader ask you, show them in the yard how slyly you make your chariot in the barn.

— Now, grandmother, — and grandchildren — twins, quickly dressed ran into the yard.

«And where did Wang go,» the youth gazed, and pale with resentment, Gilda said, «is because I am crippled,» and cried bitterly, wiping away tears with her palms.

— Don't, girl, — Snow rushed to her, herself with a reddened nose, — why will you recover. He is a boy, he would have all the swords and horses, but he is kind and brave. Don't do that. Now I will treat you with herbs, like no one else can here.

— Exactly? Aren't you kidding? she said with hope, looking around the very young witch.

— Everything will be fine with you, — said the agitated witch herself, — everything is fine, now your father will remove the sheepskin coat and felt boots from you, otherwise we are warm, you will meet.

Zigi rushed to his daughter and quickly took off his warm clothes, and sat on the bench. Gilda was left in a knitted dress, fur sleeveless and felt onuches. Winter brought drink by the nod of Snow, the witch herself gave the bucket to the girl, she took it with both hands, looked at her father and the witch and drank everything, began to fall asleep, bowing to her chest with her chin.

— Will you watch? — once asked Snow the leader, — how will I do my witchcraft?

«I don't want to, but I have to. the leader said stubbornly, I will not be afraid.

«Okay,» the witch said.

She sat next to the girl, pressed one place on her neck, which made her fall asleep. Then she stroked her hair, took off her bracelets from her hands, pulled her sleeves to her elbows, exposing her forearm tattooed, and put her palms on the girl's forehead. This did not last long, Zigi noticed how the shanks' hair turned white, and his face seemed to be icy, his eyes turned black, his lips turned blue, like his fingernails, and his girls' legs and hands, lo and behold! They began to involuntarily shrink and unclench, like a weak-willed doll, but she had not yet opened her eyes. The father tried to approach his daughter, but Zima held him tightly with her own hands. The lamps illuminated the whole action, finally, exhausted, with a heavy sigh, Snoya got up and moved away from the girl, barely moving her disobedient legs, and clinging to the wall with her fingers, sat on the bench, circling the upper room with invisible eyes.

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— Papa, — I feel my legs, and my back too, — where is that witch-maiden, that she watered me with a magic decoction, — she tried to jump to her feet, but still weak legs did not hold her, and she would fall straight to the floor, but her father picked her up. Zigi thought she was going to cry, but she laughed out loud and put her arm around her father's neck and kissed her.

«Thank you, Father. The best holiday gift. And Snow, that healer, where is she?

«It's not me, you've been cured. You are a witch to thank later. But she is resting, then we will come to her.

The door banged downstairs, and Gemini rose, hot, and flushed with frost. Van and Alena quickly looked at Gilda, who was already on her feet, and looked at each other knowingly. They threw off their sheepskin coats, and sat next to their grandmother on the bench.

— Do you want to drink? — Wang asked the guests politely, — I will pour kvass, or herbal infusion.

«We want,» Gilda readily agreed, looking around with pleasure at the prigozhny youth, «you see, I'm on my feet,» the girl proudly boasted, «your named sister picked me up.

«We see,» Alena smiled faintly, understanding Gilda's joy, but knowing what Snow is like now, behind a locked door, «it's good that Snow cured you.» About the drug, you do not tell strangers only.

«Well,» Gilda agreed, sighing at the kvass Van brought to her and her father, «thank you.» Father, let's go, it's probably time for us, and we will please our mother and brothers, they will no longer be sad for me. Thank you for everything. — and bowed.

— Winter, — Zigi turned to the woman who had already come, — we will come tomorrow, thank you, if possible.

— We will be glad, though we have a little place, the leader.

Father and daughter, both incredibly happy, dressed and left, although Zigi supported Gilda by the arm, rather carried, because her legs had not yet obeyed, as it should, and she stumbled through the step, but was immensely happy. They left, and Snow, having heard the steps, quickly returned, her hair had already become ash, her face had become normal, but she squinted terribly, but no longer led her hands in front of her, which was especially scary for everyone.

— Grandma, let me eat, — she asked, — I want to eat unbearably.

— Sit down, granddaughter, here are pies, here is kvass, — and she moved the bowl to the witch, — it's good that you came to yourself faster after that.

«Couldn't you refuse her medical treatment?» Alena asked, staring at the named sister.

— No, — the Slavnitsa shook her head, chewing the cake, — I can't, it's simply impossible, — and she looked at her sister in surprise, — the person suffers, I can help, and I refuse? I can't,

Alena, I just can't. I feel how a person suffers, how bad he is, and it hurts me myself, and I will cure him whatever it costs me. But you can't be dead — and she darkened her gaze — only the Twins themselves can, — she laughed, — not you, of course, but the Guardians of the World.

«Tomorrow the chief will come with his family, Snow.» Zima said.

— It's good that the guests will come, but I suppose Zigi told everything about me, so the leader came with Gilda. Anyone would come, — thinking, said the witch, — was afraid of me, because I saw. I was afraid that I would refuse, but I still came. And then I realized what it was — and she grinned wryly, already joking with her hands in front of her, like a blind woman, and gawked her eyes. Grandmother came up, could not stand it, wanted to pull out her granddaughter with a towel pretty... But she just bent down and kissed her cheek.

— Well, take care of yourself, baby.

— All right, grandma.

In the morning, the whole Zigi family arrived by sleigh early — a wife, two sons, a daughter, and he himself, who ruled the sleigh. Wang opened the gates to the guests, like the eldest man in the house, with the sons of the leader set and tied horses in the barn. Fat and Zell showed him how to set food for horses, check if their knees were sick, then the three of them went upstairs, where the women were already putting treats on the table, most of which Zigi brought. The leader left the room and returned with lar, gifts for the family of Zima's grandmother.

«It's for you, Winter,» he gave her a new arctic fox coat.

— To you, Alena, — put in front of her beads made of river stingray pearls.

«Van, your present,» and laid a bronze axe in front of him, decorated with rich carvings.

Then she approached Snow and was cured, still waddling funny on her feet, and her father carried offerings for her, which he gave her in turn.

— Snow, this is all for you, — the girl said, — this is a cauldron for herbs, this is a bag for potions, this is a silver bowl, like the most famous witches, and a towel, I embroidered myself until I could not walk, — she sighed, listing everything, — and, you still have four bags of barley, you love pies, — and she laughed.

— Thank you, Gilda for the gifts, I have nothing to give away yet.

«You've already given up,» laughed the leader's daughter, «all at once.

— Sit down, everything is ready, — and Winter and cheerful Nara, who does not enjoy her daughter in any way, began to lay out treats in bowls, ordinary venison, and Snow fish. There were even barley cakes, an infrequent thing at the table, there was also young cheese, ordinary food. Nara sat next to her husband, and next to her, from the other side of Winter. The leader's wife looked around the twins and the witch with curiosity, Van talked animatedly with Fat and Zell, Gilda moved and climbed onto the bench between Alena and Snow. She ate with pleasure, tried both venison and fish.

— At home, the brothers alone, she said, are having more fun here, but she looked at Wang's rare locks with interest, although her brothers also had their hair cut.

— Alena, and you, Snows, come to my house, to visit. I also have a hand ferret. He's funny. And maybe my mother will let me go now to Ore studying, herbs, so I will also learn to treat everyone.

— Let's see,“ answered Nara, who hears everything at the table, „let's eat, otherwise no one will marry, and so she weaned while she was lying on the bench.

«Now, I suppose, there will be grooms,» Gilda was not afraid, «I'm no worse than others.

The guests parted with the owners soon, the Winter Family went to spend their sleigh, and waved after them for a long time, wishing them a happy journey.

— Well, the groom, Gilda has already grabbed you, — the sister laughed, and pushing him on the side, from which he turned painfully red, and the sister laughed even more, — Thank snow, she is your matchmaker, — and laughed again.

Snow just looked at Alena, but sighed incomprehensibly, and turned to face her brother and made her eyebrows a house, which made Alena laugh even more. Winter just shook her head, looked at her grandchildren and smiled.

The grandmother did not interrupt the malicious Alena, but only thought about it, but smiled happily: «It would be nice, otherwise it's an orphan, and Gilda is a girl from a good family. It would be nice.» And she said aloud to Alenka:

— Enough for you, it's too early to think about it, he is still three years old before the grooming.

## Fern decoction

Two years passed, unnoticed in hard training, and the annual wandering through pastures along the Ob River, in the summer they, cattle breeders, all climbed closer to the Student Sea, went down to the south, in the steppe for the winter, in order to preserve herds. The Snow Maiden has become a well-known witch and healer, despite her youth. Many came, wanting to cure the sick, but she did not pass the Tests, did not leave for Alatyr in any way, and could treat the unwell only with Ora. Healing was already easy, and she no longer changed in her face, but only her eyes turned black, but after a minute her vision returned to her. Wang often came to visit Zigi's house, but not to the leader, but to Gilda. He showed how to manage horses, went to the Ob with her and her brothers, to fish. The leader's daughter completely recovered, and often visited Winter's house, asking her parents to visit Alena and Snow, but she came to Van. So everything continued, but there were hard lessons at Liszt, and the young man did not show up at home for a whole month, and Gilda walked lost, unsmiling, with dark circles under her eyes, but came to her sisters to knit together, or studied herbalism with Ora.

— Let's go tomorrow, Snow Maiden, watch how the youths learn. They already control the teams of horses, — and she continued in a whisper, — only you pretend that you are sitting just like that, they say, these youthful fun are not important to you.

— Why? Snow simply asked, picking through the drying herbs on the canvas.

— So it is necessary, — the girl repeated incomprehensible, — such an order, otherwise they will think about themselves...

— Okay, — just answered the witch, — let's go, let's see.

Gilda also went with them, to see how Van rules the chariot. The girls took with them a bag of nuts, which would not be boring, and sat down in a row. Around them, as if by chance or on a very important matter, sat with a dozen three young girls, from the Huns or Mans. Each or knitted, or spun, and everyone was dressed for this ordinary work on Divo smartly, so the bracelets rang when knitted.

Gilda and Snow sat on a bench next to Alena, the witch watched, pretending that she was not interested in how young men learn to control light chariots. Like pairs of hot horses, and for some, triples chased by teamsters, turn around, maneuver without hitting each other, and young warriors throw darts at full gallop and shoot chariots from a bow into straw targets. Clods of earth, from under the hooves of horses, just earth, or sand, flew around, dust stood as a pillar, falling on future soldiers. Not far stood their mentor, he was only six years older than the students, his name was, as Alena heard, List. The chariot fighters were wearing leather helmets so that the young men would not suffer an unexpected fall. The teacher was also in the helmet and carefully looked at the students, and shouted something to them, and the girls did not hear what these words were, and most likely it was fortunately. Gilda looked at the races, her eyes wide open, and sometimes screamed impetuously, grabbing Alena and Snow by the elbows, when the chariot of Van and Vetta bent dangerously. The Snow Maiden watched, and her heart froze, as Van managed to hit the target, and by some miracle did not fly out of the wagon. The girl thought about it, and began to get the leaves of different types of ferns, and moved dry herbs, put them together in a linen bag.

— Snow, What are you up to? — Alena smiled with her big mouth, grabbing her friend's sleeve, — something new again? Your decoction saved several old people with weak hearts from death..

Gilda also looked at the drawing on the ground, but did not say a word, only smiled knowingly, looking at the witch with admiration. Snow after cure forever became an indisputable model for the leader's daughter.

— I don't know yet... — she again seemed to have heard no one — it is possible in another way, on a chariot — and thoughtfully bowed her head, took a twig, and began to draw on the ground.

Alena stood and looked at the drawing, at the chariot, at the long spear of the warrior in the chariot. Yes, Snow is a witch, you know what you thought...

The young men finished dressage, ran to wash themselves and wipe their horses from sweat, and then Wang came to the sitting girls with Vett, a friend.

— Good day, Slavnitsa, — said Van, bowing to the girls, and these words were repeated by Vett. The youths stretched out, became like young oaks, who still had to get stronger, but their growth was already considerable.

— Hello, Van, — smiling broadly, Gilda said hello, blushing with annoyance, removing sewing in the bag on your side, — you hold on perfectly in the wagon.

«And hello to you both,» Snow said after all, «I don't have much time, Wang.» Look at the drawing, and she showed the young man a sketch on the ground.

The young man looked, thought, got up and so and so, shook his head. He took out a figure of a warrior on a chariot from his bag, put a long rod to his hand, drove along the ground, thinking about it.

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