Frolka-siden

Once upon a time there was a tsar who had three daughters, and such beauties that neither in a tale can it be told nor with a pen described; they loved to walk in their garden in the evenings, and the garden was large and glorious. Now the Black Sea serpent took to flying there. One day the tsar's daughters lingered late in the garden, gazing at the flowers; suddenly out of nowhere the Black Sea serpent appeared and carried them off on his fiery wings. The tsar waited and waited — no daughters! He sent maidservants to look for them in the garden, but all was in vain; the maidservants did not find the princesses. In the morning the tsar raised an alarm, and a multitude of people gathered. Then the tsar said: "Whoever finds my daughters, to him I will give as much money as he wants."

So three were chosen: a soldier-drunkard, Frolka-siden and Yerema; they made an agreement with the tsar and set off to look for the princesses. They walked and walked and came to a dense, thick forest. No sooner had they entered it than a strong sleep began to overcome them. Frolka-siden took a snuffbox out of his pocket, tapped it, opened it and stuffed a handful of snuff up his nose; then he shouted: "Hey, brothers, let us not fall asleep, not doze! Go on further."

So they went on; they walked and walked and finally came to a huge house, and this house belonged to the five-headed serpent. For a long time they knocked on the gate and could not get through. Then Frolka-siden pushed aside the soldier and Yerema: "Let me at it, brothers!" He took a sniff of snuff and struck the doors so hard that he smashed them. Then they entered the yard, sat in a circle and prepared to have a bite of whatever God had sent. And out of the house comes a maiden, herself such a beauty; she came out and says: "Why have you come here, my dears? For here lives a most fearsome serpent; he will eat you! You are lucky that he is not at home now." Frolka answers her: "We will eat him ourselves!" No sooner had he uttered these words than the serpent comes flying, flying and roaring: "Who has ravaged my kingdom? Are there opponents to me in the world? I have one opponent, but not even a raven would bring his bones here!" — "A raven will not bring me here," said Frolka, "but a good horse will!" The serpent, hearing such words, said: "Are we to make peace, then, or fight?" — "I did not come to make peace," says Frolka, "but to fight!"

So they parted, closed in, and Frolka with one blow chopped off all five heads of the serpent, took them and laid them under a stone, and buried the body in the ground. Then the maiden rejoiced and says to these young men: "Take me with you, my dears." — "But whose are you?" they asked her. She says she is the tsar's

daughter; Frolka also told her what was needed; and so their business was settled! The princess called them into the chambers, fed and gave them drink and asks that they rescue her other sisters as well. Frolka answered: "Indeed, that is why we were sent!" The princess told where her sisters lived: "With my middle sister it is even more terrible than with me: a seven-headed serpent lives with her." — "No matter!" said Frolka. "We will deal with him too; will I take long with a twelve-headed serpent?" They said farewell and went on further.

They come to the middle sister. The chambers in which she was imprisoned were huge, and around the chambers a high fence, of cast iron. So they approached and began to look for the gate; they found it, Frolka struck the gate with all his might, and the gate swung open; they entered the yard and again as before sat down to have a bite. Suddenly the seven-headed serpent flies in. "Something smells of Russian spirit!" he says. "Bah! It is you, Frolka, who has come here. Why?" — "I know why!" answered Frolka, fought with the serpent and with one blow knocked off all seven heads, laid them under a stone, and buried the body in the ground. Then they entered the chambers; they pass one room, another and a third, in the fourth they saw the middle tsar's daughter — sitting on a sofa. When they told her in what way and for what purpose they had come here, she cheered up, began to treat them and asked them to rescue her younger sister from the twelve-headed serpent. Frolka said: "Of course! That is why we were sent. Only my heart is a bit faint; well, God willing! Pour us another cup each."

So they drank and went on; they walked and walked and came to a steep, very steep ravine. On the other side of the ravine stood huge pillars instead of a gate, and to them were chained two terrible lions and they roared so loudly that only Frolka remained on his feet, while his companions fell to the ground from fear. Frolka said to them: "I have seen worse terrors — and did not falter, follow me!" — and they went on further.

Suddenly an old man came out of the chambers — about seventy years old, he saw them, went to meet them and says: "Where are you going, my dears?" — "Why, to these chambers," answered Frolka. "Indeed, my dears! You are not going to any good; in these chambers lives the twelve-headed serpent. Now he is not at home, or he would eat you right now!" — "But we need him." — "If so," said the old man, "go ahead; I will lead you there." The old man approached the lions and began to pet them; then Frolka sneaked into the yard with his companions.

So they went up into the chambers; the old man led them to the room where the princess lived. When she saw them, she nimbly jumped off the bed, approached and asked them: who they were and why they had come? They told her. The princess treated them, and she herself began to get ready. No sooner had they

started to leave the chambers than suddenly they see a serpent flying a verst away from them. Then the tsar's daughter rushed back into the chambers, while Frolka with his companions went to meet it and fought with the serpent. The serpent at first attacked them very fiercely, but Frolka — a nimble fellow! — managed to gain the victory, knocked off all twelve heads and threw them into the ravine. Then they went back into the chambers and began to celebrate with joy greater than before; and afterwards they set off on their way and picked up the other princesses and all together arrived at their homeland. The tsar was very glad, opened his royal treasury to them and said: "Well, my faithful servants — take as much money as you want for your work." Frolka was greedy: he brought his big treukh hat; the soldier brought his knapsack, and Yerema brought a chicken basket. So Frolka was the first to start filling, poured and poured, and the treukh tore, and the silver sank into the mud. Frolka began to pour again: he pours, and it spills out of the treukh! "Nothing to be done!" said Frolka. "It seems the whole royal treasury will go to me." — "But what will be left for us?" asked his companions. "The tsar has enough in his treasury for you too!" Yerema set about, while there was still money, to fill the basket, and the soldier the knapsack, filled them and went home. And Frolka with the treukh remained by the royal treasury and to this day sits there filling it. When he fills the treukh, then I will tell further; but now I have no strength or spirit.