Seven Semyons — Variant 4

In one place a peasant had seven sons, seven Semyons — all fine fellows, each better than the last, but such lazybones, good-for-nothings — you'd have to search the whole world to find their like! They did nothing at all. The father suffered and suffered with them and took them to the tsar; he brought them there and handed them all over to the tsar's service. The tsar thanked him for such fine lads and asked what they could do. "Ask them yourself, your tsar's majesty!" First the tsar summoned the eldest Semyon and asked: "What can you do?" — "Steal, your tsar's majesty." — "All right; I need such a man for a time." He summoned the second: "And you?" — "I can forge all kinds of precious things." — "I need such a man too." He summoned the third Semyon and asked: "And what can you do?" — "I can shoot a bird on the wing, your tsar's majesty." — "All right!" He asked the fourth: "And you?" — "If the shooter shoots down a bird, I'll swim after it instead of a dog and drag it back." — "All right! — says the tsar. — And what are you a master of?" — he asked the fifth. "I'll look from a high place into all the kingdoms and tell where what is happening." — "Good, good!" He asked the sixth. "I know how to make ships; just slapdash, and I'll have a ship." — "Good, and what do you know?" — he asked the seventh. "I can heal people." — "All right!"

The tsar let them go. They lived a long time already; the tsar decided to test one Semyon: "Come now, Semyon, find out where what is happening?" Semyon climbed up somewhere high, looked around, and told: "Here this and that is happening, there that and that." Afterwards they checked it against the newspapers — exactly right! Much time passed again; the tsar decided to marry a certain princess: how to get her? He didn't know whom to send! And he remembered the seven Semyons, summoned them, gave them a task: to fetch that princess; and he gave them some soldiers. The Semyons quickly got ready, all masters — slapdash, and they made a ship, got in and sailed. They sailed up to that kingdom where the bride-princess was; one looked from a high mast and said the princess was alone now — she could be stolen; another forged some most valuable things, and they went with the thief to sell them: no sooner had they arrived than the thief stole the princess. They cut the anchors and sailed off. The princess sees she is being taken, turned into a white swan and flew off the ship. The shooter did not lose heart, grabbed his gun, fired and hit her in the left wing; instead of a dog another Semyon rushed in, caught the swan on the sea and brought it aboard. The swan turned back into the princess, only her left arm was shot. They had their own healer, who immediately healed the princess's arm. They arrived at their own kingdom safe and sound, and fired a cannon. The tsar heard it and had already

forgotten about the Semyons — he thinks: what ship has come there? "Go on," he says, "run over and find out." Someone ran or rode; as soon as they reported to the tsar about the seven Semyons together with the tsar's bride, he rejoiced at the Semyons' labors and ordered them to be received with honor, with cannon fire and drumbeat. Only the princess did not go to marry the tsar: he was already old. He asked her whom she wanted to marry? The princess says: "The one who stole me!" — and the thief Senka was a fine lad, and the princess took a liking to him. The tsar, without saying another word, ordered them to be married; then he himself wanted to rest, put Semyon in his place, and made all his brothers great boyars.