**The Frog-Tzarevna**

In olden time, in a time long before present days, in a certain Tzardom of an Empire far across the blue seas and behind high mountains, there lived a Tzar and his Tzaritza. The Tzar had lived long in the white world, and through long living had become old. He had three sons, Tzareviches, all of them young, brave and unmarried, and altogether of such a sort that they could not be described by words spoken in a tale or written down with a pen. During the long white days they flew about on their fiery, beautiful horses, like bright hawks under the blue sky. All three were handsome and clever, but the handsomest and cleverest was the youngest, and he was Tzarevich Ivan.

One day the Tzar summoned his three sons to his presence and said: "My dear children, ye have now arrived at man's estate and it is time for you to think of marriage. I desire you to select maidens to be loving wives to you and to me dutiful daughters-in-law. Take, therefore, your well-arched bows and arrows which have been hardened in the fire. Go into the untrodden field wherein no one is permitted to hunt, draw the bows tight and shoot in different directions, and in whatsoever Courts the arrows fall, there demand your wives-to-be. She who brings to each his arrow shall be his bride."

So the Tzareviches made arrows, hardened them in the fire, and going into the untrodden field, shot them in different directions. The eldest brother shot to the east, the second to the west, and the youngest, Tzarevich Ivan, drew his bow with all his strength and shot his arrow straight before him.

On making search, the eldest brother found that his arrow had fallen in the courtyard of a Boyar, where it lay before the tower in which were the apartments of the maidens. The second brother's arrow had fallen in the courtyard of a rich merchant who traded with foreign countries, and pierced a window at which the merchant's daughter ‹a lovely girl soul ‹was standing. But the arrow of Tzarevich Ivan could not be found at all.

Tzarevich Ivan searched in deep sorrow and grief. For two whole days he wandered in the woods and fields, and on the third day he came by chance to a boggy swamp, where the black soil gave way under the foot, and in the middle of the swamp he came upon a great frog which held in her mouth the arrow he had shot.

When he saw this he turned to run away, leaving his arrow behind him, but the Frog cried: "Kwa ! Kwa ! Tzarevich Ivan, - come to me and take shine arrow. If thou wilt not take me for thy wife, thou wilt never get out of this marsh."

Ivan was greatly surprised to hear the frog speak, and was at a loss to know what to do. But at last he took the arrow, picked up the frog, put her in a fold of his coat and went sadly home.

When he arrived at the Palace and told his story, his brothers jeered at him, and the two beautiful maidens whom they were to marry laughed at him also, so that he went weeping to the Tzar and said: "How can I ever take this frog to wife‹a little thing that says - Kwa! Kwa!" She is not my equal. To live one's life long is not like crossing a river or walking over a field. How shall I live with a frog ?" But the Tzar made answer: "Take her, for such was my royal word, and such is thy fate !" And though Tzarevich Ivan wept a long time, there was no further word to be said, since one cannot go contrary to his fate.

So the sons of the Tzar were married --- the eldest to the nobleman's daughter, the second to the daughter of the merchant, and the youngest, Tzarevich Ivan, was married to the frog. When the day came, he went to the Palace in a closed carriage and the frog was carried on a golden dish.

So they lived, a long time or a short time, and Tzarevich Ivan treated the frog with gentleness and kindness till a day came when the Tzar summoned his three sons before him and said: "Dear children, now that ye are wedded, I am minded to try the skill of my daughters-in-law in the arts of housewifery. Take from my storeroom, therefore, each of you, a piece of linen cloth, and his wife shall make of it a shirt which thee shall bring to me to-morrow morning."

The two elder brothers took the linen to their wives, who at once called together their maidservants and nurses and all set to work busily to cut the stuff and to sew it. And as they worked they laughed to think of Tzarevich Ivan, saying:

"What will his little Quacker make for him to bring to the Tzar to-morrow?" But Tzarevich Ivan went home looking as if he had swallowed a needle. "How can my little frog-wife make a shirt?" he thought, "she who only creeps on the floor and croaks!" And his bright head hung down lower than his shoulders.

When she saw him, however, the frog spoke. "Kwa! Kwa! Tzarevich Ivan, why art thou so downcast? Hast thou heard from the Tzar thy father a hard, unpleasant word?"

"How can I fail to be downcast?" answered Ivan. "The Tzar, my father, has ordered that thou shouldst sew a shirt out of this linen for him to-morrow."

"Worry not," said the frog, "and have no fear. Go to bed and rest. There is more wisdom in the morning than in the evening!"

When Tzarevich Ivan had laid himself down to sleep, she called servants and bade them cut the linen he had brought into small pieces. Then dismissing them, she took the pieces in her mouth, hopped to the window and threw them out, saying: "Winds! Winds! Fly abroad with these linen shreds and sew me a shirt for the Tzar, my father in-law!" And before one could tell it, back into the room flew a shirt all stitched and finished.

Next morning when Tzarevich Ivan awoke, the frog presented him with a shirt. "There it is," she said. "Take it to thy father and see if it pleases him." Ivan was greatly rejoiced and putting the shirt under his coat, set out to the Palace, where his two elder brothers had already arrived.

First of all the eldest brother presented his shirt to his father. The Tzar took it, examined it and said: "This is sewn in the common way it is fit only to be worn in a poor man's hut!" He took the shirt which the second son had brought, and said: "This is sewn somewhat better than the other and is perhaps good enough for me to wear when I go to my bath." But when he took the shirt that Tzarevich Ivan presented him, he examined it with delight, for no single seam could be seen in it. He could not admire it enough and gave orders that it should be given him to wear only on the greatest holidays. Ivan went home happy, but his two brothers said to one another: "We need not laugh at Ivan's wife; she is not really a frog, but a witch."

A second time the Tzar summoned his three sons and said: "My dear children, I wish to taste bread baked by the hands of my daughters-in-law. Bring me to-morrow morning, therefore, each of you a loaf of soft white bread."

Tzarevich Ivan returned home looking as if he had eaten something without salt, and his bright head hung lower than his shoulders, and when the frog saw him, she said:

"Kwa! Kwa! Kworax! Tzarevich Ivan, why art thou so sad? Hast thou heard a harsh, unfriendly word from the Tzar thy father?"

"Why should I not be sad?" answered Ivan. "The Tzar my father has bidden that thou bake him for to-morrow a loaf of soft white bread."

"Mourn not, Tzarevich Ivan. Be not sad for nothing. Go to bed and sleep in comfort. The morning is wiser than the evening."

When he was asleep she ordered servants to bring a pastry-pot, put flour and cold water into it and make a paste. This she bade them put into the cold oven, and when they were gone she hopped before the oven door and said:

"Bread, Bread! Be baked! Clean, white, and soft as snow!"

Instantly the oven door flew open and the loaf rolled out, cooked crisp and white.

Now the two Tzarevnas, the wives of the other brothers, hated the frog because of the shirt she had made, and when they heard the command of the Tzar, the wife of the eldest brother sent a little black slavegirl to spy on the frog and see what she would do. The black girl hid herself where she could watch, and went and told her mistress what she had seen and heard. Then the two Tzarevnas tried to imitate the frog. They dissolved their flour in cold water, poured the paste into cold ovens and repeated over and over again:

"Bread, Bread! Be baked! Clean, white, and soft as snow!"

But the ovens remained cold and the paste would not bake.

Seeing this, in anger they gave the poor slavegirl a cruel beating, ordered more flour, made paste with hot water and heated the ovens. But the spilled paste had flowed all about and clogged the flues and made them useless, so that one had her loaf bumed on one side and the other took hers out underbaked.

In the moming, when Tzarevich Ivan woke, the frog sent him to the Palace with his bread wrapped in a towel, and the brothers came also with theirs.

The Tzar cut the loaf of the eldest son and tasted it. "Such bread," he said, "might be eaten only out of misery," and he sent it to the kitchen that it might be given to the beggars. He tasted that of the second son and said: "Give this to my hounds." When Tzarevich Ivan unwrapped his loaf, however, all exclaimed in admiration. For it was so splendid that it would be impossible to make one like it - it could only be told of in tales. It was adorned with all kinds of cunning designs and on its sides were wrought the Tzar's cities with their high walls and gates. The Tzar tasted it and sent it away, saying: "Put this on my table on Easter Sunday, when we shall have royal visitors." So Ivan went home rejoicing.

A third time the Tzar sent for his three sons and said to them: "My dear children, it is fitting that all women should know how to weave and broider in gold and silver, and I would see if thy wives are skilled also in this. Take, therefore, each of you, from my storehouse, silk, gold and silver, and tomorrow morning bring me each of you a carpet."

When Tzarevich Ivan brought sa~lly home the silk, the gold, and the silver, the frog was sitting on a chair. "Kwa! Kwa! Kworax!" she said." Tzarevich Ivan, why cost thou mourn? And why cloth thy bright head hang down lower than thy shoulders? Hast thou heard from the Tzar thy father a cruel and bitter word?"

"Have I not cause to mourn?" he answered. "The shirt thou hast sewn, and the bread thou has baked; but now my father has bidden that thou make for to-morrow a carpet of this gold, silver, and silk."

"Fret not, Tzarevich Tvan," said the frog. "Lay thee down and rest. The day has more wisdom than the night."

As soon as he was asleep she called servants and bade them take scissors and cut to pieces all the silk, the gold, and the silver, and then, sending them away, threw it out of the window, and said:

"Winds! Winds! fly abroad with-these pieces of silk, of gold, and of silver, and make me a carpet such as my dear father used to cover his windows!" And hardly had she said the last word, when back into the room flew the embroidered carpet.

Now again the wives of the elder brothers had sent the little black slave-girl to watch, and she ran quickly to tell them. And they, thinking that this time the charm must work, cut all of their silk and precious thread into pieces, threw them out of the window, and repeated:

"Winds! Winds! tly abroad with these pieces of silk, of gold, and of silver, and make us carpets such as our dear fathers used to cover their windows."

But though they waited a long time, the winds brought them no carpets. Then the Tzarevnas, angry at the loss of their rich threads, after beating the little slave-girl more cruelly than before, sent servants hastily for more material, and calling together their nurses and maidens to help them, began to work at weaving and embroidering.

In the morning when Tzarevich Ivan arose, the frog sent him to the Palace to show his carpet with his brothers.

The Tzar looked at the carpet of the eldest son and said: "Take this to the stables. It will do to cover my poorest horse when it is raining. "He looked at the carpet of the second, and said: "Put this in the hall; it may do, perhaps, to wipe my boots upon in bad weather." But when Tzarevich Ivan unrolled his carpet, so wondrously was it adorned with gold and silver fashionings, that its like cannot be imagined. And the Tzar ordered that it be kept with the greatest care, to be put on his own table on the most solemn feast-days.

"Now, my dear children," he said, "your wives, my daughters-in-law, have done all that I bade them do. Bring them to-morrow, therefore, to the Palace to dine, in order that I may congratulate them in person."

The two elder brothers went home to their wives, saying to one another: "Now he must bring his frog-wife with him to the royal audience for all to see." But Tzarevich Ivan went home weeping, and his bright head hung down lower than his shoulders.

When he reached home the frog was sitting at the door. " Kwa! Kwa! Kworax!" she said. "Tzarevich Ivan, why cost thou weep? Hast thou heard sharp and unfeeling words from the Tzar thy father?"

"Why should I not weep?" he answered. "Thou hast sewn the shirt, thou hast baked the bread, and thou hast woven the carpet; but after all thou art but a frog, and to-morrow the Tzar my father commands that I bring thee to the Palace to royal audience. How, to my shame, can I show thee to the people as my wife?"

"Weep no more," the frog said. "Go to thy bed and sleep. There is more wisdom in the morning than in the evening."

The next day when Tzarevich Ivan awoke, she said: "Pay no heed to what others think. The Tzar thy father was pleased with his shirt, his bread and his carpet; maybe he will be pleased also with his daughter-in-law when I shall come. Do thou go to the Palace and I will come after thee in an hour. Make thy respects to the Tzar, and when thou hearest a rumbling and a knocking, say: "Hither comes my poor little frog in her little basket!"

So Ivan drove away to the Palace somewhat cheered by her words.

When he was out of sight the frog went to the window, and called:

"Winds! Winds! bring for me at once a rich carriage of state, with white horses, footmen, outriders and runners!"

Instantly a horn blew and horsemen came galloping up the street, followed by six milk-white horses drawing a golden coach. As for herself, she threw off the skin of a frog and was transformed into a maiden so beautiful that she could be described neither by words in a tale nor with a pen in writing.

Meanwhile at the Palace the company were assembled, the two elder brothers with their lovely brides attired in silks and laden with shining jewels. And they all laughed at Tzarevich Ivan standing alone, saying: "Where is thy wife, the Tzarevna? Why didst thou not bring her in a kitchen cloth? And art thou certain that thou didst choose the greatest beauty of the swamp?" But while they jeered at poor Ivan, suddenly there came a great rumbling and shouting. The Tzar supposed some King or Prince was arriving to visit him, but Tzarevich Ivan said: "Be not disturbed, little father. It is only my poor little frog coming in her little basket."

Nevertheless everybody ran to the Palace windows, and they saw riders galloping and a golden coach drawn by six milk-white horses flew up to the entrance and out of it came the lovely maiden - such a beauty as to make the sun and moon ashamed when she looked at them. She came to Tzarevich Ivan and he took her hand and led her to the Tzar his father and the Tzar himself seated her at the royal table to dine.

As all began to feast and make merry, the wives of the elder sons whispered among themselves and said: "It is as we have thought. She is in truth a witch. Let us watch carefully and whatever she does let us be careful to do likewise. So, watching, they saw that the frog-wife did not drink the dregs of her wine-cup, but poured them in her left sleeve, and that the bones of the roast swan she put in her right sleeve, and they did the same.

When they rose from the table, the musicians began to play and the Tzar led out Ivan's beautiful wife to dance. This she did with exceeding grace. And as she danced - she waved her left sleeve, and at one end of the banquet hall a lake appeared one rod deep. She waved her right sleeve and swans and geese appeared swimming on it. The Tzar and his guests were astonished and could not sufficiently praise her cleverness. When she finished dancing the lake and the fowls upon it disappeared.

Then the wives of the elder sons began to dance. They waved their left sleeves and all the guests were splashed with the wine dregs; they waved their right sleeves and the bones flew right and left, and one nearly put out one of the Tzar's eyes. At this he was angered, and straightway ordered them out of the Palace, so that they went home in shame and dishonour.

Now seeing what a beautiful creature his little frogwife had become, Tzarevich lvan thought to himself: "What if she should turn back into a frog again!" And while they were dancing he hastened home, searched till he found the frog-skin and threw it into the fire.

His wife, arriving, ran to search for the skin and when she could not find it, guessed what he had done.

She immediately fell aweeping and said: "Alas, alas, Tzarevich Ivan, that thou couldst not have patience even for a little while! Now thou hast lost me for ever, unless thou canst find me beyond three times nine lands, in the thirtieth Tzardom, in the empire that lies under the sun. Know that I am the fairy Wassilissa the Wise." When she had said this she turned into a blue dove and flew out of the window.

Tzarevich Ivan wept till his tears were like a river, then he said a prayer to God and bidding the Tzar his father and the Tzaritza his mother farewell, went whither his eyes looked, in search of his lost wife.

He went on and on; whether it was near or far, or a short road or a long road, a tale is soon told, but such a journey is not made quickly. He travelled through thrice nine lands, asking everyone he met where he could find Wassilissa the Wise, but none could answer, till he reached the empire that lies under the sun, and there in the thirtieth Tzardom he met an old gray-beard to whom he told his story and asked his question.

"Well do I know of Wassilissa the Wise," answered the old man. "She is a powerful fairy whose father, in a fit of anger, turned her into a frog for three years. The time was almost up, and hadst thou not burned her frog-skin she would be with thee now. I cannot tell thee where she is, but take thou this magic ball which will roll wherever thou commandest it, and follow it."

Tzarevich Ivan thanked the old gray-beard, threw the ball he gave him on the ground and at his command it straightway began to roll. It rolled a short way and it rolled a long way, it rolled across a pebbly plain and into a drear and dreadful forest, and in the middle of the forest he came to a miserable little hut that stood on hens' legs and turned continually round and round. And Ivan said to it:

"Little hut! little hut! Stand the way thy mother placed thee, With thy back to the wood aIld thy front to me!"

And immediately the hut turned about facing him and stood still.

Tzarevich Ivan climbed up one of its hens' legs and entered the door, and there he saw the oldest of the Baba-Yagas, the bony-legged grandmother of all the witches, lying on a corner of the stove on nine bricks, with one lip on the shelf, her nose (which was as long as the Perevitzky Bridge) thrust up the chimney, and her huge iron mortar in the corner.

"Poo!" she cried, gnashing her teeth, "who is this comes to me? Until now I have neither seen with my eyes nor heard with my ears the spirit of any Russian; but to-day it is a Russian who enters my house! Well, Tzarevich lvan, camest thou hither from shine own wish, or because thou west compelled?"

"Enough by my own will and twice as much by force," answered Tzarevich Ivan. "But for shame, thou, that thou hast not offered me to eat and to drink, and prepared me a bath!"

Then the Baba-Yaga, being pleased with his spirit, gave him food and drink and made ready a bath for him; and when he had refreshed himself, he related to her the whole a~Tair just as it had been. And when she learned that Wassilissa the Wise was in truth his wife, she said: "I will indeed render thee this service, not for love of thee, but because I hate her father. The fairy flies across this forest every day, bringing messages for her father, and stops in my house to rest. Remain here, and as soon as she enters, seize her by the head. When she feels herself caught, she will turn into a frog, and from a frog to a lizard, and from a lizard to a snake, and last of all she will transform herself into an arrow. Do thou take the arrow and break it into three pieces, and she will be shine for ever! But take heed when thou hast hold of her not to let her go."

The Baba-Yaga concealed the Tzarevich behind the stove and scarcely was he hidden when in flew Wassilissa the Wise. Ivan crept up noiselessly behind her and seized her by the head. She instantly turned into a great green frog and he laughed with joy to see her in the form he knew so well. When she turned into a lizard, however, the cold touch of the creature was so loathsome that he let go his hold, and immediately the lizard darted through a crack in the floor.

The Baba-Yaga upbraided him. "How shouldst thou win back such a wife," she said, "thou who canst not touch the skin of a creeping lizard? As thou couldst not keep her, thou shalt never again see her here. But if thou likest, go to my sister and see if she will help thee."

Tzarevich Ivan did so. The ball rolled a long way and it rolled a short way, across a mountain and into a deep ravine, and here he came to a second wretched little hovel turning round on hens' legs. He made it stand still and entered it as before, and there on the stove, with one lip on the shelf and her nose propping the ceiling, was the skinny grand-aunt of all the witches.

To her he told his story, and for the sake of her sister the Baba-Yaga also agreed to help him. "Wassilissa the Wise," she said, "rests in my house too, but if this time thou lettest go thy hold, thou mayest never clasp her more." So she hid Tzarevich Ivan and when Wassilissa came flying in, he sprang upon her and seized her and did not flinch even when she fumed into a lizard in his hands. But when he beheld the lizard change to a fierce and deadly snake, he cried out in alarm and loosed his hold, and the snake wriggled through the doorway and disappeared.

Then was Tzarevich Ivan exceeding sorrowful, so that he did not even hear the reproaches of the old witch. So bitterly did he weep that she pitied him and said: "Little enough cost thou deserve this wife of shine, but if thou chooses", go to my younger sister and see if she will help thee. For Wassilissa the Wise stops to rest also at her house. So, plucking up heart somewhat, Tzarevich Ivan obeyed.

The ball rolled a long way and it rolled a short way; it crossed a broad river, and there on the shore he came to a third hut, wretcheder than the other two put together, turning round on hens' legs, and in it was the second grand-aunt of all the witches. She too consented to aid him. "But remember," she said, "if this time thy heart fails and thy hand falters, never again shalt thou behold thy wife in the white world!"

So a third time Tzarevich Ivan hid himself, and presently in came flying Wassilissa the Wise, and this time he said a prayer to God as he sprang out and seized her in a strong grasp. In vain she turned into a frog, into a cold lizard and into a deadly, writhing snake. Ivan's grip did not loosen. At last she turned into an arrow and this he immediately snatched and broke into three pieces. At the same moment the lovely Wassilissa, in her true maiden shape, appeared and threw herself into his arms. "Now, Tzarevich Ivan," she said, "I give myself up to thy will."

The Baba-Yaga gave them for a present a white mare which could fly like the wind, and on the fourth day it set them down safe and sound at the Tzar's Palace.

He received them with joy and thankfulness, and made a great feast, and after that he made Tzarevich Ivan Tzar in his stead.