

Durak

and Other
Ukrainian Folk Tales
Retold in English



Retold by **Danny Evanishen**

Pronunciation Guide & Glossary

baba [bá-ba] grandmother, old woman

durak [doo-rák] silly or foolish person

Kupalo [koo-pá-lo] ancient Ukrainian
midsummer festival

kvas [kvas] drink made from bread crumbs

pich [peech] clay or brick oven or stove

sopilka [so-peél-ka] flute

starosta [sta-rós-ta] elder, head of village

veleten [vé-le-ten] giant

vorozhka [vo-rózh-ka] wise woman, fortune-
teller, healer

In this glossary:

[a] is pronounced as in far

[e] is pronounced as in get

[ee] is pronounced as in feet

[i] is pronounced as in sit

[o] is pronounced as between got and goat

[oo] is pronounced as in loose

[y] is pronounced as in yes

[kh] is pronounced as in Scottish loch

[zh] is pronounced as in vision

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Durak

and Other Ukrainian Folk Tales
Retold in English

Retold by Danny Evanishen
Translations by J Zurowsky
Illustrations by Ralph Critchlow

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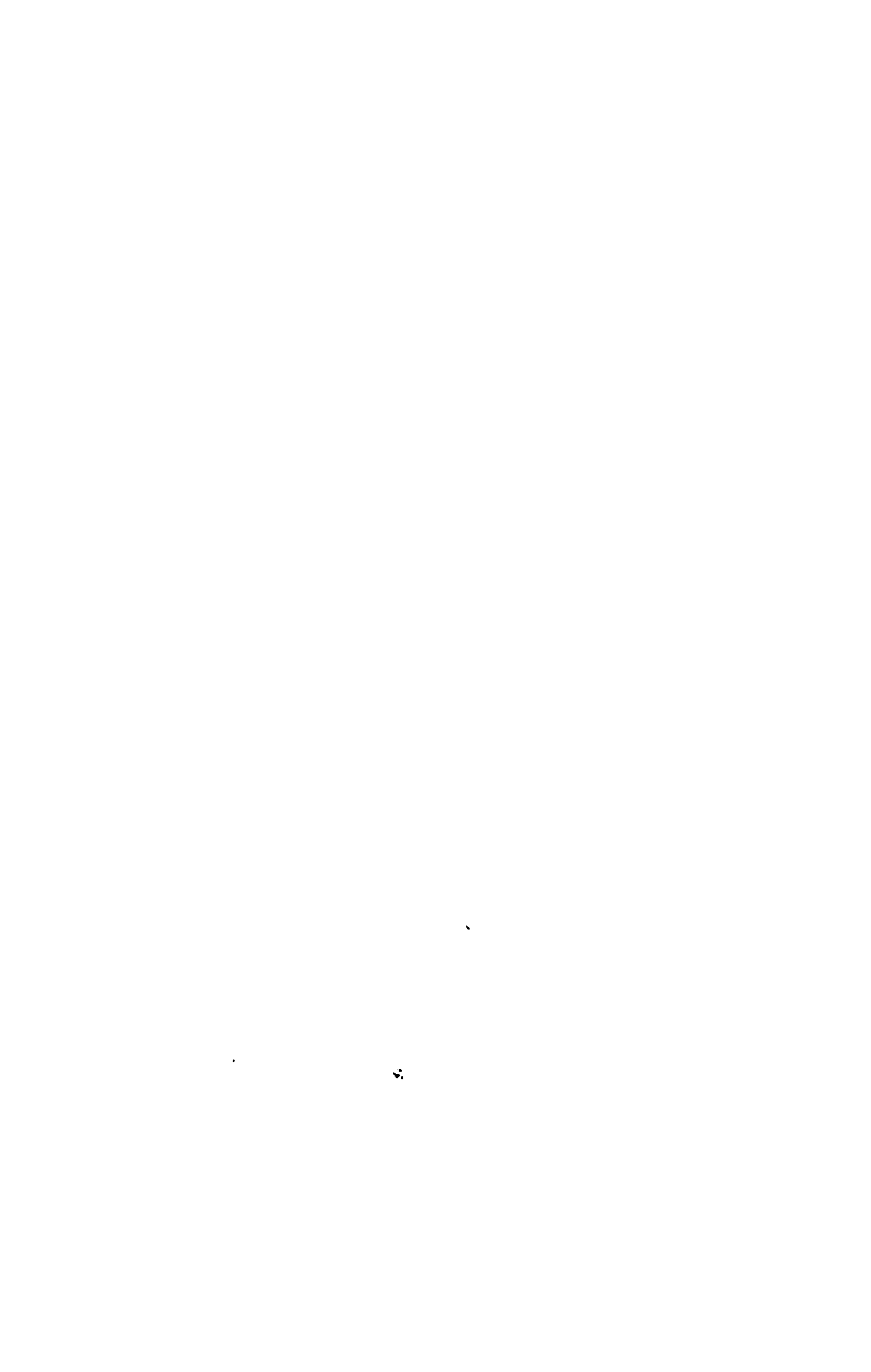
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Dedicated to the children.

May they keep the stories safe
for their children.

Foreword

This book is the tenth volume in this series. There will be more books as long as I have the stories to fill them. That should not be a problem; the Ukrainian culture is very rich in this way, and there are thousands of tales.

I enjoy collecting and publishing these stories, but they are sometimes hard to find. Many people know the stories, but for various reasons, don't get around to writing them down or recording them.

In this day and age, writing down the stories is becoming more and more important, as the people who know the stories either die or forget. It is up to us, now, to save this very important part of our heritage.

As in the other volumes of the series, some of the tales to be found in this book are old favorites, while others are less familiar.

If anyone has stories they would like to contribute, please send them to me:

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Acknowledgments

This project was begun in about 1990 by my father, John W Evanishen, who collected most of the first folk tales I published. My mother, Natalka Evanishen, gave me my introduction to folk tales when I was a child.

In this book, most of the translations from Ukrainian were done by J Zurowsky, and Ralph Critchlow did the illustrations.

Thanks are always due to the libraries and archives across Canada which make their material available. A list of all the stories and their sources will eventually be published.

The photograph on the back cover was taken by Jean Healey.

This book contains stories shared by the following people: Sandra Fedoruk (*Baba, Her Daughter and Her Dog*); Mary Shewchuk (*The Devil Under the Bridge, The Herdsman, The Rooster*); Norman Harris (*Bend the Sapling, Stabbed the Wind, The Winged Maiden*); Ted Potochniak (*The Birth of the Pike*); Vera Sexsmith, from her father, John Dobinsky (*Why Dogs Chase Rabbits*).

— Danny Evanishen, Publisher



Baba, Her Daughter and Her Dog

There once lived an old Baba with her daughter and an old dog. It was fall, and the reapers had finished their work in the fields belonging to the lord who owned the village.

As was the custom, the lord allowed the poor peasants to go over the fields after the reapers and gather whatever they could for their own use.

All the peasants of the village went into the fields except for old Baba and her daughter and her dog.

“Why are you not collecting food, Baba?” asked the lord when he saw her at home.

“There is no need for us to do so,” answered Baba. “I am old and will die soon, my daughter will marry, and the old dog will also die. There will be no one left to eat the food.”

The lord shook his head and went on his way. Time passed, but Baba did not die. Her daughter did not marry, and the old dog did not die. As there was no food in the house, they all had to beg on the streets.

One day, Baba was in the forest gathering firewood. She was so weak that she could not hoist the bundle of wood onto her back.

“Oh dear!” lamented Baba. “Why must I suffer so? Death, oh Death, where are you?”

Suddenly Death stood beside Baba.

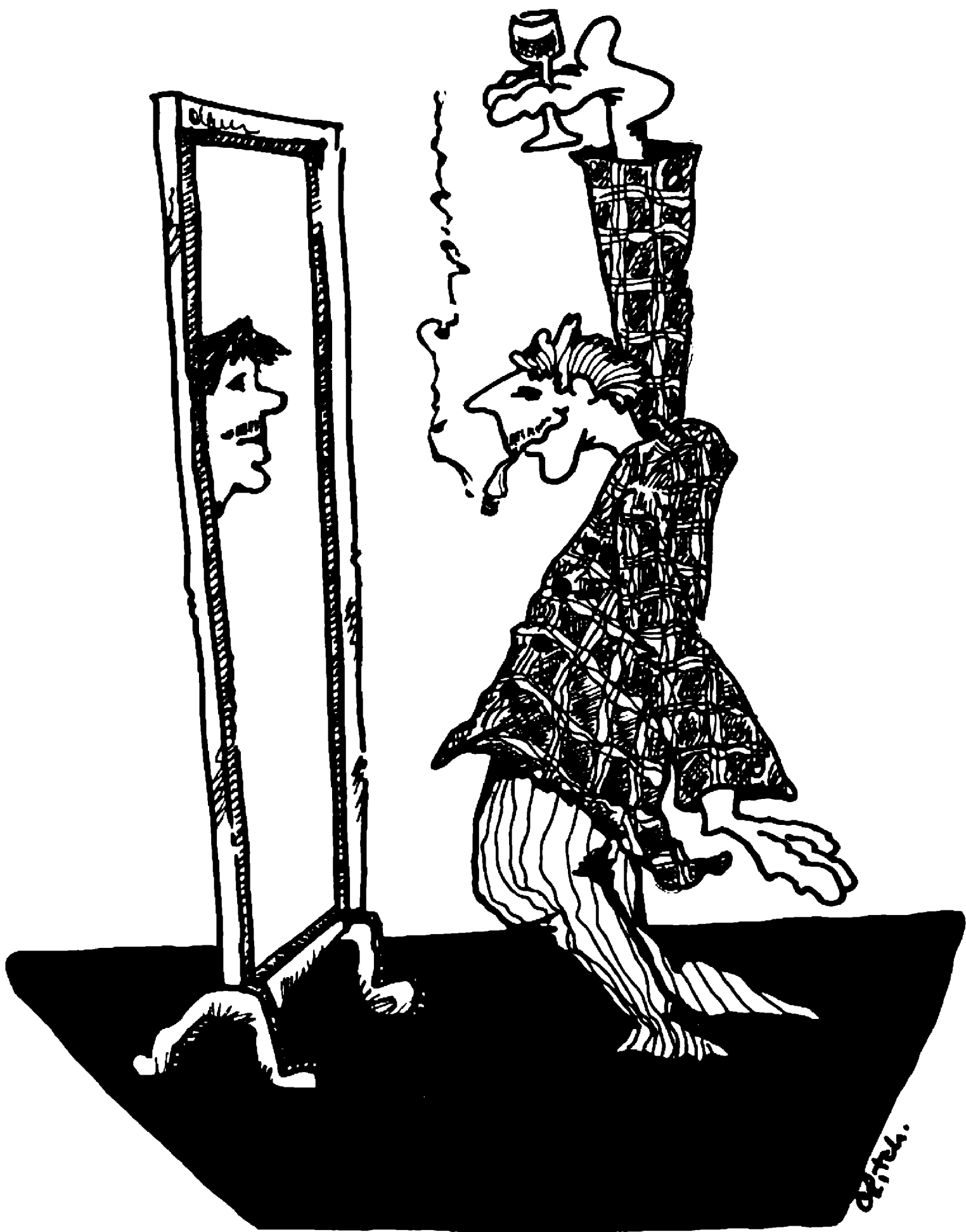
“What is your wish, old woman?” Death asked the startled Baba.

Of course, Baba had not expected Death to appear, and she quickly changed her tune.

“Oh, Death, how good of you to come to me. Could you please help me lift this bundle of wood onto my back?”







Bend the Sapling

A farmer and his wife had a son and, since he was their only child, they spoiled and pampered him from the day he was born. As the saying goes, they warmed him with their breath. What he wished for, he received, and what he wanted to do, he did.

As he grew to a young man, the son began to spend more and more time away from home, and not always with people of good repute. If there was dancing, he was there, and if there was carousing, it could not start without him.

One evening, he left home and did not return. The worried mother and father asked everywhere if anyone knew where he was, but nobody knew. Perhaps he was no longer among the living. Perhaps he had been killed.

Many years later, the father and mother, having suffered poor crops and other disasters, had to sell their last cow. The father led the cow

to market in the morning, sold her in the afternoon, and set out for home in the evening.

As he walked through the dark forest, the father was suddenly confronted by a man standing in the path.

“Where are you going this evening?” asked the stranger.

“I am going home from the market,” answered the farmer.

“And what did you do at the market today?” asked the stranger.

“I sold our last cow today,” said the farmer, and instantly realized that he should not have said that.

“In that case, let me see the money,” said the stranger.

“It is all the money we have,” cried the poor farmer. “It was our last cow, and we have nothing else to live on.”

“No matter,” said the robber. “I do not have much time, and you may not have long to live either, if you do not do as I say.”

Crying pitifully, the old man handed over the money.

“What village are you from?” the robber asked the old man.

“From Kurhanova,” wept the old man.

“Kurhanova? And what is your name?”

When he heard the name, the robber said, “That is my name too. I am your son.”

The farmer began to beg his son to come to his senses. "Please come home with me, son. You can repent of your ways and yet lead a righteous life."

Instead of replying, the son pointed to a large oak tree nearby. "Bend that oak tree to the ground. I need something from its top."

The father looked at the tree, but did not understand. "How can I bend such a tree?"

"If you do not do as I say, you will have more trouble than you already have," replied the robber.

The old man stood at the base of the huge tree and pushed on it but, of course, was not able to budge it.

"Here is a smaller tree," said the son. "Bend this one to the ground."

Again the father pushed, but could not do anything with the tree.

"Bend this sapling, then," said the son.

This the father was able to do easily.

"This is a lesson for you, father. You desire to bend me now, when it is too late. Why did you not teach me properly when I was yet a sapling, when it was still possible to mold me?"

Again, the father began to beg for the return of his money. "I am sorry, son. I made a mistake. I did not know how to raise an only child. Please return the money."

“I may return money to those who owe me nothing,” said the son, “but from you I should take twice what you have given me.”

“And what do I owe you?” cried the father.

“You owe me the most,” was the reply. “I could have been a respectable man, living like other people, but I cannot, for you have ruined me, and I must do penance for your mistakes all my life.

“Today you wish to have a son and your money, but when you let your son wander where he wished as he was growing up, well, there went your money. And now I must go. Good health to you, father.”

So saying, the son turned into the dark forest and was seen no more.

As for the father, he realized his mistake and, if the earth had opened at that moment, he would have gladly jumped in and disappeared forever. But the earth did not open, and he had to live with the knowledge of his mistake.







The Birth of the Pike

On the eve of the festival of Kupalo, the first pike in the world was born in the Dnipro River. It was a huge fish, with teeth as sharp as a sword. God preserve us from such a monster!

It was a terrible night when the pike was born. The waters of the river foamed and raged, ships were swamped and sunk, and people walking on the banks of the river ran away as fast as they could, frightened by the roaring of the black wind and the white foam on the water.

After the pike was born he grew quickly, stretching his length every hour. Each day he added to his size, and in a month he was six feet long. In two months he was twelve feet long, and in three months he was raging up and down the river like a tempest, eating the bream and the perch and the shad and the flounder and all the other fish that came in his way.

If there was a shad or a perch swimming lazily in the stream and the pike saw it as he raged by, he caught it in his great white mouth, and instantly the shad or the perch was gone, with the cracking of its bones. Shad and perch are big enough fish — it was worse for the little ones; they disappeared by the hundreds.

What could the little fish possibly do? If this slaughter continued, they would all be wiped out in a very short time. The shad and the perch called a meeting of the fishes, and they all put their heads together in a deep, quiet pool. What could be done to deal with the great pike, which had such sharp teeth and was destroying so many of them?

They all came to the meeting — shad, bream, perch, roach, dace, gudgeon and the little minnows in schools.

The roach opened the meeting. "This pike is going to kill us all. Let us kill him first."

The gudgeon looked at the roach with his wide eyes and asked, "Have you enough teeth to do the job?"

"No," answered the roach, "I do not have any teeth at all."

"Then would you swallow the pike whole?" asked the perch.

"My mouth is too small," said the roach.

"Then do not use it to speak so foolishly," said the gudgeon.

The roach blushed scarlet, and his fins are red to this day.

“I will set the prickles on my back on end,” said the perch “The pike will not find them too comfortable in his throat.”

“Yes,” said the bream, “but you will have to swim into his throat to put them there, and he will swallow you all the same.”

There was a lot more nonsense spoken, and even the minnows had something to say, until all were made to be quiet by the gudgeon.

“Babble away, all of you, if you wish,” he said. “But when you are done, listen for a moment to what I have to say.”

The fish turned to listen to the gudgeon.

“We are not safe with the pike roaming this big river; the little fish have no chance against his sharp teeth, and he swallows the minnows ten and twenty at a time. It would be best for us if he could be killed, but none of us is strong enough for that.

“We may not be able to kill him outright, but we can starve him to death and save ourselves at the same time. Since we cannot live in this mighty river with him, let us all move to the many little rivers and streams that feed the Dnipro. There the waters are shallow, and we can hide among the reeds.

“The pike cannot reach us there, and we can raise our children in peace, and only be in

danger when we go from our little river to the Dnipro. The great pike will be left alone here to rage hungrily up and down, with nothing for him to eat. His teeth will soon grow blunt for lack of bones to crush.”

All the fish waved their fins happily when they heard the wisdom of the gudgeon. And that night the gudgeon and the roach, the bream, the perch, the shad, the flounder and the dace and the minnows left the Dnipro and swam up the little rivers and streams.

There they began to live and raise their little ones, though some fishermen set nets in the rivers and caught many of them on their way to safety.

The monstrous pike swam up and down the great river, thrashing the water with his tail and diving with his long snout through the waves, but he found no fish for his sharp teeth. In the end, he had to eat what insects and worms he could find.

One day the hungry pike pounced on a fat worm in the river and found himself caught on a hook on the end of a line. Although he fought valiantly, the pike was no match for the fisherman and his friends who came running to help. The whole village had a big feast from the huge pike, and his bones made a fine soup.

The little fish never returned to the Dnipro, and from that time on there have never

been many little fish in the mighty river. Now, all a fisherman can catch might be a tiny minnow that got lost, but not much else.





The Crane and the Fox

A Crane met a Fox on the lakeshore, and the two fell to talking.

“Are you wintering here?” asked the Fox. “It is late in the season.”

“I must,” answered the Crane. “I delayed my journey south until it was too late, and now I will never make it there.”

“How will you survive, Crane?”

“I was wondering about that very thing myself. Perhaps you would allow me to live in your den where it is warm. In return I will teach you to fly.”

“Agreed,” said the Fox and they went to her den. When they were snugly underground the Crane said, “I think we will be very comfortable here.”

One day they heard some noise at the entrance of the den.

“What is that?” cried the Crane.

“I fear it is some nasty hunters who are trying to dig into my den,” said the Fox. “They want to catch me for my fur. What can we do to save ourselves?”

“I can think of only one way to escape,” said the Crane. “The hunters will not expect to see a Crane in a Fox den, so I will lie here as if I am dead. When they pick me up to look at me, you run away. They will chase you and then I can fly away.”

When the hunters dug into the den they were surprised to see a Crane.

“What is a Crane doing here?” they asked each other.

They picked up the Crane to look at him and, as they did so, the Fox darted through their legs and ran away into the forest. The startled hunters dropped the Crane to run after the Fox, and the Crane slowly flew off.

Later the Crane and the Fox came together again.

“We are safe now,” said the Fox. “You must teach me to fly so I will never be trapped again.”

“Good,” said the Crane. “Get on my back.”

The Fox climbed onto the back of the Crane who rose into the air as high as the houses, when he turned over and dropped the Fox. The Fox fell into some bushes and jumped up and down with excitement.

“How do you like flying?” asked the Crane.

“Very much,” said the Fox. “It is fun!”

The Fox climbed onto the back of the Crane again and the Crane flew again, higher than the clouds.

“Are you ready, Fox?” asked the Crane.

“Oh yes, I am!” cried the Fox.

The Crane turned over and dropped the Fox and watched her fall.

“How do you like flying, Fox?” she called.

There was no reply, so the Crane flew down to the earth. There he found the Fox flat on the ground and quite dead.

Heaving a sigh, the Crane said, “I am afraid the Fox was not meant to fly.” And he rose into the air and flew off.





The Devil Under the Bridge

Our village was built on a little knoll, with a small, winding river running around it and through the nearby fields. The villagers owned land on both sides of the river, whose banks were quite sharp and steep.

Since the river could not be crossed there, the people had to travel a fair distance before they reached a spot where they could cross.

One of the villagers, a wealthy and mean man, owned land on both sides of the river. Tired of the long way he had to travel to get from home to his land, and from one part of it to another, he cut down the banks of the river and built a foot bridge over the water.

Everyone used the bridge, as it was so handy, but if the stingy owner got to the bridge early enough to catch others using it, he made them pay a toll. As this appeared to be a good way to make money, he cut down the banks

further and built a bridge big enough for a team and wagon to use.

Now he was at the bridge every morning and every evening, collecting tolls. If the people had no money, they would pay with vegetables or eggs or whatever they had. And the rich man grew even richer, without having to work as hard as before.

Because of the height of the banks, this bigger bridge was built with one end higher than the other. The timbers of the bridge were fairly long, to stretch across the river. As the river banks were so steep and the river so winding, and the bridge so long, when the wind blew strongly enough from a certain direction, all sorts of weird sounds could be heard. Sometimes it was a moaning and sometimes a whistling, but the sound was always eerie.

The rich man took advantage of this to tell the people that he had put a curse on the bridge. He said that he had invited the Devil to live underneath the bridge and make sure that nobody crossed without paying.

One extremely windy autumn, the sounds from the bridge were almost constant, and the horses became very nervous and uncontrollable when they came near it.

There were many runaways, and wagons were overturned. At one end of the bridge there was a sharp turn and, if the horses were

galloping too fast, the wagons would simply fall over. Fortunately, injuries to people and horses were not too severe.

As the autumn continued windy, the problem increased until many people were afraid to cross the bridge at all, toll or no toll.

At this time, one of our villagers returned from his stint in the army. He had seen many battles, and was not afraid of anything. "Let us be brave," he said. "We can conquer this Devil who lives under the bridge. Then it will be safe for everyone to cross."

A number of young men agreed and, that evening, a group of them gathered with sticks and clubs in their hands. They advanced on the bridge, determined to drive the Devil out. The young boys of the village also met at the bridge, as they were not likely to miss such excitement.

One of the younger boys could not find a suitable stick, so he took along a long, thin willow switch for protection.

The boys got to the bridge first and hid in the tall grass, waiting to see what would happen. Soon the men arrived and took up their positions, while their leader strode to one end of the bridge to call the Devil out.

The leader, afraid the Devil would catch him and pull him under, did not lean over the edge to call him. Instead, he put his rear end over the bridge and then yelled at the Devil.

The young boy with the long switch was right nearby, and he could not resist the temptation. He swatted the leader on his bottom as hard as he could.

The leader let out a mighty yell, and the rest of the men, thinking this was the Devil screaming at them, scattered in all directions.

Next morning the leader showed the men the welt on his bottom. "This Devil is not afraid to use force," he said, "and his laughter was something unearthly, too. We must do better next time."

After some discussion, it was decided that the bridge had to be abandoned and a new one built. They would all chip in with labor and materials, and do the job right.

The men went to the starosta of the village and told him what they wanted and, after seeing the evidence of the Devil on the rear end of the leader, the starosta agreed.

A new bridge was built a short distance from the other one and, since it was public property, no tolls had to be paid.

The rich man was then the only one who used his old bridge, except for the young lads of the village, who used it as a place to discipline the boys who became too bossy or bullied the younger children.

The rest of the boys would dare the bully to cross the haunted bridge at midnight and, if

he did not do so, he was greatly shamed. All the boys of the village would gather at the bridge with their sticks and clubs and push the bully toward it. Few could muster enough strength to do the deed, and most of them ran away.

There was one young fellow, however, who was not a bully, but a brave boy, later known as Brave Ivan. To prove himself, he crossed the bridge twice in one night, and even without a stick in his hand!





Durak

A man and a woman lived near a forest with their son. They were not very smart, but their son had brains that worked very well.

One day the mother was bringing in wood for the fire, and she stumbled and dropped a log she was carrying.

“What a misfortune,” she cried. “What if that log had fallen on a child; it would surely have been killed by the log! And what if the child had been my own poor little grandson! Oh, oh, this is terrible, terrible!”

Her husband heard her wailing, and he came to see what was wrong. When she had told him, he too began to weep.

“That is truly terrible,” he cried. “It could so easily have happened, and we could have lost our only grandson.”

Their son heard the commotion, and he asked what was the matter.

“Oh, Ivanko, do you see this log? It slipped from my grasp and, if you had had a son, it could have crushed the life out of him.”

“Yes,” added the father. “We could have lost our only grandson.”

Ivanko listened patiently and finally said, “My dear mother and father, I have heard you say such foolish things all my life, and I would like to know if there is in this wide world a durak worse than either of you. I am leaving home for a time and, if I find anyone who is sillier than you two, I shall return.”

Ivanko took a bundle of food and clothing and set off with his walking stick. He walked a long way without having any adventures but, finally, he came to a village where he saw two carpenters building a hut from logs.

The carpenters had a log ready to install, but there they were in the yard, pulling on the log, one from each end.

“What are you about?” asked Ivanko.

“This log is too short for our wall, and we are stretching it,” said the carpenters.

“Do you have relatives in my village?” asked Ivanko. “I am certain my mother and father are related to you. But here, I can help you out.”

Ivanko took a short piece of another log and fastened it to the end of the first log. Then it fit the space perfectly.



“Oh, thank you,” said the carpenters. “You must stay with us and help us. We can build huts much faster with your good advice.”

“Thank you for the offer,” said Ivanko, “but I am now on my way home.” And he set off down the road, confident that he had found not one durak, but two who were even more foolish than his own parents.

In the next village he came to, Ivanko saw two peasants trying to lift a cow onto the roof of their earthen barn.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“Look at the grass growing on the roof of the barn,” said the peasants. “We are only trying to help the cow eat well.”

“I think you must have relatives in my village,” said Ivanko. “But would it not be much simpler for one of you to climb on the roof, pluck the grass and throw it down to the cow?”

“Ah, what a wise young fellow you are!” cried the villagers. “You must stay with us and teach us everything you know.”

“Ah, no,” said Ivanko. “I am on my way home to my mother and father.” And he set off again, thinking that perhaps his parents were not quite as foolish as these other duraks.

As he was going past a meadow, he saw a farmer holding a horse collar in front of him while another peasant was pushing the horse from behind.

“What can you be doing?” asked Ivanko.

“We have to hitch the horse to the wagon, and we are trying to put the collar on him. But he is being stubborn and we cannot do it.”

“Do you have relatives in my village?” asked Ivanko. “Here, I will show you how to do this.” And he did.

The two farmers wanted Ivanko to stay and help them, but he again set off for home, thinking that he would not find any duraks more foolish than these two.

That evening he was still some distance from home, so he stopped to ask for shelter at a hut by the road. The young couple who lived in the hut were newly married and, like most of their people, generous and kind to strangers.

“Please do come in and share our simple meal,” said the husband. “We will find you a spot for the night without any trouble.”

During supper, the husband said to his wife, “My dear, I would like some milk.”

The wife took a spoon and went down the ladder to the cellar. She soon returned with the spoon full of milk. She tipped that into a cup and went back down the ladder for more. After several trips, the amazed Ivanko asked, “Does your wife always fetch milk like this?”

“She certainly does,” answered the proud husband. “She is not a lazy one.”



“Are you related to my mother and father?” asked Ivanko. “No matter. Do you have a clay pitcher?”

The wife gave Ivanko a clay pitcher and followed him into the cellar to see what he would do. Ivanko filled the pitcher with milk and carried it to the table.

“Now you will have your milk and not have to wear out your feet with walking up and down the ladder,” he said.

The young couple were astounded at the wisdom of their guest.

“Please stay with us and help us on the farm,” they said. “With such a wise helper, we would certainly prosper.”

“I thank you for the offer,” said Ivanko, “but I am on my way home to my mother and father. Good health to you.” And off he went.

When Ivanko finally arrived at home he told his parents that he had found many duraks even sillier than they were, and that he would stay home from now on and be satisfied with what he had.

His mother and father remained just the same as they ever were, and they were happy to have their son home again.





The Fool and the Magic Sopilka

A man had two smart sons named Vasyl and Petro and a third, Ivan, who was a fool. To be a fool is not always a bad thing, for fools can see things that others cannot. The father, who was ill, divided all his worldly goods among the three and shortly thereafter died.

The three sons went into the wide world to seek their fortune. The two smart lads left their goods at home while Ivan, who had only one small mortar bowl used for grinding grain, took his with him.

The boys walked and walked, and it began to become dark. Entering a forest, Vasyl said, "Let us climb into this oak tree and spend the night there so that robbers will not find us and attack us."

Petro replied, "And what are we to do with this fool and his mortar?"

Ivan replied, "You two worry about yourselves; I can climb the tree myself."

Vasyl and Petro climbed to the top of the oak, while Ivan struggled up to the lower branches as best he could and pulled his mortar behind him.

Later, a band of robbers did indeed ride up, fresh from some hard work at their trade. They tied their horses to some nearby trees, gathered some wood, started a fire beneath the oak, and began cooking gruel for supper in a large kettle.

Just as the robbers gathered around the fire with their spoons and bowls, Ivan dropped his mortar, which splashed right into the kettle. The mortar splattered the boiling gruel into their eyes, and they all ran off, thinking it was the police come to arrest them.

Ivan, in trying to save his mortar, dropped from the oak. He stood up, looked around, and said, "Climb down, brothers, and see what we have here."

Vasyl and Petro climbed down and, when they saw what had happened, hurriedly gathered together all the goods the robbers had left behind, loaded the horses and rode home, while Ivan was left behind with only a sopilka which they had overlooked.



Ivan picked up the sopilka and began to play. This was not an ordinary sopilka but a magic one! When he played, the forest came alive and danced: wolves, rabbits, foxes and bears all danced together in the firelight. Even the trees grabbed each other and held on so they would not dance away.

Ivan played and laughed and everyone danced and danced until he became exhausted and stopped playing. After all this excitement, he was quite tired, so he crawled into a bush and fell fast asleep.

In the morning Ivan got up and walked toward the city. The road was filled with people heading for the bazaar, some to sell flatcakes, some painted eggs in a box, some kvas in pails.

When Ivan played on his sopilka, everyone danced. The man carrying the box of eggs broke them all dancing and jumping around like a devil. People who were sleeping leaped up and began to dance, some without a shirt on, and some without even pants.

The whole city turned upside down; the dogs, pigs, chickens, all the animals and all the people began to dance.

Finally tiring of playing, Ivan left the city, and everyone collapsed, wondering what had happened. Ivan decided to go to work, and he went toward the country to hire himself out as a laborer. On the way, he met a priest.

“I have need of a laborer, my good fellow,” said the priest. “Will you come to work for me?”

“I will,” said Ivan.

“And what wages will you ask of me for one year of work?”

“I will ask for five gold pieces.”

“Agreed,” said the priest.

The priest took Ivan home with him and next day sent him to take the oxen to pasture. Ivan drove the oxen onto the hay field and lay down to relax while the oxen grazed.

Remembering his sopilka, Ivan played. When he played, the oxen immediately began to dance. They danced and danced and almost collapsed before Ivan stopped playing.

In the evening Ivan drove the oxen home. They were so hungry from their dancing that they greedily ate some rotting straw the priest had in the yard.

Next day Ivan again drove the oxen to the pasture. He allowed them to graze for a time and then again began to play. He played until evening, the oxen dancing the whole time, and drove the hungry and exhausted oxen home.

The priest looked at the oxen and said, “Where do you pasture them so that they are so thin and hungry?”

The priest determined to find out what was happening and, next day after Ivan drove the oxen to pasture, the priest followed.



Arriving at the pasture, the priest hid in a thorn bush to see what would happen. He sat and watched while Ivan climbed onto a haystack and began to play. Immediately everyone began to dance: the oxen, the wild creatures in the woods, and even the priest himself in the thorns. The thorns were sharp and, when the priest began to dance, he tore his clothes and had his hair and beard plucked out by the thorns.

The priest yelled to Ivan to stop playing, but Ivan did not hear. When he finally noticed the priest dancing in the thorns as though mad, he stopped playing. The priest gathered up his tattered clothes and ran home.

As the ragged priest ran through the streets of the village, the people did not recognize him and thought he was a beggar or a thief. They yelled at him and set the dogs after him. The priest jumped over a fence and ran through the gardens and through the weeds, trying to get home.

The priest finally arrived home covered in burdocks, and his wife did not recognize him. She yelled for help, "There is a mad man in my yard! Drive him out!"

The neighbors ran with sticks and rakes but, before they could beat him, the priest spoke to them and they recognized his voice.

They helped him into the house and he told his wife about Ivan and his sopilka. She listened and was amazed to hear such a far-fetched tale.

In the evening, Ivan drove the oxen into the stables, gave them their straw and went to eat his supper. As he entered the house, the priest said to him, "Ivan, play a little song for my wife on your sopilka."

As Ivan was getting out his sopilka the priest tied himself to a post which supported the roof in the house. Ivan sat on the floor by the door and began to play, while the wife of the priest sat on a bench in order to hear.

As soon as Ivan started playing, the woman jumped off the bench and began to dance wildly. A cat jumped off the pich and began to dance. Only the priest was able to hold himself, but his hands and feet twitched just the same. As he twitched about, the rope loosened so that the priest began to dance about the post. He danced until he bruised himself considerably, and finally began to yell to Ivan, "Enough! Stop!"

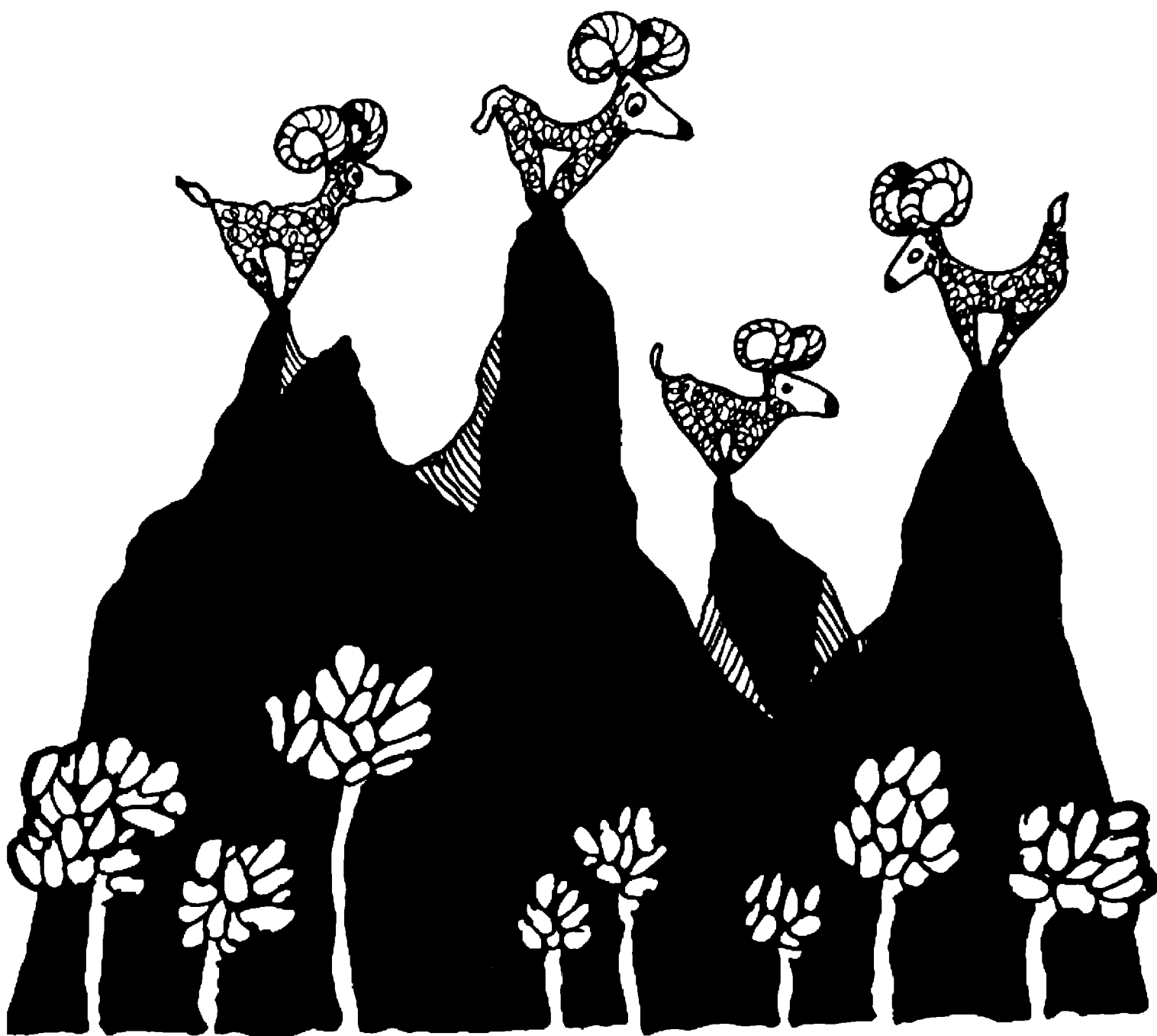
Ivan stopped playing, put his sopilka in his shirt and had his supper. The priest said to his wife, "We must be rid of this man, or he will torture us and our oxen to death."

Ivan said to the priest, "If you do not want me to work for you any longer, then pay me my

wages and I will go. If not, I will play until you decide to pay me.”

The priest immediately brought the money from his bag and gave it to Ivan. Ivan happily took his five gold pieces and once more went into the wide world to seek his fortune.





The Herdsman

The people in the Carpathian Mountains and in the neighboring areas lived in small villages in the valleys, along the creeks and by the rivers, and they kept a few sheep, goats, and sometimes a cow.

Each village had a few herdsman, whose job it was to take the animals into the mountains for summer grazing, and to milk them and make cheese.

The herdsman took along some boys as apprentices to help them with the herds and to learn the trade.

In our village there were several herdsman, but there was one who, although he was considered to be the best at his trade, was not the easiest person to get along with. He took the largest herd and the most apprentices both younger and older, every summer.

The herdsman was quite wealthy, by village standards. He had a fair-sized farm with many buildings and fenced yards to milk the animals and to keep them safe for the night.

As soon as the herdsman with his charges reached the meadow in the mountains, the boys were divided into small groups, and each group was assigned a small cave dug out of the mountainside to live in.

Each boy was given a staff with a knife blade mounted in the end, and a whip. In addition, each boy always wore on one side of his belt a hunting knife, and a short axe on the other side.

The very first night, the lessons began. The herdsman taught the boys how to use the staff for protection, and how to use the whip to control the animals. The boys learned which parts of the animal the whip was applied to and how hard they were to be hit, if at all.

The boys were taught how to throw the knife and the axe, using one spin or two, depending on the circumstances, and how to use them in other ways.

Because the herdsman was so good at his trade, he was much sought after by the villagers not only to care for their animals, but also to teach their sons.

Unfortunately, the herdsman was a mean and demanding person. He drove the boys

harder than he drove the animals, and kept after them if they made any kind of mistake.

He also did not feed them properly, usually giving them the whey from yesterday instead of fresh milk, and the bread he baked for them on a hot stone was as hard as the stone it was baked on.

The only cheese the boys had to eat were the cheeses that did not turn out well enough to satisfy the herdsman.

Some of the villagers, when they came to pick up their share of the cheese and other milk products, would sneak in some food for their sons. They knew the herdsman did not feed them well, and growing boys need a lot of food.

The herdsman also taught the boys how to dance, and when guests came, the boys would perform. The herdsman collected money from the guests, saying that it was for the boys, but, of course, the boys never saw any of the money.

One day the herdsman took a load of surplus cheese to a town some distance away, to sell it. As there was a circus in town that same day, he went to see what was going on.

During the performance, one of the lions escaped his master and killed a horse nearby, and began to eat it. The circus wardens came running with their guns, but the herdsman got there first with his whip.



Yelling at the wardens not to shoot, he applied his whip with great skill and slowly but carefully forced the lion to return on its belly to its cage.

The display of the skill of the herdsman was as well received as the circus itself was. It was this level of skill that had all the parents hoping to have their sons taught by him.

One day in winter when the herds were all safely home and in their own yards, the herdsman was approached by a man who was hungry and lost. The man said he had been on his way to visit people in the area, and somehow had become lost.

Our people were normally sympathetic to the less fortunate and helped others as best they could. The herdsman, although he made a show of generosity, gave the man some whey from yesterday, and the hard bread he usually fed the boys.

When the man asked for a piece of cheese, the herdsman gave him the poorest one he had, one which he would certainly not be able to sell. The traveller thanked the herdsman and turned to leave.

The herdsman began to think that perhaps this was an imposter, and not a lost traveller after all. He owned most of the nearby land and knew everyone in the area, and he knew of nobody who was expecting a visitor.



The herdsman chased after the traveller and took back the cheese, calling him an imposter and a thief.

The man returned the cheese without a word and disappeared down the road. The herdsman, returning to his yard, was about to put the cheese with the rest of them, when he noticed that the cheese in his hand had turned to stone.

When they heard the story, the villagers all said that the traveller was the Lord Himself, and that the herdsman had disgraced himself. The traveller, they said, had come to visit the herdsman, and to check on his treatment of the boys in his care.

The herdsman believed that what the villagers said was true, and he became a changed man. He no longer took large herds into the mountains, but only a few animals, and only two boys for help.

He treated the boys much better, but most of his time was spent wandering the mountain trails with his head bowed, as though he was hoping for the traveller to appear again.





How Baba Outwitted the Devil

One day the Devil met Baba and said to her, "I know you have a fine garden, so let us plant something there together, and I will help you with the work. Then we can divide what we succeed in growing between us."

"Very well," said Baba. "Let us plant some potatoes." The Devil brought some potato seeds, and he and Baba planted them together.

The Devil weeded the potatoes and watered them and hilled them faithfully. As a matter of fact, he did most of the work, under the directions Baba gave him.

The potatoes grew large and, when the time came to dig them up, Baba asked the Devil whether he wanted the tops or the roots.

"The tops, of course," the Devil said.

"Very well, you can have them," said Baba. "I will take the roots, then."

Baba dug up the potatoes and took them for herself, and she left the tops for the Devil. The Devil lifted the tops onto his back and went off to sell them but, seeing that no one wanted them, said to himself, "A plague on the woman! She tricked me. Well, she had better look out, for I shall trick her next time!"

A year passed, and he came to see Baba again. "Let us plant something together!" he suggested to her.

"Good," said Baba. "Let us grow poppies."

The Devil agreed and he and Baba planted some poppies. The Devil carried water for them every morning and evening.

The poppies bloomed and had great, heavy heads and, when the time came to cut them, Baba asked the Devil whether it was the tops he wanted or the roots.

"The roots, of course!" the Devil said.

"Very well, I shall take the tops, then," Baba said.

The Devil was pleased. "I tricked her this time!" he said to himself.

Baba cut the poppy-heads and left the stalks and the roots for the Devil, who tied them together, hoisted them onto his back and went from hut to hut, trying to sell them.

Of course, no one wanted the poppy roots and, when he had carried them about for so long that his shoulders sagged under the

weight, he said, "A plague on the woman! She has tricked me again."

But in a few days he went to see her again. "Let us sing some songs and see which of us can sing longer than the other," he said. "Here is the way we will do it. First I will get on your back, and you will carry me until I have sung all the songs I know, and then you will get on my back and I will carry you until you have sung all the songs you know. Whoever sings the longest will receive all of the crop we plant next year, tops, roots and stems."

"I only know one little song," said Baba.

"And I know many," the Devil thought. "I shall get the better of her this time!"

The Devil got on her back and, as she carried him around, he sang every song he could think of, one after another. In two days he had gone through all of the songs he knew.

"It is my turn now," said Baba. She climbed on his back and began to sing, "Dum-dee-dum, dum-dee-dum, dum-dee-dum!"

Baba never stopped but made the Devil carry her while she kept singing the same thing over and over.

The Devil listened to her until his patience gave out. "How much longer are you going to sing that silly song?" he asked.

"I have not even come to the third verse yet," she said.

The Devil had been carrying her for five days by then and, seeing that the song was likely to go on and on, he began running through swamps and bushes in order to try to throw Baba off his back.

But Baba clung to him for dear life, and he could do nothing. He headed for the blackthorn bushes, hoping that she would get scratched and fall off.

Before he could get in among them she jumped off his back and said, "You silly Devil! As though you could not carry me any longer! I only had a bit of my song left to sing." And home she ran.

And that is the little story of how Baba outwitted the Devil.







How the Carpathian Mountains Were Born

Long ago, before the grandfathers of our oldest ancestors were born, the whole of the Ukrainian land was an endless prairie. Soft green grass waved over the steppe; the fir trees and pines, the mighty oaks and maples, the elms and poplars all swayed in the gentle wind along the rivers wandering through the valleys.

The land was ruled by a huge giant named Veleten, who made the earth tremble whenever he walked upon it.

Veleten was an excellent farmer, and he owned countless numbers of cattle, sheep, horses and pigs. The animals pastured on the meadows and wandered through the forests.

Ducks, geese and swans in their uncounted numbers floated on the ponds and streams, while just as many chickens and guinea fowl cackled and squawked in the yards.

On a hilltop made by human hands, the giant lived in a beautiful white marble palace, with tall turrets reaching their fingers into the sky. It had many, many rooms and corridors to lose oneself in. In each room there was wealth and beauty, all a heart could desire.

Veleten slept in a golden bed covered with handwoven blankets and, during the day, he sat in a silver throne and received his subjects as a mighty king should.

He had thousands of servants who did his bidding; they worked his fields, made his bread, looked after his castle, fed his livestock and birds, and did all the other things that needed to be done.

They worked from sunrise to sunset, not for themselves, but to create wealth for their master Veleten.

The poor servants lived in huts made of earth, far from the palace, so that their master did not have to see or smell their misery.

They were bound to the land and to Veleten; nobody was allowed to leave the land to look for a better life. They all lived and died in serfdom and abject poverty.

One day there arrived at the palace a young man named Carpo Dniprovsky, who came from the shores of the Dnipro River. Carpo had left home to seek his fortune when he was but a young lad; he had hoped to find work so

that he could help his desperately poor mother, as his father had died some time ago.

The young fellow was hired on by Veleten, and he worked there for one year, two years, then five. Like the others, he gathered the hay, plowed and seeded the soil and reaped the harvest. Carpo was a generous and charitable fellow, and he performed not only his own work, but he helped others, who may have been old, weak or otherwise not as capable as he was.

For his honesty, industry and fairness, Carpo was loved by all his fellow workers, but he felt no pity for those who bowed and grovelled before the master. He could not stand and watch silently as Veleten reaped the riches while the workers went hungry.



When his twentieth birthday arrived, Carpo decided it was time to depart for home. He felt that Veleten should reward him for his excellent work; he would return to his mother with enough money to make both their lives easier. He had long thought over the matter, and was trying to decide how to approach the master to settle accounts.

One evening as he walked by the huts of the servants he saw an enormous shadow approaching. It was the master Veleten, who was inspecting the cattle and spying on the peasants, making sure that all was in order.

When Veleten came near, Carpo made his presence known to him. "Ah, Carpo. What are you doing here so late? Waiting for a young maid, perhaps?"

"No, good Sir," answered Carpo, "I was seeking you, for I have matters to discuss with you. I have served you long and faithfully, and would like to return to my home and see my mother while she is still alive. I humbly beg of you payment for my labors."

Veleten thought at first that Carpo was joking, because no one had ever dared to ask him for anything, let alone to leave the land or be paid wages. But Carpo was determined, and he repeated his request.

"I have served you faithfully, Sir," he said, "and my work was worth something."

“You will go nowhere!” shouted Veleten, furious at such daring. “I alone give orders as to whether my servants stay or leave!”

“I am leaving your employ, Sir,” said Carpo stubbornly, “and I insist on payment, for my work was worth something.”

Such insolence was unheard of, and was something which Veleten could not forgive. “I shall let you go, but only to be buried below ground!” he seethed in anger, stepping up to the lad. “There you shall find your wages.”

Carpo did not flinch. “You will have to pay for the work I did,” he said again, as if he had not heard the threats. This so angered Veleten that he flew into such a rage that his eyes turned red and flames leaped from his mouth.

He seized Carpo with his powerful hands, lifted him high above his head, and flung him down so violently that his body made a hollow in the earth.

Incredibly, Carpo picked himself up, feeling an inner strength which was given him by the land that he had served so faithfully.

He seized Veleten and threw him on the ground, again and again, until the earth could not withstand the force of the blows and split open. Veleten opened his eyes to find himself in a deep cavern where he himself had intended to drive Carpo.

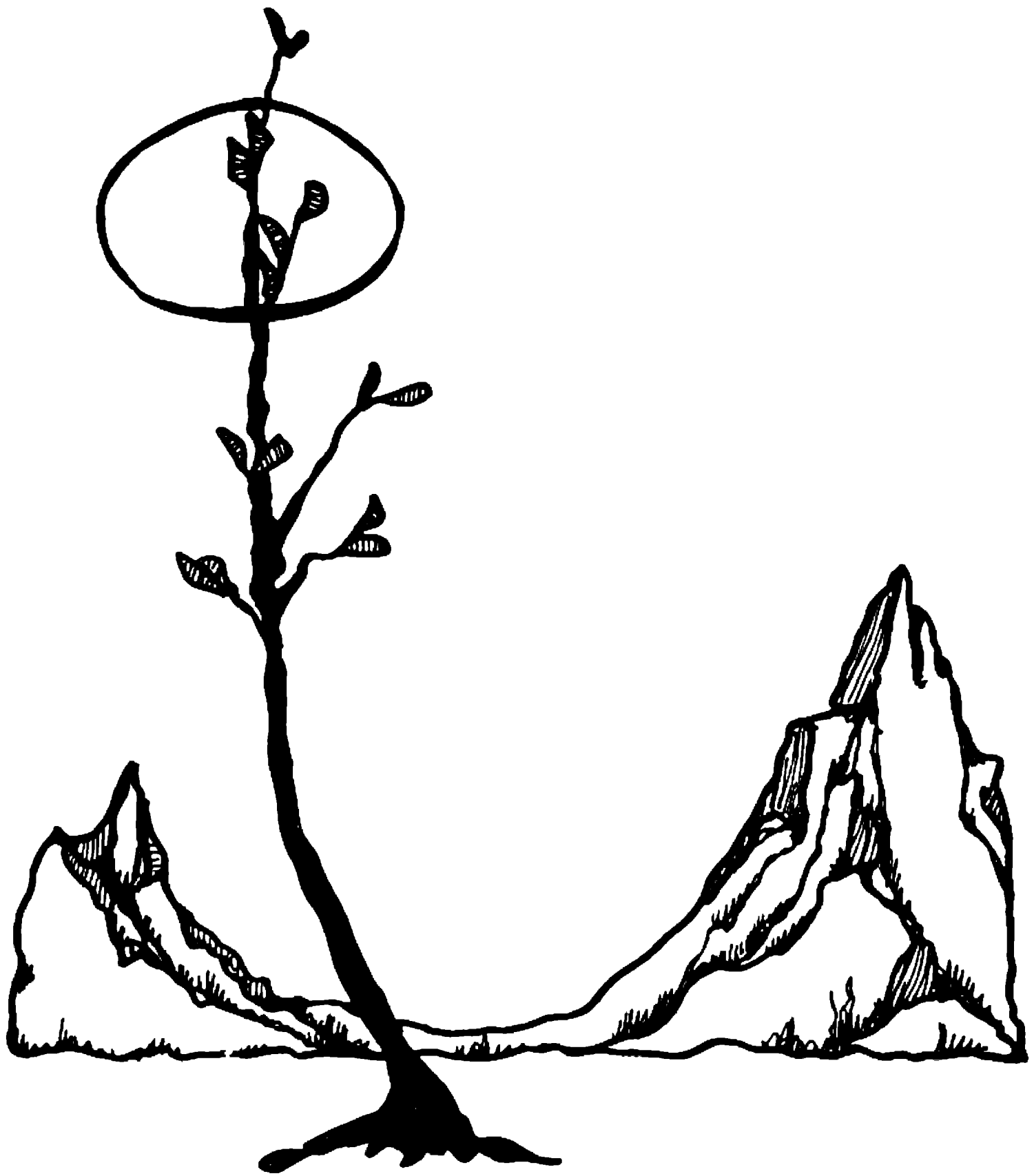
Veleten strove with his great strength to break through the earth which had closed over him and left not a crack. He planted one foot hard and heaved, and the earth bent with the force; he stamped his other foot and it bent further, but did not open. He pushed up with his head and heaved with his back; he pounded with his massive fists, all to no avail.

Although he could not break free, his struggles caused the earth to heave and swell and, on the plain, mountain after mountain formed and grew. The more Veleten heaved and struggled, the higher grew the mountains.

Where Veleten struggled the hardest are the lands of the Hutsul people. It was there that the mountains grew the highest.

When the people awoke and saw the results of the mighty battle which had happened while they slept, they were filled with awe and wonder. All around stretched hills and mountains, and where the palace once stood there was nothing but a valley; all the finery had vanished utterly.

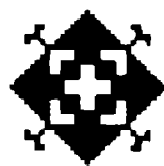
Water began to seep from underground, eventually filling the new valley with a beautiful blue lake. The people looked on bewildered, wondering what to do now that they had no master. They gathered everyone together to decide what to do; Carpo told them what had happened, and then took his leave of the land.

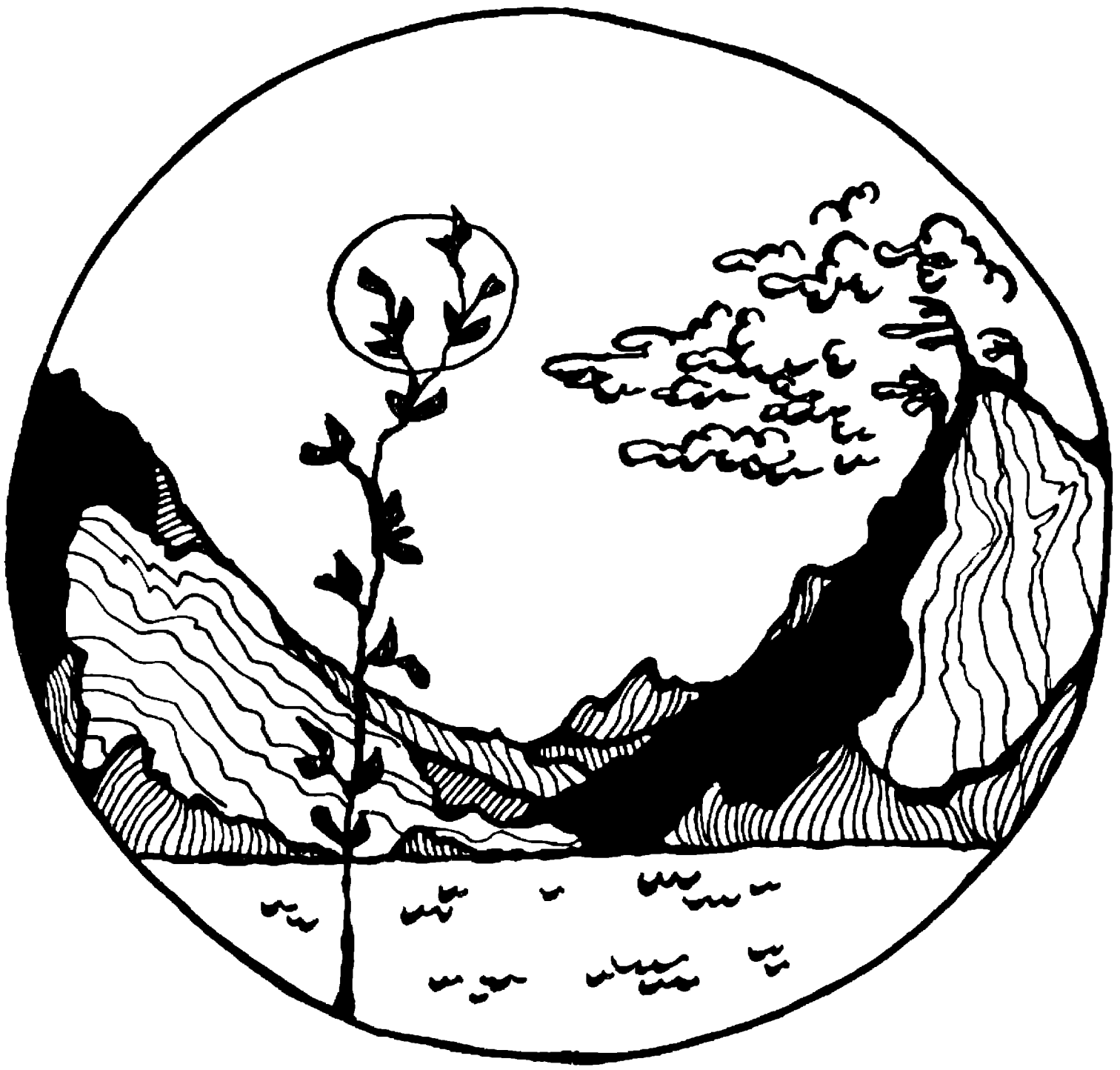


The people decided to stay where they were. They called the lake Synivyrsk or The Blue Eddy, for it was a deep blue, and the new mountains were named the Carpathians in honor of Carpo, who had made the miracle.

A new life began. Some people remained on the plains, while others moved into the mountains. They ploughed, seeded, grew and harvested their own grain now and looked after their own animals. They learned to cut trees from the forest to build homes.

Ever since then, when a storm surrounds the mountains, the people say that Veleten is restless, and is still trying to break free. But his efforts are in vain, for he has grown old and his strength is gone. Never again will he appear above to rule as he once did.







The Language of the Animals

A peasant was walking by a field when he saw a haystack on fire. He heard a voice crying from the haystack, so he ran over to see if he could help. He could see nobody but a snake there, trapped by the fire.

“Help me, man!” cried the snake.

“Why, so you can bite me?” asked the suspicious peasant.

“No, I will not bite you,” said the snake. “I will reward you well if you save my life.”

“But how can I help you?” said the peasant. “I cannot get close to the fire.”

“Hold out a long stick to me and I will crawl onto it.”

The peasant found a stick and held it out to the snake, who immediately crawled onto it. The peasant drew it out of the fire, and the snake was safe.

“Thank you, good man,” said the snake. “Take me now to my father, the King of Snakes, and he will give you your reward. Instead of accepting the gold and silver and such that he offers you, ask instead for the flower that will allow you to understand the language of all the animals and birds in the world. I have eaten of that flower, and that is why you and I can understand each other.”

The peasant went with the snake and stood before the King of Snakes. When the situation was explained to him he said, “I thank you, man, for rescuing my child. I will reward you with whatever of my riches you desire.”

“I would like nothing more than the flower which will allow me to understand the language of all the animals and birds in the world,” replied the peasant.

“You would be well advised to consider this request most carefully,” said the King of Snakes. “This can be a dangerous ability to possess, if you do not know how to use it wisely. Also, you can tell no one in the world that you possess this ability. If you were to do so, you would die immediately.”

The peasant was firm. Nothing would do but he must have the flower, so it was given to him. He ate the flower, thanked the King of Snakes and his child, and went home.

Along the way, the peasant heard two crows talking together.

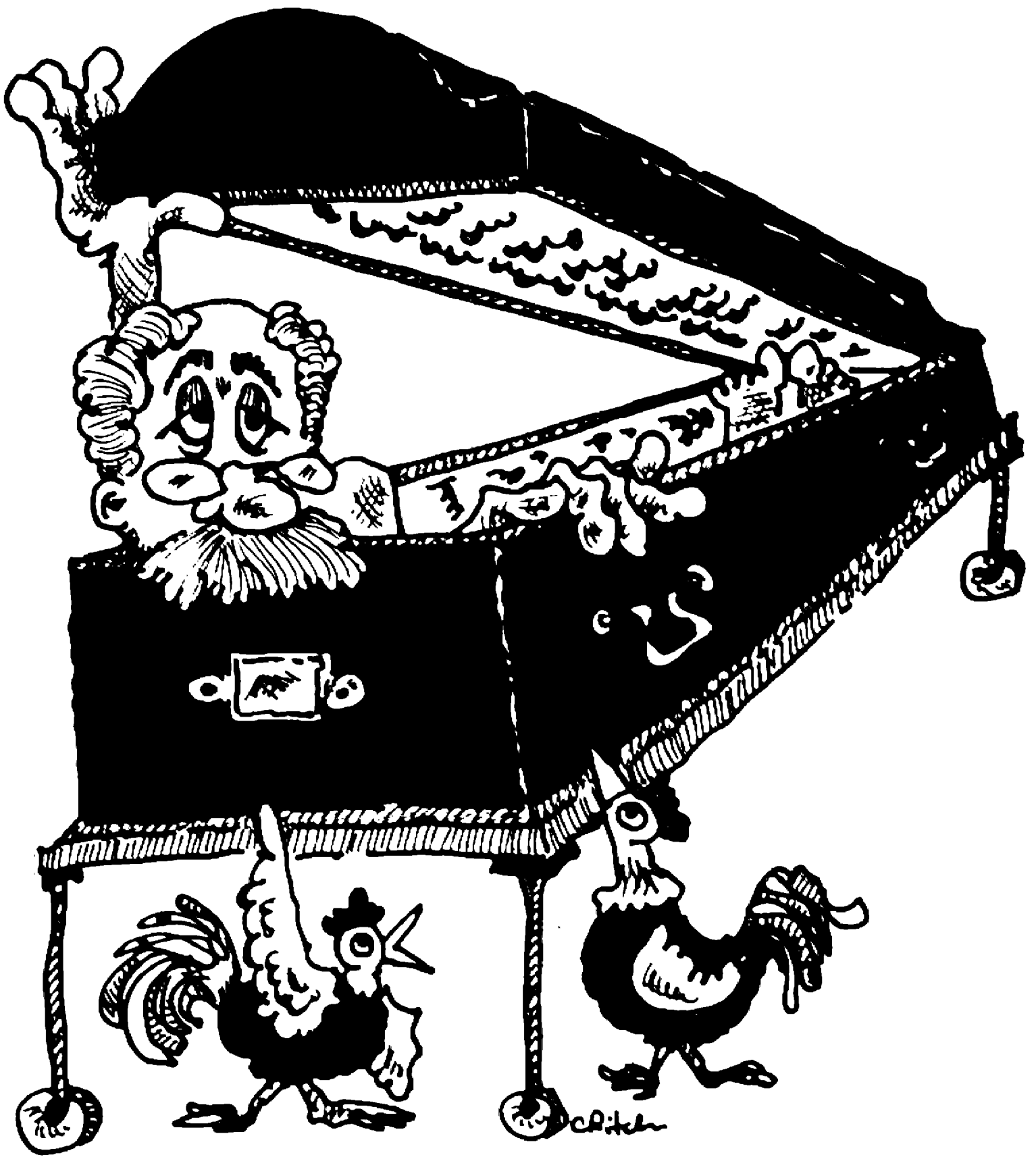
“I wonder,” said one bird to the other, “why no one has found the treasure buried beneath this tree. It is such a treasure that anyone who knew of it would be wealthy enough to marry the beautiful princess of our land.”

The peasant immediately dug up the treasure and carried it home. He became a rich man, much respected in the country. In time, he came to the notice of the king, who was very impressed with his wealth. The peasant married the princess and became an influential man.

One day, he and his wife were out riding in their fine carriage. The man was listening to the horses talking and, when one horse told the other a joke, the man burst out laughing. His wife wanted to know what was so funny but, of course, he could not tell her or he would be struck dead.

The wife, however, was persistent. She thought that perhaps her husband had laughed at her, and she was determined to find the truth of the matter. She nagged him and nagged him, but he would not tell her.

Finally, after she had worried him for a long time, he grew weary of her constant demands. He thought to himself, “She will be the death of me with her nagging anyway, so I might as well tell her and get it over with.”



“Come, wife,” he said, “help me prepare a coffin, for I am about to tell you what I laughed at. When I do, I will be struck down dead, so we might as well get everything ready at once.”

The wife was surprised at all this, but she still had to know what the secret was, so she helped him to prepare for his funeral. As the man was lying in his coffin, preparing to tell his secret, he heard a squabble out in the yard. It was some hens scolding the rooster for crowing so loudly.

“Be quiet, you vain thing,” they said. “You know the master is about to die. You might show some respect.”

“Respect? For such a fool as he is? What right has anybody to know all his affairs? If he is so foolish as to give in to her, he certainly deserves to die.”

The man lay in his coffin and thought all this over. Finally, he got up and said to his wife: “No, wife, I have thought it over, and I am not yet ready to die. If you press me further, you will be sorry. You have no right to pry into all of my affairs, and I will never tell you.”

The wife saw that the man was firm in his resolve, and she never mentioned the subject again. Although she wanted to hear the secret, she also wanted to go on living with her husband, which she did for many happy years.





The Rooster

Many, many long years ago, even before Christianity came to Ukraine, the rooster was the king of the barnyard. He foretold all manner of things in the way he strutted, how high he lifted his feet and how many times he flapped his wings before he crowed.

The people could tell by the actions of the rooster whether good or evil would befall the family, or even the whole village. The crowing of the rooster would indicate if company was coming, or if there was a death, a birth, sadness, or happiness about to happen.

The people had no need of a clock, once they learned the ways of the rooster. He would crow in different ways throughout the day, and people knew what the crowing meant.

Our village, which was pretty well one extended family, worked together and we helped each other when the need arose. The people all

thought much alike, and we believed strongly in the rooster.

The happiest time in our village was always the harvest. That was when various bees were organized to do the work one or two people could not do alone. There were harvesting bees, threshing bees, wool-washing bees, spinning bees, embroidering bees, and even bees for making paper flowers for weddings. Everybody enjoyed the bees, because they made the work easier and more joyful.

The happiest bees were organized when a wedding was about to occur. All the girls of the village would gather to get everything ready for the bride, and the young men would gather nearby with a fiddle and a dish for a drum.

The young men would be invited to the late supper, and the evening would be spent in eating, singing and dancing.

To thank their hosts, the young men always brought to the late supper an offering of some food, usually a fresh fish from the nearby stream or a freshly-caught rabbit from the forest. It must be admitted that, if they were unable to find a fish or a rabbit, the young men would on occasion resort to raiding a chicken house for their thank-you offering.

One day, everything changed in our village. As so often happened in Ukraine, as a result of some far-off war or other, our village



fell under foreign ownership. Our local officials were replaced with foreign masters and police.

These new officials spoke our language badly or not at all, and their purpose was not to help us live, but to force us to pay them taxes and control our lives.

Suddenly, the Law was the Law, and it was their Law, not ours. Permission from the police and a fee were necessary if we wanted to go rabbit hunting, fishing, berry picking, mushroom hunting, or even collecting broken bits of sticks for firewood.

The young men of our village were suddenly in a spot, since none of them had any money for licences to fish or hunt. How were they going to come up with thank-you gifts for their hosts?

For a time, the young men had a solution. Half of them would hang around town and tease the police, doing minor mischief, to keep the police busy while the other half would go hunting or fishing.

One evening, there was an especially big wedding being prepared. Half of the men tried their trick again; they hung around the house of the bride, teasing and entertaining the police. This time the police even joined in some of the wrestling matches and gymnastics.

The other half of the men went to hunt for an offering, but they did not know that the

police had brought in reinforcements just for this occasion.

There was also a third group of men involved in this wedding. The former starosta of our village was acting as the matchmaker in this wedding, and he had the groom and his best men with him at the other end of the village. They were just heading for the house of the bride, to finish the wedding match.

The searching police officers, when they saw the starosta and his men, mistook them for the young men, and ran after them, yelling. The startled group had no desire to be confronted by the police, so they ran off, some of them jumping the fence of the nearby cemetery.

The starosta was an older man, and he had a loaf of bread under one arm and a rooster under the other. He was in no shape to jump any fences, so he ran to the gate of the cemetery. He threw the bread over the fence, put the rooster on the gate post, and ran in to hide behind the nearest grave marker.

As it was a cloudy evening, the police had a bit of trouble seeing what was happening, but they ran to the cemetery as well. They lit their lanterns and trained them on the gate in order to open it.

In all the noise and confusion, the rooster became muddled when the light shone on him. He thought it was morning, and he reared back,



Critch.

flapped his wings and let loose a mighty barrage of crowing.

The police, who were naturally fearful of what is to be found in a cemetery, fell back on their fellows, and a general runaround began, which ended in the police running away yelling about evil spirits.

The starosta saw the police running away, and he stepped out to look for his bread, happy that he would not be arrested for trespassing. He picked up the bread and took the rooster from the gate post, kissing it many times in joy.

The officers had not caught the young men, and their actions had caused bad feelings between the villagers and the authorities. The police chief hurriedly sent the officers back to their own district in disgrace.

As they dejectedly made their way out of town, the officers wished with all their hearts that the rooster would be made into soup. For the starosta and his group, the crowing of the rooster had indeed brought good luck and happiness, but for the police, it had meant bad luck and misery.





Stabbed the Wind

A farmer had threshed a large pile of rye with his flail, and was beginning to winnow it by tossing it gently into the air to let the breeze remove the chaff. But the wind came up stronger and refused to co-operate.

When the man threw the grain into the air, the wind blew the chaff right into his face and, if he moved to place his back against the wind, the wind shifted so that it again blew right into his face.

Every time the farmer changed his position, the wind shifted until, finally, he became very angry. He threw his knife at the wind and yelled, "How long will you provoke me, you evil wind?"

To his amazement, the knife hung in mid-air for a moment and then disappeared. Although he mourned the inexplicable loss of his knife, the farmer noticed that the wind had

settled down to a steady strong breeze from one direction, and he was able to finish his chore.

After the harvest was finished, the farmer went on a walking trip to another village, many miles away. On the way he had stopped too long, talking to his neighbors and, by the time he entered the forest which lay in his path, it was becoming dark.

Spying a light some way off in the forest, the man thought to himself that he had better seek shelter, for fear of wild beasts, which were known to inhabit dark forests.

Approaching the hut with the light, the man called out, "Hello. Can you spare a place on the floor for me tonight?"

The door opened and the master of the house, a powerful, robust old man came out and looked long and hard at the traveller. "Do you know who I am?" asked the old man.

"No, I do not," was the reply.

"I am the wind at whom you threw your knife," said the old man. "See here, your knife remains impaled in my leg, and you are the only one who can remove it. If you do so, I will be happy to shelter you for the night."

As he removed the knife, the farmer said, "I am sorry to have done you harm, but why did you tease me and mock me so?"

"There are many of us winds throughout this wide world," said the old man. "Often we





meet someplace and entertain each other and ourselves by doing various feats. That day I had been a guest of a neighboring wind, and we had a great day showing off and blowing away the tops of several mountains.

“This kind of activity often leaves us feeling light-headed, and I fear that, on my way home, I felt quite mischievous. It was then that I had my little fun with you, which resulted in my injury.

“I promise that I will not bother you any more, but there are many other winds who may not be as forgiving as I am. They would certainly cause you all kinds of mischief.

“There is a bed for you. Sleep well. I must now go to work.”

“To what work do you go?” asked the man, wondering what the work of a wind could be.

“Tonight I go to a great work. Beyond this forest lies a faithless village, where the people do not remember Almighty God. They observe none of the Holy Days, show no mercy to the less fortunate, and have not put their hands to any acts of charity for far too long.”

“And what will you do with this village?”

“We have much work there tonight. God has ordered many of us to gather there and teach the people to respect the Lord. By morning very little of the village will remain.

“We will overturn the buildings and destroy the fields. The villagers will learn that they cannot live without the help of God.”

The next morning the man left the hut at daybreak and continued his journey. Along the way he passed the village the wind had spoken of. It was truly destroyed.

The houses were broken and scattered, as were the other buildings. A general wailing was heard from the survivors, who wandered about, trying to piece their lives together, with very little success.

The wind met the man and said, “This is a lesson for you and for the world. Remember the Lord, and He will remember you.”







Strange Feet

Late one evening, after attending a village wedding, a man was walking home by himself. Having had a good time, he was tired, and he decided to have a nap. He stopped under a tree and fell fast asleep.

When he awoke, he saw that he had no boots on his feet. Someone had stolen them while he was sleeping.

He looked stupidly at his bare feet. "Those are not my feet," he said. "My feet had boots on them. These feet are bare; I wonder whose they are? And where are my own feet?"

With that, he turned over and returned to his dreams, hoping to find his own feet.





Vuiko, the Bear

The Hutsul people have a story about the origin of the bear, who they call "The Big One," or "Vuiko," which means "Uncle."

There once was a miller, who took it into his head that he wanted to frighten God. Nobody knows why he wanted to do this. Perhaps he was a jokester, or perhaps he had a grievance against God.

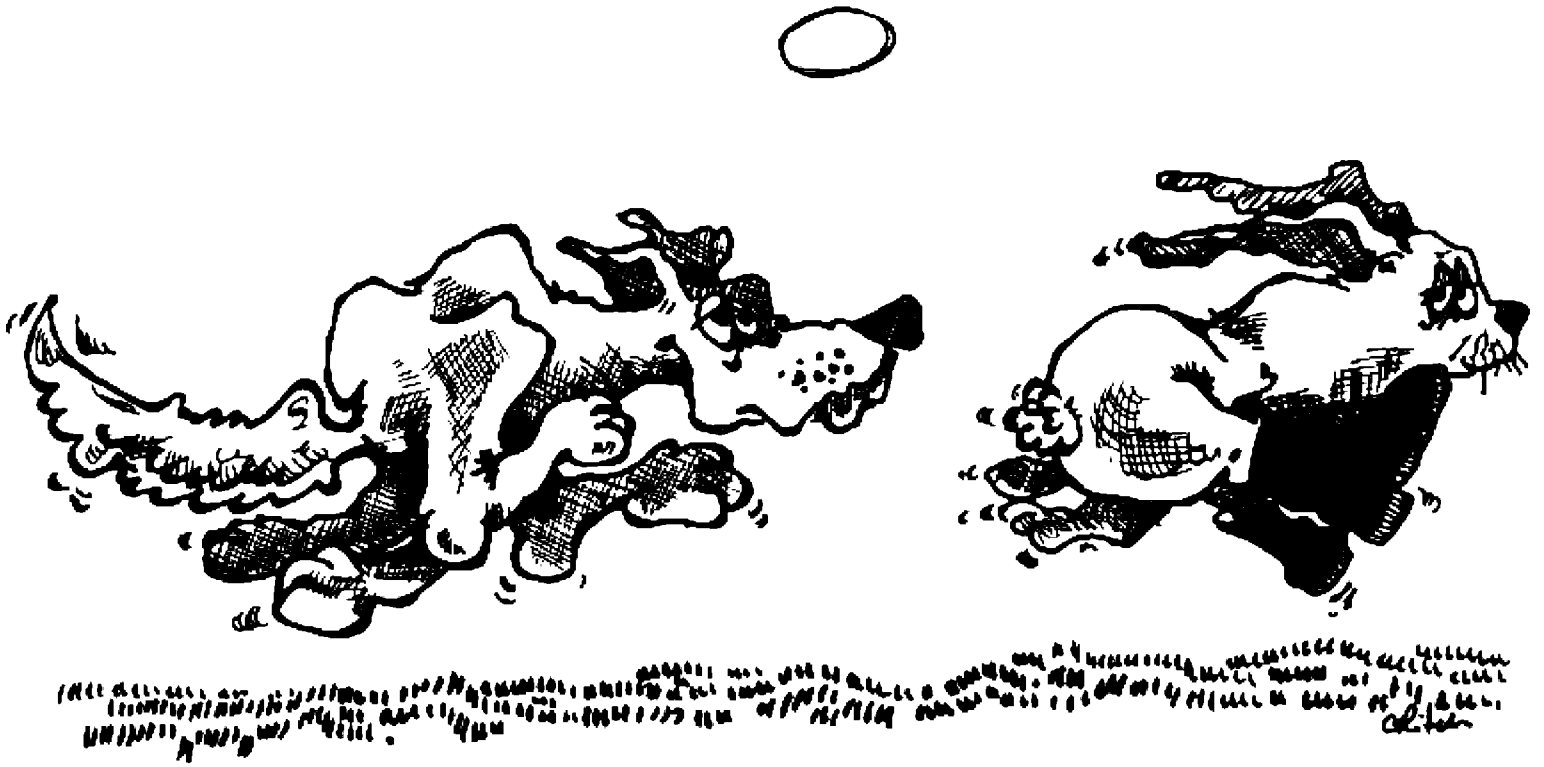
Whatever the reason, the miller turned his sheepskin coat inside out, which is a very powerful magical thing to do. He then hid under a bridge and waited for God to come by.

When God finally came along and was about to cross the bridge, the miller jumped out, growling and walking on all fours.

Although startled by the apparition, God hit the miller with a broom and said, "Get away from me, you bear."

At this, the miller turned into a bear!





Why Dogs Chase Rabbits

One day a dog left his home and went out into the wide world to get a job. He worked long and hard and finally took his wages and bought a lovely new pair of boots.

On his way home he met up with a rabbit who said, "Those are beautiful boots, indeed. May I try them on, please?"

The dog was so proud of the boots that he agreed, and he sat down to take them off.

The rabbit sat down next to the dog, pulled on the boots, and admired himself. Suddenly he jumped up and ran away.

And that is why dogs still chase rabbits. They are trying to get their boots back.





The Winged Maiden

A long, long time ago in a far-off land, a king and his wife had an only child, a son named Andriy. Andriy was an only child, and his parents doted on him.

Andriy was a handsome lad who loved beautiful things, and his mother bought him any fancy clothing or jewelry he desired.

The prince had sun-colored hair with curls that twined like serpents around his white face, blushing crimson cheeks, teeth like pearls and eyes as blue as the deep ocean. Any girl who so much as glanced at him would drown her heart for love of him.

Andriy, who was somewhat spoiled, was a bit of an odd character. He did not put his handsome looks to any good use, nor did he associate with others his age. He seemed to be always sad and in deep thought.

As Andriy grew older, his good looks increased, but he remained morose. One day his mother said to him, "My son, why are you always so sad? Why do you distance yourself from others? It is getting to be time that I had a daughter-in-law."

"Oh, Mother, there is no girl on this earth for me, and in my heart no hope. I would love to meet an extraordinary girl, even a spiritual being, but such does not exist. I fear I am fated to remain alone all my life."

If a young maiden, seeing Andriy, did not do something extraordinary, he completely ignored her, as if she were not even there.

If, however, a girl did somehow attract his attention and speak with him, things were even worse. He would consider the girl too sad, too happy, too talkative, or too badly dressed. It seemed that he was looking for any excuse to dismiss them.

The poor mother was deeply saddened to see and hear of this behaviour but, by now, she knew something of the mind of her son. In an effort to bring Andriy out of his melancholy, the mother consulted a vorozhka who lived nearby.

The vorozhka listened to the problem and mixed up a magic potion to make Andriy see young maids in a different way. His mother put the potion into his drink, but it had no effect at all. Andriy continued as he had been.

Despairing, the mother had to admit defeat. Perhaps it really was fated that the prince would remain single all his life. Her only hope was that in time he would grow out of his mood and act more like a normal young man.

In the villages of the kingdom, there was no girl who did not know of Andriy, and there was constant scheming and plotting to get his attention. No girl ever succeeded in obtaining more than one small meeting with him, and they all gave up after such rejection.

There was one young girl in one village, however, who did not give up. Nadia was a beautiful and intelligent but poor peasant girl, who was endowed with more than the usual amount of cunning. Her name, which means Hope, fit her well.

Nadia knew that Andriy had a favorite spot in the forest where he would wile away the time sunk in deep thought, and she made plans to meet him there and win his heart.

One fine morning Andriy went as usual to his spot in the forest, and he sat, as usual, on his favorite oak log. As he sat wrapped in thought, he heard a rustling in the forest behind him. He turned and saw an apparition.

There, in the clearing, stood a beautiful girl dressed in white, with long black braids falling down her back. And on her back were small silver wings.

Andriy leaped to his feet and froze in amazement, his heart beating furiously. Could this be the spiritual being he was so certain he would never find?

The maiden approached and said, "Kind sir, would you allow me to sit and rest a while?"

Andriy, unable to speak, gestured to the maiden to sit on the log and he sat next to her.

"I thank you, good sir. You would be right to refuse me, as this place is yours. However, I would find your friendship delightful, as I can see by your bearing that you have loftier thoughts than are to be found among the people with whom I live."

The enchanted prince hung on every word spoken by the winged maiden, and he stared at her beautiful face and at her wings.

Finally he found his voice and said, "Will you please allow me to know who you are?"

"Why would you want to know anything about a maiden named Nadia?" she asked.

The name pierced his heart. This was his spiritual dream come true!

"Forgive me my interest, but please allow me to inquire further. Why do you have wings? Do you fly?"

"Yes, there are times when I do fly. I was born with these wings, and they remind me that I must seek a higher ideal and not lower myself into common everyday matters."



After some moments the girl stood to depart, and Andriy also jumped up.

“Will I see you again?” he asked.

“Yes. I shall be here again tomorrow at this time,” said the girl, rustling her wings and tossing her hair. She took seven steps into the forest and disappeared from sight.

When the prince got home, his mother immediately saw a change in him. He was alive! On his lips there was a smile and in his eyes a bright spark of life.

Every day for seven days Andriy met the bewitching winged maiden in the forest. She had replaced all else in his dreams, whether he was awake or asleep.

On the seventh day, Andriy mustered all his courage and asked the winged maiden for her hand in marriage.

“You have awakened my heart,” he said, “and you have taken possession of it. I have lived in the clouds since I met you, and I want you for my partner for the rest of my life. Your answer will bring me either good fortune or everlasting sorrow, and I tremble at the thought of what your answer will be.”

“I cannot answer you now,” said the maiden. “I must consider all things, but I promise you an answer tomorrow.”

Neither of the two could rest that night, Andriy because he feared she might reject him,

and Nadia because she knew how close she was to realizing her dreams.

When they met the next day, Nadia said to Andriy, "It appears that you love me, and I know I love you. I will gladly become your wife, but know this: for my marriage to you, I must pay with my wings."

"Why is that?" cried Andriy, disappointed by this turn of events. He certainly wanted her for his wife, but with wings!

"It can be no other way," said Nadia. "The moment I promise to marry you I lose the right to have wings, and they will fade away, leaving only small traces of their existence. Such is my fate. When I consider that I must part with my wings, those emblems of chastity and purity, sadness stabs my heart. But, for you, for our pure love, I am willing to make the sacrifice."

Had he known this beforehand, Andriy may have never pursued matters this far. By now, however, it was too late, and he was madly in love with the maiden, wings or no.

Andriy extended his hand to the maiden and said, "Tomorrow, my love, meet me here. I shall return, and together we shall ask a blessing of our parents for our marriage."

Andriy felt sorry that Nadia would have to part with her wings, but he also considered himself lucky, as she had awakened in him an ocean of feeling he did not know existed.



“Mother!” Andriy cried as he entered the palace. “Tomorrow you will have a daughter-in-law with wings!”

The mother was taken by surprise, and feared that her son had lost his mind. Seeing her confusion, Andriy poured out the whole story to his overjoyed mother.

“Let her be winged or not,” she cried happily, “just let her be!”

In the morning Andriy flew to the forest, his great joy giving speed to his feet. He had not long to wait in his favorite spot before the maiden appeared, but with no wings.

“You see, my love,” she murmured, “your love has burnt my wings. You will see small marks on my back where they were.”

Tenderly, Andriy took her into his arms. He was so in love with this spiritual being of unknown origin, who had once had wings.

In a short time, Nadia and Andriy were in the palace, before the king and queen, who accepted Nadia with all their hearts.

Within a month, the two were married, to the astonishment of the village girls, who could not understand how this had come to pass.





The Young Man and the Eagle

In times long past, there was a soldier who lived to be one hundred years old, and he had never once been ill.

One day, however, he felt that his time had come and he called his son to his side.

“Soon I am going to depart from this earth, and I am leaving you my rifle to use in times of peace to shoot game for food. But listen: you must never kill an eagle.”

“Why not?” the son asked.

“Sit down, my son, and listen to my story. Many years have passed since I fought a dragon with six heads. He was a huge dragon and fierce. Every time I cut off one of his heads, the dragon would pick it up and put it back on its neck, where it would again grow fast.

“We fought for hours, neither able to get the better of the other, and we were both becoming weary. An eagle flew past, and the

dragon asked him to fetch some water before he died of thirst. Before the eagle could leave to get the water, however, I too called to him.

“‘Eagle,’ I said, ‘I beg of you, do not bring water. Instead, bring me some sand to sprinkle on the heads of the dragon as I cut them off. That will prevent them from growing back on the dragon, and I can then defeat him.’

“The eagle was not fond of the dragon and brought the sand, and I was able to kill the dragon and remain alive. I made a vow to protect all eagles, and have done so all my life. I ask only that you do the same.”

The son promised never to shoot an eagle, and the old soldier presently died, at peace with himself. After burying his father, the son took the rifle on his shoulder and set out to seek his fortune in the wide world.

That evening, as it was growing dark, the young man found himself in an open field. He saw a light shining high on a mountain, and he climbed toward it, eventually reaching a small house with a candle glimmering on the table inside. He looked in the window and saw twelve ruffians seated at the table playing with a golden apple.

One of the men inside saw the face at the window and pointed at the youth, saying, “Brothers! Who is this spying on our stolen treasures? Shall we slay him now or later?”

The young fellow, although he was in a bad spot, made his brain work quickly, and he thought that if he showed the robbers he was not afraid of them, they might let him live.

Accordingly, he raised his rifle and shot the golden apple out of the hand of the robber who held it. The apple shattered into many small pieces, but the robbers sat there and did not move a muscle.

The youth walked boldly through the door, and the biggest robber grabbed his shirt and picked him off the floor, glaring right into his eyes. "That apple was our most prized possession and, for destroying it, you should die immediately. However, since you are such a good shot, you may save your life by performing a task for us."

"What task might that be?" asked the lad.

"Beyond the third mountain is a dark palace with no windows, and we want to know what is in it. We think a devil lives there, but cannot find out for certain because there is an eagle guarding the palace gate. You must shoot the eagle so that we can enter the palace."

"And will you set me free if I can get you past the gate without firing a shot?" asked the young man.

The robbers were surprised at this and answered, "If you can do it any way at all, we will set you free."

Next morning, the young man stepped outside, put a handful of earth in each of his boots before he put them on, and set out for the palace. The robbers followed and hid nearby while the youth approached the gate.

When the eagle saw the young man, he screamed loudly and spread out his wings menacingly. The youth showed the eagle the earth in his boots and said, "Why do you scream at me? I am no threat to you; I am standing not on your soil but on my own."

The eagle became silent and calm, folded his wings, and went back to sleep, and the guards who had been awakened by the cries of the eagle also returned to their slumber.

The youth returned to the robbers and said, "There, now things should be easy. The eagle is asleep and will not bother us. But I shall go in first and see what I can see. Wait for me here, and I will call you when all is safe."

The youth went through the gate to a door, where he found a huge guard asleep and breathing blue flames from his mouth. He went further to a second door with an even bigger giant asleep, and the flames that came from his mouth were bright red.

He came to a third door, and the giant sleeping there was the biggest of all; the flames that poured out of his mouth were black.

Entering through that door, the youth found himself in a large room bright with sunlight which streamed in through a skylight. In the room was a bed, in which slept a lovely young maiden with a golden ring on her finger and a golden kerchief around her neck.

The youth fell in love with the maiden as soon as he saw her. Impulsively, he kissed her, and she awoke.

“How long have I slept?” she asked aloud. Then, seeing the youth, she asked him, “Who are you? What are you doing here?”

“I fear you have slept long,” said the lad. “I have come to wake you, princess, for princess you must be, and to take you away from this place of darkness.”

“The spell is broken!” the maiden cried. “Then it is you I am meant to marry! But let us flee before the devil arrives.”

“Where can we go?” the youth asked. “I saw only one gate, and there are twelve robbers hiding outside it.”

“The palace is enchanted,” she said. “Anyone who touches the walls will be stuck there until they are freed by the devil.”

The youth called to the robbers and had them all line up against the wall, where they became stuck fast.

The young man and the princess then ran through the gate and into the forest.

When the devil returned to the palace, he found the robbers and ate them. Then, seeing that the maiden was gone, he became so angry that he killed all of his guards.

The devil next ran toward the eagle, meaning to do the same to him, but the eagle flapped his wings and flew off, following the youth and the maiden.

Coming to a wide river, the youth and the maiden heard large wings in the air and, turning, saw the eagle flying toward them. Fearing that the eagle had been sent by the devil to catch them, the youth took aim with his rifle and shot the eagle dead.

Suddenly, with a roar, a deep dark pit appeared and the river sank into it. The devil flew out of the pit, seized the maiden and jumped back into the hole.

Before the hole could close, the youth shut his eyes and also jumped in. He found that he was in the Underworld, where witches lived in their huts. Because the youth was clever enough to follow the devil closely, the witches thought him to be a servant of the devil and they did not harm him.

Coming to the first house, the youth was approached by the witch, who said, "Welcome, Brother. Here is a glass of wine made from the blood of a bull. It will give you strength."



At the next house, the second witch also called him "Brother" and gave him two glasses of wine made from the blood of a bull.

The third witch called him "Brother" and gave him three glasses of the same wine. Though he felt somewhat lightheaded, he also felt that he had become very strong.

"Where has the devil gone, Sister?" he asked. "He has stolen my bride and run off."

"You will have difficulty finding him," replied the witch. "He is the Lord of the Underworld, but he also has a palace on earth where he can go if he wishes."

"I know the palace on earth, for I have been there," said the youth.

"In that case, to find him here, you must follow his tracks until you reach a gate leading into a mountain. As the devil feels completely secure in the Underworld, the gate is unlocked and unguarded. Though it is heavy, the wine has made you strong enough to open it easily."

Following the tracks of the devil to the mountain, the lad hid nearby until he saw the devil depart. He opened the gate and ran in, where he soon found the maiden. She was overjoyed to see him but, fearing that he might be killed, she begged him to leave her there and run away before the devil returned.

"I will wait for the devil," said the youth. "I have my rifle and fear nothing."

“But bullets cannot harm the devil, as he has no soul,” said the princess.

“We could vanquish him if we could destroy his strength,” said the lad. “Find out where his strength is hidden, and then we shall take care of him properly.”

“I shall try,” said the maiden.

The youth hid in the forest nearby and waited for a sign from the maiden. When the devil returned, she praised his strength and asked him where he kept it.

“Like any witch, it is in my broom,” he told her, laughing.

When he again left, the maiden placed a number of gold coins around the broom.

“What are the coins for, Princess?” the devil asked when he saw them.

“You said your great strength is in the broom,” she replied. “I was paying respect to it.”

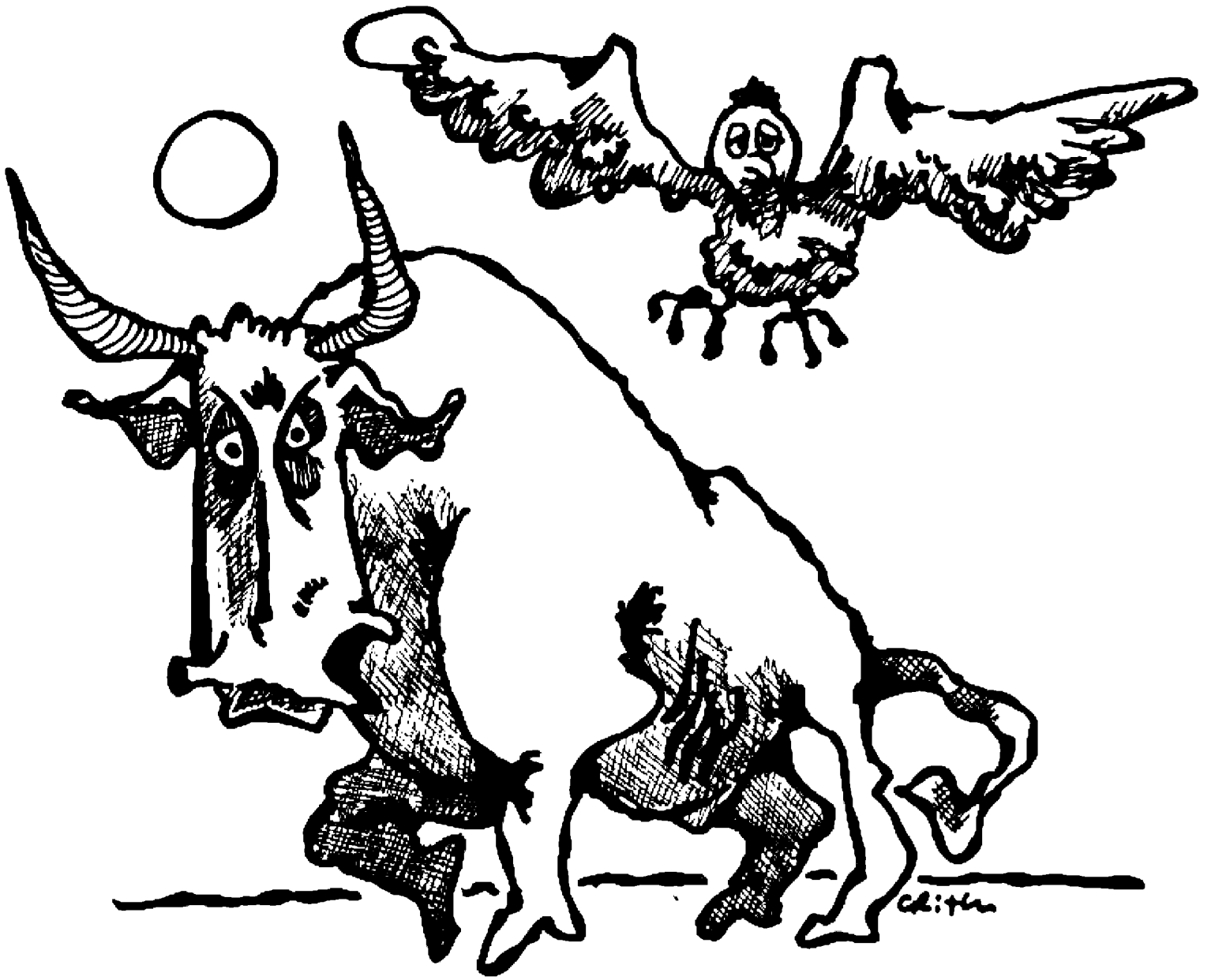
The devil burst into a loud, mean laughter so violent that the mountain shook.

“My strength is not in the broom, but in the pich,” he said.

The maiden at once threw the coins onto the pich. The devil became very angry at this.

“I only did it out of respect for your strength,” she said.

“Do not act so silly! I am strong because I have the heart of a bull!” he yelled, too angry to notice that his secret was out. He immediately



changed himself into a bull and, bellowing, ran through the gate into the forest.

The youth was waiting outside and, not knowing that the bull was really the devil, made no attempt to hide. Thus, when the bull charged him, he seized his rifle and shot the bull dead.

The maiden came running when she heard the shot, and she cried, "That is not a bull but the devil! We must cut him to pieces, lest he come back to life."

They cut the devil into pieces, which they sealed in an iron barrel and prepared to leave. Unable to find the road that led out of the Underworld, the youth went to visit the witches.

"There is a river to cross," said the witches. "An old eagle will ferry you over in his boat. The road from there is easy to follow, for it goes straight."

The youth became alarmed.

"What eagle operates the ferry?" he asked.

"In the world above, he was shot and killed not long ago. Since then, he has been ferrying the boat across the river here in the Underworld," replied the witches.

"It was I who shot him as the princess and I fled," said the lad, "although it was not something I wished to do. How can I now ask him to take us across?"

"There is one possibility," said one witch. "The eagle may not recognize you if you cross

one at a time. Since there were two of you together when he was shot, he may not link you separately with his death.”

As it was the only thing to do, the youth hid on the shore while the maiden was ferried across. He watched as she walked up the path to the earth above and, when the boat returned, he climbed in.

When the eagle saw the rifle the lad was carrying, he was so alarmed that he jumped back, and the boat was overturned.

In the commotion, the youth lost his grip on the rifle, and it spun away to fall to the bottom of the river. The eagle, no longer afraid, seized the youth in his claws and carried him across the river.

The maiden was waiting by the river, and the two embraced happily. They ran off and, as they neared the passage to the earth above, a dark cloud suddenly appeared, bringing with it a rain of fire and ashes. The eagle soared above and spread his wings to shield the lad and the maiden from the flames and, in saving their lives, lost his own.

Once free from the Underworld, the young man and the maiden were bathed in bright sunlight. At the kiss of the sun, the spell of the devil was broken forever, and she remembered everything of her previous life.

The two of them travelled to the palace where her father ruled, and great was the rejoicing. They were soon married and a feast was held to celebrate the wedding.

When the king died, the youth took his place as ruler, and his first decree was a law declaring that eagles were to be protected from harm forever.



Notes on the Tales

Page 11 Baba, Her Daughter and Her Dog

Sandra Fedoruk of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan spent her growing-up years close to her Baba Maria Yakimchuk, from whom she heard many stories, most of which she still remembers.

Some of the stories are true, some are sad, some teach us a lesson and still others are just for fun, like this one.

Page 15 Bend the Sapling

This story was translated by Norman Harris of Endeavour, Saskatchewan. He found it in an old book of folk tales called *Kozak Dorosh*.

Mr Harris has translated or collected many of the tales found in this series of books, and we are grateful to him for his fine work.

Page 21 The Birth of the Pike

This story is found in several collections. One of the best of the retellings, found in a book called *Tales for an Unknown City*, is by Ted Potochniak of Toronto, Ontario.

In some collections, this story is called a Russian folk tale. Often, it is impossible to tell

where many stories originated, as they travel over borders so freely, adapting themselves to the storytellers and their personalities. Some stories appear to have counterparts in all the Slavic cultures, and some in the world in general, such as the Aesop fables.

The stories I include in this collection come to me either in the Ukrainian language, translated from Ukrainian or other languages, or are told to me in English by Ukrainian people. Some stories are identified as Ukrainian by the people who tell them.

Thus, some stories may not appear to be Ukrainian, but I am taking the chance of including some non-Ukrainian tales among the rest. I would rather err on the side of caution.

Page 27 The Crane and the Fox

Not a common tale, this one is found in only some collections. It does at least teach us not to try to be what we are not.

Page 31 The Devil Under the Bridge

This is another wonderful story from Mary Shewchuk of Vegreville, Alberta. Mary died in 2001, but her memory lives on. We should be grateful to her for sharing her stories.

Page 37 Durak

Found in many collections in many languages, this story celebrates the noodleheads to be found in every society.

Page 45 The Fool and the Magic Sopilka

This story was translated from a Ukrainian book which was published during the Soviet occupation of Ukraine. It is represented in the book as a normal Ukrainian folk tale, but it displays the usual Soviet disregard for the true state of affairs in Ukraine.

Most obvious is the Soviet anti-clerical theme, which attempts to portray all religious people as fools or “anti-revolutionaries.”

Page 55 The Herdsman

A story from Mary Shewchuk. Many stories she has passed along are not found anywhere else, and we are thankful for her dedication in passing the stories on to us.

Page 63 How Baba Outwitted the Devil

This story is similar to others involving animals who plant a garden together. It also has elements of adventures with devils, most of whom are not any too bright.

Page 69 How the Carpathian Mountains
Were Born

Found in a few story collections, this one also originated among the Hutsul people who live in the Carpathian Mountains.

The Hutsuls, due to their relative isolation, are some of the people lucky enough to retain their customs and traditions longer than others who were subjected to the policies of the various occupying forces who ruled much of Ukraine for so many years.

Page 79 The Language of the Animals

Several collections in various languages retell versions of this story, some of which contain unique elements, while others share all the events in the story.

This again shows how stories change with the personality and whims of the storyteller. This version was compiled from several available in other books.

Page 85 The Rooster

One of Mary Shewchuk's stories. Many of her stories contain details of the folk beliefs and way of life of the Ukrainian people. Such stories are a valuable source of information.

Page 93 Stabbed the Wind

Another story from Norman Harris, from the book *Kozak Dorosh*. This story is not found in any other collection I have seen. Once again, it could be that the person who wrote down the story got it from the last remaining storyteller who knew the story.

Page 101 Strange Feet

Some stories are so short as to be almost jokes. Most such stories are more for entertainment rather than for teaching.

This story is found in a few collections, both in English and in Ukrainian, and it is a very short story each time it appears.

Page 103 Vuiko the Bear

In the Carpathian Mountains, the Hutsul people believe strongly in the spirits who control their lives. The Hutsuls have many stories which explain things in Nature, and this is one of them.

Page 105 Why Dogs Chase Rabbits

This story was told to me, along with a couple of others, by Vera Sexsmith of Edmonton, who got the stories originally from her father, John

Dobinsky. He used to be a great storyteller, entertaining his family for hours at a time.

Page 107 The Winged Maiden

Norman Harris translated this story from a book called *Graf Rozbiynyk*. Mr Harris has been collecting local and Canadian material concerning Ukrainians for many years, and I am pleased to be able to share some of his work with everyone.

Page 117 The Young Man and the Eagle

Not a common story, this one nevertheless contains many elements of a typical Ukrainian folk tale. In it we find a poor young peasant who encounters witches, magic and devils, and who ends up marrying the princess.

Stories such as this provide an escape for people who have a hard life; although they cannot perform these wonderful deeds, they can certainly tell stories about people who do perform them.

—Danny Evanishen, Publisher



In this glossary:

[a] is pronounced as in far

[e] is pronounced as in get

[ee] is pronounced as in feet

[i] is pronounced as in sit

[o] is pronounced as between got and goat

[oo] is pronounced as in loose

[y] is pronounced as in yes

[kh] is pronounced as in Scottish loch

[zh] is pronounced as in vision

Pronunciation Guide & Glossary

baba [bá-ba] grandmother, old woman

durak [doo-rák] silly or foolish person

Kupalo [koo-pá-lo] ancient Ukrainian
midsummer festival

kvas [kvas] drink made from bread crumbs

pich [peech] clay or brick oven or stove

sopilka [so-peél-ka] flute

starosta [sta-rós-ta] elder, head of village

veleten [vé-le-ten] giant

vorozhka [vo-rózh-ka] wise woman, fortune-
teller, healer

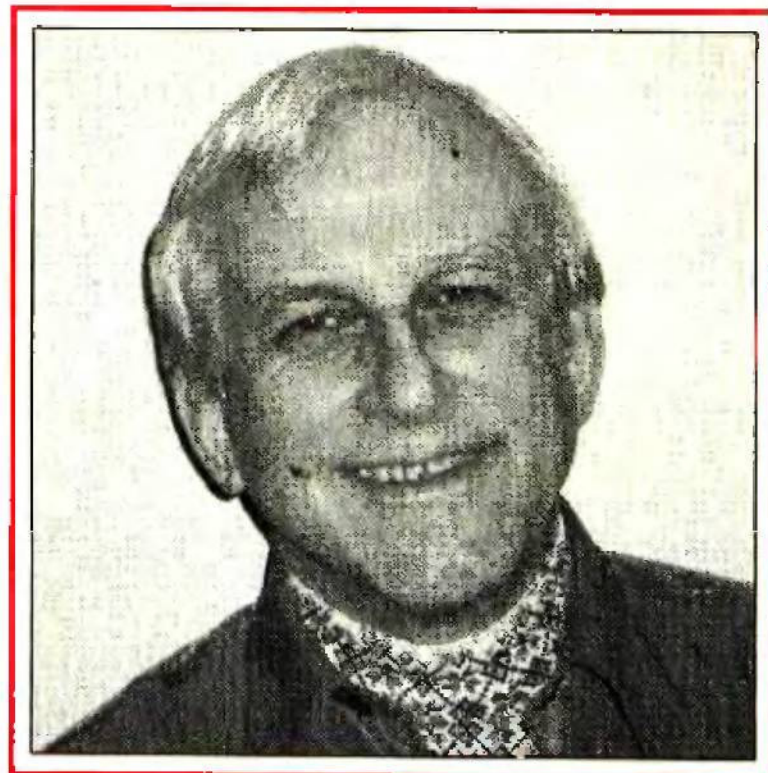
Durak

and Other Ukrainian Folk Tales Retold in English

This is the tenth book in a series which will contain all the Ukrainian folk tales available. There are thousands of such tales to be collected and retold; this volume represents a tiny portion of the number.

Durak contains some old favorites and some tales that are less well-known. All are retold in a lively and entertaining manner that is sure to please both young and old. The delightful illustrations add another dimension to the enjoyment of the tales.

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