

THE FIREBIRD

BILL AND GILL PLAY MUSIC AS THE AUDIENCE ENTER.

BILL Hello.

GILL Hello.

BILL I'm Ivan, Tsar of the Land of Plenty.

GILL And I'm Yelyena, the Queen.

BILL And the story we're going to tell
Is of what happened to us
When we were only a little older than you.

My father was a Tsar too.
He was well loved by his people.

But suddenly he started getting ill.

My brothers and I had no idea why.

What's wrong father?

GILL I'm tired, Ivan.

BILL You look pale.

GILL I don't feel very bright.

BILL My two brothers wouldn't let him rest.

Come on dad, give us a fight.
Come on, we're stronger than you.
Come on.

GILL Boys, boys – careful with me.

BILL I tried to stop my brothers being so rough.

Careful – he's not well.

He's just pretending, they'd say.
He's just pretending.

But he wasn't just pretending.

As the weeks went by so he got weaker.
Every week
weaker than the week before.

GILL Listen my sons
to what your father has to tell you.
Listen and take heed.

The golden apples on my golden apple tree
Are disappearing one by one.

Every time an apple disappears
I feel my life slipping away.

As I grow weak so the earth withers.
If this continues, the world will die.

BILL Who's stealing the apples, father?

GILL I don't know who's stealing the apples, Ivan.
The soldiers talk of a blinding light,
They can't even see the thief
Let alone catch him.

BILL I'll catch him, said Peter
my eldest brother.
I'll catch him, dad.
Just you see.

GILL That night Peter kept watch in the orchard.

The golden apples glistened in the moonlight.
The church clocks in the city struck eleven.

Quarter past eleven.
Half past eleven.
A quarter to midnight.

Peter's eyes began to close.

Suddenly
A flash of light
Peter woke
an apple was gone
and a shooting star lit up the sky.

BILL I let you down, dad.
The thief came and stole the apple
and I couldn't stop him.
I let you down.

GILL You tried.
The thief was too clever.
But you tried.

BILL Let me have a go, dad
said Dmitri
my middle brother
Let me have a go,
I won't let you down.
I'll catch the thief.

GILL Thank you Dmitri,
Yes, you have a go.
You try to catch the thief.

So later that night
Dmitri kept watch in the orchard.

The golden apples glistened in the moonlight.

The church clocks in the city struck eleven.

Quarter past eleven.
Half past eleven.
A quarter to midnight.

Dmitri's eyes began to close.

A flash of light
Dmitri woke
An apple was gone
and a shooting star lit up the sky.

BILL I feel so stupid, dad.
I got all sleepy
and the thief came and stole the apple
And I feel so stupid.

GILL You did your best, Dmitiri.
But the thief's cleverer than us all.
You did your best.

BILL Let me try, father.

GILL You're too young, Ivan.
You'll never keep awake.

BILL Let me try.
We've got to catch the thief
Otherwise you'll die.
Let me try.

GILL You can try, Ivan.
You can try.

BILL So now it was my turn to watch
in my father's orchard

Gotta catch the thief
Gotta thatch the kief
Gotta thief the catch.
Gotta kief the thatch

What's that?

GILL A bright light.

BILL In the distance.

GILL Growing bigger.

BILL Getting nearer.

Flames burning.

A creature of flame
heading for the golden apples.

Stop thief!

I grab at the whirling flames
and find myself clutching a burning feather in my hand.

The creature has gone.
And with it, another apple.

Oh father
how can you forgive me.
I saw the thief
a creature of flame
I grabbed at the thief
and tore out a feather
but the thief escaped
with another golden apple
leaving you weaker than before.

GILL The creature of flame
is the Firebird, Ivan.
The Firebird flies like a thief in the night
and steals my golden apples.
But why?

BILL Yes, why?

GILL I don't understand.

BILL Who can explain?

GILL The Wise Woman of the Wild Woods.

BILL Who?

GILL The Wise Woman.
Go to her in the wild woods.
Go to her, Ivan
with your brothers.
Ask her.

BILL So I went with my brothers to the wild woods.
And we called to the wise woman.

Wise Woman of the Wild Woods come to us.

GILL Come to us.
Help us to understand.

BILL Help us to understand
what's happening to our father.

GILL Who calls me away from the tangles of the thicket?
Who calls me away from the wildness of the wood?
Who calls me away from the brambles and the berries?
Who howls my name in the wind?

BILL Wise woman of the wild woods
It is I,
Ivan,
the son of the Tsar
who calls you.

GILL Why do you call me?
 What is it you would know?

BILL Our father is dying.
 The Firebird steals the golden apples from the orchard.
 Why is this happening?
 What can be done?
 Will you help us, please?

GILL I'll help you.
 I'll show you what is happening.

 The Firebird is not your enemy

 She is forced to this wickedness by Lodgoth
 Tsar of the Frozen Wastes

BILL You fill our hearts and minds
 with fear
 wise woman of the wild woods.

GILL By day the Firebird is imprisoned
 in a cage of gold
 By night she must fly
 to perform the secret bidding
 of Lodgoth the Sorcerer

BILL What must we do?

GILL Free the Firebird
 from the clutches of Lodgoth

 His Palace of Ice lies to the East
 many weeks journey from here

 You must fetch the Firebird
 to your father's palace
 then the beat of her wings
 will warm your father's heart
 and restore him to health.

BILL Which path must we follow, O Wise One?
 And what must we take with us on our journey?

GILL These things are for you to decide

 You'll meet with strangers on the way

 Some are friends
 some are enemies

 Be sure to discover which are which

 Take care
 and farewell

BILL So we set off on our journey to the east
 leaving our father ill in his palace.

 I'm going in front, said Dmitri

my middle brother.

GILL No, I'm the eldest, said Peter
so I'm going in front.

BILL It doesn't matter who goes in front

GILL said Ivan

BILL as long as we get there.

And we walked for an hour

GILL or a day

BILL or a week

Until we came to a tree
at the side of the road

GILL where a Raven hung
trapped by her leg
in the cleft of a branch

Help me

BILL What's that? Who's there?

GILL Help me. Oh help me.

BILL It's a talking raven.

GILL Help me. Please help me.

BILL She's trapped in the tree.

GILL Help me. I can't last out much longer.

BILL Who trapped you in this tree?

GILL An agent of Lodgoth trapped me.
His name is Zamwane.
He left me here to die.

BILL Why has Zamwane done this thing?

GILL Because I was waiting to warn you.

BILL Warn us of what?

GILL Please help me.

BILL Warn us of what?

GILL Help me from this tree before I die.

BILL Peter. What do you think?

GILL It's a trick.

BILL I'm not so sure.

GILL The Wise Woman warned us.
Some are friends
Some are enemies.
Be sure to discover which are which.

BILL This raven is our friend.
I'm sure of it.
Quick, help me.

GILL No way.
Ravens are pants.

IVAN CLIMBS UP

BILL Right now, keep still while I lever these branches apart.

THE RAVEN IS RELEASED

GILL Oh that's better.
You've no idea how uncomfortable that was.

BILL Here, have some water.

GILL Thank you Ivan.
You've saved my life.
Maybe one day I'll do the same for you.

BILL What do you mean?

GILL Never mind.
You're searching for the Firebird.

BILL How do you know?

GILL I'm a raven.
We ravens are entrusted with many secrets.

BILL Who's your master?

GILL I have no master.

BILL Then who tells you these secrets?

GILL That's a secret.
But listen now to my warning.
Listen and take heed.

Not far from here is the town of Valpurgis.

The people have a party to celebrate the harvest.

The drink is strong, the music loud and the dancing wild.

But you must keep your strength for the journey.

Don't drink the drink or you'll forget.

Keep your ears stopped up in case you hear the music.

If you hear the music you'll start to dance.

And once you join the dance
you might never stop.

Take care
and farewell.

BILL And before I could say another word
the raven had vanished.

THE RAVEN VANISHES

We continued on our journey towards the East
where the sun rises.

THE BROTHERS WALK TOGETHER

And we walked for an hour

GILL or a day

BILL or a week.

Till in the distance
We heard

GILL What?

BILL the sound of celebration.

We're nearing the town of Valpurgis
the harvest party's in full swing.
We must do as the Raven said
and stop up our ears.

GILL And this they did.

THEY STICK THEIR FINGERS IN THEIR EARS.

And very silly they looked too.

BILL But we couldn't hear the music.

It was quite a party.

Bonfires burning,
flames flickering

GILL A mysterious looking man
pushed his way through the crowds
towards the boys.

Welcome friends
welcome to the Feast of Valpurgis.
The fires burn bright
and we dance in the flames.

My name is Zamwane
your host for this evening.

BILL Sorry. Can't hear.
Got paper stuffed in my ears, I'm afraid.

GILL So I see.

BILL But we're on the look out
for a baddy named Zamwane.

GILL Ah, why's that?

BILL Don't ask why.
It's a secret.

GILL Is it really.
And are these your brothers?

BILL They're my brothers.

GILL I bet you're thirsty.
Here, have a drink.

BILL Now, no sooner had Zamwane offered my brothers a drink
then they pulled the paper out of their ears
they heard the music
and they started to dance.

No, stop.
Peter, Dmitri.
Remember what the raven said.

You must save your energy for the journey.

GILL Don't tell us what to do, right?
We're older than you.

BILL I went off to find a bed for the night.

My brothers stayed at the party
drinking and dancing.

GILL And they danced and they drank
And they drank and they danced
all night long

BILL Until at last
the bonfires began to die
and the smoke to drift

GILL And the sky grew grey as the day dawned

BILL the music came to an end

GILL And the brothers sank thankfully down to the ground to sleep

BILL & GILL Wicked!

BILL I woke refreshed after a good night's sleep

and returned to fetch my brothers.

We must go,

GILL Leave us alone.

BILL It's time to go.

GILL Can't you see we're exhausted.

BILL I let you sleep in as long as I could.

GILL We're not coming.

BILL What do you mean?

GILL What's the point?

BILL We've got to find the Firebird. Save father.

GILL It's a waste of time.

BILL A waste of time? Saving father?

GILL He's old anyhow.
He keeps forgetting things.
Keeps getting ill.

BILL But he's our father.

GILL You're a silly little boy who doesn't know anything.

BILL Maybe. But I'm going to find the Firebird.
I'm going to save our father and the world.
And if you won't come with me then I'll do it on my own.

GILL What a hero.
Scram little brother.
Scarper off to the Frozen Wastes.

And if you're not back in two months time
we'll have a party to celebrate.

BILL And so we parted company.

GILL Peter and Dmitri stayed in Valpurgis
often drinking, sometimes dancing
with never a thought for the Tsar their father.

BILL I crossed the border
that separates the Land of Plenty
from the Frozen Wastes.
and continued on my journey
towards Lodgoth's Palace of Ice in the east.

I'd walked for an hour or a day or a week

when suddenly I became aware
that I was being followed.

Something as silent as a shadow
was dogging my every step.

When I stopped, the creature stopped.

When I hurried on
the creature hurried after me.

My heart was pounding
my back itching
waiting for the attack I knew was to come.

Finally I stopped and turned
to face my terror.

A wolf.
A giant wolf from the Fearsome Forest.

GILL Good evening.

BILL Good evening.

GILL I can talk.

BILL So I hear.

GILL A wolf that can talk.

BILL Yes.

GILL You're not surprised?

BILL No.

GILL Oh.
I'm here to help.

BILL I know.

GILL Clever-clogs.

BILL No, I'm not a clever-clogs
I know you're here to help
but I don't know anything else.
How do I find the Firebird?

GILL Straight to the point.
How to find the Firebird.
The Firebird is held captive by Lodgoth the Sorcerer.
Tsar of the Frozen Wastes.

BILL Yes I know.

GILL Look, Ivan, you could at least pretend.
It would help me feel useful.

BILL I'm sorry Vanya,
the Wise Woman of the Wild Woods told us.
But she didn't say how to get there.
Or what to do when I do.

GILL Do what?

BILL Do get there. Vanya?

GILL Yes?

BILL How do I know your name?

GILL Don't worry about it.
Look, you need transport.
Lodgoth's palace lies through the forest
over the lake
and beyond the mountains.

BILL Quite a journey.

GILL Certainly is. And speed is of the essence.

BILL Father grows weaker every day.

GILL Precisely.

BILL So?

GILL So?

BILL What form of transport?

GILL You mean there's something you don't know?

BILL There's plenty I don't know.
Please tell me Vanya.

GILL The Horse with the Silver Mane.

BILL With the Silver Mane.

GILL Indeed.

BILL Able to race through forests.

GILL Precisely.

BILL Swim across lakes.

GILL Certainly.

BILL Leap over mountains.

GILL Quite right. So?

BILL So?

GILL So?

BILL So?

GILL So how do you make the Horse with the Silver Mane?

BILL Make it do what?

GILL Not make it do anything.
 Just make it.
 How do you create it?

BILL Create a horse?

GILL That's what I said.

BILL I don't know what you're talking about.

GILL Good.
 Now listen, little Ivan.
 Listen and take heed.

 You see this mountain in front of us?
 Capped with ice and snow?

BILL I do.

GILL You see how the moonlight streams from behind the clouds?

BILL I do.

GILL You see how the moonbeams strike the mountain,
 bouncing off the ice,
 sparkling in the snow?

BILL Indeed I do.

GILL You must climb the mountain Ivan
 scale the rocks
 till you reach the snows

 You must harness the moonbeams that strike the ice

 In this way you will make your Silver Horse
 that will carry you through the forest
 over the lake
 and beyond the mountains

 I shall wait for you here.

 And Ivan.

BILL Yes.

GILL I have something for you.

BILL A sword!

GILL How do you know? It's meant to be a surprise.

BILL If I'm going to be a hero, I've got to have a sword, haven't I.

GILL Well here it is. The mighty sword Humdinger.

VANYA PRESENTS THE MIGHTY SWORD

It will guard you at all times.

Take care and farewell.

BILL And so
 with the mighty sword Humdinger
 strapped to my waist
 I began to climb the side of the mountain

GILL His fingers clutch for cracks in the rock

BILL My hands are raw
 my muscles ache

GILL As he nears the summit
 he loses his footing

 He slips and slithers to the cliff edge

BILL Hanging by my fingernails
 I haul myself up

 There in front of me the moonlight
 shining on the glacier
 the moonbeams playing on the ice

GILL He inches forward to clutch them in his grasp

BILL they skip away out of my reach

GILL Again he slides towards the streaming moonlight

BILL once more the moonbeams slip through my fingers
 like quicksilver

 How can I harness the moonshine?
 How can I capture the light?

GILL He gazes at the ice
 that shines like a mirror
 reflecting the moonlight
 straight back to the sky

 and a thought comes to him

 He draws his sword of steel
 the blade so bright
 that he sees his own face

 he catches a moonbeam that leaps from the ice
 reflecting it back where it came

 the beam is trapped between ice and steel

 the more the moonbeam tries to escape
 the brighter the light that illumines the mountain

 the light grows stronger
 the sword begins to sing
 the ice to crack

brighter
louder

Until...

GILL I, Hrothga, Horse of the Silver Mane
am here to answer your bidding

I am not used to being harnessed by an earth creature
but you trapped me in the moonlight
and I must obey

BILL I, Ivan, Prince of the Land of Plenty
have harnessed you Hrothga

I bring you here because my need is great

Lodgoth the Sorcerer has captured the Firebird

He steals the golden apples from the Land of Plenty
My father will die and the world will wither
unless the Firebird is freed

You must carry me, Hrothga, to Lodgoth's Palace of Ice
in the Frozen Wastes

GILL I shall obey
glad to join you
in the fight against Lodgoth

BILL First we must rejoin Vanya
at the foot of the mountain

GILL Vanya?

BILL My friend. He is a wolf.

GILL A wolf?

BILL Yes, a wolf. You're not afraid?

GILL No, of course not
but wolves have claws
and teeth
and this terrible smell ...

BILL After all that fuss you're just a coward.

GILL No one calls me a coward and gets away with it.

BILL Then show me what we're made of, Hrothga.
Back down the mountain to meet Vanya.

GILL Very well, young Earth Prince.
Climb on my back and let's see how brave you are.

BILL So up I climbed
onto the broad back of Hrothga

GILL No sooner had he settled than the horse leapt
from the top of the peak

BILL diving down down through the night

GILL plunging down down through the pine forest

BILL helter skelter down the face of the cliff

GILL landing with a mighty thump
at the foot of the mountain

BILL Vanya the wolf was not best pleased with Hrothga.
You could have killed him Hrothga.
Do that again and I'll bite your fetlocks.

GILL No, please Vanya. I won't. I promise.

BILL We've no time for games.
If Lodgoth succeeds there'll be no more games ever again.
We must go.

GILL You're quite right, Vanya.
Come on Ivan
up you climb.

BILL And off we raced through the Fearsome Forest.
I rode bareback
twisting the mane of moonlight in my fingers.
Vanya ran beside us,
Wolf and horse
each trying to outrun the other.

And on we ran
till at last we stood at the shores of the Great Lake.

GILL We stand at the shores of the Great Lake.

BILL Yes so I see.
Why have we stopped?
We must head onwards to the Palace of Ice.

GILL You have another task to perform, Ivan.

BILL I do?

GILL Yes you do.

BILL What is it?

GILL You must persuade someone else to join us.

BILL Who?

GILL The Princess Yelyena.

BILL The fairest princess in the world.

GILL You've met her?

BILL No.
But if we need her then she must be the fairest princess in the world.

GILL Very clever.

BILL Where is this princess, Vanya?

GILL On the Island of Eternal Spring, Ivan
in the middle of this lake.

BILL Why do we have need of her?

GILL Lodgoth is in love with Yelyena the Fair.
He would give us the Firebird if she were to marry him.

BILL We can't force the Princess to marry Lodgoth.

GILL It is your task to persuade her to do so.
Of her own free will.

BILL Tie this poor young girl to Lodgoth for ever?

GILL It's the only way to save your father and the world.
One more thing.

BILL Isn't there always.

GILL The Great Lake is full of giant water snakes
and other monsters of the deep.

BILL I hate snakes. Specially giant water ones.

GILL If you show any fear they will crush you in their coils.

BILL That's very cheerful.

GILL Courage my friend.
They are only there if you are afraid.
Mount up and in we go.

BILL Once more I climbed onto the broad back
of Hrothga of the Silver Mane
and we splashed into the water.

What's that?

GILL What's what?

BILL Something tickling my toes.

GILL Just your imagination.

BILL What's that?

GILL What's what?

BILL Something nibbling my knees.

GILL Don't be afraid.

BILL I'm not. Really I'm not.

There's nothing tickling my toes.
Nothing nibbling my knees.
Nothing at all.
It's going to bite, I know it.
It's going to bite.
Help!

THE SERPENT

GILL Don't be afraid, Ivan.
Don't be afraid.
The serpent only has strength if you are afraid.

Be brave and the serpent has no power.
Gaze with courage into the serpent's eyes.

Courage Ivan. Courage my friend.

Think of your father Ivan. Think of your father.

BILL My father. Yes.

GILL And Ivan gazed into the eyes of the monster
and the serpent lost his power
and loosened his grip

then Ivan drew his sword
and he struck the serpent in the neck

and the waters of the lake
burbled and boiled and glooped and glugged.

And the lake was filled with a stinking darkness.

BILL Thank goodness that's over. What a stench! I'm covered in bits of snake.

GILL We all are.

BILL Wow! Where are we, Vanya?

GILL Good question.
We have reached the Island of Eternal Spring.

BILL Look at that butterfly.

GILL We must find Yelyena the Fair.

BILL Where is she Vanya?

GILL I've no idea.
But this isn't a big island.
She can't be far.

BILL No, she can't be far.

GILL I suggest you take a look.

BILL Good idea.

Take a look.
I've never smelt such wonderful flowers.

GILL And this at last is where I come into the story.
Because I, of course, am Yelyena the Fair.

I was just a young girl when all this happened.

As I walked one day through a meadow of flowers
breathing the perfumes of Eternal Spring
I heard a sound I'd never heard before.

Hello.

BILL Hello.

GILL. Who are you?

BILL Who are you?

GILL I asked first.

BILL I can't remember.

GILL Why are you here?

BILL I don't know. And I don't really care.

GILL Did Lodgoth send you?

BILL Lodgoth? Lodgoth!
Now I remember.
I must speak with Yelyena the Fair.

GILL Is she expecting you?

BILL Not exactly.

GILL And what is it you want to say?

BILL I can only say it to her.

GILL And your not sent from Lodgoth?

BILL Certainly not.

GILL Go on then.

BILL Go on what?

GILL Say it.

BILL Only to her.

GILL I am her, you idiot.

BILL You?

GILL Yes.

BILL But...

GILL What's the problem?

BILL You're not fair. You're dark.

GILL Don't be stupid please.
Fair doesn't mean blonde.
Fair means beautiful.

BILL And you are beautiful.
Definitely - very fair meaning beautiful.

GILL Thank you. And you?

BILL Me? Oh no, I'm not beautiful.

GILL No, twit. Who are you.

BILL I remember now.
I'm a Prince.
Prince Ivan.
From across the lake and back through the Fearsome Forest.

GILL And what is it you want?

BILL Nothing.

GILL Nothing?

BILL Nothing. I've changed my mind.

GILL What was it you wanted before you changed your mind?

BILL I wanted you to marry Lodgoth.

GILL So you were sent by Lodgoth.

BILL No, not at all.
You see,
he sends the Firebird
as a thief in the night
to steal the golden apples from our orchard

My father grows weak
and the world begins to wither

I must release the Firebird
to save my father's life.

GILL Why did you want me to marry Lodgoth.

BILL If you were to marry Lodgoth
He would give up the Firebird straightaway.

GILL Me marry Lodgoth?

BILL It was a stupid idea. I'm so sorry.

GILL And what happens if I don't?

BILL I don't know.
To fight him his useless.
There's no future for the world
unless the Firebird is released.

GILL I have everything I want on this Island.
I have nothing more important to decide
than when to get up,
when to eat
and when to go to bed.
Then you arrive
and you ask me to save the world.

BILL No, I'm not asking.
I was going to but I'm not.

GILL And I'll do it.
But why?
Why on earth?

BILL Yes, why?

GILL For you.

BILL For who?

GILL For you.

BILL No time to say more.

Together we scrambled onto the broad back
of Hrothga of the Silver Mane

GILL and the mighty Horse galloped away
towards the Mountains of the East

BILL with Vanya the Wolf at his heels

GILL The Mountains of the East
rose high and steep in front of us

BILL drawing nearer and nearer
faster and faster

GILL Hrothga can never climb these mountains,
I said,
what will we do?

BILL Hold hard and here we go.

GILL With one mighty bound the horse left the earth

BILL with faithful Vanya still at his heels

GILL and soared up up upwards past the stars
leaving the snow capped mountain peaks far below

BILL The journey may have lasted a second

GILL or a minute

BILL or an hour

GILL But before we had time to think ...

BILL Look. Below us. The Palace of Ice.
Down we go to find Lodgoth
Prepare for landing.

GILL The snows of the Frozen Wastes
raced towards us.

BILL & GILL Here we goooooooooo!

THEY CRASH LAND

BILL Hrothga was most apologetic.

GILL Terribly sorry about that.
Going a bit faster than I thought.

BILL Vanya, as usual
was full of advice.

GILL Remember Ivan.
Say nothing to anger him.
He is more powerful than you know.

BILL And I thought my heart would burst.
I can't go through with this Yelyena.

GILL What are you talking about Ivan?

BILL I can't leave you here with Lodgoth.
I love you, Yelyena.

GILL And I love you, Ivan.
But we have the world to save, remember.

GILL & BILL Lodgoth!

BILL ... came striding into the Chamber of Ice.

GILL Ivan drew his sword
and hid Yelyena behind him.
Behind me Yelyena.

BILL So, Ivan, we meet at last.
Tell me, young Prince,
why you and your companions invade my Frozen Wastes.

GILL I'm here to save my father.

BILL In the autumn of his life the apples fall.

GILL The apples don't fall, Lodgoth.
They are stolen by the Firebird on your orders.

BILL The north wind doth blow and we shall have snow.

And how you shall all suffer then.
Poor things.
For this winter will last for ever.

GILL We are to make sure that it doesn't.
We are here to set the Firebird free.

BILL And how, young Prince, do you propose to free her?
You and this flea-bitten wolf.
And this puny little pony.
And who is this delectable creature
hiding behind your back?

GILL Nothing to do with you Lodgoth.

You ask how I propose to win the Firebird.
The answer is simple.
I am here to take her from you.
And if you try to stop me then we must fight.
I am younger and stronger than you, Lodgoth.
And I have already proved my courage
in my battle with the serpent of the Great Lake.

BILL You're a most amusing young man, Ivan.
You've had a bit of a wrestle with some poor reptile
And now you think yourself ready to fight with Lodgoth?

Let's see how this tickles your fancy.

A ONE-SIDED FIGHT WHICH IS ABOUT TO END IN THE
DEMISE OF OUR HERO WHEN:

GILL Stop!

YELYENA REVEALS HERSELF

BILL Yelyena! Yelyena the Fair.
I have waited long to welcome you to my palace.

GILL I come to offer myself in marriage to you,
Master of the Frozen Wastes,
if ...

BILL If?

GILL If you will release the Firebird.

BILL Release the Firebird?

GILL Yes.

BILL I was ready for Ivan.
Ready for him to come boasting and bragging
and spoiling for a fight.
But the Princess Yelyena I didn't expect.
And I certainly didn't expect this lovely flower
to offer herself as my bride.

GILL I am yours, Lodgoth,
if you will give up the Firebird.

BILL My precious flower bride.
In exchange for my precious fire bird.
Do you come to me of your own free will?

GILL I do.

BILL To love, honour and obey?

GILL No Lodgoth.
Not to love you.
That I cannot do.

BILL But of your own free will?

GILL Yes. My own free will.

BILL Then come to me, my precious rose-petal.
Come to me.

SHE GOES TO HIM

LODGOOTH RELEASES THE FIREBIRD FROM HER CAGE

Take the bird of fire.
She makes this place too devilish hot for my liking anyway.
Take her.
Tomorrow is our wedding day.

GILL Take her Ivan.

BILL Never.

GILL For the sake of your father.

BILL Never.

GILL For the sake of the earth.

BILL No.

GILL Do it Ivan. For my sake.

IVAN TAKES THE FIREBIRD

The bird of the sun will fly free once again.
But I will stay in this chamber of ice for ever.

Go!

BILL And before I could say more
Vanya and Hrothga
had bundled me out of the Chamber of Ice
and we were on our way back
towards the Land of Plenty -
the Firebird safe in my hands.

GILL Leaving me in Lodgoth's Palace.
Alone.

Alone in the chamber of ice

Tired though I was I couldn't sleep
My head and my heart were awlirl
with thoughts of what was
what was to come
and what might have been.

When I was young
the summer sun
shone all year long

Warm winds blew
sweet flowers grew
all the year long

I fell in love with you Ivan

You left me here as you had to do
Tomorrow is my wedding day

Now I am older
in a land that is cold
and I long for your love

We've thrown away
every happy day
how I long for your love

I gave my heart to you Ivan

You left me here as you had to do

Tomorrow is my wedding day

BILL and with these thoughts
 still singing in her mind
 Yelyena the Fair fell asleep

GILL Many many miles away
 on the road that leads to the west
 Hrothga of the Silver mane gallops apace
 with Ivan and the Firebird on his back

BILL Where's Vanya?

GILL Behind us. Ready to nip at my heels.

BILL He's not there.

GILL Well he was. He can't be far away.

BILL I don't hear him.

GILL You wouldn't. He runs silent as a shadow.

BILL Perhaps he's lost us in the snow.

GILL Not Vanya.
He's no ordinary wolf.
No doubt he has a task to perform.

BILL What's that?

GILL What?

BILL There on the ground.

GILL It's a snowdrift.

BILL Snowdrifts don't wear clothes.
It's a girl.
It's Yelyena.
Yelyena, wake up.

GILL Where am I?

BILL You're here, with us.

GILL I must be dreaming.

BILL You're not dreaming.
Look. This is me. Ivan.
Here's Hrothga.
Here's the Firebird.
And here's you.

GILL But I went to sleep in Lodgoth's palace.
Tomorrow is my wedding day.
I dreamed.
I dreamed of Vanya the wolf.
And flying and falling.
And now I'm here.
What does this mean, Ivan?

BILL Vanya the wolf is no ordinary creature.
It's he who's saved you, Yelyena.
So that's where Vanya has been.

No, Vanya, you're here.
You tricked Lodgoth.

GILL You're right as usual, young Ivan.

BILL If you tricked Lodgoth
he'll be furious.

GILL Right again.

BILL And if Lodgoth's furious
then he'll be after us.

GILL True, unfortunately.

BILL Yelyena, look up there in the sky.
Is it a bird?

GILL Is it a dragon?

GILL & BILL No.

BILL It was Lodgoth.

GILL Lodgoth was flying towards us
aboard his winged chariot
the dreaded sky-slayer.

BILL I'm after you, Vanya.

GILL What can we do. It's impossible to escape the dreaded Sky-Slayer.

BILL Onward, Sky-Slayer. I'll be revenged on them all.

GILL The Firebird was burning my hand.

BILL Where are you, Yelyena.

GILL She was growing bigger.

BILL Come to me, my little flower bride?

GILL I couldn't hold her any longer.

BILL You made a fool of me Vanya
and you shall pay.

GILL The Firebird wanted to fight Lodgoth.

BILL You foolish bird - you think yourself a match for Lodgoth?
I shall extinguish your flames for ever.

FLAMES SHOOT FROM THE FIREBIRD, SINGEING
LODGOth

The north wind doth blow
and we shall have snow

THE FIREBIRD ATTACKS AGAIN

I'm burning.
Wheel me away Sky-Slayer.

GILL You are beaten, Lodgoth.
You have met your match in the Firebird.

BILL Whirl me away to my Palace of Ice.
My powers melt in the heat.

GILL You're beaten Lodgoth.

BILL The Firebird had saved us all.

And as we looked around
the snows began to melt.

GILL As the sun peeped
from behind the clouds.

BILL The trees began to bud

GILL And we could smell the warming earth.

ALL [SING] Lodgoth is defeated
 Winter has retreated
 Feel the strength of springtime
 In the warming sunshine
 Now a New Year is born

 See the Firebird flame and fright the enemy
 It's she who with her strength has fought to set us free
 She who burned and blazed to save us – you and me
 Now a New Year is born
 Now a New Year is born

GILL Some miles outside the town of Valpurgis
 where Ivan had first met the wolf
 a sad leave-taking took place

BILL This is where we first met, Vanya.
 And here we must say goodbye.
 I can look after myself now.
 And those in my protection.

GILL Can you?

BILL Now Lodgoth is defeated, yes.
 I have learned much from this adventure.

GILL I hope so.

BILL Returning to the Land of Plenty
 I have no more need of the mighty sword Humdinger.

GILL I hope not.

IVAN HANDS BACK THE MIGHTY SWORD

BILL How can I ever thank you?

GILL By getting on with your task.
 You still have a journey to make
 and your father is at death's door.

 Take care
 and farewell.

BILL Farewell, Vanya.

 And you Hrothga
 You are free again.
 As free as the moonlight.

GILL Yes, I shall return to the mountain top.
 I've enjoyed our adventures.

 Take care
 and farewell.

BILL Farewell Hrothga.

GILL Now on foot,
Ivan and Yelyena continued their journey with the Firebird.

BILL We journeyed towards the west
Where the sun sets
And we walked for an hour

GILL or a day

BILL or a week

GILL until we reached the town of Valpurgis

BILL Something's going to happen. It's not over yet.

GILL What's not over? What's going to happen?

BILL I don't know.

GILL You shouldn't frighten me like this.

BILL I wish Vanya were here.

GILL He can't look after you always.

BILL I love you Yelyena.

GILL I know.

BILL I say that just in case.

GILL Don't worry yourself, Ivan. Don't worry yourself.

BILL Now Dmitri...

GILL ...and Peter

BILL had stayed all this time in Valpurgis

GILL often drinking, sometimes dancing

BILL with never a thought of the Tsar their father.

Who's that?

GILL Is it?

BILL It is, isn't it?

GILL I think it is. He's come back.

BILL He's on his way to get the reward.

GILL The reward! What do we do?

BILL I don't know.

Better be nice to him while I think of something horrible.

GILL Ivan!

BILL Dmitri! Peter!

GILL Ivan!
It's you! Well I never! You're back!

BILL Yes I'm back.

GILL Excellent!
And this?

BILL The Firebird.

GILL The Firebird!
Excellent!
And she?

BILL The Princess Yelyena. Yelyena the Fair.

GILL Yelyena the Fair?
Excellent!

BILL We're to be married.

GILL Good for you, Ivan.
Happiness to you both.
We're so pleased to see you, little brother.

BILL We must set off at once. Father needs us.

GILL O course we must. Can't keep daddy hanging on.
Dmitri, can I have a word?

BILL Peter?

GILL This is sickening. I can't be nice much longer.

BILL Horrible little brat that he is.
How we gonna stop him blabbing to daddy?

GILL Wait till we're out of the town and there's no-one about.
We'll shut him up for good.

BILL Wicked!

GILL And we'll get the Firebird.
And the Princess into the bargain.

BILL And the reward.

GILL & BILL Excellent!

GILL Come on Ivan.
Off we jolly well go.

BILL So we journeyed together along the road to the west.
We walked for an hour

GILL or a day

BILL or a week

GILL until we came to the tree
where they had rescued the Raven.

BILL Peter, do you know where we are?

GILL Not exactly, why?

BILL This is the tree where we rescued the Raven.

GILL It is, is it?

BILL Yes it is.
I'm glad we brothers are together again.

GILL So am I.
On our way back to save our father.
Now that we've won the Firebird.

BILL We?

GILL Yes. We. We all played our part.

BILL You two stayed in Valpurgis.
I set off alone to the Frozen Wastes.

GILL But we wouldn't go telling daddy that, would we?
He might not be very pleased.

BILL We must tell the truth.

GILL Silly to upset him.
We must make him happy.
Tell him about all the brave things that we boys did together.

BILL But it's a lie.

GILL You'll do as we say, Ivan.

BILL I can't. It's a lie.

GILL You'll do as we say if you know what's good for you.

BILL Will I?

GILL Yes you will Ivan. You'll do as we say.

THEY DRAW THEIR DAGGERS

BILL What are you going to do? What is this?

Yes. My very own brothers.
They drew their daggers
threw their arms around me
held me tight
and then they stabbed me.

I fell to the ground dead.

I really did die that day.

My brothers turned on Yelyena.

We were attacked, weren't we?
We rescued you, do you hear?
And we rescued the Firebird.

PIOTRA GRABS THE FIREBIRD

Ivan died a hero's death.
You understand?
Speak to me. Speak.

What's the matter with you, you silly little girl?

And what's happening to the Firebird?
She's fading.
She's getting dimmer.
And cooler.

Don't do this to me.
How are we going to get the reward if you go out, you daft chicken.

We've got to get her back to the palace
before she fades away.

GILL And the brothers hurried off on the road to the west
 with the fading Firebird,
 dragging me
 Yelyena the Fair
 silently behind them

BILL leaving my dead body
 lying on the soft ground.

GILL Ivan
 Ivan

Where are you?

Something has happened Ivan?
I've lost you

Ivan

My friend

You thought you were ready for the world
You didn't understand its ways

VANYA HOWLS

GILL BECOMES THE WISE-WOMAN

Why do you howl for me Vanya?

Why do you call me away from the tangles of the thicket?
Why do you call me away from the wildness of the wood?

What pain is in your heart Vanya?

I hear the pain of grief
the pain of loss

You led this boy through the Frozen Wastes Vanya
Together you won the Firebird

WISE-WOMAN CAWS

Here lies Ivan who saved your life
slaughtered as he travelled in triumph
Fly to the mountains of white to the west
to the clean clear waters of the River of Life

Bring to me here some of that water
to sprinkle the flesh of your friend newly slaughtered.

THE RAVEN TRAVELS TO THE RIVER OF LIFE

I must prepare

DURING THE SONG THE WISE-WOMAN COVERS IVAN IN HER CLOAK OF LEAVES

BILL [SING] At the dead of the year life is buried beneath the earth
In the ground the seed lies sleeping
Worms churn the rotting earth
From decay new life is born
The seeds of life wait for the warming rain

AT THE END OF THE SONG BILL BECOMES THE BODY OF IVAN

THE RAVEN RETURNS

GILL You have flown to the mountains of white in the west
to the clean clear waters of the River of Life

You bring to me here some of that water
to sprinkle the flesh of our friend newly slaughtered

THE WISE-WOMAN SPRINKLES IVAN WITH THE WATER OF LIFE

Grow together
knit and heal the wounds of the flesh

Water of Life wash away death

Come back to us Ivan
Ivan come back

He breathes

Wake Ivan

You have much to do

VAN WAKES

GILL (Vanya) Do you know what has happened to you?

BILL No I don't.

GILL That makes a change.
You were killed Ivan.
By your brothers.
You died.

BILL Am I in paradise?

GILL You're on earth.
Brought back to life by the Wise Woman of the Wild Woods.

BILL Where's Yelyena?
And the Firebird?
Were they killed too?

GILL Your brothers have taken them to your father's Palace.
They will say you were killed by robbers
and that they saved Yelyena and the Firebird.

BILL We must go to the palace.

GILL You must go to the palace.

BILL I still need you.
I thought I was ready but I'm not.

GILL You're ready now.

BILL Am I?
Am I really truly ready?

GILL You really truly are.
Farewell.

BILL Goodbye. Wolf-brother. Thank you.

I watched as Vanya ran towards the east
watched
until he was no more
than a speck on the horizon

and finally the wolf was gone

GILL Ivan set out in pursuit of his brothers
set out for the palace of his father
which he had left as a boy
and to which he was returning as a man

BILL My father the Tsar was as ill as ill
as a father can be

He lay on his sick bed

bewailing the death
as he thought
of his sons

he had hardly the strength to open his eyes
when he heard the voices of two of his boys

Father
Father
We're back
with the Firebird,
just like we promised.

And a beautiful Princess.
I won her in a great adventure.

We had lots of adventures.
We were brave and bold.
And very grown up.
You'd have been proud of us father.

GILL Ivan.

BILL Bad news I'm afraid.
Robbers.
Lots of them.
We fought hard.
Very hard.
But Ivan.
Poor old Ivan.
Sorry.

GILL Then let me die.

BILL No father no.
You can't die
We've got the Firebird.

GILL Let me die.

BILL You can't die you selfish old man.
What about the reward?

Flap your wings, you puny piece of poultry,
or I'll pull your feathers out one by one.

And that was the moment
that I came bursting into the Palace.

What are you doing?

GILL Ivan!

BILL Father!

GILL Ivan!

BILL Yelyena!

GILL Ivan!

BILL My brothers!

GILL But you're dead. We killed you.

BILL Ah, so you admit it?

GILL When we say we killed him
we don't mean we exactly killed him.
We just poked him a bit.
With our daggers.
For fun.

BILL You killed me.
But I'm back.
So what are you going to do about it?

GILL Damn you, Ivan. You won't defeat us.
Get him, Dmitri.

A BIG SWASHBUCKLE TAKES PLACE

BILL I shall leave your punishment to our father the Tsar.
It is against him you have offended.

The Firebird,
freed from the clutches of my wicked brothers
found her strength again.

She spread her wings
and warmed my father's heart.

THE FIREBIRD SPREADS HER WINGS AND FANS THE TSAR

GILL Ivan

You bring the Firebird to my kingdom
to quicken the earth

You bring Yelyena
to gladden our hearts

the earth stirs with the life of the year to come

You are young Ivan

I am old

You and Yelyena are ready to rule in my place.

May the Firebird live long amongst you
in the Land of Plenty

May the shadow of Lodgoth
never darken your days

BILL And the bells rang out
for our wedding

GILL and for the crowning of Ivan

Tsar of the Land of Plenty

BILL and Yelyena his Queen.

[SONG] Green grows the apple bough
White blows the blossom
Bright shines the summer sun
Winter's forgotten

Bless both the bride and groom
Now and hereafter
May you find joy
In your journey to come

[Let love and friendship
be with you always
Health and happiness
gladden your hearts

Bright shines the summer sun
Winter's forgotten
May you find joy
In your journey to come

GILL Take care

BILL And farewell