

"Frau Karus, I gave it to her!"  
 Frau Karus was shaking her head with displeasure:  
 "If they start now . . . then at twenty . . ."  
 "Frau Karus—"

I didn't know what else to say. I realized—no, no matter what, she wouldn't believe me. She thought I wanted to protect the child, and in her opinion that was definitely not the thing to do—"because if they start to drag off geshpensts at ten, then at twenty—"

I took the scissors, crawled onto the chair, and began cutting off of the Spider whatever I chanced on—horses, cows, deer, foxes, frogs, stars. I collected two full boxes.

"Frau Karus, take them to the girls! This is for Elya and this—for El'za. And here are the little slippers!" I remembered Elya liked them very much, and so I cut down the tiny magic red slippers; I also cut down the warm fluffy monkey, bobbing on a slender little thread, "the monkey's for El'za, the little slippers—for Elya."

"Ach!" Frau Karus seemed to blossom all over, "*wunderschön!*" (wonderful)—and her eyes became extraordinarily kind, "wonderful!" She looked at me good-naturedly.

And my heart began to leap—from some kind of sudden freedom. With precisely this look she had lifted from me that blackness—that chain—that night.

"Actually, Frau Karus, you were confused about that geshpenst; the nephew was not the geshpenst, and I made a mistake. I'll show you right now—next to the London-Svyatopolk-Mirsky pipe, over there—he's hanging there on a tiny thread, I saw him during the night!"

Frau Karus squinted—she couldn't see very well.

I looked—he was nowhere to be seen. Next to the London-Svyatopolk-Mirsky pipe there was no geshpenst—the geshpenst had disappeared.

## CHRIST'S GODSON

FROM: *Skazki russkogo naroda, skazannye Alexeem Remizovym* (Fairy Tales of the Russian People as Told by Alexey Remizov; Berlin, 1923).

The couple lived in poverty, in such dire need that it was actually impossible to invite anyone to visit. Nevertheless, everyone has his own holy day, and without a holy day life—which is cruel to begin with—would lack all light.

A son was born. He had to be christened, but there was no one to ask to be godparents.

If you're wealthy and have power—everybody comes to you. But to the poor—who is attracted by rags?

There sat Ivan and Marya.

"What shall we do with the child?"

Well, grumbling won't help, either.

A pilgrim was passing through.

"Let's call in the pilgrim; the pilgrim won't refuse!"

But when they looked at his face, it was actually terrifying—his nose was missing and, like death itself, his teeth were bared in a hideous grimace.

"What shall we call the baby?" Marya said, already unhappy.

What choice was there? Only to suffer it—one couldn't very well leave the child unbaptized either.

"Let's call him Job—Job, my godson," replied the pilgrim meekly.

It was clear, he too spoke not joyfully, but with sadness.

Who really knows:

wherefore and why things happen to a man—why

you come into this world and everyone flees from you?

So they baptized him; they named the baby Job, as his godfather had said. And they felt sad.

"Let's ask," Ivan said to Marya, "our godfather to stay with us for just a bit."  
 They turned around, but he was nowhere to be seen—as if he'd never been.

Job grew up and began asking his mother and father where and who his godfather was.

They didn't want to tell—why remember?

They no longer lived in the same way. Things had gotten better, it had become bright and gay in their home—it seemed that good fortune had come with Job.

But Job kept insisting, "Tell me, tell me."

"We were living in poverty," his father said. "No one would visit us, and we couldn't, in good conscience, invite anyone. When you were born, there wasn't even anyone to ask to be a godparent—who would come to such poor people! Some pilgrim agreed. We baptized you, and since that day he's disappeared; we've never seen him again."

"How I would like to see him!" Job dreamed. "On Easter Sunday, when everyone walks from the church exchanging blessings with his godfather, I have no one."

"You stupid little thing," his mother said, "it'd be better to exchange blessings with a dog—your godfather was disgusting!"

At Easter matins Job stood in the church.

Everyone went and exchanged blessings; only he stood and approached no one.



ALEXEY REMIZOV

And then someone came up to him—stopped before him.  
“Christ is risen, my dear godson!”  
“Truly He is risen.”  
Job rejoiced—he had found his godfather.  
His godfather took him by the hand and led him—not out of the church,  
but inside the church, upwards, through the air—into the heavens.

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His mother and father cried—they had lost their son.  
They sat at the table to break the Lenten fast. There was no Job; Job had  
disappeared.

“Did you see our son at matins?”  
Everyone said, “We saw him exchange blessings with his godfather, and  
together they left the church. They were a match for each other—both  
young, the same age.”

“Then it must have been some rogue who took him away—his godfather  
was disgusting, old; he had no nose.”

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For a year Job had been gone.  
For a year not a thing was heard of him.  
The old couple grieved for their son. They couldn't accept it—he had  
disappeared!

But one must learn to accept misfortune:  
misfortune comes not without reason, just as there is nothing in life  
that is without purpose—both sickness and disasters; only, is there no  
one who knows and will tell, why and wherefore such things exist?

The following year, at the very same Easter matins, as people were about  
to go and exchange blessings, Job, as if awakened from a dream, was standing  
right there, next to the pillar, in the same place he had stood before.

The mass ended. Job went home.

“Christ is risen, my parents!”

When the old couple looked—they saw Job, their son.

“Truly He is risen!”

They burst into tears—they hadn't expected, hadn't hoped for him.

“Truly He is risen!”

They began to question him. Where had he been? Where had he vanished  
to? And for a whole year!

CHRIST'S GODSON

“It wasn't a year; only three hours. And tomorrow I'm going again.”  
“But where will you be going?”  
“To Mark, the rich man. I must bring him a money box from my god-  
father. You see, I found my godfather, and it's my godfather I've been with.”  
Early, even before the sun had risen, Job began to take his leave.  
But they wouldn't let him:  
“Spend just one little day with us!”  
He left.

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Job went to Mark, the rich man.  
Mark was sitting at the window, rocking his parents in a cradle. They were  
old and couldn't walk.

“Mark, take this money box, feed your parents. This money is for bread for  
you.”

“I have no need of gold—the rich will take it from me, the courts will  
punish me.”

Mark returned the money to Job.

And Job left that poor one—Mark, the rich man.

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Job went along the road.  
Some people were stacking wood.  
“God help you, good people!”

“Oh, dear little brother, we have no mittens on our hands and, as you can  
see, we're without boots; we're naked and barefoot, our clothes are torn all  
over and our strength is gone from hunger. Ask the Lord God, will we suffer  
long?”

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Job went further.

Some women were drawing water—from one well into another they  
poured the water with buckets.

“God help you, good people!”

“Oh, dear little brother, the skin has peeled off our hands, we're frozen.  
Ask the Lord God, will we suffer long?”

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Job went further.  
A house stood there; under its corner—an old woman. The old woman was holding the house up on her shoulders.  
“God help you, good person!”  
“Oh, dear little brother, it’s broken my whole back. I hold this weight day after day all by myself. Ask the Lord God, will I suffer long?”

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Job went farther.  
A pike was lying on the road—how its eyes bulged, its mouth gaped!  
Job took pity on the pike.  
The pike spoke to him:  
“Oh, dear little brother, I cannot go without water, and I so want to swim! I can’t live on land. Ask the Lord God, will I suffer long?”

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Job came to a cave.  
“Good day, godfather! I almost didn’t find you.”  
“But where have you been?”  
“I’ve come from Mark, the rich man.”  
“You’ve crossed the whole globe.”  
“Mark did not take the gold; the rich, he said, would take it from him, the courts would punish him.”  
“Take him some bread.”  
“And while I was traveling, I came across some people; they were stacking wood—they suffered greatly, their clothes were torn, and they were hungry.”  
“Let them stack forever; why did they steal the wood? By their offense, by their slander, by their callous hearts they took the warmth from the hearts of others.”  
“I met some women; they were pouring water from one well into another. They were frozen.”  
“Let them pour forever. Why did they thin the milk with water? They cheated, they deceived the hearts of others!”  
“I also saw a pike; the pike was lying on the road. It was cracked all over, from thirst its mouth gaped, and it begged for the sea.”  
“Greedy, cruel, let it spit out forty ships! Then it can go to the sea!”  
Job wished to go right away and repeat the words of his godfather to all those tortured ones. They awaited him, there on the road.  
“My kind godson,” the godfather stopped him, “the Tsar beyond the Mountains has a daughter, the tsarevna Magdalene; take Magdalene for your wife. I myself will marry you.”

Job took his leave and went from the cave back along that very same road.

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Job came to the pike.  
It rejoiced:  
“Well, what am I to do, dear little brother?”  
“If you spit out the forty ships, you will be free in the sea!”  
The pike spit out ship after ship—all forty ships, and once more swam in his sea.

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Job came to the old woman, who was holding the house on her shoulders.  
“Well, what am I to do, dear little brother?”  
“Suffer forever.”  
The old woman began to cry:  
“—forever, how long is that?”

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Job came to those who were pouring water from one well into another.  
“Well, what are we to do, little brother?”  
“Suffer forever.”  
The unfortunate ones began to tremble:  
“—forever, and will there be no end?”

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Job came to those who were stacking wood, hungry, with their clothes torn.  
“Well, what are we to do, dear little brother?”  
“Suffer forever.”  
And their arms fell to their sides:  
“—forever.”

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Job came to Mark, the rich man.  
“Mark, here is some bread for you.”



ALEXEY REMIZOV

"I don't want it; I don't need it—my parents have died."  
Job put the bread on the table for the poor one—Mark, the rich man.

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His mother and father were hurt. Their son didn't live with them.  
"We didn't raise you so that we'd never see you at home!" And they were  
very sad:

"There won't even be anyone to close our eyes."  
A pilgrim, like his godfather, Job traveled a difficult path:  
there's so much joy in the world, and yet  
in the world just as much unendurable torture.  
Can it be there is no end?  
Suffering—forever?  
And is there no power that can free us?

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Job spoke to his father and mother:  
"The Tsar beyond the Mountains has a daughter, Magdalene. My god-  
father has betrothed me to Magdalene."

His father and mother cried out in horror:  
"To Magdalene! She lies rotting, terrible to look at; they even give her food  
through the window—a stench rises from her."  
Job did not listen.  
He did not heed their words:  
"Magdalene will be my wife."

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Job asked:  
"May I see the tsarevna?"  
"Oh, my dear little brother," the tsaritsa said, "you cannot go to her—a  
stench rises from her."  
"Never mind, let me—I am taking her as my betrothed."  
"How can you take her!" the mother wept, "the unfortunate one."  
Job went into the tsarevna's room.  
The tsarevna lay there—forever without hope.  
She raised her eyes hopelessly.  
No one had ever yet asked for her, and in her heart all pleadings were  
covered with scabs.  
"Arise, Magdalene, it is I, Job, your betrothed!"

FAITH IN NIKOLAY

And Job took her by the right hand, like a bride.  
Suddenly, like a fire, a flame flashed hotly.  
Magdalene arose, immaculate as a bride.

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On Ascension Day Job led his bride into the church.  
There his godfather married them—Job and Magdalene.  
And he led them—not out of the church, but inside the church, upward,  
through the air—into the heavens.

FAITH IN NIKOLAY

FROM: *Zveno* (The Link, no. 2; Paris, 1928).

Before Baty there was in Rus' a certain Nikolay: Nikolay "the Wet."

In Kiev, at St. Sophia's, on the inner balcony (the one set aside for the  
choir), stands this image: Nikolay enveloped in a green chasuble, as green as  
the stained glass of St. Nicolas in the Chartres Cathedral.

During the transfer of the sacred remains of St. Nikolay from Lycian Myra  
to Bari, they were carried across the sea, and his grace permeated the entire  
world. At both ends of the earth a miracle occurred: in Nantes the Prince of  
Bretagne (the boy Conan) was miraculously healed, and on the Dnieper a  
dear little boy, Vanya, began to recover.

The father of Conan was Alain Fergean,  
the second Duke of Bretagne from the  
House of Cornwall, his mother Hermangard;  
the Abbey of St. Nicolas is in Anges, one of  
the most revered holy places in Western  
France. The parents of Conan took a  
vow to go to this Abbey and consecrate themselves  
and their children to St. Nicolas.

Only a miracle could save Conan.  
And, when the name of St. Nicolas was  
spoken over the dying boy, the fading  
"three-thousand-year old" eyes of the  
Celtic boy suddenly sparkled, and he  
began to speak of the sea. He told of  
how he was gathering little cockleshells  
on the shore and that an old man