

THE GREEN OAK*

*Prologue to the romantic poem "Ruslan and Liudmila", by A. S. Pushkin.

A green old oak on curving shore,
And on that oak a golden chain;
There goes a cat of wondrous lore
All day and night as 'round a chatelaine.
To the right it goes. . . a song it sings;
To the left. . . a fairy tale it brings.
There wonders are: wood-goblins rove,
And a mermaid haunts the mystic grove;
On many an unknown forest trail
Unseen creatures leave their spoor;
And a hut there wobbles weak and frail,
Windowless and with no doors.
Through dale and forest spirits roam,
And from the east there bursts the foam
Of waves on the shore of the barren sand;
There thirty stalwart knights in row,
From the depths of the shining sea they go,
And their dripping servant comes to land.
There too a prince, as he goes by,
Seizes the czar of surly moods;
Before the people to the sky
Across the sea and across the woods
Kaldoon bears off his hero high;
A princess grieves in the darkness there
In a brown wolf's faithful loving care;
There Baba Yaga's mortar walks,
With no assistance weirdly stalks;
On piles of gold Kashchay there wastes;
Of Russia there it smells and tastes.
And there was I upon the shore,
Beneath the green oak there I sat,
As I drank my mead the learned cat
Told me his tales of fairy lore.

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