

The Frog Princess Excerpt

(adapted from a traditional Russian fairy tale)

SETTING

The court and surrounding lands of IVAN, Czar of Russia. Some time in the mythical past.

SCENE 1

IVAN's castle.

Enter KILNIKOV with a great book which he carries lovingly, gloatingly. He sits down and furtively opens the book.

KILNIKOV

(reading at first pronouncing each word carefully) Abda ... Babda ... Bidda ... Lobda ... Dibda Boo -- Not bad. (He continues after a moment) Liksty, fliksty, sixty, seventy loksty, maksty shoo. This could work!

(He continues babbling a chant, getting more and more worked up. After a while enter SERVANT GIRL, carrying a pie. KILNIKOV stops suddenly.)

Who are you? What do you want? How dare you interrupt me! Don't you know who I am?

SERVANT GIRL

(she curtseys) I'm sorry, sir, but ...

KILNIKOV

BUT! Do you not know who you are talking to? Kilnikov the Great, grand sorcerer to the Czar Ivan Babooshkin, the unbearable. I'm the one and only great magician in all of Russia ... And you interrupt me with a B U T! Don't you realize how dangerous I can be? ... Well, answer me girl!

SERVANT GIRL

Uh ...

(He tries to be scary and evil to frighten the SERVANT GIRL but to no avail)

KILNIKOV

(sings)

Abbra Cadabra Caboom,
I'm a mean son of a goon.
I'm thoroughly glad
To be wickedly bad!

And I don't give a fig who I ruin!

Shickity, shockity, shoo,
I eat little girls like you,
Anyone who dares,
Kilnikov scares.
So be gone and be quick and be through!

It is interesting to see
How you resemble a bee.
A wave of my wand
And you're instantly gone!
Yet you dare to interrupt ME!

KILNIKOV

(to audience) I have often thought that what people fear most about me is my stare. *(He stares)* But actually I think it's my laugh. *(He laughs)* Or could it be my frown? *(He frowns)* They're all so wickedly, so deliciously, delightfully, delectably mean and low-down evil that ...

Kilnikov's a name to fear.
It buzzes in everyone's ear.
When he laughs out loud,
The people are cowed,
And I'm happy to say that I cheer!

Abbra, Cadabra, Caboon,
I'm a mean son of a goon.
I'm thoroughly glad
To be wickedly bad,
And I don't give a fig who I ruin.

KILNIKOV

Well, now what can I do for you?

SERVANT GIRL

You don't scare me.

KILNIKOV

Right. Not even a little? *(She shakes her head.)* Right.

SERVANT GIRL

I have an urgent message for you.

KILNIKOV

You do? From who?

SERVANT GIRL

Whom. From Prince Sascha.

KILNIKOV

(aside) Ah, Prince Sascha. My friend, my trusty good buddy. He's the only one in Russia who's actually afraid of me. *(He waits.)* Well, let me have the message.

SERVANT GIRL

It's a secret.

KILNIKOV

Too secret to tell?

SERVANT GIRL

Yes. He has sent it hidden in this pie that I have brought for you.

KILNIKOV

Well, give me the message.

SERVANT GIRL

It is hidden in this pie.

KILNIKOV

I know! I know! You've told me.

SERVANT GIRL

I have been instructed not to touch the message.

(He's becoming annoyed.) Don 't touch it, then. Just give it to me.

SERVANT GIRL

Are you sure you want it?

KILNIKOV

Am I sure I want it? Of course I want it. It's a secret message from my good friend Prince Sascha. He's in trouble. He needs my help. Only my magic can save him. I am his—*(She throws the pie in his face.)* last hope.

(SERVANT GIRL hands him a cloth).

Thank you. *(He wipes the pie from his face and finds a piece of paper.)*

SERVANT GIRL

You're welcome. I'll be going now.

KILNIKOV

Good. You do that. *(SERVANT GIRL exits)*

KILNIKOV

(He reads message.) "Dear Kilnikov. This is a secret message. I must see you immediately. Your fearful friend, Sascha."

(SASCHA enters)

SASCHA

Ah, Kilnikov. I see you got my message.

KILNIKOV

Yes. *(He wipes more of the pie off his face.)*

SASCHA

I must see you.

KILNIKOV

What is it, this time? Has your father, Ivan, taken away your rocking horse, or locked up all your favourite teddy bears in the tower prison?

SASCHA

Oh Kilnikov, don't make fun of me. (*He sits dejectedly.*) This time it is serious.

KILNIKOV

With you, my friend, Sascha, for you nothing is serious. Don't look so glum. It can't be that bad.

SASCHA

It is that bad.

KILNIKOV

Nonsense.

SASCHA

It is I tell you! It's SERL0US! Serious! -Serious! Serious! (*etc.*)

KILNIKOV

(*trying to interrupt*) Cut it out

SASCHA

Serious! Serious! Serious! (*etc.*)

KILNIKOV

(*still trying to stop him*) I said, cut it out. (*Makes a gargoyle face and a strange sound.*) Aaaaaah! Cut it out!

SASCHA

(*screams and cowers in fear*) Uuuuuhhhhhh!

KILNIKOV

(*smiles and looks confidently at the audience*) You want to see fear? I'll show you fear. (*He makes another scary face and sound and Sascha cowers in fear.*) I am a mean son of a goon!

SASCHA

Kilnikov, I desperately need your help. It's father. He is on one of his rampages again. He has been yelling and screaming all morning at me and Mischa and Nicoli. Calling us every worthless name he can think of.

KILNIKOV

(*aside*) And that adds up to a lot of names. No wonder he's called Ivan the Unbearable.

SASCHA

He says all his sons must marry and he has devised a test for us to choose our brides.

KILNIKOV

What test?

SASCHA

He won't tell us anything except that the one who gets the most magnificent bride will become the next Czar of Russia and all the rest will be banished forever.

KILNIKOV

Hmmm. (*he thinks*) This is serious. Those scoundrel brothers of yours will stop at nothing to become their father's favourite.

SASCHA

Kilnikov, you must help me! (*He grabs him*) Help me! Help me! Help me!

Okay, okay. But promise me something.

SASCHA

Anything!

KILNIKOV

No more messages, please.

(Enter SERVANT GIRL carrying a cake.)

KILNIKOV

What you again! What is the meaning of this impertinence? How dare you invade the inner sanctum of my ...

SERVANT GIRL

We have done this before.

KILNIKOV

(smiles awkwardly) Well yes, so we have ...

SERVANT GIRL

I have a message for you.

SASCHA

(KILNIKOV looks at SASCHA) Not from me.

SERVANT GIRL

It's from the Czar.

KILNIKOV

Oh. What is it? Out with it, girl! Don't you see I'm impatient and liable to explode at a moment's hesitation?

(He makes an evil face and moans evilly. SASCHA cowers, but the SERVANT GIRL is nonplussed.)

SERVANT GIRL

Nothing.

KILNIKOV

Not even an eeny, teeny, weeny, beeny little bit of fear?

SERVANT GIRL

(shakes her head) Nothing.

KILNIKOV

Okay, give me the message.

SERVANT GIRL

It's a secret.

KILNIKOV

Sounds familiar. (*to SASCHA*) Are you sure you didn't have anything to do with this?

SASCHA

No, honest.

KILNIKOV

Okay. Give me the message. If it's a secret, I won't read it aloud.

SERVANT GIRL

I cannot touch it. It is hidden in this cake.

KILNIKOV

I don't believe this. (*looks at SASCHA*)

SASCHA

Honest, it's not me. I only use pies.

KILNIKOV

Is this some sort of bake-athon?

SERVANT GIRL

Do you wish me to give you the message?

KILNIKOV

(*looks at SASCHA*) That depends. Is there any other way for me to get the message without you, giving it to me? (*She shakes her head.*) I thought so. Okay, give it to me.

(She throws the cake at his face. He takes it rather well and finds the message. He reads.)

"Dear Kilnikov. This is a secret message. (*He looks at SASCHA*) I must see you immediately. Your hateful Czar, Ivan." (*looks at SASCHA again*) The family resemblance is remarkable!

SCENE 2

(*IVAN enters, together with SASCHA'S two brothers, MISCHA and NICOLI, the CZARINA.*)

IVAN

Ah, Kilnikov. I see you got my message.

KILNIKOV

Yes. I was just having dessert. Care to join me?

IVAN

No, no, some other time. (*sees SASCHA*) So there you are, you snivelling, wet bag of noodles. I thought I'd find you here! (*He grabs SASCHA and throws him to his brothers.*)

CZARINA

Ivan, you shouldn't treat poor Sascha so roughly. Remember his delicate condition.

IVAN

Hah! (*He laughs*) I remember that I am embarrassed to call him my son. Together with his two other worthless brothers, such useless sons would make even a kind, noble and generous Czar weep for pity and despair.

CZARINA

And you're not kind, noble or generous.

IVAN

No! And so I do not weep. I wail. I yell and scream and gnash my teeth and ask myself which one of these dried-up apricots is to be the next Czar of Russia? Hah! The thought is enough to make me sick.

(IVAN sings)

I am mean and I 'm cruel
and people fear me,
For my deeds they are dastardly
that's true.
But I am only just a person,
and you must hear me
How could I have had
three sons like you?

CHORUS

How could he have had
three sons like you?

IVAN

While I rant and I rave,
it is for a reason.
My nastiness is not without its rue.
I cannot bear you sons,
season after season.
How could I have had
three sons like you?

CHORUS

How could he have had three sons like you?

He is known as unbearable,
unpredictable and terrible.
There is nothing bad enough
He wouldn't dooooo.

All Russia quakes for him.
All Russia shakes for him.

Ivan the Unbearable, that's you!

IVAN

(laughs) That's me!

Now, a father's duty is to
love his sons, I know.
To tickle and to cuddle
and play peek-a-boo.
But I've had it up to here!
I won't stop to waste a tear!
Only one of you will cheer:

EVERYOOE

Long live the Czar!

IVAN

And off to the tower for the other two!

(everyone gasps)

CHORUS

He is mean and he is cruel
and people fear him,
For his deeds they are dastardly,
that's true.
But he's only just a person,
and you must hear him
How could he have had three sons like you?

IVAN

How could I have had three sons like you?

CZARINA

Oh, Ivan, you can't mean that!

KILNIKOV

Sire, this is entirely against convention.

SASCHA

Father, don't treat us so cruelly.

MISCHA & NLCOLA

No, father, not the tower, not the tower.

IVAN

Silence, SILENCE! Sons the day will decide your fate. I have here two arrows, one for each of you. One ... two ...

(He realizes his mistake.)

Don't anyone leave.

(IVAN exits and soon comes back with three arrows.)

I have here *three* arrows, one for each of you. One ... two ... three ... Shoot these arrows in any direction you wish. Where the arrow falls, there you will find your bride. The son whose bride is the smartest and the most regal will become my favourite, the only true Prince and the next Czar.

SASCHA

And if she isn't?

IVAN

And if she isn't? And if she isn't! Then it's to the tower for you and torture.

CHORUS

Not the tower.

NICOLI

But father, you can 't. You know I love you the best.

IVAN

Enough! I have so decreed. Here are your arrows. And make sure you don't break any windows.

(IVAN, CZARINA, SERVANT GIRL, SASCHA and KILNIKOV exit.)

MISCHA

Nicoli, this is a dumb way to pick a wife. Why you could hit somebody by mistake

NICOLI

That' s exactly what I 've been thinking, Mischa.

MISCHA

What do you mean? What nasty, little scheme are you making up?

NICOLI

What if I shoot my arrow and it should hit Sascha! What do you think would happen, Mischa?

MISCHA

(thinks for a moment and shrugs) I don 't know. You'd marry Sascha?

NICOLI

(hits him) Don 't be stupid. It might hurt him.

MLSHA

(laughs) It might hurt him, Yeah, I see your point.

NICOLI

Well, let's hope that Sascha sees it too.

(They exit.)

SCENE 3

(Enter KILNIKOV and SASCHA. SASCHA has a bow and arrow.)

SASCHA

Oh, it' s no use, Kilnikov. I'll never learn to shoot this thing. I don 't even have the strength to pull it back.

KILNIKOV

Patience, Prince Sascha. Have you not come to the great Kilnikov for help?

(He takes out to his magic book.)

What we need here is a little spell or two. *(He looks in book.)* Aggravation ... alligators ... animals ... Here we are, arrows. Acrobatic arrows, babbling arrows, coughing arrows. happy arrows. Ah. here it is: marriage arrows. *(He reads.)*

SASHA

What does it say?

KILNIKOV

It looks hard, but not impossible. I need your help. It's a two-man magical charm,

SASCHA

I don't know. Are you sure you can do this?

KILNIKOV

Am I sure, he asks me? Does a zebra have spots? *(SASCHA gives him a strange look.)* Okay. I'm going to teach you this magic charm. Repeat after me. Rocca.

SASCHA

Rocca.

KILNIKOV

Good.

SASCHA

Good.

KILNIKOV

No, not good.

SASCHA

No, not good.

KILNIKOV

Sascha, stop.

SASCHA

Sascha, stop.

(KILNIKOV makes an evil face and sound and stops SASCHA.)

KILNIKOV

I meant "good" that you got it right, not "GOOD!"

SASCHA

Oh, Sorry.

KILNIKOV

Okay, let's keep going. Ricca. *(SASCHA doesn't say anything.)* Ricca. Well?

SASCHA

Well, what? What am I supposed to do?

KILNIKOV

Repeat after me.

Okay.	KILNIKOV
Ricca.	SASCHA
Ricca.	KILNIKOV
Goo ... <i>(He catches himself and makes a face in anno-</i>	
Racca.	SASCHA
Rocca, Ricca, Racca.	KILNIKOV
Rocca, Ricca, Racca.	SASCHA
Now when I say ...	KILNIKOV
Now when I say ...	SASCHA
No, that's not what I want you to say.	KILNIKOV
No, that's not what I want you to say.	SASCHA
Sascha stop.	KILNIKOV
Sascha stop.	SASCHA
NO!	KILNIKOV
NO!	SASCHA
QUIET	KILNIKOV
QUIET.	SASCHA
ENOUGH!	KILNIKOV
	SASCHA

ENOUGH!

(KILNIKOV screams and makes a face and SASCHA cowers.)

KILNIKOV

Are you stupid or what?

SASCHA

No, but ...

KILNIKOV

When I say, "Repeat after me," don 't you know what I mean?

SASCHA

I think I do.

KILNIKOV

Okay. Now when I say " Boom" you say "Rocca." Got it? *(SASCHA nods.)* When I say "Chick," you say "Ricca."

SASCHA

Okay.

KILNIKOV

When I say "Sh'boom," you say "Racca."

SASCHA

(pause) Is that all?

KILNIKOV

(looking in book) Yes.

SASCHA

What happens when we do this?

KILNIKOV

Don't worry, something good, I'm sure. But we got to say it right, otherwise something bad will happen.

SASCHA

(trying to get away) I don 't want to do this.

KILNIKOV

(grabs him) Don It be silly. I know what I 'm doing. You don't want to end up in the tower, do you? *(SASCHA shakes his head.)* Well, come on then. Let's try. I'll go slowly. Ready?

SASCHA

Ready.

KILNIKOV

Okay, here goes. Boom.

SASCHA

Rocca.

KILNIKOV

Chick.

SASCHA

Ricca.

KILNIKOV

Sh'boom.

SASCHA

Racca.

KILNIKOV

Hey, that was good. Now we 've got to say it 99 more times and the spell's cast.

SASCHA

Remember, go slowly.

KILNIKOV

Boom.

SASCHA

Rocca.

KILNIKOV

Chick.

SASCHA

Ricca.

KILNIKOV

Sh'boom

SASCHA

Racca.

KILNIKOV

(Repeat the above about three times ... The following speeds up as it goes along.)

KILNIKOV

Chick.

SASCHA

Uh, Ricca.

KILNIKOV

Boom.

SASCHA

R1, Rocca.

KILNIKOV

Sh'boan

SASCHA

Ro, Racco.

KILNIKOV

Boom.

SASCHA

Ricca, uh ... Nocca, uh ...

KILNIKOV

Sh'boom.

KILNIKOV

Chacca.

SASCHA

Reecha, uh, bocca, chocca chocolate ... (*etc.*)

(Add lb as they exit.)