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**“Tale of Tsar Saltan, of His Son the Famous and Puissant
Champion Gvidon Saltanovich, and of the Lovely Swan-Princess”**

by Alexander Pushkin

**Tale of Tsar Saltan, of His Son the Famous and Puissant Champion
Gvidon Saltanovich, and of the Lovely Swan-Princess**

By their window sat and spun
Maidens three; the day was done.
And the eldest maid was saying:
“Were I empress, I’d be laying
Out in state a banquet fine,
For the whole wide world to dine.”
And the second maid was saying:
“Were I empress, I’d be laying
Linen out, and weave by hand,
For the whole world, every strand.”
Then the youngest spoke, the other:
“Were I empress, I’d be mother
Of a hero; I would bear
To our father-tsar an heir.”

Scarce that maid had ended speaking,
When the door went softly creaking,
And the emperor stept inside,
Lord of all that countrywide.
All the while they were debating,
He behind the fence was waiting,
And the youngest sister’s word
Pleased him best of all he heard.
“Beauteous maiden, happy meeting!
Be my empress! Such his greeting.
“Bear me that same hero son
Ere September’s out and done.
You, beloved sisters, quitting
This poor chamber, must be flitting
In my train, and follow now—
Follow, too, your sister. Thou
Shalt be cook, and thou, the second,
Lady-webster shalt be reckoned.”

Father-tsar went in the hall;
To the palace hastened all.
Tsar Saltan, not long he tarried;
On that evening he was married.
Noble was the feast; thereat
With his youthful queen he sat.
Then the noble guests attended
To a couch of ivory splendid
Bride and bridegroom, young and fair,

And alone they left them there.
Cook, within the kitchen railing,
Webster at the loom bewailing,
Grudge the good things that befall
Such a spouse imperial.
But the lady, young and royal,
To the word she gave was loyal,
And that night became with child.

These were times of war, and wild.
Tsar Saltan, on point of parting,
On his trusty charger starting,
Bade his queen: "From every ill
Keep thyself, and love me still."
While he far away was faring
Long, and pitilessly warring,
Came her time at last; and God
Brought a boy—of too foot odd.
With her babe the empress resting,
Like a mother-eagle nesting,
Sent a rider with a scroll
To rejoice the father's soul.
But, to compass her undoing,
Cook and webster plots were brewing
To forestall that messenger;
Babarikha, dowager,
Grandam, aiding; and another
Was dispatched, with this: "The mother
Yesternight gave birth to one
Neither frog, nor mouse, nor son—
No, nor daughter; but a creature
Monstrous, new, and out of nature."

When the rider brought that word,
And tsar, the father, heard,
First he bade him hang, in passion;
Bore himself in strangest fashion,
Yet, for once relenting, gave
These commands unto the slave:
"Wait: the emperor, returning,
Shall adjudge, by law and learning."

With the writing forth he passed,
Rode, and got him home at last.
Cook and webster and that other,

Babarikha, the queen-mother,
Gave the word to ply him deep,
Got him in drunken sleep,
Robbed his wallet of the writing,
Planted one of their inditing.
So that day the fuddled man
Brought the order; thus it ran:
“These, to our boyars: Obey ye.
Not an idle hour delay ye.
Queen and brood fling privily
In the bottomless deep sea.”
And the good boyars, they failed not;
Nought would serve; and grief availed not
For their lord and mistress young.

So into her room they flung,
Told how both must meet disaster
At the bidding of the master;
Read the order out; anon
Set the empress and her son
In a barrel; and the thickly,
Tared it over, rolled it quickly,
Drove it duly forth to sea.
“Thus he told us; thus do we.”

In the blue sky stars are flashing;
On the blue sea waves are lashing;
Stormy cloud the sky bedims;
On the sea the barrel swims.
There the queen lies, struggling, straining,
Like a woeful widow plaining.
Every hour the child hath grown
Fast as though a day were flown.
Still she wails; and still he urges,
As the day goes by, the surges:—
“Wave, my wave, beloved of me!
Thou art boisterous and free;
Wheresoe'er thou wilt thou splashest,
Shingle upon shingle dashest,
Flooding all the shores that be,
Hoisting vessels on the sea.
I command thee, do not slay us;
In the dry land wash and lay us!”
There and then the obedient wave
Gently to the foreshore drave

Freight and barrel; left them stranded;
Noiseless ebb'd; behold them landed!
Child and queen are safe ashore,
And she feels the earth once more.
—Who from out the cask shall take them?
Surely God will not forsake them?
On his feet the boy stands straight,
At the bottom drives his pate,
Gives a little heave, and asks then,
“How are windows cut in casks, then,
For escape?—without ado
Bursts the bottom, and comes through.

Now the pair are free to wander.
See, a champaign rises yonder
To a hill with green oaks crowned,
With the blue sea spanning round.
But the son and heir was heedful,
Holding a good supper needful;
Snapped an oaken branch, and so
Bent it in a stubborn bow;
From his cross¹ a silk cord taking,
Strung it on the bow, and breaking
Short a slender reed, made right
A good arrow, sharp and light.
Then he went for quarry forward
To the valley-edges shoreward.

To the beach he scarce had gone,
When he heard—was that a moan?—
Saw the sea disturbed,—and, gazing,
Something evil and amazing:—
In the wave, a swan shows fight,
And above her hangs a kite.
And the poor bird wildly splashes,
And the troubled water lashes;
He his needle-claws outflings,
Whets his gory neb;—then sings
All at once the arrow speeding,
Strikes his crop, and sends him bleeding
Out his life into the flow.
And the prince, with lowered bow,
Sees the creature sink and flutter

¹ The cross which every Orthodox wears around his neck from a child. — *Translator's note.*

With a cry no bird could utter.
And the swan floats round, and still
Pecks that kite of wicked will,
Batters him with wing descending,
Drowns him, for a quicker ending.
Then to the tsarevich young
Speaks she in the Russian tongue:
“Thou, my prince, wert my salvation,
Mighty for my liberation.
Grieve not that because of me
Thy good shaft lies under sea,
Or that thou must fast to-morrow:
Sorrow proves not always sorrow.
Richly shalt thou be repaid,
And hereafter have my aid.
Saviour of a swan thou seemest,
But a maid to life redeemest;
With thy arrow thou didst smite
An enchanter, and no kite.
Know, that always I shall mind thee;
Be thou where thou mayst, I find thee.
Now, however, homeward get.
Go; sleep sound; no longer fret.”

So flew off swan enchanted.
Queen and prince held firm, and scanted,
Though a livelong day had passed;
Bedward went, nor broke their fast.

Next the prince, his eyes unclosing,
Shook away his dreams and dozing,
And behold! To his amaze,
A great city met his gaze.
White the walls were, and behind them
Thick the battlements that lined them;
Church and sacred cloister there
Sparkle, turreted in air.
Quick the queen is roused and sighing
Oh! and *ah!* The prince is crying
“Will the thing come true? I see,
Pleasant is my swan with me.”
To the city both betake them,
Cross the barrier; to make them
Welcome, triply surge and swell
Deafening chimes from every bell.

And the folk flood out to meet them;
Holy choirs praise God, and greet them;
In gold chariots to the gate
Comes the court in princely state.
All men praise and honour loudly
That tsarevich; crown him proudly
With a prince's cap; declare
He is monarch of all there.
License of the queen obtaining,
On that day the prince is reigning
In his capital; thereon
Takes the name of *Prince Gvidon*.

Breezes on the water shifting
Landward urge a vessel drifting,
Bellying out her canvas brave
As she skims along the wave.
On the deck the shipmen teeming
Wonder if awake or dreaming
Such a marvel they behold
On that island, known of old—
Strongly gated quays, and gilded
Towers; a city newly builded!
Cannon flaming from the quay
Bid the ship put in from sea;
And the strangers by the gateway
Moor; the prince invites them straightway,
Gives them food and drink, and then
Thus makes question of the men:
“Merchants, what are ye exchanging?
Whither may ye now be ranging?”
Then the sailor-men speak out:
“We have sailed the world about:
Now in sables we have traded,
Now in foxes dusky-shaded.
Past the island of Buyan,
To the realm of famed Saltan
Now due eastward we are wending.
Time is up; our trip is ending.”
“Happy journey, every man,
To the famous tsar Saltan
Over sea and ocean faring!”
So the prince gave word, declaring:
“Do him reverence from me!”
Then they went, and, gazing, he

Watched them far, beheld them vanish,
Sad with thoughts he might not banish.
Look! The snowy swan, aswim
On the billows, calls to him
“Hail, my lovely prince, good morrow!
Tell me, tell me, my prince, thy sorrow?
Why art thou so silent, say,
Downcast as a rainy day?”
“I’ve a weary grief devouring,
All my manhood overpowering.
Would I might my father see!”
Dolefully thus answered he.
But the swan said, “Art thou minded
To pursue the ship? behind it
Flit, and be a midget, since
This is all thy woe, my prince!”
Then she waved her wings, and scattered
Noisily the wave, and spattered
Him with spray from top to toe.
In a single instant, lo,
To a dot he shrank and minished,
Was a midge; the change was finished.
Piping soft, away flew he,
Caught the vessel on the sea,
Lighted gently, to discover
A good cranny, and took cover.

Past the island of Buyan,
To the realm of famed Saltan
Gaily onward flies the trader,
Gaily hums the breeze to aid her;
See, already looming nigher
Is the land of her desire!
Soon the strangers, newly landed,
To the palace are commanded,
And behind them to the king
Our adventurer takes wing.
There he sees, in gold all shining,
But with countenance repining,
Crowned and throned above them all,
King Saltan within his hall.
Cook and webster and that other,
Babarikha the queen-mother,
Pin their looks upon the king,
Squatting round him in a ring.

Then he calls the guests and seats them:
At his board; with question greets them:
“Master-merchants, where go ye?
Sailed ye long? and over sea
Fared ye well? Or lived ye poorly?
In the world are wonders, surely?”
Then the sailor-men speak out:
“We have sailed the world about.
Overseas we lived not poorly;
Here was a world’s wonder, surely:—
Once an island in the deep
Lay unpeopled, barren, steep,
Blank and level; on it growing
Was a single oak-tree showing.
There to-day a city new
With a palace stands to view.
Golden-steepled churches cap it,
Towers ascend, and gardens lap it,
There sits prince Gvidon, and thence
Sends to thee his reverence.”
At the tale astonished duly,
“If I live,” the tsar said, “truly
I will see that wondrous isle,
Have Gvidon my host awhile.”
Cook and webster and the other,
Babarikha, the queen-mother,
All were loth to let him so
To that isle of wonders go.
Said the cook, malignly winking
To her fellows, “We are thinking
That a city by the sea
Surely is a prodigy!
Hear, now, of no paltry wonder:—
In a wood a pine, whereunder
Sings a squirrel rhyme on rhyme,
Nibbling filberts all the time:
Common filberts they are not, sir;
Each a golden shell has got, sir;
Kernels, of pure emerald:
Which a wonder may be called.”
Tsar Saltan sat there, astounded;
But the midge, in wrath unbounded,
At his auntie drove his sting,
In her right eye plunged the thing.
And cook went pale, and wried her

To those noble folk a ditty:
Is it in the garden pretty,
Or the kitchen-plot? Gvidon,
Wondering sorely, thanks the swan:
“Lord, bestow on her such blessing
Even as I am now possessing!”
For the squirrel then he bade
That a crystal house be made;
Set a clerk to make an entry
Strict, of every nut; a sentry
Also at the doorway pitched.
—Squirrel honoured, prince enriched!
Breezes on the water shifting
Landward urge a vessel drifting,
Raising up her canvas brave
As she skims along the wave
Past the island cliff-defended,
Past the city large and splendid.
Cannon flaming from the quay
Bid the ship put in from sea.
Then the merchants by the gateway
Moor; the prince invites them straightway,
Gives them food and drink, and then
Thus makes question of the men:
“Merchants, what are ye exchanging?
Whither may ye now be ranging?”
And the sailor-men speak out:
“We have sailed the world about;
All the while in the horses trading,
Stallions from the Don our lading.
Past the island of Buyan
To the realm of famed Saltan
Far the path that we are wending.
Time is up; our trip is ending.”
“Happy journey, every man,
To the famous tsar Saltan
Over sea and ocean faring!”
So the prince gave word, declaring
“Homage take from Prince Gvidon
To the tsar upon his throne.”

Then the merchants bowed, departed,
Straight upon their voyage started.
Seaward stept the prince; thereon
Through the waters rode the swan.

“Ah,” he prayed, “my soul is longing,
Swept away by wishes thronging...”
In a moment, as before,
She besprinkled him all o’er,
And the prince became a fly then,
And between the sea and sky then
Winged away, and on the ship
Lighted, in a chink to slip.

Past the island of Buyan
To the realm of famed Saltan
Gaily onward flies the trader,
Gaily hums the breeze to aid her.
See, already looming nigher
Is the land of her desire!
Soon the merchants, newly landed,
To the palace are commanded,
And behind them to the king
Our adventurer takes wing.
There he sees, in gold all shining,
But with countenance repining,
Crowned and throned above them all
Tsar Saltan within his hall.
Webster; wry-faced cook; that other,
Babarikha the queen-mother,—
Glower like toads upon the king,
Squatting round him in a ring.
Then he calls the merchants, seats them
At his board, with question greets them:
“Strangers, masters, where go ye?
Sailed ye long? and on the sea
Fared ye well? Or lived ye poorly?
In the world are wonders, surely?”
Then the sailor-men speak out:
“We have sailed the world about;
Overseas we lived not poorly;
Here was a world’s wonder, surely:—
On the deep an island lies;
There we saw a city rise;
Golden-steepled churches cap it,
Towers ascend, and gardens lap it.
By a palace is a fir
And a house of crystal, sir;
There a squirrel tame is thriving
And what tricks is she contriving!

She is chanting rhyme on rhyme,
Nibbling filberts all the time—
Common filberts they are not, sir!
Each a golden shell has got, sir!
Kernels, too, of emerald pure.
Guarded there, she sits secure;
Henchmen sundry service tender,
And a clerk is set to render
Count of every nut; at hand
Doing honour, soldiers stand,
Cast those shell in coin, and send them
Round, for all the world to spend them.
Maidens too the emeralds strow
Into padlockt stores below
All are rich men in that islet,
Nobly housed; no huts defile it.
There sits Prince Gvidon, and thence
Sends to thee his reverence.”
At the tale astonished duly,
“If I live,” the tsar said, “truly
I will see the wondrous isle,
Have Gvidon my host awhile.”
Cook and webster and that other,
Babarikha the queen-mother,
All are loth to let him so
To that isle of wonders go.
And the webster with a lurking
Snigger to tsar said, smirking:
“Was it wondrous, what they saw?
Did a squirrel pebbles gnaw,
Gold about at random shaking,
Emeralds in bunches raking?
Be it lies or be it truth,
We are not amazed, in sooth.
For the world a greater wonder
Holds:—a sea that swells in thunder,
Boils tempestuously o’er,
Floods on a deserted shore,
Sunders, noisily careering.
See, upon that shore appearing,
Blazing fierily, there be
Scale-clad champions, thirty-three!
Each is comely, each defiant,
Each a pickt and youthful giant;
All of even height; one more

Follows—uncle Chernomor.
Say now, is not this thing rarely
Wonderful, to call in fairly?”
And the guests, who have the wit
Not to cross her, silent sit.
Tsar Saltan is sore astounded;
But Gvidon, in wrath unbounded;
In a flash, a buzzing fly,
Lights on auntie’s leftward eye;
And that webster paled, to find it
Instantly and wholly blinded.
“Catch him, catch him,” still they yell;
“Squash him, squash him, squash him well!
Now we have him; stay, keep still there!”
—Calmly, past the window-sill there,
To his heritage now flees
Prince Gvidon, beyond the seas.

By the shore the prince is pacing,
Ever on the blue sea facing;
Look! the snowy swan, aswim
On the billows, calls to him:
“Hail, my lovely prince, good morrow!
Tell me, tell me, whence thy sorrow?
Why art thou so silent, say,
Downcast as a rainy day?”
Then he answers, “Ay, a dreary
Grief consumes me; I am weary
For a marvel; would there were
Such a windfall, for my share!”
“Tell me, what might be that wonder?”
“Somewhere, ocean, swells in thunder,
Boils tempestuously o’er,
Floods on a deserted shore,
Spills, in noisy spray careering.
And upon that, shore appearing,
Blazing fierily, there be
Scale-clad champions, thirty-three.
Each is comely, each defiant,
Each a pickt and youthful giant,
All of even height; one more
Follows—uncle Chernomor.”
“Here is nothing to disquiet;
Dear one, be not troubled by it,”
So the swan replies; “for well

Know I that same miracle.
Why, those knights, whom ocean mothers,
Are my true-begotten brothers.
Grieve not; go; the brethren wait;
Give them welcome at thy gate.”

Then he sat, no longer troubled,
In his tower; the waters bubbled;
On the sea his eyes he turned;
Suddenly the ocean churned,
Loudly splashed, and fled, and parted.
On the foreshore up there started
Each one blazing fierily,
Scale-clad champions thirty-three.
Two and two they march; conveying
Citywards the troop, with graying
Locks that glitter, Chernomor,
That good uncle, goes before.
From his tower the prince came posting,
Those dear visitors accosting.
Swiftly scurried up the folk;
To the prince the uncle spoke:
“Bidden by the swan, we landed;
Straitly she hath us commanded
That we guard thy glorious town
And patrol it, up and down.
We are daily now to sally
From the ocean wave, and rally,
Never failing, one and all,
By thy lofty city wall.
Soon we meet again; now leave us;
We must forth to sea, for grievous
Unto us is earthly air.”
One and all, they homeward fare.

Breezes on the water shifting
Landward urge a vessel drifting,
Raising up her canvas brave
As she skims along the wave
Past the island cliff-defended,
Past the city large and splendid.
Cannon flaming from the quay
Bid the ship put in from sea.
Then the merchants by the gateway
Moor; the prince invites them straightway;

Gives them food and drink, and then
Thus makes question of the men:
“Merchants, what are ye exchanging?
Whither may ye now be ranging?”
And the sailor-men speak out:
“We have sailed the world about;
Virgin silver, gold, and bladed
Steel are wares that we have traded.
Past the island of Buyan
To the realm of famed Saltan
Far the path that we are wending.
Time is up; our trip is ending.”
“Happy journey, every man,
To the famous tsar Saltan
Over sea and ocean faring!”
So the prince gave word, declaring
“Homage take from prince Gvidon
To the tsar upon his throne.”
Then the merchants bowed, departed,
Straight upon their voyage started.
Seaward stept the prince; thereon
Through the waters rode the swan.
“Ah,” he cried, “my soul is longing,
Swept away by wishes thronging...”
In a moment, as before,
She besprinkled him all o’er;
There and then he shrank and minished
To a humble-bee; ’twas finished;
Flying, droning, off went he,
Caught the vessel on the sea,
Lighted softly, to discover
Aft a cranny, and took cover.

Past the island of Buyan,
To the realm of famed Saltan
Gaily onward runs the trader,
Gaily hums the breeze to aid her.
See, already looming nigher
Is the land of her desire!
Soon the merchants newly landed
To the palace are commanded,
And behind them to the king
Our adventurer takes wing.
There he sees, in gold all shining,
But with countenance repining,

Crowned and throned above them all
Tsar Saltan within his hall.

Cook, and webster, and that other,
Babarikha, the queen-mother,
All the trio, in a ring,
Gaze, foursquare, upon the king.
Then he calls the merchants, seats them
At his board, with question greets them:
“Merchants, masters, where go ye?
Sailed ye long, and on the sea
Fared ye well? or lived ye poorly?
In the world are wonders, surely?”
Then the sailor-men speak out:
“We have sailed the world about;
Overseas we lived not poorly;
Here was a world’s wonder, surely:—
On the deep an island lies;
There a city doth arise;
And each day there comes a wonder:
For the ocean swells in thunder,
Boils tempestuously o’er,
Floods on a deserted shore,
Spills, in noisy spray careering.
Then upon that shore appearing,
Blazing fierily, there be
Scale-clad champions thirty-three.
Each is comely, each defiant,
Each a pickt and youthful giant;
All of even height; one more,
Ancient uncle Chernomor,
With them from the ocean sallies,
And in twos the troop he rallies
To protect that island-town
And patrol it up and down.
Never was a guard securer,
Braver, busier, or surer.
There sits Prince Gvidon, and thence
Sends to thee his reverence.”

At the tale astonished duly,
“If I live,” the tsar said, “truly
To that wondrous isle I’ll come,
Guest of Prince Gvidon.” But mum
Cook and webster sit; that other,

Babarikha, the queen-mother,
Snickering cries, "Shall sailor-men
With this tale amaze us, then?
People out of ocean strolling
Wander prowling and patrolling!
Whether lies or truth they tell,
Here I see no miracle.
Can such marvels be? a new one
I will tell ye, and a true one:—
Over sea a princess stays;
None from her can take his gaze;
She bedims the sun in heaven;
She illumes the earth at even;
Moonbeams in her tresses are;
On her forehead burns a star;
And herself, she sails before ye
Like a peafowl in her glory;
When she speaks, her accent seem
Like the warble of a stream.
Say now, is not this thing rarely
Wonderful, to call it fairly?"
And the guests, who have the wit
Not to cross her, silent sit.
Tsar Saltan is sore astounded;
But the prince, his wrath unbounded
Reining, at his grandma flies,
But he spares her ancient eyes.
Round he twirls, and drones, and flounces,
Straight upon her nose he pounces,
And that nose the hero strings;
Up a mighty blister springs;
Then once more alarm is sounded:
"Help—in Heaven's name—confound it!—
Catch him, catch him!" now they yell,
"Squash him, squash him, squash him well!
Now we have him—stay, be still there!"
But the humble clears the sill there;
To his heritage he flees,
Calmly flitting overseas.

By the shore the prince is pacing,
Ever on the blue sea facing.
Look! the snowy swan, aswim
On the billows, call to him:
"Hail, my lovely prince, good morrow!

Tell me, tell me, whence thy sorrow?
Why art thou so silent, say,
Downcast as a rainy day?"
"I am wretched, and a dreary
Grief consumes me; I am weary
Watching other people wed,
All but me—", he sadly said.
"But who is she? by what token
Shalt thou know her?" "Men have spoken
Of a princess. Where she dwells,
The beholder sees nought else.
She bedims the sun in heaven;
She illumines the earth at even;
Moonbeams in her tresses are;
On her forehead burns a star;
And herself, she walks before ye
Like a peafowl in her glory;
When she speaks, her accent seem
Like the warble of a stream.
Only—is this truth or error?"
He awaits her word, in terror.
Silently the snowy swan
Mused awhile, but spoke anon:
"Such a maid there is; but take her
Once to wife, thou canst not shake her
Like a mitten from thy wrist;
No, nor like a girdle twist.
Hear my counsel; thou shalt profit,
So thou wilt avail thee of it:
Ponder all things; hesitate,
Lest repentance come, too late."
But he swore he would not tarry;
Time was ripe for him to marry;
He had turned it every way
In his thoughts; was ready, nay,
Passionately yearned to wander
After that fair princess younder;
Fain to trudge it, if need be,
To the world's extremity.
Then the swan—profoundly signed she—
"Why so far afield," replied she,
"For thy princess? I am she;
Here behold thy destiny."
Then, her pinions upward flinging,
Over the wide water swinging,

Down she stooped upon the strand,
Hid her in a bush at hand,
Gave a shake and gave a shiver,
Turned a princess, with one quiver.
Moonbeams in her tresses are;
On her forehead burns a star;
And the lady, in her glory
Like a peafowl walks before ye;
When she speaks, her accent seem
Like the warble of a stream.
Then and there the prince enfolds her
To his bosom white, and holds her;
Then to his dear mother he
Leads her quickly; on his knee
Falls, and thus begins entreating!
“Sovereign lady-mother, greeting!
This my chosen bride shall be
Duteous daughter unto thee.
Grant this boon, that we, possessing
Thy good leave and marriage-blessing,
May in peace and concord live;
So, thy benediction give.”
Then the ikon she extended
Wonder-working, o’er their bended
Heads, and wept, and spoke: “The Lord
You, my children, shall reward.”
But the prince, not long he tarried,
To the princess he was married,
And they entered on their life,
Waiting increase, man and wife.

Breezes on the water shifting
Landward urge a vessel drifting,
Bellying out her canvas brave
As she skims along the wave
Past the island cliff-defended,
Past the city large and splendid.
Cannon flaming from the quay
Bid the ship put in from sea;
And the merchants by the gateway
Moor; the prince invites them straightway,
Gives them food and drink, and then
Thus makes question of the men:
“Merchants, what are ye exchanging?
Whither may ye now be ranging?”

On the deep an island lies;
There a city doth arise;
Golden-steepled churches cap it;
Towers ascend, and gardens lap it.
By the palace is a pine,
And a mansion crystalline;
There a squirrel tame is thriving;
And such tricks is she contriving!
She is chanting rhyme on rhyme,
Nibbling filberts all the time;
Common filberts they are not, sir;
Kernels too, of emerald pure;
Each a golden shell has got, sir!
Her they pet, and keep secure.
And there is a further wonder:
There the ocean swells in thunder,
Boils tempestuously o'er,
Floods on the deserted shore,
Spills, in noisy spray careering;
And upon that shore appearing,
Blazing fierily, there be
Scale-clad champions, thirty-three.
Each is comely, each defiant,
Each a pickt and youthful giant,
All of even height; one more
Follows, uncle Chernomor.
Never was a guard securer,
Braver, busier, or surer.
With the prince a bride there stays;
None from her can take his gaze;
She bedims the sun in heaven;
She illumes the earth at even;
Moonbeams in her tresses are;
On her forehead burns a star.
Prince Gvidon that city proudly
Rules, and all men praise him loudly.
And he sends thee homage now,
Yet he blames thee: "Where's thy vow
Soon to be our guest, nor linger;
Yet thou never stirrest finger!"

Then the tsar could not forbear
Longer; bade the fleet prepare.
Cook, and webster, and that other,
Babarikha the queen-mother,

All were loth to let him so
To that isle of wonders go.
But the monarch, nothing heeding,
Silenced then and there their pleading,
Saying, "Is Saltan a child
Or tsar?", and never smiled;
Stampt, and cried, "I sail this morning!"
Left them; slammed the door, in warning.

Prince Gvidon, all silently
At his window watched the sea;
Not a murmur, or a lashing
Wave, but just a gentle plashing!
But upon the distance blue
Ships were swimming into view:
'Twas the emperor's fleet in motion
Coming o'er the level ocean.
Then the prince Gvidon upsprang,
Thunderous his summons rang:

"Mother of my heart, come hither!
Thou too, young princess; and thither
Turn your eyes, upon the sea;
"This my father comes to me."
And he sees the fleet draw nearer;
Points a spyglass, marks it clearer;
Sees on deck the emperor pass
Spying at them through his glass.
Cook and webster and the other,
Babarikha the queen-mother
By his side bewildered stand
At that unfamiliar land.
Guns flame out from every barrel,
Every belfry chimes a carol.
Prince Gvidon goes down, and he
Meets the tsar beside the sea,
Cook and webster and that other,
Babarikha the queen-mother.
Quickly he the tsar has brought
To the city, saying nought.

To the palace all go straightway.
Armour gleams beside the gateway.
There the emperor can see
Thirty champions and three.

Each is comely, each defiant,

Each a pickt and youthful giant;
All one stature; and one more
Follows, uncle Chernomor.
Next, the tsar the court is treading,
Where, beneath a pine high-spreading
Chants a squirrel rhyme on rhyme,
Nibbling gold nuts all the time,
Out of each an emerald cropping,
In a sack the jewel dropping;
And the spacious court is strewn
With the golden husks alone.
Further still— on what amazing
Princess are the strangers gazing?
Moonbeams in her tresses are;
On her forehead burns a star,
And herself she walks before ye
Like a peafowl in her glory,
And her prince's mother leads.
And the tsar, he gazes, heeds,
Knows them both; his heart is leaping;
“What is here? he cried, and weeping
Melted, and his breath he drew
Hard and heavily, and knew
Her, his queen, and quickly caught her
To him, and his gallant daughter
And his son. To board they fared

And a noble banquet shared.
Cook and webster and that other,
Babarikha the queen-mother,
Into corners scampered round;
Hardly might those three be found.
Then they broke in sobs and moaning,
All their past transgressions owning,
And the tsar, so glad was he,
Merely banished home the three.
And they bore to bed, half-drunken,
Tsar Saltan, when day was sunken.

I drank beer, drank mead; and yet
Hardly were my whiskers wet.