

Pyotr Yershov. The little humpbacked horse

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PART ONE

Now the telling of the tale begins

Past the woods and mountains steep,
Past the rolling waters deep,
You will find a hamlet pleasant
Where once dwelt an aged peasant.
Of his sons-and he had three,
Th'eldest sharp was as could be;
Second was nor dull nor bright,
But the third-a fool all right.
Now, these brothers planted wheat,
Brought it to the royal seat,
By which token you may know
That they hadn't far to go.

There they sold their golden grain
Counted carefully their gain
And, with well-filled money bags,
Home again would turn their nags.
But, upon an evil day,
Dire misfortune came their way-
Someone, 'twixt the dark and dawn,
Took to trampling down their corn;
Never had such grief before
Come to visit at their door;
Day and night they sat and thought
How the villain could be caught,
Till at last it dawned upon them
That the way to solve the problem
And to save their crops from harm
Was, each night to guard their farm.

As the day drew near its close,
Up the eldest brother rose
And, with pitchfork, axe in hand,
Started out his watch to stand
Dark and stormy was the night,
He was overcome with fright
And, of all his wits deprived,
In the nearest haystack dived.
Slowly night gave way to day;
Our brave watchman left his hay,
And, with water from the well,
Soused himself-then, with a yell,
Pounded on the cottage door;
And you should have heard him roar!

"Hey, you sleepy owls," cried he-