

# **The Tale of Matryonushka**

**Narrated by Lada**

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Once upon a time there was a girl called Matryonushka. Pleasant in face and appearance, she was also kind to people. Her plait of flaxen hair reached below her waist. Her eyes were blue like cornflowers.

She lived alone in a little cottage in the forest beside a small fast-flowing stream where the stream fed into a large lake.

But Matryonushka was not an orphan. She still had her mother and father, and two elder brothers. On the other side of the lake was the village where Matryonushka was born, and that was where her family lived.

But why did Matryonushka come to live alone? That is what I am about to tell you.

From an early age, Matryonushka had always stood out for her exceptional kindness.

For every little bird and every little animal, her thoughts were always not to cause them any harm, but to endear herself to them. Every little flower, every little sapling — she loved them all as friends. Whatever little animal it might be — dogs, cats, cows, horses, goats, sheep, chickens or geese — she loved them all!

To people too she was friendly. She was always willing to help in any way she could! She always had good words to say about everyone! Never did she even think anything bad about anyone!

Her mother and father could not be happier with her, having such a good daughter in the family.

As it turned out, however, living with Matryonushka's good-heartedness was not an easy matter.

What was life like in the village? The little calves, piglets, hens and roosters came into the world and were nurtured, and then they were slaughtered for their meat and eaten! Since time immemorial that was the way things were done in those parts.

But when Matryonushka grew up a little and began to realize this, the very sight of it brought tears to her eyes, and she would flatly refuse to eat any food for which an animal had been killed. No matter how much they tried to make her, she would not budge!

Despite all her father's and elder brothers' attempts to persuade her and prevail upon her, she would have none of it!

Matryonushka, for her part, would pick wild strawberries and mushrooms in the forest, and prepare pies and pancakes for all the family. But as for meat, it was as if it made her ill, and she would not touch it

For she could always feel the pain of others.

And so it was that as she began to grow up, Matryonushka asked her father and brothers to help her build a little cottage near the edge of the forest, and to allow her to live there separately from them.

At first her parents did not want to let her live on her own, but then they relented, since by that time Matryonushka was already known throughout the village not only for what many saw as her “magical” kindness, but also for her

ability to prepare teas from medicinal herbs to treat various ailments. She collected the wild herbs and dried them, and knew many things that others did not.

But how did she learn this?

Well, from an early age Matryonushka liked to talk to the different plants.

If she went out to the meadow, she would start talking to the flowers and wild herbs. Or she would go into the forest, hug a small tree and also talk to it!

She would talk about what she was thinking, and ask a flower or a tree for advice.

At first she did not hear any replies. The flowers and trees would nod or shake their heads and branches, as if they were replying “yes” or “no” to her.

Then Matryonushka sometimes began to hear a kind a gentle Voice replying to her questions.

At first she thought it was the flowers and trees holding a conversation with her.

And when Matryonushka began to try to heal people, she realized that the Voice was the Voice of God. It was Him giving her the important advice!

So over the course of time Matryonushka began to recognize all the useful properties of plants, when to pick them, how to dry them, how to make infusions, and which ailments they could help to treat.

And when she picked the plants, she would always make a point of saying “Please forgive me, dear little plant. I am picking you not just for fun and then to throw you away, but to help treat people's ailments!”

And if a small branch was broken off a tree by the wind, Matryonushka would collect the needles or leaves from the branch to make infusions from them too.

Then little forest animals would start to come up to her, sometimes for Matryonushka to heal them, and sometimes just to snuggle up to her and be playful.

So it was that Matryonushka made faithful friends among the animals of the forest, and birds would fly up to her and sing their songs.

And when anyone came through the forest towards Matryonushka's little cottage, there were always different voices there to warn her.

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One day a huge bear came to see Matryonushka. It had caught its paw in a trap set by hunters. The bear had had enough strength to tear off the branch to which the trap had been tied, and to make its escape. But it could not free its paw from the trap. With the trap's iron jaws biting into the bone in its paw, the bear hobbled up to Matryonushka for help.

The bear was enormous, but Matryonushka was not afraid.

She went up to the bear. “Give me your paw, my bear friend,” she said in a kindly voice, “I will take it out of the trap and make it better.”

The bear, agonized by the pain, let Matryonushka free its paw from the trap and allowed her to apply some healing ointment to the wound.

From that day on, the bear made its home nearby and took to warning Matryonushka of any danger, acting as her protector.

Matryonushka would observe the behaviour of the different animals. She would notice which plant each animal ate, and for what purpose.

The animals were not in the least afraid of her.

And so Matryonushka's knowledge grew and grew.

**Matryonushka also learned — according to Divine Instructions — how to make healing water and how best to use the water to treat ailments.**

**It was not long before Matryonushka began to notice that her hands seemed to have the ability to see. By running her fingers and her hands over the body of whoever she was treating, she was able to see exactly where the source of the illness was.**

**But more than that, she soon recognized that this was not simply the hands of her own body, but within them or beyond them — the hands of the spirit. And it was possible to use those hands of the spirit to gather up the dark energies within the body and cast them out.**

**And it was also possible to fill the body with *light*, like sunlight, and seemingly to wash out everything inside it with this *light*.**

**Gradually Matryonushka became completely sure that what she could hear was the Divine Voice, both when she herself asked questions, and when God Himself wanted to tell her something.**

**And she began to see the Divine Light; at any moment it was enough to turn the gaze of her spirit towards Him.**

**She also learned how to make her spirit be as one with this Light.**

**And it was easy for the Light to pour in through the hands of the spirit! And having become as one with Him, it became possible to heal illnesses.**

**She also began to notice that it was possible for an illness to return to a person, no matter how much healing was tried, if the person himself did not change for the better, if he did not try to tackle the cause of the illness.**

**And God began to reveal to Matryonushka the causes of the illnesses.**

**Matryonushka began to find out much more about how to heal not only the bodies of people, but their souls too.**

**She set about teaching people how to help heal themselves and others, and how to live healthily and happily.**

**And so it was that Matryonushka soon came to know how to cure any ailment.**

**Her reputation began to spread, and people would come to see her even from other villages far away for medication, advice and healing.**

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**But some would also come wanting her to perform magic and sorcery.**

**A girl would come and ask for a love potion to bewitch a young man who took her fancy, for he — scoundrel that he was! — loved another!**

**Or along would come a man wanting to know how he could anger a bitter enemy.**

**But Matryonushka would tell them that we should not wish other people ill, that this is not the way to think and behave, but there was no end to the evil ideas that plagued some people's lives.**

**And Matryonushka understood that it was not only bodies that could be deformed, sick and blind, but souls too.**

**But how could souls be cured of evil?**

**This was a question that played on Matryonushka's mind more and more, and something she asked God about ever more frequently. What was the treatment for human malice, for insensitivity, resentment, jealousy and envy?**

**This is the answer God gave her:**

**Love from the heart is the helping hand in all misfortunes! This love needs to be awakened in the soul! This is no easy task, but it is very important!**

In everyone there is something good, no matter how small. It is this something good that must be grasped! And then it will be possible to help that soul find its way out of the abyss of evil!

But the person himself absolutely must want that to happen! Otherwise nothing will come of it! Because every soul possesses free will. And every individual makes a choice: to incline towards good, or evil.

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One day a girl came to see Matryonushka, complaining about her lot in life.

"I am so wretched and unhappy!" I have a sister who is so beautiful! All the young men only have eyes for her! She is the only one whose hand they seek in marriage! In her presence, no one even notices me at all!

"What should I do so as not to be eclipsed by her beauty and always live in her shadow?"

"I am no great beauty and not especially clever, and that is why all the attention goes only to my sister! But as for me, nobody loves me! Nobody will ever marry me!"

"Do you know what is the most unattractive about you?"

"Is it my nose?" asked the girl in alarm. "Perhaps it is too big? Or is it the small birthmark on my cheek?"

"Or am I too fat? But many young men like well-rounded hips and full bosoms. I am like this because when I am sad, I cannot prevent myself from eating. After all, we have to comfort ourselves somehow!"

"So you have decided that the best treatment for disappointment is to eat something tasty? But can you not see that this only gives you comfort for as long as you have the taste of sweetness in your mouth?" Matryonushka asked, with a smile.

"But what is the way forward for me? How can I rid myself of this suffering and jealousy?"

"Would you like me to tell you the secret of how to make yourself more beautiful? You see, the least beautiful thing about you is jealousy and concern only for yourself!"

"But how can I stop being jealous? My sister gets everything, and yet I am supposed to wish her even more goodness and happiness?"

"Listen: true beauty lies in the beauty of the soul! When the soul is beautiful, then it is a pleasure to listen to such a person and be in their company! Then the person becomes kind and other people cannot take their eyes off the light from the heart which pours out of the soul!"

"But how can we make our soul beautiful?"

"We need to awaken that love from the heart within us! Yes, we can be envious of someone else's happiness, but we can also learn how to *share happiness*, to be happy together with the other person!

"And then — through something as simple as this! — your life will be filled with happiness and beauty!

"Let me give you some advice to help you begin to awaken your beauty:

Rise with the sun at the crack of dawn!

Make it a day of gladness born!

Walk this Earth without the shoe

Wash yourself in the morning dew!

**Live from your heart and through your smile,  
Look to the Father all the while:  
God please accept my thanks, I pray,  
For all the happiness of this day!**

**“Then with every day you will become more beautiful: in your soul and in your person!**

**“When you feel Mother Earth beneath your feet, strength and good health come to you!**

**“When you wash your face in the dew, it becomes more beautiful!**

**“If you smile through your heart, and show this through your kind actions and words, everyone will like you, and you will win everyone's affection!**

**“And if you thank God for the happiness He sends you, you will begin to feel His Presence and Help throughout the day!**

**“Then you will be ashamed before God to be jealous, to make trouble for others, to lose your temper or to take offence! Then you will stop doing these things!**

**“And when you stop taking offence, others will stop offending you.**

**“You will stop bearing grudges and being jealous, and you will understand that the happiness of others brings joy to you too! And happiness will then come into your life too!**

**And if you should begin to feel aggrieved about something, you will turn your gaze to God and think again! Because what you used to think was a trouble or punishment in your life was not, in fact, a punishment, but Divine promptings. This, too, is a Divine Prompting: how to make your life better, how to change yourself for the better, and how to give other people joy and happiness!**

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**One day it happened that Matryonushka went off to the river, and two robbers with guns went into her cottage to steal. They believed that she had been given a lot of money by those she had treated. They did not know that Matryonushka never took payment for her healing. But this was something the robbers could not even imagine, for they always sought to benefit themselves, and saw earthly riches as their prize.**

**But in Matryonushka's cottage it turned out that there was nothing for them to steal.**

**They looked about them angrily: perhaps she had hidden it away somewhere? But they could not find anything. Only medicinal herbs, curative infusions, dried mushrooms and wild strawberries.**

**They decided to look around outside, in case she had a treasure chest hidden somewhere. They put down their guns and stood them by the wall.**

**Thereupon the bear, Matryonushka's friend, set upon them. He growled furiously and began to chase after the hostile intruders.**

**The robbers could not grab their guns, because the bear had cut off their path. So they started to run off wherever their legs took them, with the bear at their heels!**

**They landed up in a swamp, got caught in the quicksand, and found they were stuck.**

**But the bear went his own way, avoiding the quagmire.**

**Slowly the robbers sank into the mud. The harder they tried to get themselves out, the faster they sank. Feeling that death was imminent and**

inevitable, they were reminded of their lives filled with criminal deeds. This made them feel even more desperate, and they began to scream and shout for help.

Matryonushka returned to her little cottage and saw the guns leaning by the door, with everything inside higgledy-piggledy. She heard the shouting coming from the swamp.

She snatched up a long strong pole and ran to the rescue.

She pulled out both robbers, led them to the river, and told them to wash their clothes and themselves.

Then she took them to her cottage, gave them each clean clothes while they waited for their own clothes to dry in the sun, and gave them food.

“Why did you save us?” asked the robbers in surprise. “We wanted to do evil to you, and you reply with kindness!”

“Now you understand what evil is, it only leads to misfortune for those who choose it! Look, you wanted to do wrong to someone, but you yourselves ended up in the swamp and nearly perished!

“The evil in your lives is like that swamp, it sucks you in. Sometimes you cannot get out of the abyss! The evil that you do to others stores up great misfortune for you yourselves in the future! The worst possible misfortune!

“That is why I saved you: for you to understand this!”

“But how should we live now, since we know nothing other than how to fire our guns and rob?”

“You cannot chop wood? You cannot dig?”

“Well, I suppose we can...”

“Then go out into the world and offer your help in houses where the women are elderly or widows, and there is no one to do men's work! In return, you will receive your fill!”

“As for stolen riches — forget about them!

“He who makes his livelihood through work brings happiness into his life. He who makes a living by thievery only robs himself of his own happiness!

“If you begin to lead honest lives, you will have a different future in store!

“And for the sins of your past, ask God, too, for forgiveness as well as those whom you have wronged!”

So it was that two people who were previously robbers went out into the world, learning how to live their lives anew.

And now Matryonushka — as in all her healing work — began to discern not only how to heal the body, but also give correction to the soul.

She started to seek ways in which man can help himself to make his life better.

She took to thinking how man can learn how not to bring new misfortune and ailments upon himself through impure thoughts and wrongful deeds.

She would tell people that rejoicing in every day and living a life of goodness, love and happiness is God's commandment to every man!

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One day a former soldier walking on crutches came to see Matryonushka. His leg had been blown off by a cannonball in the war, and he had remained a cripple for the rest of his life. But the war had crippled not only his body, but his soul too.

“Matryona,” he said. “You know how to heal people. So you must also know about all kinds of poisons, so that someone can take poison and die without

living in misery. Sometimes it can be a great service to help someone depart this life easily.”

“The life-span of man is determined by God! If life here is hard and you are sad and embittered against the whole world, it will not be any better after death!”

“Do you mean you know what happens after death?”

“How can I not know? Of course I know! Our souls live on without our bodies! As they were in life, so they will remain after our bodies die.”

“It is possible to live without a body, and perhaps this is even easier for the soul. But there is very little that the soul can change without the body!

“That is why people are given a body: to create good and beauty, to help other people, and to make good their own mistakes!

“Well if you are so wise, perhaps you know how I should continue my life? I dreamed of returning from the war, getting married, building a new house and bringing up children. And now, what sort of a man am I? A cripple! I cannot work a plow, I am not strong enough to build a house. Who will want to marry a man like me?”

“There is a girl of who is dear to you! She was waiting for you to return from the war. And now she is waiting for you to stop intoxicating yourself with wine, and to make her a proposal of marriage.”

“But how do you know that?”

“Everyone comes to see with me with their troubles, ailments and preoccupations, and that is why I know so much.”

“I am not willing to beg for money. How would I make a living with a young wife?”

“I was told that you once used to love to draw, to decorate window shutters, and make spoons and bowls out of wood.”

“Yes, I used to.”

“Well there is your work! You can sell your decorative spoons and bowls. Whatever you need in the house you can buy with the money you make.”

“Yes, I still have my paints. They have been stored away for a long time. But my brushes are all rather worn. I will need to make new ones. It seems I will need to hunt for squirrels.”

“You must not harm the squirrels! Let me give you this for luck: make yourself some brushes!

With those words Matryonushka cut off a handful of her thick plaited hair, took some twine, and gave them to him.

“Thank you, Matryonushka! People are right to say that you can heal anything! You have given me hope! It is as if I have been born again!”

“Now your happiness and that of your chosen one will depend on you alone! And do not forget to invite me to the wedding!”

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That soldier was not the only one to be left crippled by the recent war in that country. Many people suffered great distress. Victory, however, was declared as a great accomplishment!

The tsar's chief military commander, Prince Bronislav, who was in command of all the tsar's men, had secured many victories and also won this war for the tsar, but he too was seriously wounded in the fighting.

Bronislav was brave, he did not hide behind the soldiers' backs! Through his own courage and daring, he also inspired others to acts of military bravery!

His glory was known throughout the land. "He is our hero!" they would say. "He fought for the tsar and his country! He overwhelmed many enemies, and won many battles! He personally saved many of his own soldiers! He is held in great esteem by all! He has been appropriately rewarded by the tsar in land and in gold!"

However, Bronislav's wounds would not heal! He was now unable to get up from his bed, unable to regain his former strength.

Once of Herculean strength and handsome countenance, he now spent all his days confined to bed, barely able to raise an arm, completely powerless to stand up.

Word reached him of the girl called Matryonushka, who could cure any ailment.

He dispatched his footmen to discover her whereabouts and find out if there was truth in what people said about her healing powers.

The footmen returned and reported that there truly was such a girl, and everyone who had come to see her had been cured of their ailments.

They carried the hero on a stretcher to the little forest cottage where Matryonushka lived.

Matryonushka came to the door.

"Leave your prince here with me," she told Bronislav's footmen. "Perhaps I will be able to restore him to health. Then, in a month's time, he will come back to you by himself. If he does not come, then you should come here."

Bronislav became irritated.

"But they told me that you can cure any ailment. I am prepared to pay any price for your healing treatment. I have gold and large domains with houses and gardens. Anything you ask for will be yours! Just restore me to health! It is no life being confined to bed powerless and infirm!"

"I do not accept money for my healing, prince! But I wish with all my heart to restore you to health!"

"But that does not depend on me alone. Much will depend on you, too. And above all — on God! It is from Him — through our ailments and sufferings — that we receive promptings on how we should live. It is from Him that we receive help in this healing process!"

So it was that Prince Bronislav stayed at Matryonushka's little cottage in the forest.

She gave him healing infusions to drink, and tended to his wounds with medicinal ointments.

With each passing day, Bronislav's condition began to improve!

Matryonushka took to helping him go out to the birch tree growing beside her cottage. She told him to learn from the birch tree: to feel how strength can return to the body too:

"Feel it: in spring the birch draws the moisture and strength of Mother-Earth from its roots to the tips of its leaves to help it grow. It puts out new leaves on its branches. So it is with the human body, too: the life force gifted by God flows in and reaches every part of the body and heals everything!"

So she began to teach Bronislav that just as we breathe in the air, we can breathe in the Divine Light in all its mercy, like the morning sun. And breathe so as to fill the whole of the body with this Light as we inhale, and to breathe out all that is unhealthy as we exhale.

With the passage of time Bronislav's body came to be suffused more and more with this Light. His former strength began to return.

The two would spend much time in discussion together.

**Bronislav wanted to know all about Matryonushka.**

**“Why do you live alone in the forest? And how do you get by without money, if you do not accept payment for your healing?”**

**Matryonushka replied with a smile, as if the words came to her in verse:**

**“The forest is my home and hearth! I see the beauty of the Earth! In summer I admire the green, the winter peace is white and clean, the golden colors fall will bring, the dainty flowers of the spring. In spring my vegetables are sown, I pick in summer what has grown, in fall the mushrooms I will dry, that's all I need to get me by!”**

**“But do you not find it frightening here, or dull?”**

**“I do not have time for boredom,” said Matryonushka earnestly. “There is always work for me to do!**

**“As for fear — I have none, for I have God in my life. Everything that comes into my life is from Him!**

**Bronislav listened to her with a sense of admiration! Fair of face and form was Matryonushka. But more than that, her spiritual lucidity, pureness and strength, the warmth from her heart and her confidence filled him with such pleasure and joy, as if he had known her all his life. He was the happiest man alive!**

**Matryonushka's conversations with the prince also dealt with serious matters.**

**“Bronislav, what do you think: are acts of war just or unjust in the eyes of God?”**

**“What is there to think about? The tsar gives the order, and my duty is to carry out that order properly!”**

**“But if you are ordered to commit evil, to carry out a crime of some kind — would you also carry out a criminal order?”**

**“No, I would sooner perish!”**

**“But what about war — is that good or evil?”**

**“That, I know not.”**

**“That is why your wounds are taking so long to heal, for you to think this over.**

**“Because you saved the lives of others, your own life has been spared.**

**“But for those whom you killed or maimed, you have received serious wounds.**

**“Now you can think about this:**

**“Are the orders of the tsar always just?**

**“Was that war just?**

**“Is it acceptable — before God — to wage an unjust war?**

**“Is it heroism to carry out inhumane orders?”**

**“Well — for a soldier, if he does not carry out an order, then he is immediately shot.”**

**“But you, prince — the tsar holds you in high esteem. He always listens to your advice!**

**“You are a hero! no one will suspect you of cowardice!**

**“If the tsar thinks again of attacking other countries, you will be able to stop him!**

**“Many quarrels and disputes can be settled by peaceful means!**

**“Let every people live in peace and happiness in their own land!”**

**Bronislav started thinking these things over. And it was when he realized that he had done many unjust deeds in his life, and when he had made repentance for this, that he was finally restored to health.**

**Matryonushka took him outside and doused him with cold river water from her bucket, whereupon Bronislav was filled with a force for good much greater than the strength he had had before his sickness.**

**As for his wounds, not a trace of them remained on his body!**

**He was in awe of this miracle!**

**The next day they came to take their leave of each other.**

**“How can I thank you, dear Matryonushka, for restoring me to health?”**

**“Ensure that no soldier's blood is shed in vain, and that our country and others too are not afflicted by war!**

**“That is the best way you can thank me, and I will always be happy that I was able to heal you!”**

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**Some time after that, a man came to see Matryonushka for some medication. He had arrived from the capital city with the latest news that there would soon be a new war, as the tsar wanted to conquer the neighbouring tsardom. The man went on to recount how Bronislav had refused to take command of the army, and for that reason he had been found guilty of high treason and sent to prison.**

**As soon as Matryonushka heard this, she prepared to set out immediately on the journey.**

**“Take me to the capital city in your carriage,” she told the man. “I must hurry! This is all my fault: it was me who instructed Bronislav to live by his conscience and act out of love. That is how I have led him into trouble! Now I must come to his rescue!”**

**“Do you intend to go to the tsar himself? Will you not be afraid to come to the defence of the disgraced prince? And what if you not only fail to save him, but also lose your own life?”**

**“No, I have no fear! What will be, will be. There's no escaping it! If need be, I will die for the sake of truth!**

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**Matryonushka did, indeed, go to the capital city, but they refused to let her into the palace to see the tsar.**

**She was at a loss to know what to do.**

**But that did not last long. All of a sudden the tsar fell ill with an unknown affliction and took to his bed. Fearing death, he ordered doctors to be sought.**

**It was then that the palace gates were opened to Matryonushka.**

**“Heal me!” the tsar told Matryonushka. “I have pain in my heart, I am losing my sight, my arms and legs are becoming numb. I feel that death is not far away!**

**“But this is not the time for me to die: war must begin very soon! Without me, everything here will be destroyed!**

**“Restore me to health!” the tsar told Matryonushka. “For that I will fulfil any wish you have! Whatever you want, just ask!”**

**“But how, Sire, can I heal your heart when you do not know how to show love for people — your own people?” she replied.**

**“How can I heal your eyes if you cannot see God through your soul? You look at what is good, but you see it as evil and punish it. And what is evil you proclaim as good, and you reward it! You are intending to carry out your evil schemes! That is the way you will become completely blind!**

**“How can I treat your arms, Sire, if you use them to write unjust decrees?”**

**“And you intend to use your legs — and those of your army — to run riot over the land of another people!**

**“In order to regain your health, you must change yourself!”**

**“But how?”**

**“In the laws of your tsardom,” Matryonushka replied, “it is proclaimed that if one man steals something from another, then he is a thief and a criminal.**

**“And if you, Sire, wish to seize lands and riches from your neighbouring tsardom, then what, too, are you?”**

**“How dare you speak like that to the tsar!”, he exclaimed angrily, half-rising from his bed with the last of his strength.**

**“You yourself asked me to heal you, so I am healing you!**

**“If you will not understand why life on Earth has been given to man by God, and how that life should be lived in the eyes of God, there is no way that you will regain your health!**

**“Each human life has a great purpose, which it is within the power of all of us to understand!**

**“That purpose is to transform our souls for the better and to help others.**

**“Every man, indeed, has only one tsardom granted to him by God, and that is within his soul.**

**“When the body dies, the only riches that have importance are those which have accumulated in the tsardom of the soul. Only there can the immortal riches of each of us be preserved. And these riches take the form of kindness, concern for others, forgiveness and wisdom.**

**“Your body will die, and someone else will rule your earthly tsardom.**

**“After the body dies, there is only one power in the beyond: the Power of God!**

**“You will realize that in that world where you find yourself, no gold has any value!**

**“And in this world inhabited by the living, you will no longer have any influence on the destiny of your earthly tsardom!**

**“And you will only have regret for the misfortune and distress sown by your unjust deeds!**

**“Now, while you are alive on Earth, you must understand that your future depends on you alone, Sire! Examine your own spiritual qualities: is there peace and orderliness, love and beauty in the tsardom of your soul, or is there despondency, anger, suspicion and malice?**

**“These same qualities divide our souls in the other world too. Each man chooses for himself — through his thoughts, feelings and actions — whose company he will share in the world after death.**

**“If man in his earthly soul nurtures goodness in himself, no one is harmed as a result, and no one is deprived of anything.**

**“And when the tsardom's intrinsic man-soul becomes as sublime as the Tsardom of God, then also comes true happiness!**

**“Then he presents to God his entire inner personal tsardom, and finds himself in the infinite Tsardom of God which knows no bounds, and which is the same for All who have Attained It!”**

**The tsar listened, and as he understood Matryonushka's words he seemed to feel a sense of relief.**

**Matryonushka continued.**

**“If there is peace, order and an understanding of God's Law in your inner spiritual tsardom, then it will become easy for you to promote order in your state**

here on Earth too. For you will become able to learn to distinguish between what is good and what is evil for other people.

“If you awaken the love in your heart, if you begin to look at everything from your spiritual heart, this will be easy to understand!

“Imagine yourself in the position of someone condemned to live in poverty and distress because of your orders!

“Put yourself in the position of those who are obliged to go to war and kill other people on your order!

“Feel the pain of the widows and orphans who have been left without a breadwinner!

“Feel the pain of the cripples who now live on alms, and this is your fault!

“It is in your power to make life better for the people of your country!

“Now you can make wise laws and think about order in your own country, not dream about new conquests and predatory wars!”

The tsar found himself agreeing with Matryonushka, and began to think about the good that could be done for people.

Then Matryonushka — with the Help of God — healed his afflictions.

“Ask for whatever you wish!” said the tsar.

“Must I ask you not to start a war with our neighbouring tsardom?”

“No, there is no need. I now understand that.

“In what way, then, can I recompense you?”

“Prince Bronislav is in prison. Set him free. He is loyal to you and wishes good for his country!”

“So be it, your wish is granted!”

\* \* \*

Bronislav was released from prison. His pleasure at meeting Matryonushka was indescribable.

“Again you have saved me! Had it not been for you, Matryonushka, I would have spent the rest of my days languishing in prison! Or sent off to the executioner's block.”

“I am happy, Bronislav, that you were not afraid of going against the will of the tsar and speaking the truth to him!”

“I was never afraid of anything before, either. And with you I clearly saw God and the truth of life!

“Why would I now be afraid? On the contrary, I have understood a great deal during these days of imprisonment!

“There is only one thing I regret: that I did not reach the point of declaring my love for you, and telling you of my gratitude!

“Matryonushka, will you marry me?”

“But what sort of princess am I? I am from a humble family. To live without my work, without healing people — that is something I cannot do.”

“Wherein lies a person's worth? Is it in the status of those who came before him? You yourself know that!

“We will live at my estate a long way away: there are forests there, an enormous lake, and many people will come to you for help!

“And what about you, in the service of the tsar?”

“My service is now over. The tsar has relieved me of all duties. He no longer trusts me.”

**“That means he was unable to overcome his pride, he would not admit that he had done you wrong. It seems that I did not heal him completely,” said Matryonushka sadly.**

**\* \* \***

**Bronislav and Matryonushka went off to the distant estate and married. Their life together was harmonious and fine.**

**Matryonushka healed people and taught them about good.**

**Bronislav did not appear to have very much to do.**

**One day, however, some youngsters came to see him.**

**“You are a hero,” they said. “You have won many battles! Teach us how to fight. The older boys keep hitting us and blocking our path!**

**Bronislav agreed to help. First he looked into the rights and wrongs of the matter.**

**Then he set about teaching the younger ones, who were always being picked on, how to defend themselves and others in a fist fight.**

**Once he had taught them, the older boys who used to be the bullies came to see Bronislav, admitted their wrongdoing, and also asked him to teach them.**

**And that is how things continued.**

**One day, Bronislav asked Matryonushka a question.**

**“What do you think, is it a good thing that I have started teaching the children martial arts?”**

**“Yes,” Matryonushka replied, “I think so. But only teach those want to become *strong and good!***

**“It is important to teach each of them how to become the kind of person that God would like to see us, His children, become.**

**“For that, it is also necessary to explain how to appreciate beauty, how to create goodness, how to love one another, and how to serve God!**

**“And if you explain that along with how to sing beautifully or how to be healthy and strong — but that is not so important!**

**“You can teach people about**

**— the power of good.**

**— how to stand up for others and to make sure that no harm comes to the vulnerable,**

**— how to fight for what is right and, in doing so, not to fear death,**

**— how to be strong and not to allow weakness to turn us into cowards,**

**— how to stand up to an enemy without rage and anger,**

**— how to learn to get the upper hand through the power of good,**

**— how, in victory, not to give in to triumphalism over the vanquished,**

**— how to give friends a helping hand!**

**He who is good and strong can achieve anything!**

**But if a man is good but weak, he is a slave to his weakness!**

**And you can also teach people not only how to tackle an adversary, but also explain how to overcome their own weaknesses and vices!**

**This knowledge of which I speak — about the goodness of the soul, about God — is needed not only by those afflicted by ill-health!**

**You can also tell the healthy about beauty and the power of love. And you can teach how not to reject the Laws of Love, even when carrying out military service!**

**And Bronislav began to teach these things too. Not only children, but also adults came to learn. He taught them how to stand up for themselves not simply**

by using fists; he taught them everything he himself had learned from Matryonushka. He included all this unobtrusively in the *knowledge of how to assert oneself*.

The more Bronislav taught other people, the more he himself learned to understand.

Gradually a group of loyal supporters formed around Bronislav who were better than all the tsar's forces!

On one occasion he was accosted by a cabal who wanted to offer him advice.

"If you wanted, you could conquer the entire country!" they said. "Then you could rule it however you like! You are of noble birth, your reputation is great, the people would follow you!"

"I do not want civil war! I do not need military fame! I do not wish to rule over people!"

"But why do you need such a following of loyal supporters?"

"Until universal peace among nations is established on Earth, we need a properly disciplined supporting force so that peace and order can always be defended by honest, good, wise, brave and clever people!"

\* \* \*

But peace in that country did not last long.

Somehow people forget the lessons learned in life!

Although the tsar had already stared death in the face and had begun to rule more justly, much egoism and arrogance remained in him. Once again a dispute arose between the tsar and the ruler of a neighboring tsardom. Once again the people of both countries began to prepare for war! The soldiers of the neighboring tsardom attacked first. Again war and bloodshed began.

But without Bronislav the tsar's army had lost all sense of cohesion. As they had ceased to prepare for warfare, discipline in the ranks broke down! The commanders battled with each other for rewards, high rank and honors and forgot about the rank-and-file soldiers. Which soldier wants to serve with honor when there is no respect for the commanders?

So it turned out that the tsar's forces were not prepared for battle! This all became evident as the fighting began. Woe and despair spread across the land, villages burned, people perished.

The tsar's servants hurried off to see Bronislav, cap in hand.

"Our master, the Tsar, has sent us to see you!" they said. "Save our country from invasion by the enemy! He apologises for the way he treated you in the past, and for the wrong he did you! Do not bear him any grudges!"

Bronislav gathered together his loyal supporters.

"Can I come with you?" Matryonushka asked him. "I will tend to the wounded!"

\* \* \*

When Bronislav added the strength of his loyal supporters to the tsar's forces and assumed command, the defeats came to an end. The warring parties soon returned to the former borders that existed previously between the countries.

Bronislav set about negotiating a lasting peace. But it proved impossible to reach any kind of agreement. So much blood had been shed, so many people had

lost their lives, so much hatred had been generated by the war! All anyone wanted was revenge! All saw only their truth and did not want to forgive others!

In the meantime Matryonushka was tending to the wounded. It made no difference to her whether the wounded person was from the enemy forces or their own. She tended to and treated them all!

Then the commander of the opposing forces decided that if they took Matryonushka hostage, Bronislav — for the sake of the woman he loved — would agree to all their conditions.

They seized Matryonushka, and sent a messenger to Bronislav: “We have taken your wife captive, so now, Prince Bronislav, carry out all our demands!”.

They presented him with a list of demands.

Matryonushka guessed why they had seized her and tied her to a tree in a prominent place. She began to think how she could set herself free.

Then, when the soldier guarding her started to doze, she decided to try her plan.

The birds of the forest flew up to her and untied the ropes on her arms. She took off her shoes and set off to find her own people, without trying to hide.

The guard woke up.

“Stop, or I will shoot!” he shouted. But he could not bring himself to fire his weapon at Matryonushka, such was the pity he felt for her! For he had seen how Matryonushka tended to all the wounded, no matter whose side they had been fighting for!

Matryonushka carried on walking and found herself among the enemy forces.

The alarm was raised in the enemy camp, and they began chasing after her. “Stop, or we will kill you!”

From the other side Bronislav's soldiers came running to her rescue!

The commander of the enemy forces, enraged, ordered all his soldiers to shoot Matryonushka: “Fire! he shouted.

Matryonushka turned round and looked at the soldiers, enveloping them in her love, seeking to deliver them from evil!

Not a single one of them fired.

At that point the commander himself, out of powerlessness and spite, fired his weapon! Once! Twice! Three times!

His soldiers threw themselves upon him, and seized his rifle. But it was too late.

\* \* \*

Bronislav saw this, and realized that Matryonushka had tried to bring back peace even at the cost of her own life.

He lifted up the body of his beloved.

He went out between the two opposing forces and began to speak about peace, about the tears of mothers and wives, fathers and children, about God, and about everything Matryonushka had taught him.

No one dared to fire their weapon.

Brave fighters who had come through many previous battles listened to him in silence. Young soldiers drank in his words in silence. Not even the commanders dared to raise any objection.

So the forces declared a truce. They sent messengers to their tsars asking them to declare a lasting peace with each other.

Bronislav, bending over the body of his beloved, suddenly heard a miraculous Voice:

“Let everyone who wishes to see Matryonushka resurrected fetch a handful of water from the river, and bring it back repeating to the water these words: “Life, Love, Light!” And that water will become *the water of life!*”

Bronislav told all the people what he had heard.

Everyone to a man — the soldiers and commanders of both sets of forces — drew from the river a handful of water, repeating the sacred words as they carried it in their hands. They poured the water on Matryonushka's wounds.

Even the commander-in-chief of the opposing forces did so in an act of repentance, so overwhelmed was he by the bravery and love of the woman who had tried to minister to the souls of the people.

The last person to bring his cupped handful of water was Bronislav himself.

When he opened his hands and sprinkled the water on his beloved, Matryonushka opened her eyes and rose to her feet, alive and healthy!

She bowed to all the soldiers.

“You turned this water into *the water of life!* Now go and wash all the wounded in the same way, that they too may also be healed and resurrected!

And that is how it came to pass that hostilities in those lands ceased for a long time.

The tsar of that country decided to go into retirement. Since he had no successors, he designated Prince Bronislav to succeed him.

For a long time, Bronislav and Matryonushka ruled the country wisely. They themselves lived happily, brought up children, and taught others about the purpose of life on earth.

They would say, above all, that true happiness is achieved only in Great Love! And that Great Love in man begins to grow from small love, from our concern for every good being, from listening, understanding, help and compassion.

The people in those lands told their children and grandchildren about Matryonushka and Bronislav for a long time.

If people were to remember their teachings today, too, there would be more harmony and happiness on Earth!

Dear readers and listeners, perhaps you will say that such things do not happen in reality and it is only in fairy tales that everything ends happily.

But have you ever wondered why?