

In Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Stravinsky's Ballet

Firebird

saviour pirotta • paintings by catherine hyde

He held on until he heard a snap. The firebird had broken free and soared up into the sky, leaving only a single golden feather in Ivan's hand.

When Ivan showed the feather to his father, it lit up the entire throne room.

"So, the legend is true!" declared the king. "Whoever brings me the firebird will inherit half my kingdom."

Right away, Prince Dimitri set out to find the firebird. He rode on and on until he came to a crossroads at the edge of the kingdom. There he saw a huge rock on which was carved a warning:

Take the middle road and you will suffer hunger and cold.

Take the right road and you will live, though your horse will die.

Take the left road and you will die, though your horse will live.

"They all sound too dangerous," said Prince Dimitri, used to the sheltered life of a prince, and he galloped back to the palace.

The next day, Prince Vasili set out to catch the firebird. Not having any of his advisers to do his thinking for him, he was also scared by the warnings on the boulder and returned home to his father.

Then Prince Ivan said to the king, "Papa, may I go in search of the firebird too?"

"Why should you succeed where your older brothers have failed?" said King Vaslav. "Do not bother me, Ivan."



the feather



the edge of the kingdom

But Ivan saddled an old horse and rode out into the night. At the edge of the kingdom, he came to the boulder and read the warning.

I don't like being cold and hungry, thought Ivan, so the middle road is not for me. And I don't want to die, so the road on the left is no good, either. There is no other way but to risk the road on the right.

He'd hardly galloped past the boulder when he found himself in a dark and gloomy forest. He heard a growl, and a grey wolf, huge as a lion, leaped into his path. It knocked Ivan off his old horse, which it gobbled up in one mouthful.

"You are a brave lad," said Grey Wolf. "Anyone else would have turned back at the boulder. Climb onto my back, and I will take you wherever you want to go."



“Take me to the firebird,” ordered Ivan, clambering onto Grey Wolf’s back.

Away they sped, out of the gloomy forest and into a city. Grey Wolf stopped near a high wall, overgrown with ivy.

“On the other side of this wall is the garden of King Dolmat,” said the wolf. “In the summer house you will find three birds in dazzling gold cages – the third cage holds the firebird. Take the firebird as she sleeps, but I warn you: leave the gold cage behind.”

Ivan stole into the garden and found the three birds in the summer house, just as the wolf had described. He was about to put his hand inside the firebird's cage when he noticed that it was made of beaten gold. Surely it would be a pity to leave such a treasure behind? He tried lifting it off its hook, but immediately alarm bells rang all over the palace and he was captured by the king's guards.

"I see by your fine clothes that you are a prince," said King Dolmat. "Why would you try to steal my firebird?"

"It is your bird that is the thief," replied Ivan. "It took my father's golden apples and I was sent to bring it to justice."

"I should lock you up in prison," said King Dolmat, "but instead I shall send you on a mission. Beyond the mountains to the west lives King Afron. He promised me a horse with a golden mane, but never sent it. Bring me the horse and I'll give you the firebird and her cage."



the cage was made of beaten gold