THE GREEN OAK*  

*Prologue to the romantic poem “Ruslan and Ludmilla”, by A. S. Pushkin.

A green old oak on curving shore,  
And on that oak a golden chain;  
There goes a cat of wondrous lore  
All day and night as 'round a chatelaine.  
To the right it goes... a song it sings;  
To the left... a fairy tale it brings.  
There wonders are; wood-goblins rove,  
And a mermaid haunts the mystic grove;  
On many an unknown forest trail  
Unseen creatures leave their spoors;  
And a hut there wobbles weak and frail,  
Windowless and with no doors.  
Through dale and forest spirits roam,  
And from the east there bursts the foam  
Of waves on the shore of the barren sand;  
There thirty stalwart knights in row,  
From the depths of the shining sea they go,  
And their dripping servant comes to land.  
There too a prince, as he goes by,  
Seizes the czar of surly moods;  
Before the people to the sky  
Across the sea and across the woods  
Kaldoon bears off his hero high;  
A princess grieves in the darkness there  
In a brown wolf’s faithful loving care;  
The girl Baba Yaga’s mortar walks,  
With no assistance weirdly stalks;  
On piles of gold Kashehay there wastes;  
Of Russia there it smells and tastes.  
And there was I upon the shore,  
Beneath the green oak there I sat,  
As I drank my mead the learned cat  
Told me his tales of fairy lore.

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