



## The gift of the pike

### Description

*From the story collection by Alexander Afanasyev.*

Emilian lived in a village on the Volga River with his two brothers and their wives. He was a beautiful man, but he was also very lazy and despised work. He spent his days sitting at the stove in the kitchen. His brothers ran a business left to them by their deceased father. One day they went on a trip to sell their wares along the river, leaving Emilian with the women, promising to return with a caftan, red boots and a red hat for their brother.

During the days and weeks the brothers were gone, the wives tried in vain to get Emilian to work, until one day they left him with only this choice: Fetch water from the frozen river, or there would be no dinner, no caftan, no red boots and no hat.

Taking this threat very seriously, Emilian quickly set off, and reached the river, grumbling and complaining about his problems while cutting through the thick ice. As he put water in the buckets, he noticed that he had caught a fish: a large pike. Emilian was going to take it home for dinner, but the pike begged him, promising that if Emilian let him go, he would never have to work again, which was a tempting offer for the lazy man. All he would need to say was, « By order of the pike, and according to my wish, I want... » and you will add your wish and your will would be done. Emilian agreed, and to his surprise, the spell worked and his wishes were all granted.

Emelian did not hide his new talent, and soon the tsar heard about it and ordered this « magician » to appear before him in his palace on the Caspian Sea. Emilian, still lazy as ever, ordered his stove to take him to the czar by flying, using the order of the pike. He immediately arrived at the palace in front of the czar, still lying on his mantelpiece, where he looked down on the czar and did not really behave as a subject should towards his monarch. The tsar would have ordered his head to be cut off if he had not been eager to discover the secret of the boy's power. But since the boy would not reveal his secret, he decided to use his daughter, the princess, to get the secret. After three days of sharing games, the princess had only learned that Emilian was handsome, fun and charming. She wanted to marry him. The tsar was angry at first, but then decided that Emilian might give his secret to his wife if he got married. So he arranged the wedding.

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At first, Emilien was horrified at the idea, convinced that a woman would bring him more trouble than it was worth. He agreed, however, and the wedding feast took place soon after, which even brought

Emilien down from his stove. During the feast, Emelian had such terrible table manners, and behaved so badly, that the Tsar changed his mind and decided to get rid of him. A sleeping potion was added to the groom's wine, and he was locked up in a barrel while sleeping and thrown into the sea. His wife was banished to an island opposite the royal palace. While floating in the waves, Emilian met his friend the pike, who allowed him to wish again for whatever his heart desired, since he had not abused his power.

Emelian wished for wisdom, and when the pike pushed him to the island, Emelian found his wife and finally fell in love with her. He had the island cabin transformed into a magnificent palace, with a crystal bridge to the mainland, so that his wife could visit her father, the tsar, whom she had forgiven for her wickedness. With his newfound wisdom, he made amends with everyone, and lived happily ever after.

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