

**THE SOLDIER AND  
DEATH; A RUSSIAN FOLK  
TALE TOLD IN ENGLISH**

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The soldier and death; a Russian folk tale told in English by Arthur Ransome

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**ARTHUR RANSOME**

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**THE SOLDIER & DEATH**



THE  
SOLDIER AND DEATH

A RUSSIAN FOLK TALE  
TOLD IN ENGLISH BY  
ARTHUR RANSOME



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A SOLDIER served God and the Great Tzar for twenty-five years, earned three dry biscuits, and set off to walk his way home. He kissed his companions with whom he had served so long, and boasted of the feasting there would be in the village when he should come marching home with all his wars behind him. Singing at the top of his voice he was as he set off. But as soon as he was alone on the high road, walking through the forest he began to think things over. And he thought to himself: "All these years I have served the Tzar and had good clothes to my back and

my belly full of victuals. And now I am like to be both hungry and cold. Already I've nothing but three dry biscuits."

Just then he met an old beggar, who stood in the road and crossed himself and asked alms for the love of God.

The soldier had not a copper piece in the world, so he gave the beggar one of his three dry biscuits.

He had not gone very far along the road when he met a second beggar, who leant on a stick and recited holy words and begged alms for the love of God.

The soldier gave him the second of his three dry biscuits.

And then, at a bend in the road, he met a third old beggar, with long

white hair and beard and loathsome rags, who stood shaking by the roadside, and he begged alms for the love of God.

"If I give him my last dry biscuit I shall have nothing left for myself," thought the soldier. He gave the old beggar half of the third dry biscuit. Then the thought came into his head that this old beggar would meet the other two, and would learn that they had been given whole biscuits while he had only been given a half. "He will be hurt and affronted," thought the soldier, "and his blessing will be of no avail." So he gave the old beggar the other half also of the third of his three dry biscuits. "I shall get along somehow," thought the soldier, and was