



Boris Kolmakov, the author

"A fairy tale lives in every child, it is 'y to be

The AbNormal animals

The tale dedicated to handicapped children and true friendship

By B.V. Kolmakov

Translated by L.N. Dudanova

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Boris Viktorovich Kolmakov was born on 30 April in 1955 in the village Korliki, Nizhnevartovsky district, where he still live surrounded by the enchanting and peaceful Siberian nature because the village Korliki is a secluded spot – the only way to get to Korliki is a helicopter.

In 1972 Boris Kolmakov graduated middle school in the village Laryak. In 1973 he was drafted for 3-year service. He was the best soldier in his unit. In 1977 Boris Kolmakov graduated the technical school where he studied organization of hunting and fur-farming. He had an interesting job experience: he was a wildlife manager and a section foreman and a hunting industry manager.

In 1982 he entered Kiev Institute of Civil Aviation. He had been working as an airport manager for 25 years in his home village where still the only air track exists to this day. Boris Kolmkov can speak such rare languages as Khanty and Eskaleut. His knowledge about the exotic Siberian culture is more than that: he can also drive a reindeer team. He loves the Russian nature with all his heart and he would love to take part in saving its wildlife, that's why he began writing his tales. It took him only a night to write his first book "The Goose king", others took him 2-3 days.

He keeps saying that fairy tales "sleep" in every child since his or her childhood, they simply need to be woken. Boris Kolmakov's tales often describe a "parallel" world around us: it's pets like parrots, fish, hedgehogs, tortoises and many others. Today the tale-teller travels around Russia to meet his young readers: from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka Peninsula, from Ukraine to Vladivostok, from North Caucasus to Volga Region. Boris Kolmakov always interests children with his tales making them feel the whole emotional palette. Then he comes back home, his calm and quiet forest corner, to write new books.

The tale "The Goose king" was written by Boris Kolmakov, who is a native in the village Korliki, Nizhnevartovsky district. He has got a nice ear for "the singing of birds and the breath of herbs". His book is based on his long experience of observing the wildlife. The purpose of this tale is to show a right way of the world perception: a man can understand himself only when learn the laws of nature. Kolmakov describes the spiritual path as the search for harmony with nature.

For Kolmakov ecology is concerned with a soul first of all. All these facts made Nizhnevartovsk State University (NVSU) support the publishing of the tale for ecology education in the context of the VI International Ecological Action "To Save and Preserve".

The story is interesting and useful to different people who are not indifferent to the environment problems.

AbNormal animals

Part I. Welcome to the world

Only moments ago there was a thick fog. It seemed the fog stretched from the very skies to the ground. Here, it began to lower, and soon the tops of pines and firs appeared. They looked like stacking rings. Only their lower branches were hidden with the thick fog. Nearby the trees, an old lone chum¹ was standing, or rather its frame, sticking up poles and a part of its fence. This fairy world was awakened by the grouses arriving. Flapping their wings, the birds perched on a spreading birch and began to call to one another: "clack-clack..." Spring just began, when the snowy marsh and tundra were slowly getting free

¹ A chum (pronounced "choom") is a temporary dwelling used by the nomadic Yamal-Nenets and Khanty reindeer herders of northwestern Siberia of Russia. It can remind you a wigwam made of fell of reindeers.

from the snow, and every morning the bird hubbub informed about the coming warmth.

In the morning, an old doe gave a birth to a pretty fawn in a glade. Previous evening she had chosen this place, because one day, long ago she had come into this world exactly here, next to the old chum.

A newly-born tried to stand up several times. Finally, he could do it. The happy doe was fussing zealously about him, washing her fawn and repeating: "Come on, stand up, my sonny. Look at the wonderful world waiting for you". And suddenly, she said his name: Choomie.

It happens, called out once, a name can "stick" and even change one's appearance.

Meanwhile, the fawn stood up, swaying unsteadily on his thin legs, and was about to fall again. Minute by minute, he stood more and more confidently and made his efforts to move. First of

all he suckled his mother's milk. When he finished his meal, he glanced back.

By that time, the fog had already dissipated, and the improbable world opened behind the fawn. The black grouses made a mating-place in the glade. The black handsome-cocks with crimson eyebrows outspread their tails and began to fight. The hens, grey like chooks, sat on a log and chose the winners. It was a brooding period.

The fawn came to the fence and smelt its poles: There was something natal in this smell. His mother called him, "Choomie, be careful! This fence can fall on you, stand aside."

"Mommy, what does "Choomie" mean?"

"Well, look at these poles — there had been a chum once, you were born here so that's why your name is Choomie."

"How strange," said the fawn. "What if I was born on a birch, I would be called Birchie?"

"Of course, no, silly you," answered his mother. "If you were born on a birch, you would be called a black grouse."

"Why?" the little fawn wouldn't relent.

"Because deer can't be born on the trees. Let's go to that stream — there our relations have babies. They have a newly-born called Streamlet."

Choomie followed the doe. He stopped form time to time and he tasted snow and puddle water. Their taste was new and unusual, but his mother's milk was better. It was sun rising, and only in hollows there was the fog floating. The sky was blueing, the outward world was getting more and more fabulous and beautiful. The smells of the marsh and of the fresh pines clouded Choomie's mind.

They reached the stream and found the other new born fawn. He was called Streamlet. Gamboling, Streamlet and Choomie jumped over the narrow rage stream, while their mothers vainly

tried to pacify their kids, kept saying, "Wait, wait, you will have enough time running and jumping, the outing is soon."

They were wild deer. They were that kind of deer who appreciate the freedom above all. Their fawns were born in forests. With the first melting, the wild deer set off — across the tundra, to the ocean shores, where birds fly to brood. They go across the tundra, where under moss the everfrost is, and no mosquitoes and other bloodsucking insects. Tundra is always bliss for the deer in summer heat. From year to year, their path was the same: in summer deer migrated north and in winter they migrated south, where in the pine woods there were snow-white reindeer moss and solonetz² places of their tasty morsel, that they visit in autumn.

² Solonetz is a type of soil rich in sodium.

A noble and wild deer can be recognized by his majestic posture. His antlers are big and strong, they are meant for fights and defending offspring only, because their roads can be very dangerous and long. The Eskimos call them savages. The antlers of domesticated deer are decorative and look like a fir-tree with freaky branches and twigs, sticking out into the air. In autumn, when it is time for bucks to fight, the velvet on their antlers comes off and hangs, it doesn't peel off, giving domestic deer almost a fir-tree air.

In March, deer shed their old antlers — they rash into the thicket and break them, running into trees. And only does, which look after fawns, do not shed their antlers — they need them to protect themselves and their little fawns against the predators.

The days went on. The herds united into flows, and then the flows united into great rivers. This life torrent headed north. Everything was

interesting for Choomie. He made a lot of friends. Among them were a fawn called Hornlet. Choomie had no idea why he had gotten such a name. No one told him the reason.

Every herd was consisted of 20-30 individuals and was headed by a buck - the strongest and biggest male deer in the herd. He was responsible for the discipline. The outing was under command of the leader called Choir. The deer going across the tundra, water, marsh stamping and flopping made pretty much noise. Even the predators were afraid of such a herd — no one could survive under a hundred thousand hoofs. Choomie with his friends kept going in the middle of the flock. At stops, he could find his mother even with his eyes closed. Suckled, he always thanked his mother with a kiss for nourishment for his life— he licked her ear or her eye. Kissing, he thanked her for being the best and the most beautiful mom ever.

Here, the ocean came in sight. Along the shore, the fields of ox-eye daisies and sunshine-yellow globe flowers were blossoming. Sometimes, in the middle of summer, it could snow, but the snow melted fast. Here, free grazing, the doe showed tundra wolves to Choomie and taught him, "Beware of them, my dear, they are our greatest enemies. In winter, when there is a lot of snow, it takes them only half an hour to tear our entire herd into pieces, like blind kittens."

"Mommy, are you frightening me? They are very close, but they don't attack."

"In summer," explained the doe. "they even settle next to people. Do you remember the chum where you were born? Long ago, people lived there. Wolves became their neighbors. The wolves made their families. First, the wolves touched no one. But when their cubs grow stronger, you'd better to be ready to face trouble. The tundra wolves are considered the biggest wolves in the

world. When the tundra is covered with snow, they go to the forest as we do. And since then, we must be very careful - it is dangerous to run deep into the forest."

Choomie asked his mother, "Mommy, tell me, please, do we have other enemies but wolves?"

"Yes, we must beware of bears and wolverines."

"Who are they?"

"Wolverines are like bears but smaller.

A wolverine is in wait for us in the forest, hiding on a bent tree. The wolverines always choose our paths for their hunting. They jump down on a well-grown deer."

"Oh, how terrible it is! Will you show me them?"

"Certainly, dear. The cloudberry is ripening soon. Bears love it. Sometimes they try to run after us, but it is not easy to catch us up. We are ships of the tundra."

"Mommy, may I taste the cloudberry?"

"You have to wait till it ripens, I'll show you."

Choomie sprang up smartly and ran to his friends.

A month passed, the herd began to move east, making a big curve. It was the begging of their journey back home. In summer, the tundra fed them, the young deer grew stronger and went through many experiences. From far away, they spotted bears with their little cubs, fishing and eating. Choomie came to the fish scraps, but he didn't like their smell.

Summer turned to autumn. The deer settled on a rolling plain, somewhere in bright emerald pine forest and golden-red woods of birch and aspen, where many mushrooms were with reindeer mosses and cowberries. There was also natural solotetz. First, bears did not allow the deer to come close to the solotetz. But, when they are plentifully

vitamins, the beasts hurried away. It was the time for them to build their dens. As soon the bears left, the deer and elks pounced greedily on the delicacy. They needed to provide themselves with vitamins and salt. Winter promised to be very long. Here, Choomie met a young calf, who was born in May. His mother named him Scoopie. Grown-up elks had big antlers towering above their heads. They looked like big shovels. That is why the young calf's name was clear to curious Choomie. The biggest elk had seventeen outgrowths per each shovel. It meant he was seventeen years old. Choomie's relatives had marvelous antlers covered with velvet. Choomie wished to have the same big beautiful antlers.

One day, Choomie heard a loud crackling from the depths of the wood. He looked back to see two enormous fighting elks, grappling with their antlers. At the same time, father away, the vast bucks took a run, rushed and crashed into each other with their antlers. They fought, butted each

other and caused torn gashes. The velvet on their antlers was already torn and hung in tatters. Choomie snuggled closer to his mother and asked her, "Mommy, what are they doing?"

The doe licked her salty lips. She paused, scarcely noticing what was happening, and answered, "It is a rut."

"What is it?" Choomie persisted.

"At this time of year, bucks fight demonstrating their strength and courage. The winner takes the most beautiful doe to wife. Such a doe like your mommy."

"And me? When I grow up, I will fight too?" asked Choomie.

"Yes, darling, all men fight for beautiful women. I suppose people do the same."

"Yeah ..." that was all Choomie could say.

In the gale, a stag from the tribe of Tiny brooks stood and stamped his hoofs. The velvet on his antlers was hanging, the blood was flowing down his neck, but nothing could spoil his handsomeness and greatness. For a moment, Choomie imaged himself standing proudly in the gale and stamping his hoofs. He wished his best faithful friends would be with him forever.

Yes, he will stand exactly here with his friends — Hornlet the Deer and Scoopie the Elk. But in this glade, there will not be any duels and fights of snags. It will become a meeting place of three friends who will be respected not for their strength, but for their honourable actions.

Part II. The ordeal

A year passed. In winter the old doe — Choomie's mother — died. The wolves killed and ate her. Chommie was saved by a miracle. The tundra wolves, which were heavier than any deer, chased the herd to the pine forest, where trouble was waiting for them. The snow was deep there. The first to go was the leader of the Tiny brooks, he trampled down the snow and paved their way. The does and fawns followed him. They made the snow hard and trodden, so the wolves could easily run them down. Choomie was just a silly little chap, but he realised the wolves' ruse, in several leaps he jumped off and stood motionless. It saved his life. The wolves hunted only the deer running straight. The whole herd died that day. Chommie wandered in the tundra several days, looking for his fellows, but all his efforts were in vain. He walked day, he walked night till he finally met wild deer, who became his new family.

Spring came, and Choomie remembered his birthday. Choomie longed to find the place, where he had seen this colourful word first time. He recognised that place from a distance by the old chum. Choomie lied down on a hummock. Everything was exactly the same as that day: the snow was everywhere, the sun was bright, the black grouses were shouting to one another, sitting on the birch. The partridges and black grouses fought like deer did. And he remembered his mother's words: "Men always fight for women". Like elks, deer, humans. Now Choomie could add, "Like birds." He stood up, took a view of his birth place and promised to himself: "Every year I will come here to remember my mom. If I have a doe-friend, I'll ask her to give birth to our fawns right here". For some reason Choomie wanted people to come back to this old chum. Then, he could have a settled life, his wandering around the tundra and long passages would end, he would not lose his relations and

friends anymore. He plodded slowly towards the streamlet and spotted his fellows from afar. To approach them, he had to jump over the stream. He bowed to drink and, suddenly, saw his own reflection in the water.

"Oh my God," said he aloud. His full-grown antlers were different from others. Yes, they were beautiful, but they grew towards each other (and reminded a top of chum), they were not branchy like other deer had. His mother's words came to his mind. Exactly, his antlers reminded a little chum. It happens, called out once, a name can "stick" and even change one's appearance and made his appearance similar to his name. There, on crossings, he saw many deer, but no one of them had antlers like he did. He took his time to drink and to eye his reflection. Finally, he made a single long leap and jumped over the stream. It surprised him and showed that he was strong and healthy. On the other bank there was Streamlet. He had

survived that winter too. He recognised Choomie and greeted him with his merry laughter. Streamlet shook his head in deer style and laughed. He even fell down, laughing. It took him several minutes to calm down and say, "Why do your antlers grow in a wrong way?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, the reason is I was born next to the old chum."

"Gosh, you look like a chum!"

"Stop babbling like a stremlet," answered Choomie. "They don't bother me. Rather, when we run through the forest, other deer have to move their heads to the left and to the right. And what if the trees stand too close to each other, so close that there hardly enough room for your body, will you get though? When I run, the trees never disturb me."

"That's it. I haven't thought about this before. But what about the mating duels? How will you fight?"

"Have no idea," uttered Choomie. "Then we'll see."

The friends went to the main flock, where Choomie was scoffed at again. Streamlet told everyone about advantages of such antlers. But great many deer did not listen to his explanations and kept calling Choomie a wrong and abnormal deer. Time passed, the big herd prepared to make a long passage. In the bulk of whity-grey animals, Choomie easily found Hornlet and called him from afar. Hornlet had only antler in the middle of his head. They made fun of each other. The passing by deer shouted to them: "Hey you, freaks, what are you laughing at? You are abnormal animals." The friends stopped laughing and stepped away.

"Well, what can we do if we were born like this?" said Choomie. "We look like this because of our names." "I wonder," reasoned Hornlet. "If my mom had called me Bull, would I have grown bull strong?"

"No," broke in Choomie. "We are strong enough. We simply should prove that we are equal to others. Do you remember, the last outing, we saw a deer with a broken leg? He was teased. He was mocked and called Cripple and Lame. But he was a hero. He stood out in our memory as a very brave deer. One day, a bear assaulted on the herd. The brave deer didn't run away as others did. He faced the beast. He smartly struck the bear with his antlers and pierced his heart. Unhappily, the deer died too. The bear family has never hunted our herd anymore after."

Choomie and Hornlet talked, following the herd. But the deer refused to accept them, so the friends had to take a parallel path. Spring happened to be long that year. The herd often stopped to scatter and then to gather again and, like an ocean

wave, they swept past the abnormal stags, being hunted by the tundra wolves. Chommie and Hornlet watched it, standing on a hillock. Suddenly, an elk came from a distant forest outlier. Chommie recognised the elk easily, it was Scoopie. He had freaky antlers too. He had the only antler right in the middle of his head. Chommie noted to himself, "It must be very nice to winter in the forest with such a friend. We have to scrap the snow with our hoofs to get some reindeer moss. We can't get a lot of feed for a day. If he grub the snow with his shovel, a whole herd can just go and eat. That's great to have him as a friend." Scoopie approached and told his story, that was exactly the same as theirs — teasers, mockeries and banishment from the herd because of his distinction.

"Even having the only antler, I can grab a log and threw it far away," Scoopie said distastefully.

"Don't worry, it doesn't matter. Let's be friends! We can follow the main herd together, so you will see the tundra and the ocean. And then, we will go to the solonetz to provide ourselves with vitamins," Choomie assuaged his friends. His words were full of confidence that their way was right. "By the way," he addressed to Scoopie. "What do you elks do in summer? How do you escape mosquitoes, gadflies, horse-flies, midges and other bloodsucking insects?"

Scoopie reflected and scratched his ear with his leg, and then he answered, "We have to spend days standing in the water to avoid them."

"You see, in the forest you can spend a month standing in the water, but in the tundra, there is no insect."

"Why?" asked Scoopie.

"Because in the clearings and near the ocean, there is a strong wind blowing and the ground is cold. It's cold everfrost. And you definitely will like cloudberry. Let's go with us, it will be fun," said Choomie.

And three abnormal animals followed the parting torrent of deer. The hoofs made hollow drum noises on the frozen ground. Choomie knew this route, so he headed his friends. They chose hills to see afar the direction of the herd, and then they made a decision by themselves how to avoid the wolves. The friends were cautious and prudent. They were similar to a patrol.

Here, an upland area with steeps next to oxbow lakes —ideal traps used by such smart predators like wolves and bears —appeared in front of them. Their guileful plan was to dive the herd in to the edge of the steep. They planned that several dozens of animals from the bulk could fall into the gully. The deer did not think about the trap, going right to the death. That was Choomie meditated about. It happened that the leader Choir bent round the knoll, leading the herd to the clearing. Standing on the hill far away, Choomie caught sight of the rout of the hungry tundra wolves — there were

about twenty of them. The wolves seemed to had been preparing their trap long time ago. They pressed themselves to the cold ground and even seemed to merge with the tundra flora. And the deer — a ready-caught prey — kept going down to the clearing between mountains. Choomie closed his eyes, and for a moment a scene recurred to his memory that he could never forget. In the pine wood, when the wolves had left, he looked for his mother to find only her head with the most beautiful antlers in the world. Her eyes were wide opened, tears stiffed in them. Her eyes looked at Choomie saying, "Be strong, sonny. Be a smart deer, take our revenge."

Choomie swept a tear and said to his friends, "Now or never, that's our chance to become bull strong stags! Then why were we born? Let our antlers be freaky, but we should prove that we are better than they all. God had a reason to make our antlers this way. So, my friends, now the wolves

are going to attack our brothers and sisters. Yes, the herd expelled us, but we must save their lives even if they are silly big deer. Now we go down this hill. I will be in the middle, Scoopie, you'll be on the right, and you, Hornlet – on the left, and we rushed into the heart of the rout." At that moment, Choomie did not know exactly why he planned everything that way.

"Choomie, are you loony?" said Scoopie.

"No. If we don't distract the wolves right now, they will tear all deer, and then they will eat our heads off. The wolves don't expect any attack, it will stop them."

The friends nodded in agreement. Meanwhile, the herd was gathering in the clearing. The deer leader Choir still did not notice the predators. However, he observed three "abnormal" animals, dashing to the herd. They rushed as if wanted to outrun everyone and to be the first in the passage. Choir stopped and everyone in the herd

stopped too. The sun was high and glared in the eyes. Slightly narrowed his eyes, Choir saw a pack of wolves and realised what was happening. The wolves had already pressed themselves to the ground and were ready to run towards their prey. In the good organized trap, the herd was plainly seen for the wolves. Choir figured out the intention of the "abnormal" animals and realized that they were going to the instant death. He commanded to wedge and to put their antlers forward. No one was allowed to flee outright. No one could break off. The herd regrouped. Meanwhile, the wolves were already rushing up to attack the herd. Choomie hardly had a moment to command, "Scoopie, Honlet, I'll break into the pack to draw them apart, and you, hit everyone you can. Scoopie, threw them aside as you do with logs. And you, Hornlet, stab. It'll work out!" Choomie cut into the route. Hitting the wolves hammer and tongs with his antlers, Choomie threw them off. The side outgrowths of his antlers tore off the fell of the wolves hard to draw blood. Scoopie and Hornlet rushed forward to battle. They threaded big and middle wolves on their antlers and then threw them on new attackers. The fight lasted three minutes. As a result the wolves took to flight. It was a very courageous feat. And also it was a good lesson for the deer herd. The small handful of braves defended the herd from the predators. These animals with wrong antlers coped with them so crafty and differently from the robust deer with large antlers. Every big and strong stag thought that it would be better not to duel with these braves. And it became clear to everyone that a new mating duel place had to be found, because the most beautiful place would be a property of three best friends. All the deer, who had watched the battle, came close to their rescuers and licked them. A doe licked Choomie as his mom used to. He closed his eyes and for a moment imagined her being next to him. She should be

proud of him. Choomie thought at first and then said it aloud, "I have avenged my mother." Finally, Choir thanked them with a bow and allowed friends to follow him migrating.

The days passed. This time of year the sun was still shining high. Scoopie enjoyed travelling with the deer. The cloudberry was delicious and blue berries — great bilberries, were also very tasty. The only thing he did not like much was the water, it was bad and salty. On the coast the white — or rather dirty — bears could be met. They often stopped to eat remnants of animals and fish.

A flock of birds themselves gyrated and screamed above the unfriendly predators. It was first time our friends saw the polar bears. They were two grown-ups with cubs. Then Choomie realised: going along the shore, the predators approached to the herd. At once he guessed their plan. The bears wanted to teach their cubs to hunt.

Choomie warned his friends, "We will fight right now. Now or never."

"Will it work out?"

"I don't know," answered Choomie.

"Anyway we always can run away. But now, in the clearing, we can fight. I wish we succeed in! When we come to the solonetz, there will be a lot of bears.

And now, let's dodge the attack."

"Perhaps we shouldn't?" Scoopie whined.

"We must, Scoopie, we must. Look, they are coming sidelong slowly as if they are friends to the deer. And, look, the herd's vigilance is lulled. They pay no attention to the impending danger. I will be the first to attack, and you, Hornlet, be ready to antler."

"Got it," boldly answered Hornlet.

"And you, Scoopie, do your best. Be ready!
On my count, start up."

From the outside it looked like this: at the top of his rate, Choomie crashed into a polar bear.

Roaring in pain, the bear rose on his hind legs. Meanwhile, taken a leap Hornlet thrust the beast's heart with his only antler. The soundless bear slowly sat down and overturned. Scoopie ran up to them, but there was nothing to deal with. The fight was short. Other bears ran away.

"That's it, my friends," said Choomie. "You didn't believe in our victory, did you?"

"I believed you, that were Scoopie who doubted," said Hornlet.

The deer looked upon them as heroes, and no one might tease them. They were treated with respect.

Our friends grew up into strong stags.

On their antlers, new outgrowths appeared.

"They are a reward of our triumphes," were

Choomie's words.

The herd of deer went to the solonetz. Some bears were insolent, keeping the deer out of the solonetz. Choomie said to his friends, "Do you

remember our first fight. Now or never. We will own the solonetz." The hart Choir offered his help and added, "Believe in our victory." Choomie pointed the leader of brown bears, "If we win him over, we will win all of them over."

The friends took the starting position. Now, there were four of them. They ran off so fast that the bears, which had never been scared before and had not expected the attack from these strong animals, lost instantly two their leaders. The tremendous beasts fell to the ground, scraping in horror dirt and bushes. Suddenly, they stood motionless with their jaws wide opened in savage grin. Other bears fled. And everyone saw blood on the antlers of the valiant heroes.

Choomie walked out in the glade, where every year battles took place. He stood proudly with his head high. Stamping his hoof several times, the hero said loudly, "Henceforth, no one will fight in this glade. It will be peaceful and quiet. And if someone wants to test his strength, he'd better fight against predators. For only then, the battle and aggression can be warranted."

The first to bell was Choir. All deer with their heads high joined him. It meant that they admired the brave four, who were leaders of this great herd of wild animals from now on.

The sun was setting in a vast crimson glow. The beads of sunlight were sparkling on the bright colourful autumn leaves. Choomie and several other deer were going to the old lone chum...

Translated by L. Dudanova





