

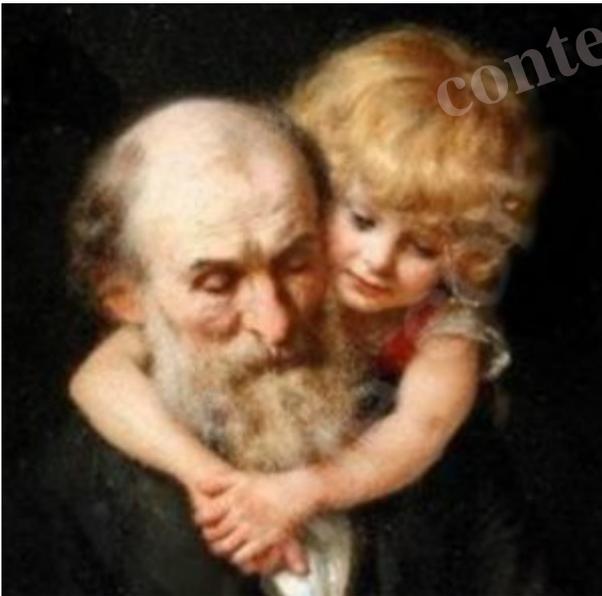


Baba Yaga

Description

Russian folk tale. Modernized version by Contesdefees.com.

Once upon a time there was an old widower man who lived alone in a hut with his daughter Natasha. They were happy until the old man decided to remarry.



The new woman was giving the little girl a hard time. No more bread and jam on the table, no more playing hide and seek around the samovar during tea time. It was even worse than that, because she was not allowed to have tea at all. The stepmother said that little girls should not have tea, let alone eat bread with jam. She would throw the girl a piece of bread and order her to go out into the yard to eat. Then the mother-in-law began to convince her husband that everything that went wrong was the daughter's fault. And the old man believed his new wife, thinking he could trust her. Poor Natasha was left alone in the yard, wetting the dry bread crust with her tears and eating it all alone in the cold. Then she would hear the mother-in-law yelling at her to come in and wash the tea utensils, tidy up the house, brush the floor and clean the muddy boots.



One day, the mother-in-law decided she couldn't stand Natasha one more minute. But how to get rid of her for good? So she remembered her sister, the terrible witch Baba Yaga with skeletal legs, who lived in the forest. And a horrible plan began to form in her head.

The next morning, the old man went to visit friends in the nearby village. As soon as the old man was out of sight, the wicked stepmother called Natasha.

« Go to my sister, your dear little aunt, who lives in the forest, » she said, « and ask her for a needle and thread to mend a shirt.

« But we have a needle and thread, » said Natasha, trembling, for she knew that her aunt was Baba Yaga, the witch, and that no child who came near her ever returned.

« Shut up and obey! » the stepmother shouted, gnashing her teeth, making a sound like clawing.

« How will I find her? » said Natasha, trembling. She had heard that Baba Yaga pursued her victims by flying in a giant mortar and pestle, and that she had iron teeth with which she ate children.

The stepmother grabbed the little girl's nose and pinched it.

« This is your nose, » she said. « Can you feel it? »

– Yes, » the poor girl whispered.

« You will follow the road through the forest until you come to a fallen tree, » said the stepmother, « then you will turn left, and follow your nose to find your aunt. Now go, lazy girl! ». She stuffed a handkerchief into the girl's hand, into which she had put a few pieces of stale bread, some cheese and a few pieces of meat.

Natasha turned and looked at her mother-in-law at the door, arms crossed, glaring at her. There was nothing she could do but obey and go into the forest.

She walked along the road through the forest until she came to the fallen tree. Then she turned left. Her nose still hurt where the stepmother had pinched it, so she knew she had to keep going straight.

She knew she had to keep going straight;

Finally, she arrived at the hut of Baba Yaga, the skeletal-legged witch. The hut was surrounded by a very high fence. She pushed the entrance gate which opened with a miserable creak, as if it hurt to move. Natasha noticed a rusty oil can on the ground.

« How lucky, » she said, noticing that there was still oil in the can. And she poured the remaining oil drops into the hinges of the gate.



Inside the enclosure was Baba Yaga's hut. It was unlike any other hut she had ever seen, as it stood on giant chicken legs and walked around the yard. As Natasha approached, the house turned to face her and it seemed to her that its windows were eyes and its door a mouth. A servant of Baba Yaga's was standing in the courtyard. She was crying bitterly over the tasks the witch had given her and wiping her eyes on her petticoat.

« How lucky I have a handkerchief. » Said Natasha. She untied her handkerchief, shook it clean, and

carefully put the bits of food in her pockets. She gave the handkerchief to Baba Yaga's servant, who wiped her eyes on it and smiled through her tears.

Near the hut stood a huge, very skinny dog, gnawing on an old bone.

« How lucky I am to have bread and meat. » Said the little girl. Reaching into her pocket for her pieces of bread and meat, Natasha said to the dog, « I'm afraid it's a little stale, but it's better than nothing, I'm sure. And the dog immediately swallowed it and licked her lips.

Natasha reached the door of the hut. Trembling, she knocked.

« Come in, » squeaked a horrible voice.

The little girl entered. There sat Baba Yaga, the skeletal-legged witch, weaving on a loom. In a corner of the hut, a skinny black cat was watching a mouse hole.

« Good morning, Auntie, » Natasha said, trying not to show her fear.

« Good day to you, niece, » said Baba Yaga.

« My mother-in-law sent me to ask you for a needle and thread to mend a shirt. »

« Really? » smiled the witch ironically, showing her iron teeth, for she knew how much her sister hated her daughter-in-law. « Sit here at the loom and continue my weaving, while I go get the needle and thread.



The little girl sat down at the loom and began to weave.

Baba Yaga whispered to her servant, « Listen to me! Prepare a very hot bath and wash my niece. Scrub her. I will make a delicious meal out of her. »

As the maid went in to get the pitcher to fill the water for the bath, Natasha said, « Please don't be too quick to make the fire, and please carry the bath water in a colander, so that the water can drain. » The maid said nothing, but she did indeed take a long time to prepare the bath.

Baba Yaga approached the window and said in her sweetest voice, « Are you weaving, little niece? Are you weaving, my pretty one?

« I am weaving, Auntie, » Natasha replied.

As Baba Yaga moved away from the window, the little girl spoke to the hungry black cat that was watching the mouse hole.



« Black Cat » Henriette Ronner Knip

« What are you doing? »

« I'm waiting for a mouse, » the poor cat replied. « I haven't eaten in three days. »

« How fortunate! » said Natasha, « I have some cheese left! » And she gave her cheese to the black cat, who gobbled it up in one bite. Then he said, « Little girl, do you want to get out of here?

« Oh, my darling kitten, » said Natasha, « of course I'd like to get out of here! For I fear that Baba Yaga will try to eat me with her iron teeth. »

« That's exactly what she intends to do, » said the cat. « But I know how to help you. »

Just then, Baba Yaga returned to the window.

« Are you weaving, little niece? » She asked. « Are you weaving, my pretty one?

« I'm weaving, Auntie, » said Natasha, as the loom rattled, rattled, rattled.

Baba Yaga walked away again.

The cat whispered to Natasha, « There is a comb on the stool and there is a towel for your bath. You must take them both and run while Baba Yaga is still in the bath. Baba Yaga will chase you. When she

does, you will throw the towel behind you, and it will turn into a big, wide river. It will take her a little while to recover. When she crosses the river, you throw the comb behind you. It will turn into a forest so impenetrable that she will never cross it. »

« But she'll hear the loom stop, » Natasha replied, « and she'll know I'm gone. »

« Don't worry, I'll take care of it, » said the skinny black cat.

The cat took Natasha's place at the loom.

Clack clack, clack clack; the loom had never stopped for a moment.

Natasha checked that Baba Yaga was still in the bath, then she jumped out of the hut.

The big dog jumped up to tear her apart. But just as he was about to jump on her, he recognized her and stopped.

« You are the little girl who gave me the bread and meat, » he said. « Good luck to you, little girl, » and he lay down with his head between his paws. She stroked his head and scratched his ears.

When she reached the gate, it opened gently, softly, without making any noise, thanks to the oil she had poured into its hinges earlier.

Then she started to run with all her might!



Meanwhile, the skinny black cat sat at the loom. Clackety-clack, clackety-clack, sang the loom as the cat wove and tangled in the messy threads.

Baba Yaga then came back to the window.

« Do you weave, little niece? » she asked in a high-pitched voice. « Are you weaving, my pretty one? »

« I'm weaving, Auntie, » said the thin black cat, tangling and tangling the thread, while the loom rattled, rattled, rattled.

« That's not the voice of my dinner, » cried Baba Yaga, and she jumped into the hut, grinding her iron

teeth. Behind the loom she saw no little girl, but only the poor black cat, all tangled up in the threads!

« Grrr! » said Baba Yaga, and she jumped on the cat. « Why didn't you gouge out the little girl's eyes?

The cat curled her tail and arched her back. « In all the years I've served you, you've only given me water and made me hunt for my dinner. The little girl gave me real cheese. »

Baba Yaga was mad with rage. She grabbed the cat and shook it with all her might. Then, turning to the maid, she grabbed her by the collar, and shouted, « Why did you take so long to prepare the bath?

« Ah! » trembled the maid, « In all the years I have served you, you have never offered me even a rag, while the little girl gave me a pretty handkerchief. »

Baba Yaga cursed her and rushed into the yard.

Seeing the gate wide open, she shouted, « Gate! Why didn't you squeal when she opened you? »

« Ah! » said the gate, « In all the years I have served you, you have never deigned to pour even a drop of oil on the hinges, and I squeaked every day to my shame. The little girl oiled me and thanks to her I can now open and close without a sound. »

Baba Yaga slammed the gate shut. Turning, she pointed her long finger at the dog. « You! » she shouted, « why didn't you tear it to pieces when it ran out of the house? »

« Ah! » said the dog, « In all the years I have served you, you have never thrown me anything but an old crust of bone, but the little girl gave me real meat and real bread. »

Baba Yaga rushed into the courtyard, cursing and hitting them all, while screaming at the top of her lungs.

Then she jumped into her giant mortar. Beating the mortar with a giant pestle to make it go faster, she flew through the air and soon caught up with Natasha in flight.

There, far ahead of her on the ground, she spotted the girl running through the trees, stumbling and looking over her shoulder in fright.

« You will not escape me! » said Baba Yaga, laughing horribly, and she aimed her flying mortar straight at the little girl.

Natasha ran faster than she had ever run before. Soon she could hear Baba Yaga's mortar banging on the ground behind her and its metal teeth grinding with a shrill sound. Desperately, she remembered the words of the skinny black cat and threw the towel behind her on the floor. The towel got bigger and bigger, wetter and wetter, and soon a deep and wide river stood between the little girl and Baba Yaga.

Natasha kept running. Oh, how she ran! When Baba Yaga reached the edge of the river, she screamed louder than ever and threw her pestle on the ground, for she knew she could not fly over an enchanted river. In a rage, she flew to her hen's feet home. There she gathered all her cows and led them to the river.



« Drink, drink! » she shouted at them, and the cows drank the whole river to the last drop. Then Baba Yaga jumped back into her giant mortar and flew over the dry riverbed to pursue her prey.

Natasha had gained a head start by running, and she thought she was finally free of the terrible witch. But her heart sank with terror as she saw the dark figure swooping down on her from the sky again and heard the iron teeth grind horribly.

« This time it's the end for me! » she despaired. Then she suddenly remembered what the cat had said about the comb.

Natasha threw the comb behind her, and the comb grew bigger and bigger, and its teeth turned into a thick forest, so thick that not even Baba Yaga could enter it.

The bone-legged witch, gnashed her teeth and howled in rage and frustration, and finally walked back to her hut with chicken legs.



The tired little girl, finally arrived at the house.

She was afraid to go in and see her wicked stepmother. So instead of going in, she waited outside in the shed.

When she saw her father passing by, she ran to him.

« Where have you been? » her father shouted. « And why is your face so red?

The stepmother blushed when she saw the little girl, she couldn't believe her eyes and her teeth gritted to the point of breaking.

But Natasha was not afraid, and she ran to her father and climbed on his lap. She told him everything that had happened. When the old man heard that the stepmother had sent her daughter to be eaten by Baba Yaga, the witch, he was so angry that he chased her out of the hut and never let her return.

From that moment on, he took good care of his daughter himself and did not let anyone come between them.

Around the table again filled with bread and jam, father and daughter played hide-and-seek behind the samovar again, and lived happily ever after.



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