



Morozko

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Russian

Intermediate

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There was once a stepmother who, besides her stepdaughter, had a daughter of her own. Whatever her own daughter might do, she looked kindly at her and said, "Sensible darling!" but as for the stepdaughter, whatever she might do to please, it was always taken amiss. Everything she did was wrong, and not as it should be. Yet, sooth to say, the little stepdaughter was as good as gold; in good hands she would have swum in cheese and butter, but, living with her stepmother, she bathed herself every day in tears.

What was she to do? The blast, though it blows, does not blow for ever, but a scolding old woman it is not so easy to avoid. She will take anything into her head, even to combing one's teeth. And the stepmother took it into her head to drive her stepdaughter from the house. "Take her, take her away, my old man, whithersoever you like, that mine eyes may not see her, that my ears may not hear of her; but don't take her to my own daughter in the warm room, but take her into the bare fields to the bitter, biting frost."

The old man began to lament and weep, but for all that he put his daughter in the sledge; he would have liked to cover her with the horse-cloth, but even that he dared not do. So he took the homeless one into the bare fields, threw her on a heap of snow, crossed himself, and hastened home as fast as possible, that his eyes might not see his daughter's death.

There the poor little thing remained on the fringe of the forest, sat down under a fir-tree, shivered, and softly said her prayers. All at once she heard something. Morozko was crackling in a fir-tree not far off, and he leaped

from fir to fir and snapped his fingers. And look! now he has come to that fir beneath which the girl was sitting; and he snapped his fingers, and leaped up and down, and looked at the pretty girl. "Maiden, maiden, 'tis I—Moroz-ruby-nose!"—"Welcome, Moroz! God must have sent thee to my poor sinful soul."—"Art thou warm, maiden?"—"Warm, warm, dear little father Morozushko!" Moroz began to descend lower, and crackle still more, and snap his fingers more than ever, and again he began speaking to the girl. "Art thou warm, maiden? Art thou warm, beauty?"

The girl was scarce able to draw her breath, and yet she kept on saying, "Yes, warm, Morozushko; warm, little father!" Morozko crackled more than ever, and snapped his fingers harder and yet harder, and he said to the maiden for the last time, "Art thou warm, maiden? Art thou warm, beauty? Art thou warm, sweet clover?" The girl was all benumbed, and it was only in a voice scarcely audible that she could say, "Oh, yes! warm, darling little pigeon mine, Morozushko!" Morozko quite loved her for her pretty speeches. He had compassion on the girl; he wrapped her in furs, warmed her with warm coverings, and brought her a coffer, high and heavy, full of bridal garments, and gave her a robe all garnished with gold and silver. She put it on, and oh, how beautiful and stately she looked! And she sat down and began to sing songs. And the stepmother was preparing her funeral feast and frying pancakes. "Be off, husband, and bury your daughter!" she cried.

And off the old man went. But the little dog under the table said, "Bow-wow! the old man's daughter is going about in silver and gold, but the old woman's daughter no woosers will look at."—"Silence, you fool! There's a pancake for you, and now say, 'The woosers will take the old woman's daughter, but there's nothing left of the old man's daughter but her bones.'" The little dog ate the pancake, but again he said, "Bow-wow! the old man's daughter goes about in silver and gold, but the old woman's daughter no woosers will look at." The old woman kept beating the dog and giving him pancakes, but the little dog would have his way, and said, "The old man's daughter goes about in silver and gold, but the old woman's daughter no woosers will look at."

The floors creaked, the doors flew open wide, and in they brought the high and heavy coffer, and behind it walked the stepdaughter, in gold and silver, glittering like the sun. The stepmother looked at her, and threw up her arms. "Old man, old man! put to a pair of horses, and take my daughter at once. Put her in the selfsame field, in the selfsame place." And the old man took the daughter to the selfsame place. And Moroz-ruby-nose came and looked at his guest, and began to ask her, "Art thou warm, maiden?"—"Be off with you!" replied the old woman's daughter, "or are you blind not to see that my arms and legs are quite benumbed with cold?" Morozko began skipping and jumping, fair words were not to be expected from that quarter. And he was angry

with the stepdaughter, and froze her to death.

“Old man, old man! go and fetch my daughter. Put to my swift horses, and don’t overturn the sledge and upset the coffer.” But the little dog under the table said, “Bow-wow! the wooers will wed the old man’s daughter, but they’ll bring home nothing of the old woman’s daughter but a sack of bones.”—“Don’t lie! There’s a cake. Take it and say, ‘They’ll carry about the old woman’s daughter in gold and silver!’” And the doors flew open, the nasty old woman ran out to meet her daughter, and instead of her she embraced a cold corpse. She began to howl and cry; she knew then that she had lost her wicked and envious daughter.

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