

GRANDDAUGHTER'S SLED

A Tale From Russia

A man named Ivan lived with his elderly father and young daughter. At that time, so long ago, old people were thought to be useless. They were taken to the forest and left to die, all alone. Now that the old man was feeble and could no longer earn a living, Ivan tied him onto his daughter's sled.

"Where are you taking Grandfather?" asked the girl.

"To the forest," replied Ivan.

"But why, Father? He is too weak to cut down trees or pick berries."

"Never mind why, Daughter. It's something I must do."

"Can I come too?" asked the girl.

"Yes, but ask no more questions."

The girl ran behind the sled, stopping here and there to pick wildflowers for her grandfather. When they came to the middle of the forest, Ivan said, "I'm sorry to leave you here, Father, but you know how it is among our people."

"You can't leave Grandfather out here," said the girl. "He will starve or be killed by the wolves."

"He is old and can no longer work. I have no choice, Daughter."

The girl thought for a moment and said, "But we can't leave my sled behind, because when you grow old, I'll need it to carry you into the forest."

Ivan frowned and then realized the truth of the girl's statement. "You are right, Daughter. Let's take Grandfather home. But don't tell any of our neighbors that he is still with us."



They hid the old man in a back room and kept his existence a great secret.

Soon afterward, a terrible famine swept the land. Food became scarce and the people grew hungry. Ivan had less and less to take to his aged father. The old man did not complain.

The famine continued and the villagers ate the last of the wheat and rye. They even ate the seed grain and had nothing to plant in the spring. There was no hope of survival.

Ivan took his old father a small piece of hard bread and told him that the people were starving.

“Nonsense,” said Grandfather. “Take the straw roof from the barn and thrash it well. You will find that there is more than a handful of grain left in the thatch. Plant the grain and you will get a healthy crop!”

Ivan did as he was told and soon had a fine crop of rye. The villagers were grateful and asked him where he got such excellent advice.

“From my father, a wise man indeed.”

“Your father is dead,” said one of the villagers.

“Grandfather is not dead,” explained Ivan's daughter. “We have hidden him, but not his wisdom. Grandfather has saved all of our lives!”

So Grandfather came out of hiding, and from that time forth, old people were honored and respected in that village.

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