

The Little Girl and Father Frost

Once in Bulgaria, the winter witch decided to banish the sun and make winter last forever. She put old Father Frost to sleep so he couldn't stop her and she covered the earth with snow.

People woke up to find their houses so deeply buried in snow they had to tunnel their way out. In one village, a group of neighbours decided to ask Father Frost for help. However, he lived in an icy palace on a mountain peak and nobody dared undertake such a dangerous mission.

At last, a little girl called Yordanka volunteered to go. "If someone will care for my grandfather when I am gone, I will do it!"

"You can't!" cried her grandfather. "You're too small for such a journey."

The neighbours agreed. “And you don’t own a warm coat or a hat and scarf. You don’t even have mittens. You’ll freeze!”

“I will not,” said Yordanka. “My legs are as strong as a mountain goat’s. Besides, my heart will keep me warm.”

The neighbours were so moved by Yordanka’s courage, they agreed to let her go. The children gave her their warmest clothes – a thick woollen jumper, a coat, a hat, a scarf, mittens, socks and a pair of sturdy boots.

When Yordanka was ready to leave, her grandfather hugged her. “Go, little one. I know your good heart will keep you warm and safe.”

Yordanka waved goodbye and set off for Father Frost’s ice palace.



The brave little girl climbed up the mountain, never stopping to rest. After some time she spotted a glittering ice palace in the distance. But just as she began to feel hopeful, terrible whirlwinds whipped up around her.

“Who dares trespass on our path?” they whispered, as they swirled and whirled and nipped at her ears. ➔





Yordanka pulled her woollen hat over her ears, snuggled into her warm coat and ploughed on.

After a while, the whirlwinds grew tired of trying to stop her and fell to the ground. “What a strong girl,” they said, gasping for breath. “No one has ever passed us before. Let’s ask the blizzards for help.”

So they called for the blizzards who roared angrily and blew fiercely at Yordanka. “Stop right now!” they wailed and raged at her.

But the little girl struggled on and refused to give up on her journey.

Eventually the blizzards also fell to the ground. “How did she beat us?” they said, breathing heavily. “Let’s ask the winter witch for help.”

So they called for the winter witch. When they told her about Yordanka she said, “If force doesn’t work, then we must be gentle. Watch me.”

The winter witch appeared before the little girl and began to sing an enchanted lullaby.

“What a sweet voice,” said Yordanka. “I’m not far away now, so I’ll sit and listen for a while.” But as the witch sang, the girl’s eyes began to droop.

A whimsical winter scene with a girl in a red dress surrounded by animals in a snowy forest. The girl is in the center, wearing a red dress with a yellow and red striped pattern and a red hat with a white pom-pom. She is surrounded by various animals: rabbits, squirrels, and mice. The background is a snowy forest with blue trees and falling snow. The scene is lit with a soft, blue light, suggesting a winter night.

“Sleep, little girl, sleep,” said the witch with a cruel grin. “Sleep forever!”

Yordanka drifted into a deep sleep and the winter witch vanished. Snow fell thickly around her, and her rosy cheeks turned white, then blue.

Suddenly, something stirred in the snow. A tiny head popped up – it was a mouse. It saw Yordanka and squeaked, “Help! Quick, help!”

Instantly, dozens of mice peeped out of the snow. They ran to Yordanka and rubbed her feet and hands. But they were too small to warm her, so they called for help again.

Soon a family of rabbits hopped to the rescue, closely followed by a scurry of squirrels. Together, they huddled around Yordanka, warming her with their soft fur.

After a while, the colour returned to her cheeks and she opened her eyes.

“Thank you!” she cried. “Now I must find Father Frost and ask for his help.”

“We’ll come too,” said the animals.



The mice, rabbits and squirrels flocked around Yordanka as she headed to the ice palace. ➔



When they arrived, Yordanka was surprised to find the door open.

“What has happened to Father Frost?” she wondered. They walked into a hall of shimmering crystals, where Father Frost was fast asleep on a splendid throne of carved ice.

Yordanka called his name, but he didn’t stir, so a squirrel jumped on his lap and tickled his nose with its tail.

Father Frost let out a mighty sneeze and opened his eyes. “What are you doing here?” he asked.

Yordanka told him everything.

Father Frost was astonished. He thanked Yordanka and the animals for waking him. “The winter witch must have cursed me. I can’t believe I’ve slept through winter. I’d better put things right again.”



The background illustration shows a young girl with braids, wearing a red and white striped winter coat and a brown hat with a pom-pom. She is holding two yellow snowdrops. The scene is set in a forest with a large tree on the left and several snowdrops scattered on the ground. In the upper corners, there are small blue winged figures, likely snow fairies, flying. The overall color palette is soft and wintry, with greens, blues, and reds.

Father Frost blew on a tiny silver whistle and the crystal hall filled with his helpers, who had all been under the same curse. He said to his guards, “Capture the winter witch and lock her away until next year.”

Then he said to his fairies, “Please clear away the clouds so that the sun can melt the snow.”

As Father Frost thanked Yordanka again, she said farewell to her kind animal friends and set off for home.

On the way back, she was overjoyed to see the sun begin to shine and the snow slowly start to melt.

By the time she had reached her village, the snow had disappeared. Everyone cheered. “What a brave girl you are, Yordanka! Thank you!”

That evening, her grandfather picked a bunch of the first snowdrops, and everybody sang and danced to celebrate the coming of spring – especially Yordanka. ★

DID YOU KNOW?

Father Frost is known as Dyado Mraz in Bulgaria and Ded Moroz in Russia. He is a lot like Father Christmas, except he delivers gifts on New Year’s Eve and wears blue. He also carries a magic staff and his sleigh is pulled by horses.