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Grandfather Frost

James Riordan

There once lived an old man with his second wife, and they each had a daughter. The wife pampered her own daughter, who was lazy and bad-tempered. But she was unkind to her stepdaughter.

The old man's daughter had to rise before daybreak to tend the cattle, fetch the firewood, light the stove and sweep the floor. Yet her stepmother found fault with all she did and grumbled at her the whole day through.

Even the wildest wind grows calm with time, but there was no quieting the old woman once she was roused. She would not be content until she had driven the poor girl from the house.

'Get rid of her, old man,' she said one day to her husband. 'I cannot bear the sight of her any longer. Drive her into the forest and leave her in the snow.'

The old man pleaded but the wife always had her way. So, one bitterly cold morning, he harnessed his horses to the sledge and called his daughter:

'Come, my child, we are going for a ride, climb into the sledge.'

The sledge raced over the crisp snow into the forest until it came to a lofty fir-tree. There the old man stopped and left the luckless girl trembling by a deep snowdrift. He drove home with heavy heart, certain he would never see his daughter again.

It was very cold, and the girl sat beneath the hoary fir-tree shivering. All of a sudden, she caught her breath, for she could hear a cracking and snapping of twigs, and she knew Grandfather Frost was leaping through the trees. In a twinkling he was in the topmost branches of the very tree by which she sat.

'Are you warm, my pretty one?' he called.

'Yes, quite warm, thank you, Grandfather Frost,' she answered.

He came down lower and the cracking and snapping grew louder than ever.

'Are you warm?' he called again. 'Are you snug, my pretty one?'

The girl was scarcely able to catch her breath, but she said:

'Yes, I'm quite warm, thank you, Grandfather Frost.'

He then climbed lower still, cracking and snapping the frosty boughs very loudly indeed.

'Are you warm?' he asked. 'Are you snug, my pretty one? Are you cosy, my sweet snow child?'

The girl was growing numb and could hardly move her tongue, but still she managed to whisper:

'I'm quite warm, thank you, Grandfather Frost.'

Then Grandfather Frost took pity on the girl and wrapped her in his fluffy furs and fleecy eiderdowns.

Meanwhile the wicked stepmother was frying pancakes and preparing for the funeral repast. She said to her husband:

'Go to the forest, old fool, and bring your daughter back to be buried!'

The old man harnessed the horses and obediently went into the forest and there found his daughter on the very spot where he had left her. She was alive and well, wrapped in a warm sable coat over a glittering velvet gown. Beside her stood a large chest stuffed with furs and rare gems.

The old man was overjoyed. He seated his daughter in the sledge, put the chest in beside her and drove home.

Back in the house the old woman was still frying pancakes when, suddenly, her little dog began to bark:

'Ruff-ruff! The old man's daughter comes rich and fair,
A wondrous fortune found she there!'

The old woman threw the dog a pancake and said:

'You are wrong, dog! You should say:

"The old man's daughter is cold and dead,
The forest snow lies on her head!"'

The dog munched the pancake, but still barked:

'Ruff-ruff! The old man's daughter comes rich and fair,
A wondrous fortune found she there!'

The old woman hurled more pancakes at the dog and, when this did not stop it, she beat it until it ran howling into the snow.

Suddenly there came the sound of the sledge racing into the yard; the door burst open and in walked the old man's daughter, dazzling in her white furs and precious stones. Behind her walked her happy father bearing the heavy chest of furs and jewels. The old woman was astonished to see her alive and dressed in such finery.

'Harness the horses, old man!' she said to her husband. 'Take my own daughter to the forest and leave her at the same spot.'

The old man put the woman's daughter into the sledge, drove her into the forest and left her by the deep snowdrift under the lofty fir-tree. She was soon so cold her teeth chattered and her feet grew numb.

Presently Grandfather Frost came leaping through the treetops, cracking and snapping the twigs, and stopped to ask the old woman's daughter:

'Are you warm, my pretty one?'

'Oh no, I'm terribly cold!' she snapped. 'Don't pinch and pierce me so!'

Grandfather Frost came lower, making the branches snap and crackle more loudly.

'Are you warm?' he called. 'Are you snug, my pretty one?'

'Oh no, I'm freezing!' she snapped back. 'Go away, you stupid old man!'

But Grandfather Frost came down still lower and the branches cracked and snapped louder than ever and his breath grew colder and colder.

'Are you warm?' he called again. 'Are you snug, my pretty one? Are you cosy, my sweet one?'

'Oh no!' she cried. 'I'm frozen stiff! Go away, you stupid grey-beard!'

Grandfather Frost was so cross that he sent a piercing cold blast through her and turned the old woman's daughter into a block of ice.

Day had barely dawned when the old woman said to her husband:

'Make haste and harness the horses, old man. Go and fetch my daughter and bring her back clad in furs and jewels.'

When the old man had gone, the little dog began to bark:

'Ruff-ruff! The old man's daughter will soon be wed,
But the old woman's daughter is cold and dead!'

The old woman threw the dog a pie and said:
'You are wrong, dog! You should say:

"The old woman's daughter comes rich and fair,
A wondrous fortune found she there."'

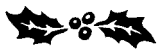
The dog continued its barking:

'Ruff-ruff! The old woman's daughter is cold and dead!'

Before long she heard the sound of horses' hoofs and rushed out to greet her daughter. But, when the old woman turned back the cover on the sledge, she found her daughter frozen stiff. So overcome with grief was she that she died.

The old man and his daughter lived on together happily for many years, well rid of the cruel old woman and her lazy daughter.

The Snow-man



Mabel Marlowe

A snow-man once stood upon a hill, with his face towards the sunset. A very fine snow-man he was, as tall as a soldier, and much fatter. He had two pieces of glass for eyes, and a stone for a nose, and a piece of black wood for a mouth, and in his hand he held a stout, knobbly club.

But he had no clothes at all, not even a hat, and the wind on the top of that hill was as bitter as wind could be.

'How cold I am! I am as cold as ice,' said the snow-man. 'But that red sky looks warm.' So he lifted his feet from the ground, and went tramp, tramp, tramping down the slope towards the setting sun.

Very soon he overtook a gipsy woman, who was wearing a bright red shawl. 'Ha, that looks warm! I must have it,' thought the snow-man. So he went up to the gipsy woman and he said, 'Give me that red shawl.'

'No, indeed! I cannot spare it on this wintry day,' answered the gipsy. 'I am cold enough as it is.'

'Cold!' shouted the snow-man in a very growlish voice. 'Are you as cold as I am, I wonder! Are you cold inside as well as outside? Are you made of ice, through and through and through?'

'No, I suppose not,' mumbled the gipsy, who was getting hot with fright.

'Then give me your red shawl this moment, or I shall strike you with my stout, knobbly club.'

Then the gipsy took off her red shawl, grumbling all the time, and gave it to the snow-man. He put it round his shoulders, without a word of thanks, and went tramp, tramp, tramping down the hill. And the shivering gipsy followed behind him.

Presently the snow-man overtook a ploughboy who was wearing his grandmother's long, red woollen mittens.

'Ha, they look warm! I must have them,' thought the snow-

man. So he went up to the ploughboy and he said, 'Give me those red woollen mittens.'

'No, indeed!' said the ploughboy. 'They belong to my grandmother. She lent them to me because my fingers were so cold.'

'Cold!' shouted the snow-man, in a very roarish voice. 'Are your fingers as cold as mine, I wonder! Are your hands and arms frozen into ice, through and through and through?'

'No, I suppose not,' mumbled the ploughboy.

'Then give me those red mittens, this moment, or I shall strike you with my stout, knobbly club.'

So the ploughboy drew off the warm mittens, grumbling all the time, and the snow-man put them on, without a word of thanks. Then he went tramp, tramp, tramping down the hill. And the gipsy and the ploughboy followed him.

After a while he overtook a tame pirate, wearing a pirate's thick red cap, with a tassel dangling down his back.

'Ha! That looks warm! I must have it,' said the snow-man. So he went up to the tame pirate and he said, 'Give me that red tassel cap.'

'No, indeed!' said the pirate. 'A nice cold in the head I should get if I did.'

'Cold in the head!' shouted the snow-man, in a very thunderish voice. 'Is your head as cold as mine, I wonder! Are your brains made of snow, and your bones solid ice, through and through and through?'

'No, I suppose not,' muttered the tame pirate.

'Then give me that red tassel cap, this moment, or I shall set upon you with my stout, knobbly club.'

Now the pirate felt very sorry that he had turned tame, but he did not like the look of that knobbly stick, so he gave up his red tassel cap. The snow-man put it on without a word of thanks. Then he went tramp, tramp, tramping down the hill, with the tassel bumping up and down. And the gipsy woman, and the ploughboy, and the tame pirate followed him.

At last he reached the bottom of the hill, where the village school house stood, and there was the village schoolmaster on the doorstep, looking at the sunset. He was smoking a glowing briar pipe, and on his feet were two red velvet slippers.

'Ha, those look warm! I must have them,' said the snow-man.

So he went up to the schoolmaster and said, 'Give me those red slippers.'

'Certainly, if you want them,' said the schoolmaster. 'Take them by all means. It is far too cold today to be tramping about with bare toes,' and he stooped and drew off his slippers, and there he stood in some bright red socks, thick and woolly and knitted by hand.

'Ha! Those look warm! Give them to me!' said the snow-man.

'Certainly, if you want them,' said the schoolmaster. 'But you must come inside. I cannot take my socks off here, in the doorway. Come on to the mat.'

So the snow-man stepped inside the doorway, and stood upon the mat.

'Be sharp with those socks. My feet are as cold as solid ice,' he grumbled.

'I am sorry to hear that,' said the schoolmaster. 'But I have a warm red blanket airing over the stove. Come in, sir. Sit on that chair by the fire, sir. Put your cold feet upon this snug red footstool, and let me wrap this red blanket around your legs.'

So the snow-man came into the schoolhouse, and sat upon a chair by the glowing fire, and put his feet upon the red footstool, and the schoolmaster wrapped the red blanket round and round and round his legs. (And all this while the gipsy woman, and the ploughboy, and the tame pirate were peering in at the window.)

'Are you feeling warmer?' asked the schoolmaster.

'No. I am as cold as an iceberg.'

'Come closer to the fire.'

So the schoolmaster pushed the chair closer to the fire, but the snow-man gave him not one word of thanks.

'Are you feeling warmer now?'

'No. I am as cold as a stone. My feet feel like icy water.'

'Move closer to the fire,' said the schoolmaster, and he pushed the chair right against the kerb. 'There! Are you warmer now?'

'No, no, no! I am colder than ever. I cannot feel my feet at all. I cannot feel my legs at all. I cannot feel my back at all.'

Then the schoolmaster pushed the chair quite close up against the stove. 'Are you warmer now?' he said.

But there was no answer, except a slithery sliding sound, and the drip, drip, drip of black snow-water.

'Dear me!' whispered the snow-man, in a gurgling kind of

voice. 'I have dropped my stout, knobbly club. My red slippers are floating into the ashpan. My mittens are swimming in a little river on the floor. My shawl is gone. My red tassel cap is slipping–slipping away. My head is going... going...'

Splosh! Splash! Gurgle!

'That's the end of him,' said the schoolmaster, and he went to fetch the mop.

Then the gipsy woman, and the ploughboy and the tame pirate came in and picked up their things, and wrung them out, and dried them at the stove, and the schoolmaster put his red slippers on the hearth, and hung the red blanket over the back of the chair.

Then he picked up the stout, knobbly club and gave the fire a poke.