

The Story Of Babushka: A Christmas Folktale

There's a great Christmas story that's told in Russia about this time of the year. It's about an elderly woman called Babushka, and you'll love it - I hope. Check it out.

Once in a small Russian town, there lived an elderly woman called Babushka. Babushka always had chores to do around the house: sweeping, polishing, dusting, cleaning, cooking etc. She was so house-proud. Her house was the best kept house in the whole village. Her garden was beautifully laid out and her cooking was loved by all who tasted it.



One evening she was busying herself about the house, dusting and cleaning, and was so pre-occupied she didn't hear clearly all the villagers

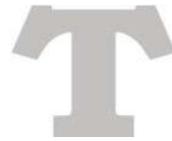
outside in the village square talking excitedly and looking at the new star in sky - she just heard a commotion in the distance.

She had heard a rumour about a new star but thought, 'All this fuss about a star! I don't even have the time to look because I'm so behind with my work. I must work, and work all night!' So, she missed the star as it shone brightly, overhead. She also missed the little line of twinkling lights coming down towards the village at dawn. She also didn't hear the sounds of the pipes and drums. She missed the voices and whispers of the villagers wondering whether the lights were an army or a procession of some sort. She missed the sudden quiet of the villagers, awestruck at what they say, and didn't even hear the footsteps coming up the path to her door. But the one thing

that she couldn't miss was the loud knocking on her front door!

'Now what?' she grumbled angrily, opening the door. Babushka gasped in amazement. There were three kings at her door. One of the servants with these three kings said, 'My masters need a place to rest, and yours is the best house in the village.'

'You want to stay here?' asked Babushka. 'Yes, it would only be until night falls and the new star appears again,' the servant replied. Babushka gulped. 'Come in, then,' she said.



The kings were very pleased when they saw all of the home-baked bread, pies and cakes. Babushka dashed about, serving them, asking them lots of questions. 'Have you come a long way?' 'A very long way,' sighed Caspar. 'Where are you going?', she queried. 'We're following the new star,' said Melchior. 'But where?' Babushka asked. The kings didn't know, but they believed that it would lead them to a new-born king, a King of Earth and Heaven. 'Why don't you come with us?' asked Balthasar. 'You could bring him a gift like we do. I bring gold, and my colleagues bring spices and perfumes.'

'Oh, I'm not sure that he would welcome me,' said Babushka, 'and what could I bring for a gift? Toys! I know, I could bring a toy. I've got a cupboard full of toys,' she said sadly. 'My baby son, died when he was small.' Balthasar stopped her as she started to tidy the kitchen up. 'This new king could be your king too. Come with us when the new star appears tonight,' he said.

'I'll think about it,' sighed Babushka.

As the kings slept, Babushka continued to tidy up as quietly as she could. 'What a lot of extra work there was!' she thought, 'and this new-born king, what a funny idea to leave everything to go and look for him.'

Babushka shook herself. There was no time for day-dreaming. All the washing-up needed drying and putting away. 'Anyway,' she thought, 'how long would she be away? What would she wear? What about the gift?' she sighed. 'There was so much to do. The house will have to be cleaned when the kings have gone. I couldn't just leave it

un-cleaned.' she whispered to herself. Suddenly it was night-time again and the new star was in the sky. 'Are you ready, Babushka?' asked Balthasar. 'I'll come tomorrow,' Babushka called, 'I must just tidy here first and find a gift.'

The kings went away, rather saddened that Babushka had decided not to travel with them to see the new-born king. Babushka ran back into her house, keen to get on with her work.

Finally, some hours later she went to the small cupboard, opened the door and gazed at all the toys. But they were very dusty. They weren't fit for a baby king. They would all need to be cleaned. She cleaned all of the toys until each one sparkled. Babushka looked through the window. It was morning! The star had come and gone. The kings would have found somewhere else to rest by now. She could easily catch them up, but she felt so tired. She had to sleep. The next thing she knew, she was awake and it was dark outside. She had slept all day! She quickly pulled on her cloak, packed the toys in a basket and ran down the path the kings had taken. This was extremely difficult, the snow had covered up their tracks.

Everywhere she went Babushka asked 'Have you seen the kings?' 'Oh yes,' everyone told her, 'we saw them. They went that way.' For days Babushka searched for the kings, and the villages got bigger and became towns. But Babushka never stopped. Then she came to a city. 'The palace,' she thought. 'That's where the royal baby would be born.' 'No, there is no royal baby here,' said the palace guard when she asked him. 'What about three kings?' asked Babushka. 'Oh yes, they came here, but they didn't stay long. They were soon on their journey.' the guard said. 'But where to?' asked Babushka. 'Bethlehem' he said, 'that was the place. I can't imagine why. It's a very poor place. That's where they went.' he said.

She set off towards Bethlehem. It was evening when Babushka arrived at Bethlehem and she had been travelling for a long time. She went into the local inn and asked about the kings. 'Oh yes,' said the landlord, 'the kings were here two days ago. They were very excited, but they didn't even stay the night.' 'And what about a baby?' Babushka cried. 'Yes there was a baby.' Said the landlord. The kings asked about a baby, too.'

When he saw the disappointment in Babushka's eyes, he stopped. 'If you'd like to see where the baby was,' he said quickly, 'it was across the yard there. I couldn't offer the couple anything better at the time. My inn was really full, so they had to go in the stable.' Babushka followed him across the yard. 'Here's the stable,' he said. He left her in the stable. 'Babushka?' Someone was calling her from the doorway. He looked kindly at her. She wondered if he knew where the family had gone. She knew now that the baby king was the most important thing in the world to her. 'They have gone on a long journey, to a place of safety,' he told Babushka. 'And the kings have returned to their countries. But one of them told me about you. I am sorry but you are too late. It was Jesus that they found, the world's Saviour, and He's gone.'

Babushka was very sad that she had missed Jesus, and it is said that Babushka is still looking for him leaving presents beside every baby at this time of year, just in case it's Baby Jesus.

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