Baba Yaga — Variant 7

Once upon a time there lived a husband and wife, and they had a daughter. The wife fell ill and died. The man grieved and grieved, and then he married another.

The wicked woman took a dislike to the girl, beat her, scolded her, and thought only of how to destroy her completely, to ruin her.

One day the father went away somewhere, and the stepmother said to the girl:

"Go to my sister, your aunt, and ask her for a needle and thread — to sew you a shirt."

Now this aunt was a baba-yaga, a bony leg. The girl dared not refuse; she went, but first she stopped at her own aunt's.

"Hello, auntie!"

"Hello, my dear! Why have you come?"

"My stepmother sent me to her sister to ask for a needle and thread — she wants to sew me a shirt."

"It is well, niece, that you came to me first," said the aunt. "Here is a ribbon for you, some oil, a little bread, and a piece of meat. When the birch tree lashes at your eyes, tie it up with the ribbon; when the gates creak and slam to hold you back, pour some oil under their heels; when the dogs tear at you, throw them the bread; when the cat claws at your eyes, give it the meat."

The girl thanked her aunt and went on.

She walked and walked and came to a forest. In the forest, behind a tall fence, stood a hut on chicken legs, on ram's horns, and in the hut sat a baba-yaga, a bony leg — weaving linen.

"Hello, auntie!" said the girl.

"Hello, niece!" said the baba-yaga. "What do you need?"

"My stepmother sent me to ask you for a little needle and thread — to sew me a shirt."

"Very well, little niece, I will give you a needle and thread, but sit down and work for a while!"

So the girl sat down by the window and began to weave.

The baba-yaga went out of the hut and said to her servant:

"I am going to lie down to sleep now, and you go and heat the bathhouse and wash my niece. And see that you wash her well: when I wake up, I shall eat her!"

The girl heard these words and sat there, neither alive nor dead. As soon as the baba-yaga had gone, she began to plead with the servant:

"My dear! Don't light so much wood in the stove as you pour water over it, and carry the water in a sieve!" And she gave her a kerchief.

The servant heats the bathhouse, but the baba-yaga woke up, went up to the window and asked:

"Are you weaving, little niece, are you weaving, my dear?"

"I am weaving, auntie, I am weaving, my dear!"

The baba-yaga lay down to sleep again, and the girl gave the cat some meat and asked:

"Cat, brother, teach me how to escape from here."

The cat said:

"Over there on the table lie a towel and a comb — take them and run as fast as you can, or the baba-yaga will eat you! When the baba-yaga chases after you, put your ear to the ground. When you hear that she is close, throw the comb — a thick, dense forest will grow up. While she forces her way through the forest, you will run far away. And when you hear the pursuit again, throw the towel — a wide and deep river will spread out."

"Thank you, cat, brother!" said the girl.

She thanked the cat, took the towel and the comb, and ran.

The dogs rushed at her, wanting to tear and bite her — she gave them bread. The dogs let her pass.

The gates creaked, wanting to slam shut — but the girl poured oil under their heels. They let her pass.

The birch tree rustled, wanting to lash her eyes — the girl tied it up with the ribbon. The birch tree let her pass. The girl ran out and ran with all her might. She runs and does not look back.

Meanwhile the cat sat down by the window and began to weave. He weaves less than he tangles!

The baba-yaga woke up and asked:

"Are you weaving, little niece, are you weaving, my dear?"

And the cat answered her:

"I am weaving, auntie, I am weaving, my dear!"

The baba-yaga rushed into the hut and saw — the girl was gone, and the cat sat there, weaving.

The baba-yaga began to beat and scold the cat:

"Oh, you old rascal! Oh, you villain! Why did you let the girl go? Why didn't you claw out her eyes? Why didn't you scratch her face?.."

And the cat answered her:

"I have served you so many years, and you never threw me a gnawed bone, but she gave me meat!"

The baba-yaga ran out of the hut and fell upon the dogs:

"Why didn't you tear the girl, why didn't you bite her?.."

The dogs said to her:

"We have served you so many years, and you never threw us a burnt crust, but she gave us bread!"

The baba-yaga ran up to the gates:

"Why didn't you creak, why didn't you slam? Why did you let the girl out of the yard?.."

The gates said:

"We have served you so many years, and you never poured water under our heels, but she didn't spare us oil!"

The baba-yaga rushed up to the birch tree:

"Why didn't you lash the girl's eyes?"

The birch tree answered her:

"I have served you so many years, and you never tied me with a thread, but she gave me a ribbon!"

The baba-yaga began to scold the servant:

"Why didn't you wake me, you good-for-nothing, why didn't you call me? Why did you let her go?.."

The servant said:

"I have served you so many years — I never heard a kind word from you, but she gave me a kerchief and spoke to me kindly and sweetly!"

The baba-yaga shouted and stormed about, then she got into a mortar and rushed off in pursuit. She drives herself on with a pestle, sweeps away her tracks with a broom...

And the girl ran and ran, stopped, put her ear to the ground and hears: the earth is trembling, shaking — the baba-yaga is in pursuit, and already quite close...

The girl took out the comb and threw it over her right shoulder. A forest grew up there, dense and tall: the roots of the trees go three fathoms underground, the tops prop up the clouds.

The baba-yaga came rushing up and began to gnaw and break the forest. She gnaws and breaks, while the girl runs on.

Whether much or little time passed, the girl put her ear to the ground and hears: the earth is trembling, shaking — the baba-yaga is in pursuit, already quite close.

The girl took the towel and threw it over her right shoulder. In that same instant a river spread out — wide as wide could be, deep as deep could be!

The baba-yaga rushed up to the river and gnashed her teeth with rage — she cannot cross the river.

She went back home, gathered her oxen and drove them to the river:

"Drink, my oxen! Drink the whole river to the bottom!"

The oxen began to drink, but the water in the river does not decrease.

The baba-yaga grew angry, lay down on the bank, and began to drink the water herself. She drank and drank and drank and drank, and drank until she burst.

Meanwhile the girl just kept on running and running.

In the evening the father returned home and asked his wife:

"And where is my daughter?"

The woman said:

"She went to her aunt's — to ask for a needle and thread, but she has been delayed somehow."

The father grew worried and wanted to go and look for his daughter, but the daughter came running home, out of breath, unable to catch her breath.

"Where have you been, daughter?" asked the father.

"Oh, father!" answered the girl. "My stepmother sent me to her sister, and her sister is a baba-yaga, a bony leg. She wanted to eat me. I barely escaped from her!"

When the father learned all this, he grew angry with the wicked woman and drove her out of the house with a dirty broom. And he began to live with his daughter, just the two of them, in harmony and happiness.

Here the tale ends.