

Dear Lifeways friends,

This Christmas story inspired one mom/teacher to start knitting slippers for homeless shelters as Christmas presents. She attaches this story to the slippers with a red ribbon for Christmas. I wet felted little story size slippers to use as a prop when telling this tale. I hope you tell it and enjoy telling it!

with best wishes,

Suzanne Down

The Christmas Slippers

The December Story this month is my adaptation of an old Russian Christmas tale. The main character is an old woman, a grandmother, or in Russian, a Babushka. I will call her Grandma Valyusha.

Grandma Valyusha lived all alone in a tiny cottage along the main street of her village. She was known far and wide to be the best seamstress in the village. Now she was getting old, and her eyes were tired from so much sewing! Once, something very special happened to her, and here is that story...

It happened on Christmas Eve. Grandma Valyusha was sitting by the fire thinking of the first Christmas so long ago, and the gifts of the shepherds and kings. 'What would I have brought the Christ Child,' she wondered? And all at once she jumped up, got her needle and thread, scissors and strong golden wool felt, and set to work. She cut carefully and sewed with her finest stitches. She was making tiny warm slippers, the kind she would have brought as a gift to the Christ Child himself. She stitched and stitched until the most perfect little slippers were finished.

Grandma Valyusha admired them and smiled. They were blue like the heavens, and she put a golden star on each one to remind her of the star that the three kings followed to find the newborn child in the stable long ago. 'Yes,' she said, 'these would have been perfect to warm the Christ Child's little feet.' Then her head nodded and she soon fell asleep in her chair. As she slept, she had a dream. A beautiful golden child appeared and said, 'dear kind Grandma Valyusha, I will visit you this night.'

Grandma Valyusha woke up knowing it had been the Christ Child. Oh how happy she was. He was coming to visit her on this Christmas Eve night! So she set to work. She swept the floors, and tidied the house. She chopped up beets and cabbage to make her best tasting borscht soup. When all was ready, she then put the tiny blue slippers with the golden stars on the table for the Christ Child's gift. Imagine, she would still be able to give him her gift!

As she waited, Grandma Valyusha looked out the window, and then she opened the door to look down the street. Brrrr, it was a cold night! As she looked down the street, she noticed an old grandfather sweeping the snow from the lane. His cheeks and nose were red from the cold.

'Old Grandfather,' she called out, 'come warm yourself with some soup, and sit for a little by my fire.'

The old grandfather was so grateful, and the good soup warmed him and gave him energy to finish his job before going home to his family for Christmas Eve.

After he had gone, Grandmother Valyusha looked in the soup pot. Oh yes, there was plenty left for the Christ Child when he came!

But still, no Christ Child was to be seen down the street. She was too excited, and kept looking up and down the street for him. Instead she saw a young woman dressed in rags, and she was carrying

something. As she got closer Grandma Valyusha saw it was a baby! The baby was wrapped in a tattered blanket and both looked very cold.

'Come in, come in dear friend, sit by my fire and warm yourself,' welcomed Grandma Valyusha. The young woman gratefully sat by the fire with her baby. Grandma brought her a big bowl of borscht soup, and warm milk for the baby. The mother ate it up so fast, Grandma brought her a second big bowl.

Grandma Valyusha held the baby and gave him some warm milk. As she had a better look at the baby she saw that he had no shoes on! His little feet were red from the cold.

'Oh the poor child,' thought grandma to herself. She looked over at the warm slippers she had made for the Christ Child... 'But those are for Him' she quietly thought. But as she looked at the baby in her arms, she knew what she must do.

'Look here,' Grandma Valyusha said to the mother, 'I have these warm slippers that might just fit your baby.' She slipped them on the baby's feet. How perfectly they fit. The baby stretched and moved his legs as if to look at the fine blue slippers with the gold stars.

The mother's eyes filled with tears of joy. 'You have been so kind to us when no one else would. Thank you dear grandmother.' Then she left with new strength. What a beautiful clear night it was.

Grandmother Valyusha was getting tired, and it was very late. She thought, 'how silly I was to think the Christ Child would visit me, a lonely old woman.' And she turned out the lights and went to bed.

As she slept that Christmas Eve, she had another dream. A golden child came to her and said, 'you waited for me to come to you and I did. I was the old man sweeping the snow. I was the mother and baby. And you helped all of them. By showing kindness to them, you show kindness to me. Thank you dear kind grandmother....'

And in the dream Grandmother Valyusha saw on the Golden Child's feet, blue slippers with golden stars.

The End

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