

Grandfather's Advice

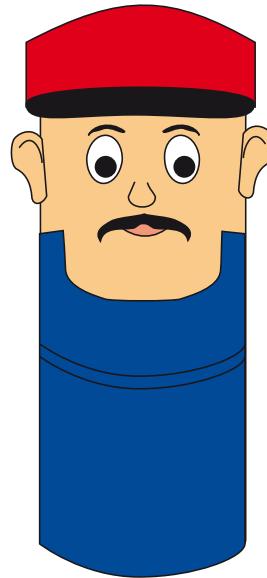
Folktales from Latvia

Characters

Grandfather - old and feeble, Farmer's father

Farmer - practical and worried

Little Son - curious and caring, Farmer's son



Scene 1

The curtain opens on a wintery forest with Farmer dragging Grandfather in a sled.

Little Son walks along side.

Little Son: Father, where are you taking Grandfather?

Farmer: (snaps) Deep into the forest.

Little Son: Why? Is there a house in the deep forest?

Farmer: (sad) No, be quiet.

(Drops the rope, shakes his head, and heads for home.)

Little Son: (alarmed) Father, you can not leave Grandfather here. It is so cold he will die!

Farmer: (sad) He is too old to work and the winter has been hard. I am being sensible in leaving him here.

(Continues towards home.)

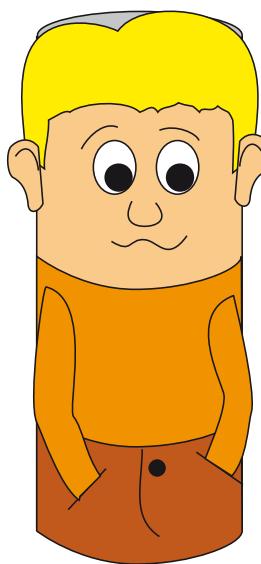
Little Son: (runs after him) Father, you can't leave my sled.

Farmer: Why not?

Little Son: When you are too old, I will need it to bring you here.

Farmer: (to himself) I don't much like that idea. It is against our peoples' ways, but perhaps the boy is right. I'll have to hide him from the neighbors, but surely I can find food to feed the old man.

Farmer: (to his son) We will go back and get Grandfather.



(Curtain drops on scene 1 as Farmer pulls Grandfather back home.)

Scene 2

The curtain opens on Farmer's house with Grandfather in bed. Farmer hands Grandfather a few crusts of barley bread.

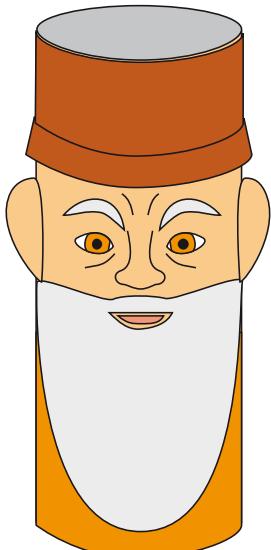
Farmer: Father, I am sorry for this bread. The winter has been very long and last year's crop was small. This is all we have left to eat.

Grandfather: I know times are hard, but my old teeth can hardly chew this tough barley bread. I can do without wheat bread, but do you not have a bit of rye bread?

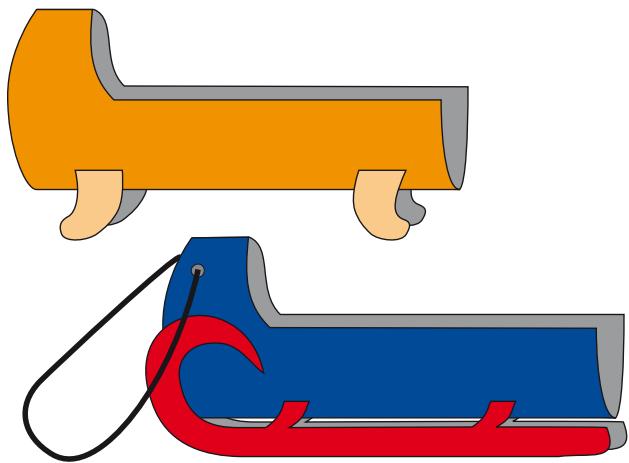
Farmer: (very sadly) I am sorry Father. We have no rye left to mill into flour. We don't even have rye seed to plant in the spring. I don't know what we will do!

Grandfather: (confident) It isn't as bad as you think. You still have the thatched roof on your barn. It is made of rye straw. Take it down and thresh it. You will find there is enough grain to sow.

Farmer: (happy) Thank you, Father. What good advice you give! I'm so happy we brought you back from the forest.



(Curtain drops. The End.)



About the Play - Grandfather's Advice <http://AuntAnnie.com/Puppets/TPTube>

This story can be told with a daughter instead of a son. You may also add a third scene in which the neighbors are amazed at the crop of rye that Farmer grows. He explains about his father's good advice. They are shocked to hear that he is alive -- it is against tradition. In the end they are all happy.

Puppets

Make the Farmer, Grandfather and Son puppets from the Toilet Paper Tube Puppets project at AuntAnnie.com.

Sets

You will need forest and house backdrops. For the forest backdrop draw several trees and a snowy path. For the house backdrop draw an open fireplace with a cooking fire. Add a few pots and pans.

Props

You will need a sled and a bed for Grandfather. Print the pattern for the Sled and Bed props and make the props following the project instructions. To save time and effort, you could use the sled as a bed by placing a bit of cloth as a blanket over it.

Staging Tips

- This play can be performed with one puppeteer.
- In Scene 1 for the look of snow lay a white scarf in front of the puppets.

The Story

Most Lettish (Latvian) folktales come from the wealth of Lettish folksongs (known as daina). This story is told in slightly different ways throughout the Baltic region. It is about a lesson learned by the peoples of many cultures -- to respect your elders and value their experience.

For much of human history, peoples have lived on the edge of starvation. It was often thought that those who could not work for their food were simply burdens. It was not unusual for elderly people to walk away in order to no longer be a burden or to be abandoned by their children. Over time people came to learn that all life is of value. This story gives one very practical example of this. Can you think of others?