

# STORY

## Grandmother March

Once upon a time, there were three siblings: Frosty, Chilly and Grandmother March, or Baba Marta. Each one of them ruled over a different time of year, and each had a different personality, but they all got on well. The three siblings owned a small vineyard, and after a year of good weather, they were left with three big barrels of wine, one for each of them.

In January, Frosty set about his work. He walked through mud, walked across frost, fought through snow and danced with the wind. At the end of the month he was exhausted, so he sat down for a drink. He shoved a finger into his barrel and made a hole, and then he put his mouth to the hole and drank, glug, glug, glug...

In February, it was Chilly's turn to work. He was much gentler than his older brother, but he was still a hard worker. He swam through rivers, broke the ice, melted the snow, sent water down the mountains, cleared forests, made nests for starlings, and walked for miles and miles. Like his brother, he was tired at the end of his work, and thirsty, too, but he opened his barrel of wine more gently and enjoyed the drink slowly: one glass, two, three, four...

One day, Frosty and Chilly were invited to the wedding of an old friend. Knowing that they should bring a present, they went into their wine cellar, but they found only one barrel left, which belonged to Baba Marta.

'Well,' said Frosty, 'we are older, so we are allowed to take the wine.'

'But Marta won't be happy!' said Chilly. Their sister had a fierce temper. 'Still, we can't show up without a present...'

So they took the wine and hoped that Marta wouldn't notice.

In the spring, Baba Marta stretched her arms and set to work. She had flowers and trees to wake up, birds to sing with, and she had to **keep an eye out for storks** because then people started putting those silly decorations on trees, and she had to take them all down. When, after a long month of hard work, she came to the wine cellar to find her barrel empty, her famous temper made a showing.

Baba Marta howled! She cried and kicked and raged. She hissed, and rivers of tears flowed from her eyes. She marched right into her brothers' house, pulled them out of bed by their beards and threw them into the river.

'Happy Baba Marta Day!' she spat, and left her brothers drowning in the water.

Gradually, after many pints of beer at the pub, Baba Marta's rage subsided. 'At least it was my family enjoying that wine,' she said to the bartender. 'If it was strangers, I'd be very angry.'

The bartender just nodded, and said nothing.

Though Baba Marta might forgive, she never forgot. Every now and then, in the month of March, she would remember what her brothers had done to her and fly into a rage. She would cry and hiss, and the weather would turn dark and rainy, and when her anger subsided, the sun came out again.

It is a good thing that Baba Marta never found out that her brothers took her wine as a gift, to a wedding where many strangers drank it. If she knew, then we wouldn't have sunshine in March for a thousand years!

THE END

## TRANSCRIPT

Why is the weather in March so changeable? Well, it's all to do with wine. Find out more in today's story.

[intro]

Hello my Lovely Learners, and welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great. I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's beginner-level story is called *Grandmother March*. As always, the transcript and PDF are available at [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com), and you can find the link in the description.

So just like last time I did a story on the podcast, we are doing things a bit differently this time. I will read through the story and explain the meanings of words and phrases, and then I will read through it again with no explanations.

Now, normally when I write a beginner level story, I really make the language very simple, but today's story is not so simple. The idea is that when I go through the first time, I will explain everything in lots of detail to make it really clear. So hopefully it should still be beginner friendly. So let's see how that goes. If you listen to this episode and it's really too difficult, please leave a comment and let me know.

So today's story was originally sent in by a listener, Mariana Panayotova. Mariana lives in Bulgaria, and this is a Bulgarian folktale. Grandmother March, or Baba Marta, is a character who appears in many Bulgarian stories. This story was originally written by the Bulgarian writer, Elin Pelin. Which I love. Elin Pelin. What a fantastic name!

So this version I am presenting today has come from these traditional myths, these traditional stories. Then Elin Pelin wrote their version of it. Then Mariana wrote her version. She sent that version to me. And now I am giving you my version of the story. So this story has quite a long family history. Interesting.

So the purpose of this story, the reason this story was written, was to explain why the weather in March in Bulgaria is so changeable.

When weather is changeable, it means it changes a lot. One minute, it's sunny. The next minute it's raining. And weather in the UK is pretty much always changeable, but in Bulgaria it can be pretty extreme. In March, in Bulgaria, it can go from sub-zero temperatures, temperatures below zero, to 30 degrees Celsius in the same day.

So on a March day in Bulgaria, it might be -5 degrees in the morning, and then 30 degrees in the middle of the day, which is a big change. So this story helps explain to children why the weather is so changeable at that time of year.

The first of March in Bulgaria is Baba Marta Day, so the day to celebrate this character, Baba Marta. She appears in many myths and for this holiday, people wear a small decoration called a Marenitsa. A Marenitsa is a small red and white decoration that people make and wear, and then the idea is after seeing the first stork in March, you take off your Marenitsa and you put it on a tree.

So a stork, S-T-O-R-K is a kind of bird which migrates, which travels over the winter. So I guess when you see the first stork, it's like, okay, spring is officially here. Let's take off our Marenitsas and put them on a tree. Storks are white birds with long thin beaks. They stand very still, and they're very long and thin.

In a lot of, uh, Western myths, a lot of Western fairytales, the idea is that storks bring babies to their parents. So when parents have a child, it's a stork that flies and carries the baby to the parents. Um, I think in the past a lot of parents told their children, this is how babies are made. Yeah? When two people love each other very much, a stork flies in and brings them the baby. And then maybe when they're older they find out how babies are actually made.

Anyway, in my version of the story, Baba Marta finds the Marenitsas, the decorations, quite annoying. And indeed, in many of the stories with Baba Marta she is a very angry woman. She gets angry and annoyed very easily. In the story are two other characters, Baba Marta's two brothers. So one brother represents January. That is Frosty, and the second brother represents February. That is Chilly. So they also represent the weather in January and February.

The original names for these characters are Golam Sechko and Malak Sechko, which is quite hard to translate, like, uh, Big Cold and Little Cold, or Big Chop and Little Chop. So I translated it as Frosty and Chilly, because frosty means very cold and chilly means a bit cold.

Okay, so without further ado, let's get into the story.

## **Grandmother March**

Once upon a time there were three siblings. So once upon a time is what we say traditionally at the start of a story and siblings means brothers and sisters. There were three siblings. There were three brothers and sisters, Frosty, Chilly and Grandmother March, or Baba Marta.

Each one of them ruled over a different time of year. So each one of them, all of them, ruled over. So when you rule over something, you control something, you are responsible for something. For example, kings rule over their country, or teachers rule over their classroom.

And each had a different personality. So a personality is what you are like. Maybe you have a happy personality or an angry personality or a kind personality.

But they all got on well. When you get on well, you have friendly relations with someone. You are friends, you don't fight. So these three siblings get on well, I'll just say that sentence again 'cause it was quite long.

Each one of them ruled over a different time of year, and each had a different personality, but they all got on well.

The three siblings owned a small vineyard. So a vineyard is a place where you grow wine. You grow the grapes, and then you make the grapes into wine. So the word vine is the plant that grapes grow on, and vine and wine sound very similar. So a vineyard.

The three siblings owned, they had, a small vineyard. And after a year of good weather, they were left with three big barrels of wine. So they were left with, they had three big barrels.

So a barrel is like a round wooden thing that you use to store wine or beer. These days, most people don't have barrels in their home, but in the past we often used barrels to store things. They were left with three big barrels of wine, one for each of them. So Frosty had a barrel of wine, Chilly had a barrel of wine, and Baba Marta had a barrel of wine.

In January, Frosty set about his work. So in January, Frosty started working. He walked through mud. Mud is dirt. When it rains a lot and you go into a field or a forest, there will be mud on the ground and mud makes your feet dirty. He walked through mud, walked across

frost. So frost is the hard white stuff that you get on the ground when it is cold. When it's very cold in winter. You get frost in the morning, and if you step on frost, you might fall over.

He walked through mud, walked across frost, fought through snow. So fought is the past of fight, to like battle to have, uh hmm. Like an argument, a fight with someone. He fought through snow and danced with the wind.

At the end of the month, he was exhausted. He was very tired. So he sat down for a drink. He shoved a finger into his barrel. So he put a finger very, very quickly into his barrel. He shoved a finger into his barrel and made a hole. So a hole is a gap, a space. And then he put his mouth to the hole and drank. So he used his finger to open up a small space, a hole in his barrel and then he drank from the hole. Glug. That's what glug means. Glug glug glug. When you are drinking.

In February, it was Chilly's turn to work. So now Chilly was working. He was much gentler than his older brother. So gentle means soft, kind. Not angry, but soft and gentle and nice.

He was much gentler than his older brother, but he was still a hard worker. He swam through rivers, broke the ice, melted the snow. So when you melt something, you make it warm so it turns into water. If you melt ice, the ice turns into water. If you have an ice cream on a hot day, it'll melt. It will turn into liquid.

Melted the snow, sent water down the mountains. Yeah? Because if there is snow on a mountain and it melts, then water will go down the mountain. Cleared forests. So he made forests empty. He got rid of forests. Made nests for starlings. So a nest is a bird's home. Birds make little homes in trees, and these are called nests. And a starling is a kind of bird. Made nests for starlings and walked for miles and miles.

Like his brother, he was tired at the end of his work and thirsty too, so he wanted to drink, but he opened his barrel of wine more gently and enjoyed the drink slowly. One glass, two, three, four.

One day, Frosty and Chilly were invited to the wedding of an old friend. So a friend of Frosty and Chilly invited them to a wedding. Knowing that they should bring a present, they went into their wine cellar. So they knew, oh, it's a wedding. We should bring a present, a gift. So they went into their wine cellar. The wine cellar is the place under a house where you keep wine because it is cold and dark.

They went into their wine cellar, but they found only one barrel left, which belonged to Baba Marta. So they drank two of the barrels. So now there is only one barrel and that barrel is Baba Marta's barrel of wine.

Well, said Frosty. We are older so we are allowed to take the wine. Frosty thinks because they are older than Baba Marta, they can take the wine.

But Marta won't be happy, said Chilly.

Their sister had a fierce temper. So a temper is when you get angry quickly. If you have a temper, you are always getting angry. And a fierce temper means a really strong temper. Fierce means like, uh, like an animal. Their sister had a fierce temper.

Still, we can't show up without a present. They can't show up. They can't arrive without a present. So they took the wine and hoped that Marta wouldn't notice. So they took the wine and thought, Ooh, I hope Marta does not see.

In the spring, Baba Marta stretched her arms and set to work. So she, ooh, she stretched her body and started working. She had flowers and trees to wake up. So she needed to wake up the flowers and trees after the winter. Birds to sing with. She liked singing with birds. And she had to keep an eye out for storks. So when you keep an eye out,

you look carefully to see something. And remember, storks are these birds, these long white birds.

She had to keep an eye out for storks because then people started putting those silly decorations on trees and she had to take them all down. So she doesn't like the Marenitsas, the decorations. So after the stork comes and everyone puts them on the trees, she goes and takes them down. She removes them.

When, after a long month of hard work, she came to the wine cellar to find her barrel empty, her famous temper made a showing.

So this is a difficult sentence, so I'll, uh, rearrange it. I'll say it in a different way. So she worked hard for all of March and then she went to the wine cellar and she found her barrel of wine was empty. There was no wine in it. So her famous temper made a showing. Her temper, which everyone knew about, appeared. So she got really angry, basically.

Baba Marta, howled. Howl is aaaaargh! That kind of noise like a wolf. Woo. She cried and kicked. Kick, you hit with your feet. And raged. Rage is another word for anger. So she was really angry. She was raging. She hissed. Hiss is [hisses]. She hissed and rivers of tears flowed from her eyes. So tears are when you cry. You cry tears. So the tears came out of her eyes like rivers.

She marched right into her brothers' house. She marched, she walked angrily, into her brothers' house, pulled them out of bed by their beards and threw them into the river. So she took her brothers' beards and pulled them out of bed and threw them into the river.

Happy Baba Marta Day! she spat. Spat like [spits]. She spat and left her brothers drowning in the water.

When you drown, you are in water and you can't swim and you are dying. And because she threw her brothers out of bed into the river, they woke up suddenly and they were drowning.

Gradually, after many pints of beer at the pub, Baba Marta's rage subsided. So slowly after drinking a lot of beer at the pub, Baba Marta's anger went down. Subside means to go down, to get better.

At least it was my family enjoying that wine, she said to the bartender. If it was strangers, I'd be very angry.

So she thinks, okay, it's not good that they drank my wine, but they are my brothers. If my brothers drank my wine, that's okay because they are family. They understand that it's good wine. If strangers, if people I don't know were drinking the wine, I would be really angry.

The bartender just nodded. When you nod, you say yes with your head, and said nothing.

Though Baba Marta might forgive, she never forgot. So we have a phrase, we say to forgive and forget. So when someone does something bad, you should forgive. You should say It's okay. I accept your apology. That's fine. And you should forget. You should forget what they did to you. But of course, in real life, forgiving and forgetting is quite difficult. So though Baba Marta might forgive, although she forgave them, she never forgot. She didn't forget what her brothers did.

Every now and then in the month of March. Sometimes in the month of March. She would remember what her brothers had done to her and fly into a rage. So she remembered what they did and got very angry. She would cry and hiss, ah, and the weather would turn dark and rainy. So she remembered what they did, she got angry, and the weather goes rainy and dark. And when her anger subsided, when she stopped being angry, the sun came out again.

So the reason the weather is so changeable in March is because Baba Marta remembers what happened and gets angry.

It is a good thing that Baba Marta never found out that her brothers took her wine as a gift. So it's good that she thought that her brothers drank the wine. She didn't know that the wine went to a wedding. To a wedding where many strangers drank it. Right? Because Baba Marta was happy that the wine was drunk by her brothers. But if she knew that it went to a wedding and lots of strangers were drinking it she would not be happy.

If she knew then we wouldn't have sunshine in March for a thousand years. Yeah? So if she knew that strangers drank her wine, she would be so angry that we would have no sunshine in March. The sun would be gone. There would just be rain in March for a thousand years.

## THE END

Okay, so well done for listening to that. And now let's listen to the real story, the whole story without interruptions. So listen and enjoy.

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So I hope you enjoyed this story. It's a nice little short one, but I think it's a lovely tale.

As I record this, it's April in the UK and the weather is not changeable. We did have lots of changeable weather in February and March, but at the moment it's just sun, sun, sun. It's beautiful.

We had a very cloudy, miserable winter. A very sad winter with no sunshine, and now we have lots of sunshine. So I guess Baba Marta is happy.

I feel like I talk about the weather a lot on the podcast. Um, but that's a very British thing. Honestly. We do talk about the weather a lot in the UK, especially this winter because it was so dark. Everyone was just very sad and depressed. And then when the sun came out, you really felt it, like everyone was much happier. Um, so that's the nice thing about British weather is we really do appreciate the sun when it comes out. And there's a very different mood in the country between winter and spring and summer.

Anyway, I have some very exciting news to share about my life, but I'm going to do a whole separate episode about it, so look forward to that next week. Let's just say that it's going to be a big change and I've been working very hard towards something and I'm really excited to share it with you all.

Oh God no, it's so annoying when people on podcasts and YouTube shows say, oh, I have some secret news, but I can't tell you yet. I know that's annoying. Um, but sometimes it's okay to be annoying. Hmm.

Otherwise, I'm still doing lots of yoga. I'm actually doing more yoga. Last week I did eight yoga classes, eight. And this week I'm probably doing nine yoga classes. What can I say? I just really love yoga. I'm, I'm, I've never enjoyed exercise this much in my life, and I'm waking up every day and just doing like 15 minutes of yoga beside my bed, right here behind where I am, and then going to yoga classes in the evenings and on Saturdays, and it's just fabulous. I love it. It feels great.

So, uh, yeah, love yoga. You should try yoga. Have you tried yoga? Do you like yoga? Do yoga. Some of my colleagues started doing Pilates and I'm like, it's not yoga.

I don't know. I, I, I should also do other exercise. I think I maybe want to join the gym at some point. Maybe. We'll see. The problem with the gym is it's a bit more boring. It's not as fun, but I want to build some more muscle. I'm flexing my muscles. Ooh. And it would be nice to have more muscles, but you know, it's not the most important thing in the world.

Alright then have a great week and I'll see you soon.