

## **The Twelve Months and Mistress Good and Mistress Bad**

Once upon a time, in a village, lived two mistresses. One was called Good because she was kind and good-hearted and had good words to say for everyone. The other was called Mistress Bad because she never had a good word to say.

One day, Mistress Good went to the mountain to collect wood. Twelve young men appeared in front of her. They were the twelve months of the year.

- Hello, Grandma, they say.
- Hello to you too! answers Mistress Good.
- Can you tell us, Grandma, what's your opinion about the twelve months of the year? Which one do you love the most?
- What questions are these which you ask, my children? Everyone has his charms! January with the snow, February with the carnival, March with the rebirth of nature, April with Easter, May with the poppy flowers, June and July with the swimming in the sea, August with the harvest, September with the grape harvest, October with the chestnuts and the beautiful chrysanthemums, November with his beneficial rains and December with Christmas. I love them all equally.

The months were very pleased from her words and they gave her a small sack. When the old lady went home, she opened it and it was full of gold coins.

## **The Twelve Months and the Bad Mistress**

Opposite Mistress Good's house there lived another old lady who wasn't poor, but she was conceited and a gossip. She saw the change in her neighbour and since she was a gossip and was very curious she went to her and asked her. The old lady told her the story with the twelve young men, but not what they asked her and what she answered them.

The very same day, the other old lady started off for the mountain. In her hand she held a large sack, rope and she pretended to be half-wretched and poor. Slowly she reached the foot of the mountain; she saw the cave and went inside. Immediately, the young men stood up from where they were sitting, they welcomed her and invited her to sit with them and asked her:

- Which good wind, grandma, brought you here in such a snow storm and such cold?
- Disgraceful winter brought me, my young lads. He is so bad this year, that I burnt all the wood I had and I came here to collect some more.
- Surely, it's old January's fault, said the lad.
- Is it only January's fault, my lads? It's all the months fault. Take one, beat the other. January, February, March and all the rest are all bad and backward. No one, truly no one is good. Others freeze you from the cold and others drench you from the rain and others sizzle you from the heat. Finally, she said:
- I'm leaving now, my lads. Do you have anything to give me to help me get through the winter?
- Give us your sack, the young lads said altogether. The old woman gave her sack and waited, with her heart fluttering with joy for the extra wealth she would soon obtain. The young men filled the sack; they tied it well and gave it to her.
- Be careful, grandma! The young men shout. Don't untie the sack until you arrive home.
- The old woman grabbed it and bolted for home! She didn't even say thank you or goodbye.

After some time, exhausted and in a sweat from carrying the heavy load the old lady arrived home. She shut her door and shutters well, lit the light and untied the sack to count her gold coins. What an unpleasant surprise! She was infuriated when she saw her floor covered with stones. That was her reward for all the reproachful remarks she had made for the twelve months of the year.

