

JANOSIK

Long ago, the people living in the Tatra Mountain area were poor and hungry because they were charged unfair rents by greedy landlords. The landlords hired soldiers to take the sheep and crops from the people who could not pay their rent.

One day, a young man named Janosik, met a rich man climbing a mountain with two of his soldiers. One of the soldiers tried to push him off the mountain path. Janosik would not get off the path. He hit the bully and the bully fell off the slope. As the second soldier came to attack him, Janosik tripped him and he too fell off the mountain. Then, Janosik took the rich man's heavy bag, which was full of money the man had collected from the poor people, and pushed him off the path, too. The three men were lying at the bottom of the ravine!

Janosik gave the money to poor starving families. He had to hide in the mountains because he knew that other soldiers would be looking for him. As he climbed the mountain, he noticed three witches walking silently behind him.

The witches told Janosik that they had been watching him and that they knew that he had pushed the soldiers off the mountain and had stolen the money. But they saw him give the money to poor families and considered him a hero. They also said he was now considered a thief because he stole a landlord's money. They offered to help him become the most famous thief who ever lived.

Each of the witches gave him a magical gift - the first was a woolen shirt that would stop any bullet or arrow, the second was a red leather belt that would help him run more swiftly than any other man and the third gift was a long handled mountaineer's axe that would allow him to climb steep cliffs and peaks where no one could follow.

Janosik soon became the chief of a group of bandits who robbed the rich and gave the money and the stolen treasures to the poor people. He was thought of as a hero by them. The landlords, who were afraid of Janosik, offered enormous rewards for his capture, but the gifts of the witches made it impossible for him to be caught.

A woman, who lived in the mountains and knew Janosik, told the soldiers about the three gifts the witches had given him. One night the woman stole the gifts and built a fire on the mountainside to signal the soldiers that she had burned them.

When the enemies arrived, Janosik no longer had the magic power. He fought bravely but was taken to prison. The soldiers promised the woman some money if she helped them capture Janosik, but they were dishonest soldiers and kept all the reward. The woman had to run away. She died in poverty in another land. Janosik escaped and still lives in the mountains robbing the rich and giving to the poor.