Granny Martha is a mythical character in the Bulgarian folklore. Her name is derived from the month of March which she personifies. January and February are perceived as two severe brothers, called “the Big Axeman” and “the Small Axeman”. Martha is believed to be their sister, an old quick-tempered lady who sometimes smiles and shines and, at other times, frowns and bites.

The month of March and its personification Granny Martha are associated with many rites and festivities dedicated to the upcoming spring. The best known is the martenitsa, the tradition to decorate people and young livestock on the 1st of March, the day when Granny Martha comes. The martenitsa is traditionally made of white and red woolen threads. Old ladies used to plait or knit it, chanting all the time to wish good health, good luck and protection against evil forces. Thus the martenitsa turned into a powerful magical amulet.

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