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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Yuletide Specters

Unknown writer

Once upon a time there lived two peasants on a homestead called Vaderas, just as there are two peasants living on it now. In those days the roads were good, and the women were in the habit of riding when they wanted to go to church.

One Christmas the two women agreed that they would ride to Christmas night mass, and whichever one of them woke up at the right time was to call the other, for in those days there was no such thing as a watch. It was about midnight when one of the women thought she heard a voice from the window, calling: "I am going to set out now." She got up hurriedly and dressed herself, so that she might be able to ride with the other woman; but since there was no time to eat, she took a piece of bread from the table along with her. In those times it was customary to bake the bread in the shape of a cross. It was a piece of this kind that the woman took and put in her pocket, in order to eat it underway. She rode as fast as she could, to catch up with her friend, but could not overtake her. The way led over a little stream which flows into Vidostern Lake, and across the stream was a bridge, known as the Earth Bridge, and on the bridge stood two witch trolls, busy washing. As the woman came riding across the bridge, one of the witch trolls called out to the other, "Hurry, and tear her head from her shoulders!"

"That I cannot do" returned the other, "because she has a bit of bread in the form of a cross in her pocket."

The woman, who had been unable to catch up with her neighbor, reached the church at Hanger alone.



The church was full of lights, as was always the case when the Christmas mass was said. As quickly as ever she could the woman tied up her horse, and

hurriedly entered the church. It seemed to her that the church was crowded with people; but all of them were headless, and at the altar stood the priest, in full canonicals but without a head. In her haste she did not at once see how things were; but sat down in her accustomed place. As she sat down it seemed to her that some one said: "If I had not stood godfather to you when you were christened, I would do away with you as you sit there, and now hurry and make yourself scarce, or it will be the worse for you!" Then she realized that things were not as they should be, and ran out hastily.

When she came into the church-yard, it seemed to her as though she were surrounded by a great crowd of people. In those days people wore broad mantles of unbleached wool, woven at home, and white in color. She was wearing one of these mantles and the specters seized it. But she flung it away from her and managed to escape from the church-yard, and run to the poor-house and wake the people there. It is said it was then one o'clock at night.

So she sat and waited for the early mass at four o'clock in the morning. And when day finally dawned, they found a little piece of her mantle on every grave in the church-yard.

A similar experience befell a man and his wife who lived in a hut known as Ingas, below Mosled.

They were no more than an hour ahead of time; but when they reached the church at Hanger, they thought the service had already begun, and wanted to enter at once; but the church was barred and bolted, and the phantom service of the dead was nearing its end. And when the actual mass began, there was found lying at every place some of the earth from the graves of those who shortly before had been worshiping. The man and his wife thereupon fell grievously ill, because they had disturbed the dead.

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