

THE CAT OF NORRHULT

SWEDISH FAIRY TALE

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On the estate of Norrhult, in the parish of Rumskulla, the people in olden times were very much troubled by Trolls and ghosts. The disturbances finally became so unbearable that they were compelled to desert house and home, and seek an asylum with their neighbours. One old man was left behind, and he, because he was so feeble that he could not move with the rest.

Some time thereafter, there came one evening a man having with him a bear, and asked for lodgings for himself and companion. The old man consented, but expressed doubts about his guest being able to endure the disturbances that were likely to occur during the night.

The stranger replied that he was not afraid of noises, and laid himself down, with his bear, near the old man's bed.

Only a few hours had passed, when a multitude of Trolls came into the hut and began their usual clatter. Some of them built the fire in the fireplace, others set the kettle upon the fire, and others again put into the kettle a mess of filth, such as lizards, frogs, worms, etc.

When the mess was cooked, the table was laid, and the Trolls sat down to the repast. One of them threw a worm to the bear, and said:

“Will you have a fish, Kitty?”

Another went to the bear keeper and asked him if he would not have some of their food. At this the latter let loose the bear, which struck about him so lustily that soon the whole swarm was flying through the door.

Some time after, the door was again opened, and a Troll with mouth so large that it filled the whole opening peeked in. “Sic him!” said the bear keeper, and the bear soon hunted him away also.

In the morning the stranger gathered the people of the village around him and directed them to raise a cross upon the estate, and to engrave a

prayer on Cross Mountain, where the Trolls dwelt, and they would be freed from their troublesome visitors.

Seven years later a resident of Norrhult went to Norrköping. On his way home he met a man who asked him where he came from, and, upon being informed, claimed to be a neighbour, and invited the peasant to ride with him on his black horse. Away they went at a lively trot along the road, the peasant supposed, but in fact high up in the air. When it became quite dark the horse stumbled so that the peasant came near falling off.

“It is well you were able to hold on,” said the horseman. “That was the point of the steeple of Linköping’s cathedral that the horse stumbled against. Listen!” continued he. “Seven years ago I visited Norrhult. You then had a vicious cat there. Is it still alive?”

“Yes, truly, and many more,” said the peasant.

After a time the rider checked his horse and bade the peasant dismount. When the latter looked around him he found himself at Cross Mountain, near his home.

Some time later another Troll came to the peasant’s cottage and asked if that great savage cat still lived.

“Look out!” said the peasant. “She is lying there by the oven, and has seven young ones, all worse than she.”

“Oh!” cried the Troll, and rushed for the door. From that time no Trolls have ever visited Norrhult.

[0] Not longer than thirty years ago a cross, said to be the one raised on this occasion, was still standing in Norrhult. ↑

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