

the bell-carrier in front, two dogs with them, and last of all the shepherd with his cloak round his shoulder.

"Welcome," cried Tega with all his heart. "But, Toli, you have tarried a long while. I was beginning to wonder-----"

"What would you, I did not come direct, I had to go round."

The bucks played around, a fine, picked lot with silky hair, they roamed about, and Tega felt as though he, too, could skip about, could take the shepherd in his arms, and embrace him for sheer joy.

As in other years, Tega kept the herd on the neighbouring slopes, on the Aitosh hills. It was Toli's business to get the bread, salt, and all that was needed, and once every two or three days, leaving the herd in the care of a comrade, he would take his way to his employer's house. Usually Tega's wife would be spinning at her wheel when he went in.

"Good day!"

"Welcome, Toli," the woman said pleasantly. "Tega is not at home at present, but sit down, Toli, sit down, and wait till he comes."

The shepherd took off his cloak, and did not say another word.

The veranda where they were sitting was upstairs; through the open windows the eye could follow the distant view; the hills lay slumbering in the afternoon light, along their foot lay a road--processions of laden mules, whole caravans ascending slowly and laboriously, winding along in bluish lines till lost to sight over the brow of the hill. The woman followed them with her eyes, and without moving, from her wheel, pointing with her hand, she said:

"There are sheepfolds yonder, too, aren't there?"

The shepherd nodded his head.

"I never asked you, Toli, how are the goats doing? Do you think my man chose well this year?"

"Well, very well."

That was all. He said no more. His deep-set eyes were sad, and black as the night. A minute later footsteps sounded in the garden, and then the voice of a neighbour:

"Where are you, dear, where have you hidden yourself?"

"Here, Lena, here," replied the woman upstairs.

Lena mounted the stairs. Behind her came Doda Sili and Mija; they had all brought their work, for they would not go away till late in the evening.

"Have you heard?" asked Lena.

"What?"

"Two more murders."

Suspicion had fallen upon Gardana. He had become a kind of vampire about whom many tales were told. Especially old men, if they could engage you in conversation, would try and impress you with the story.

In a village lived a maiden, modest and very beautiful. She was small, of the same age as Gardana, who was a boy then. They were fond of each other, they played together, they kissed each other--they kissed as children kiss. But after a while the girl's form took on the soft curves of coming womanhood; then it came to pass that they never kissed each other, they knew not why, and when they were alone they did not