

Cittaslow Schneverdingen, Germany

THE TALE OF THE SPOONMAKER'S WIFE

Many, many years ago, a spoonmaker lived in the village of Schwalingen. He had an old, evil wife, a mean old bag she was and would do nothing all day but swear and curse and annoy people. She had no child and no little chick to look after anymore and might have had it good with her husband, who was a simple and honourable man by nature and did not wish ill to anybody. But she went squabbling and quarrelling all day and never kept her evil mouth shut. This situation had already been lasting some 30 years and there was no peace in sight and no sign for her to become a little friendlier.

"You evil wife are much too bad for the devil, else he would have carried you away long ago!" said the spoonmaker one night, as he was sitting on his bench and cutting troughs.

"Let the devil come, he shall not lay a finger on me!" said the old boot to her man.

She had barely finished, when the side door swung open, a blue light hit the room and – who would have expected it – the devil was standing in the middle of the kitchen.

The spoonmaker ran away as fast as he could and as far away as his legs would bear. The old wife, however – would you believe this – grabbed the fire tongs and hit the devil on the forehead, that she pulled smoke after. "Old scoundrel, what are you doing in my house?" shouted she. "You are still wet behind your ears! Just go back to your grandmother and tell her, she should do better than raise a stupid kid like you."

The devil had not expected such a welcome and was struck silent for a moment. Still, he soon recovered, grabbed the old boot by the scruff and stuffed her into the great pannier that the spoonmaker used for carrying his goods on winter days. The devil lifted the pannier on his neck and walked away with the spoonmaker's wife, sparks flying around all over Schwalingen.

"Just wait and see, old missus, now you get what you deserve!" said the spoonmaker, who had been hiding behind a pile of heather. "I don't want them, just go ahead and smoke, said the cigar maker after giving half a dozen of his best cigars to his friend for Christmas. Just see to it, Mr. Devil, that our old boot will not scratch your eyes out!"

When the devil arrived on the Lünzen hill with his pannier, he thought: "All haste is no good, just sit down for a while and get some breath!"

No sooner thought than done! The devil put down the pannier and stretched his back straight. – In the pannier, it was as quiet as a mouse. The spoonmaker's wife had sat down and did not move and made no sound.

"Well, old boot", said the devil and bent over to the pannier. "have you lost your breath already?" The missus did not give an answer. "Wait, I am going to get you", said the devil and put the end of his old rough tail through the pannier and tickled the spoonmaker's wife under her nose. Snap! The old woman, who had only pretended she had been forced, grabbed the devil's tail and pulled it into the pannier and swiftly tied a knot into it.

The devil pulled and pulled and wanted his tail to be released again, but the knot was tight on the inside of the pannier and would not let go.

"You nasty wife", said he, "what does that mean that you are gripping on my tail? Just loosen the knot again quickly!" "You nasty devil", said the wife, "what does that mean that you are carrying me up the Lünzen hill in a pannier? Just carry me back to Schwalingen again quickly to house and farm!"

The devil huffed and puffed, kicked with his legs and ran ten times around the old sheep barn that is on top of the Lünzen hill, but the knot was tight and remained tight, and the pannier hit the devil on his heels, flapping with every jump.

The spoonmaker's wife was mad with joy. She clapped her hands and shouted: "This is how it goes, said Klasbauer, when he danced the roundelay like a waltz. Let's run back again, said the hare to the hedgehog, when they ran a race in Buxtuhde. – Just run ahead, Devil-Father, you cannot go fast enough for me!"

When the devil realized that he could not force the woman, he tried to be sweet. "Girl", said he, "don't be silly! Just let my tail go again."

"Boy", said the wife, "don't be silly. Just carry me back to Schwalingen again."

"Yes, just let my tail go first", said the devil. "Yes, you would like that!" said the old wife, "just carry me home first!"

The devil did not want to at first. He thought he might talk his way out with soft words, but the old boot insisted in her will. So the old serpent had no choice but to lift up the pannier again.

"Walk! Canter!" shouted the old wife and pulled his tail, and the devil walked as meek as a lamb through thick and thin back to Schwalingen again.

The spoonmaker pulled a face as a fiddle, when the devil brought back the pannier with his wife.

"I do not want her back, my friend", said he. "You have taken her with you, and you may well keep her for good!"

"That would be nice", said the devil, "that I would spoil my clientele with your old wife! My house is a peaceful house, we do not need a spitfire there, like your wife is one. Just look for someone sillier than me – never again shall I lay a finger on your wife!"

THE GIANTS OF SCHUELERN AND HOHENWILSEDE

Once upon a time, where there were still giants, a huge giant lived in Schuelern. Another giant, just as strong, lived at the "Wilseder Berg", which was then called Hohenwilsede.

These two giants started a quarrel. The giant who lived at the Wilseder Berg, threw heavy boulders yonder to kill his opponent.

The giant of Schuelern started burrowing through the sand to throw it into the eyes of his foe and to blind him. However, the North-East storm stopped the sand clouds and made them fall to the ground near Ehrhorn.

And the giant from Hohenwilsede did not throw far enough, so that the heavy rocks came down near Steinbeck. This way the giant of Wilsede kept his eyesight and the giant of Schuelern did not break his bones.

The witnesses of this struggle are still there to see for everyone: They are the foundlings in the Veerse valley near Steinbeck and the dunes of Ehrhorn.