

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Terrible Night-Watch**

Once upon a time there was a landlady who was a worthless hussy: she gave false weight, she gave false measure, she fibbed and fiddled. No one who entered her house emerged unfleeced. All her thoughts turned to money; for money, she would have sold her soul to the Evil One, if he had wanted it.

Many an abominable deed was committed in this landlady's house which did not come to light. At last, the measure of her sins was filled up.

A gentleman rode by and wished to spend the night. He ate and drank, and before going to bed he said to the waitress, "Someone must keep watch before my door; I shall pay them a hundred florins and more. Would you like to earn them, waitress?"

"No!" the waitress replied. "At night I sleep, during the day I'm vigilant, and in the evening I'm tired enough. But I'll tell the madam she needs to procure someone to stand night-watchman for the gentleman."

"Just think, madam!" the waitress said to the landlady. "The foreign gentleman will pay a hundred florins and more if someone keeps watch before his door. I told him no thank you." "Indeed?" said the landlady. "Well, off you go to bed, I'll procure someone easily enough."

But the landlady would not suffer that same guard-duty fee to go to anyone other than herself. She went to the stranger and told him, "There's no one here who'll keep watch for you, so I'll just have to do it myself; however, you'll have to lay out something extra."

"All right, dear hostess! I shall lay out something extra. Just keep careful watch." – Then he locked his door and the landlady remained outside in the vestibule, keeping watch, and already counting in her mind

the easily earned pile of money. – Around midnight the waitress thought she heard a whimpering groan in the hall, but it gave her the creeps, and she stayed nicely put under the bedclothes.

When day dawned, the landlady was sitting before the stranger's door and had a purse full of money in her hand; but she was a sorry sight, and the servants saw to their horror that only the clothes and the skin of the landlady were still there. Everything else had been taken away by the Devil.