

Damn cart

The widow mourned her husband—she wept day and night.

On the fortieth day, such heaviness fell upon her that she took some ropes and went to the storeroom to hang herself.

The night was moonlit and very, very quiet.

The widow had already looped the noose around her swan-like neck when suddenly she heard: a cart rattling, and what seemed like familiar voices drawing near.

She listened closely.

The cart rolled up to the gate.

The widow slipped the noose from her neck, stood there wondering—who could this be?

Someone knocked at the gate.

She went to open it...

She opened the wicket gate—and gasped aloud.

There stood her husband, and with him six more men.

They sat in the cart, one fine fellow beside another, all dressed neatly.

The woman stared, unable to believe her eyes.

"Why do you greet me like this?" said her husband. "Have you already forgotten me?"

"Oh, my dove, oh, my darling... Where have you come from?!"

"And you thought I was dead?!"

"Then whom did I bury?"

"A clever trick it turned out to be. You buried a swift hound dog, while I am alive and well for now. Get in—we're going..."

"Where to, my dear?"

"Get in, I tell you—you'll find out. These are my companions."

The woman climbed into the cart.

Her husband whipped the horse with all his might. The cart shot forward, raising dust.

The fine fellows sat silently, as if mute.

The cart drove beyond the village.

The woman began to guess where they were taking her.

Her husband laughed.

"To a new homestead," said the husband, "to a new hut."

"Oh, how frightening you are!"

"You think me dead—that is why I frighten you..."

They rode toward the river—the woman knew it was a deep place with a steep bank.

"We'll fall out!" she cried.

"No matter..."

The cart flew over the river like a bird.

Such terror seized the woman that she sat trembling, her teeth chattering.

She looked—a forest! No road in sight!

The cart rolled straight toward the pine trees. The pines parted, making way.

"Oh, I'm afraid!" the woman whimpered.

"Sit still, sit still!" said her husband. "We'll arrive soon!"

The woman saw a little church standing in the forest.

"You're steering wrongly, lads," frowned her husband. "Take it to the left."

The horse snorted—sparks flew from its nostrils.

"Take it to the left!" he commanded.

The woman grew frantic.

"Sit still, I tell you—be quiet!" her husband shouted at her.

But as they drew level with the little church, she suddenly made the sign of the cross.

The cart shook violently—it leaped upward. The woman was thrown out into a thorny bush.

"Ah, cursed ones—we nearly made it," came a voice from the cart.

And the woman saw that seven devils sat in the cart—the greatest of them being the one who had taken the form of her husband.

The cart whirled in a fiery vortex and vanished beneath the earth.

At dawn, the woman returned home, all scratched; she collapsed on the porch and fell asleep.

She slept for three days—they thought she was dead—but on the fourth day she opened her eyes and said:

"Take me to a convent, good people; I wish to take the vows."