

# Legend of a Country House

Selma Lagerlöf

## Chapter 1

It was a beautiful autumn day toward the end of the 30's. In Uppsala at that time there was a tall, yellow, two-story house that stood curiously by itself in a small meadow, far away on the outskirts of the city. The house was quite shabby and unpleasant looking, but it was adorned with Virginia creeper, which had crawled its way up the yellow wall on the sunny side of the house, where it had completely engulfed the three second-floor windows.

In a room inside one of these overgrown windows, a student was sitting and drinking his morning coffee. He was a tall, handsome fellow with a slight build. He wore his beautiful curly hair combed back, away from his face, and one lock of hair was constantly trying to fall down over his eyes. He was dressed comfortably and casually, yet he was elegant.

His room was nice and comfortable, furnished with a good couch and cushioned chairs, large desk and excellent bookshelves with almost no books in them.

Before he was able to finish his coffee, another student came in to see him. This student was of a quite different sort. He was short and broad shouldered, thickset and strong, ugly, with a large face, thin hair, and rough skin.

"Hede," he said. "I have something serious to speak to you about."

"Have you run into some kind of trouble?"

"Oh no, not me," he replied. "It has more to do with you." He was quiet for a while and stared at the floor. "I'll be damned if it isn't unpleasant to say."

"Don't worry about it then!" suggested Hede. Such formal solemnity made him want to laugh.

"It is just that I can't stand it any longer," his guest replied. "I should have told you a long time ago, but it is not really my place, you know. I can't help thinking you'll think to yourself: 'That Gustaf Ålin, the son of one of my crofters, thinks he has become such a great man, he wants to boss me around.'"

"For goodness sake, Ålin," said Hede, "You mustn't believe I think that way! My grandfather was a farmer's son."

"Yes, but no one remembers that nowadays," said Ålin. He sat heavy and slow in front of Hede and with every moment he assumed more and more his farmer's manner, as if this could help him out of his embarrassment.

"See, when I think about the great difference between your family and mine, then I think that I should be silent, but when I remember that it was your father who in his time helped me so that I was able to study, then I think that I should say something."

Hede looked at him with a beautiful expression in his eyes. "Speak now, so that you can leave this trouble behind," he said.

"It is just," said Ålin, "that I hear them talking about you, saying that you are doing nothing. They say that you have barely opened a book in the four semesters that you have been at the university, that you don't do anything but play your violin all day, and I can't believe that it's true, because you never wanted to do anything else in the world before either when you were at Falu school, but then you were forced to work."

Hede straightened up somewhat stiffly in his chair. Ålin became more and more miserable, but he continued with firm resolution.

"You probably think that the person who owns an estate such as Munkhyttan should be able to do as he pleases: work if he wants, let everything go if he wants. If he takes a degree, then

it is good. If he doesn't, then it is almost as good. Because regardless, you don't want to do anything other than run the estate. You want to live at Munkhyttan all your life. I understand that that is how you think."

Hede was silent, and Ålin saw him surrounded by the same wall of high breeding that in Ålin's eyes had always surrounded Hede's father, the Master, and his mother, the Mistress.

"Munkhyttan isn't the same now as it used to be when the iron mine was still producing," he went on carefully. "Your father probably knew this, and that is why he decided before he died that you should study. Your mother knows it too, the poor thing, and the entire parish knows it. The only one who doesn't know it is you, Hede."

"Do you think," said Hede in an irritated way, "that I don't know that the iron mine can no longer be worked?"

"Oh no," said Ålin, "you know that. But you see, what you don't know is that it is completely over for Munkhyttan. Think about it. You will surely see that you cannot live on farming alone at home there in western Dalarna! Yes, I don't know why your mother has kept it a secret from you. But she remains in sole possession of Munkhyttan so she does not need to ask any advice of you. Regardless, the people at home know that she is badly off. They say that she goes around and borrows money. She doesn't want to bother you with her problems; instead she thinks that she can keep everything going until you have passed your exams. She doesn't want to sell the property before you are finished and have a new home."

Hede stood up and walked around the room a bit. Then he stopped in front of Ålin. "But listen, you are sitting here and talking nonsense. We are rich."

"I know that you are still seen as important people at home, at least now," said Ålin. "But you understand that your resources won't last, if you just spend without any income. It was different when you had the mine."

Hede sat down again. "My mother should have told me this," he said. "I am grateful Ålin, but you have let yourself to be scared by gossip."

"Yes, I thought that you didn't know anything," Ålin said obstinately. "At home at Munkhyttan, your mother is saving and toiling for money to send you here to Uppsala and so everything can be happy and merry during the holidays when you are home. And at the same time you lie here and do nothing, because you don't know that danger approaches. I couldn't stand by and watch any longer while you deceived each other. Your mother thought that you studied, and you thought that she was rich. I couldn't just let you destroy your future without saying anything."

Hede sat quietly for a while and meditated. Then he stood up and offered his hand to Ålin with a sorrowful smile. "You understand that I see you speak the truth, even though I don't want to believe you. Thank you!"

Ålin shook his hand, beaming with pleasure. "You understand, Hede, that all is not lost as long as you are working. With your mind, you can finish your degree within seven or eight terms."

Hede straightened up. "Don't worry, Ålin!" he said. "I will be diligent now."

Ålin got up and went towards the door, but with hesitation. Before he had reached the threshold he turned. "I had another errand as well," he said. He again became very embarrassed. "I wanted to ask you to lend me the violin until you get into your studies."

"Borrow my violin?"

"Yes, wrap it in the silk cloth and lock it in its case and let me carry it away. Otherwise you won't do any studying. I would barely get out the door before you would start playing. You are so used to it now, you wouldn't be able to resist if you had it here. You can't get over things like this without receiving help. It is overpowering."

Hede stood reluctantly. "That is madness," he said.

"Oh no, it is not madness. You know very well that you have inherited it from your father. Playing is in your blood. And ever since you became your own man here in Uppsala you

have done nothing else. You live so far out on the outskirts of the city just so you won't bother anyone with your playing. You can't help yourself with this. Let me take the violin!"

"Yes, before I could not have stopped playing. But now Munkhyttan is on the line. I care more for my home than my violin," said Hede.

But Ålin stood just as stubbornly and asked for the violin.

"What good is this?" Hede said. "If I want to play, I won't have to go far to borrow another violin."

"I know that," answered Ålin, "but I don't think another violin would be as dangerous. It is this old Italian violin that is the most dangerous for you. And furthermore I suggest that you allow yourself to be locked in during the first few days. Just until you have gotten started."

He begged and begged, but Hede fought against it. He didn't want to subject himself to something as silly as house arrest. Ålin turned crimson red.

"I am taking the violin with me," he said. "Otherwise all of this will be a waste of time." He spoke vehemently and fervently. "I didn't want to say anything about it, but I know that more than just Munkhyttan is at stake. I saw a girl at the ball after the graduation ceremony last spring, and they said that she was engaged to you. I don't usually dance, but I found happiness in watching how she soared in the dance and how she was beaming and glowing like a wildflower. And when I heard that she was engaged to you, I felt sorry for her."

"You did?"

"Yes. I knew very well that nothing would become of you if you continued the way you had started. Then I swore that this child would not have to sit and wait her entire life for someone who would never come. She would not remain sitting and shrivel up while waiting for you. I did not want to meet her a few years from now with sharpened features and deep wrinkles around her mouth."

He stopped himself. Hede's glance had rested on him in a strange, inquiring way.

But Gunnar Hede already understood that Ålin liked his fiancée. It moved him deeply that he wanted to save him under these circumstances, and under the influence of these emotions he gave in and handed over the violin case.

When Ålin had left, Hede read like a maniac for a whole hour, but then he cast the book aside.

What use was it to study! He would be done in three to four years, but who could guarantee that the property wouldn't be sold in the meantime?

He sensed almost with horror how he loved the old place. It was truly enchanting. Every room, every tree stood before him. He could not dispense with any of it if he wanted to feel happy.

And he was supposed to sit with his books while it was slipping away from him!

He became increasingly worried and felt his blood pulse in his temples as with a fever. He utterly despaired because he could not play the violin in order to calm himself down.

"God," he said. "that Ålin is going to drive me crazy. First he gives me this news, and then he deprives me of my violin! A person like me must feel a bow beneath his fingers in sorrow as in happiness. I have to do something. I have to earn money, but I have no idea how to do it. I can't think without the violin."

Hede was in a rage about being locked in and assigned to his books. It was insane to start a long course of study when he needed money, money, money.

He couldn't endure the feeling of being locked in. He was so furious with Ålin, who had come up with this sheer madness, that he was afraid he would strike him when he returned.

Yes, of course he would have played if he had the violin, but that was just what he needed to do. His blood seethed with anxiety, and he was close to going mad.

Just when Hede was missing his violin most, a wandering musician came and started playing in the courtyard. It was an old blind man. He played out of tune and without expression,

but Hede was so moved by hearing a violin just then that he listened with teary eyes and folded hands.

And in the next instant he threw open the window and climbed down to the ground with the help of the Virginia creeper. He had no pangs of conscience over having left his work. He thought that the violin had come to the house solely to comfort him in his unhappiness.

Hede had certainly never asked so humbly for anything as he now asked the old blind man if he could borrow his violin. He stood the whole time with his hat in hand, even though the old man was completely blind.

The man didn't seem to understand what he wanted. He turned towards the girl who was leading him. Hede bowed to the poor girl and repeated his wish. She looked at him as a person does who must have eyes for two people. Such a steady gaze came from those large gray eyes that Hede thought he could feel it touch him: Now it rested upon his neckline and saw he had a freshly starched collar. Now it saw that his coat was brushed, and now, that his boots were shiny.

Hede had never undergone such an examination. He clearly saw that these eyes would reject him.

But that wasn't so. The girl had a strange way of smiling. She had such a serious face that one got the impression that when she smiled it was the first and only time she had ever looked happy. And now one of these rare smiles came gliding across her lips.

She took the violin from the old man and held it out to Hede.

"Now we shall have the Freischütz waltz," she said.

Hede thought it was strange that he should be forced to play a waltz just then, but it didn't really matter to him what he played, as long as he had a bow in hand.

There was nothing else he needed. The violin immediately began to comfort him. It spoke to him in light, crackling tones. "I am only a poor man's violin," it said, "but such as I am, I am a comfort and a help for a poor blind man. I am the light and the color and the clarity in his life. It is I who will comfort him in poverty and old age and blindness."

Hede felt how the dreadful downheartedness that had been pressing down his hopes began to dissipate. "You are young and strong," the violin told him. "You can struggle and fight. You can hold onto that which wants to escape you. Why are you dispirited and distressed?"

Hede had played with his eyes lowered; now he threw back his head and looked at those who surrounded him. There was a small group of children and people from the street who had come into the yard to listen to the music.

But they probably didn't come solely on account of the music. The blind man and his girl were not the only ones in the troupe.

Across from Hede there was a man wearing tights and spangles with his bare arms crossed over his chest. He looked old and worn down, but Hede couldn't stop thinking that it must be great to have a broad chest and long mustache. And there was his wife, short and fat and not quite so young, but beaming with happiness over her spangles and swinging gauze skirts.

During the music's first measures, they stood still and counted. Then fair small smiles came over their lips, and they took each other's hands and danced forward onto a small patchwork quilt.

Hede noticed that during all of the acrobatic tricks they now performed, the wife stood almost completely still while the husband did all of the work. He jumped over her and turned cartwheels around her and did flips over her. The wife did almost nothing except throw kisses to the crowd.

But Hede didn't actually think much about them. His bow had started to fly over the strings. It told him that happiness lies in struggling and conquering. It almost wanted to call him lucky because everything was at risk for him. He stood there and played up courage and hope for himself and didn't think about the old tightrope walkers.

But suddenly he noticed that they became uneasy. They stopped smiling and stopped throwing kisses at the crowd. The acrobat jumped madly, and the wife began swinging to and fro in time with the waltz.

He continued playing even more eagerly. He abandoned the Freischütz and blazed onward with an old folk tune, one that usually makes people crazy when it is played at a party.

The old tightrope walkers completely lost their composure; they were nothing other than breathless astonishment. And there came a moment when they no longer had the strength to resist. They leapt directly into each other's arms, and they began dancing the waltz right there on the patchwork quilt.

How they danced, how they danced! They took small, mincing steps and swirled around in small, tight circles; they barely stepped off of the quilt. And their faces were beaming with satisfaction and ecstasy. The zest of youth and love's intoxication had overcome the old people.

The entire crowd shouted with joy seeing them dance. The serious little girl who led the old blind man had an enormous smile across her face, and Hede was greatly moved.

Look at the effect his violin could have—completely drawing people out of themselves! It was an empire he could rule. At any moment he could claim his kingdom.

Only a few years of study abroad with a great master. Then he would travel around the world and earn a great deal of money, honor, and fame.

Hede thought that the acrobats had come there to tell him this. This was his path, which lay open and bright for him.

He said to himself: "I want to, I want to become a musician. I must become one. Studying is something quite different. I can enchant people with my violin; I can become rich."

Hede stopped playing. The circus people came forward and complemented him.

The man mentioned that his name was Blomgren. It was his real name; he had others when he was performing. He and his wife were old circus people. Mrs. Blomgren used to be Miss Viola, and she had performed on horseback. And even now, though they had left the circus, they were still artists, passionate artists. He could see that himself already. That was why they could not resist his violin.

Hede traveled with the acrobats for a few hours. He could not part from the violin, and he liked the enthusiasm the performers had for their profession. Personally he went and tested himself: "I want to see if there are artistic possibilities in me. I want to see if I can call forth ecstasy. I want to see if I can get children and beggars to follow me from house to house."

As they wandered between the houses, Mr. Blomgren threw on an old coat, and Mrs. Blomgren wore a brown cloak, and, dressed in this way, they walked beside Hede and talked.

Mr. Blomgren did not want to talk about the fame he and Mrs. Blomgren had garnered during the time they had belonged to a real circus. But the manager had fired Mrs. Blomgren under the pretext that she had become too fat. Mr. Blomgren had not been fired; he had quit. No one could think that Mr. Blomgren would keep working for a manager who had dismissed his wife.

Mrs. Blomgren loved art, and for her sake Mr. Blomgren had decided to become a free artist so that she could continue to perform. During the winter when it became too cold to give shows in the street, they performed in a tent. Then they had a very rich repertoire. They performed melodramas, magic tricks, and juggling.

The circus had forsaken them, said Mr. Blomgren, but not art. They had always served art: they would be faithful until death to a cause so worthy. Always, always artists! That was Mr. Blomgren's opinion, as it was Mrs. Blomgren's.

Hede walked quietly and listened. His thoughts flitted uneasily from idea to idea. Sometimes things happen that emerge as symbols, like signs one must interpret. There was some meaning in what was happening to him now. If he could understand it correctly, then he would receive guidance on how to find a practical solution to his problem.

Mr. Blomgren asked the student to take a look at the little girl who led the blind man. Had he ever seen eyes like those? Didn't he think that eyes like that must mean something? Could one have eyes like that without being destined for something great?

Hede turned around and looked at the little pale child. Yes, she had eyes like stars set in a sorrowful and slightly worn face.

"Our Lord always knows what he is doing," said Mrs. Blomgren, "and I think, actually, that he has some purpose in letting artists like Mr. Blomgren perform in the street. But what was he thinking when he gave that girl those eyes and that smile?"

"I am going to tell you something," said Mr. Blomgren. "She doesn't have any talent for art. And with those eyes!"

Hede started to suspect that they were not speaking to him, but only lecturing for the sake of the girl. She was walking close behind them and heard every word.

"She is no more than thirteen and not too old to learn something, but impossible, impossible; completely without talent. Teach her to sew, sir, if you don't want to waste your time; don't teach her to stand on her head!"

"That smile that she has makes people completely crazy about her," said Mr. Blomgren. "Only for the sake of her smile has the girl had steady invitations from families that want to adopt her. She could grow up in a well-to-do home now if she wanted to abandon her grandfather. But why does she need a smile that makes people crazy if she will never show herself on horseback or on the trapeze?"

"We know other artists," said Mrs. Blomgren, "that take children from the streets to raise them in the business after they themselves can no longer perform. There is more than one who has been lucky enough to create a star that brings in enormous fees. But Mr. Blomgren and I have never thought about the monetary benefits; we have only thought about seeing Ingrid flying forward through a hoop while the whole circus shakes with applause. It would be like starting life all over again."

"Why do we keep her grandfather?" asked Mr. Blomgren. "Is he an artist that befits us? We, we could have had a former member of a royal orchestra. But we love the girl and we couldn't do without her, so we keep the old man for her sake."

"Isn't it cruel of her not to let us make an artist out of her?" they said.

Hede looked around. The little girl walked with patient suffering etched on her face. He looked at her and saw that she knew that a person who can't dance on the tightrope is an untalented and contemptible being. Just then they came to a new house, but, before they could begin their performance, Hede sat down on an overturned wheelbarrow and started to preach.

And now he defended the poor girl. He reproached the Blomgrens for wanting to put her in front of a large and cruel crowd. A crowd that would love her and applaud her for a while, but later, when she had become old and worn out, they would leave her to wander the streets in the cold and rain. No, she who could make someone happy was enough of an artist. She, Ingrid, would have eyes and a smile for only one person and would save them for him, and he would not abandon her, but give her shelter as long as he lived.

Tears sprung up in Hede's eyes while he said this. He spoke more to himself than to the others. He felt at once how horrible it was to be driven out into the world, to be separated from a placid home life.

Then he saw how the girl's large, starry eyes started shining. It was as though she had understood every word. It was as if she now had the courage to live again.

But Mr. Blomgren and his wife had become very serious. They pressed Hede's hand and promised him that they would never again try to force the girl into a career as a performer. She would be allowed to take the path that she wanted. He had affected them. They were artists, passionate artists. They understood what he meant when he spoke about loyalty and love.

Hede parted from them after this and went home. He didn't try to find a secret meaning in his adventure. When it came down to it, there had been no other meaning in it at all other than that he had freed the poor sorrowful child from worrying herself to death over her inadequacies.

## Chapter 2

Gunnar Hede's estate, Munkhyttan, lay in a poor forest parish far away in western Dalarna. It was a large, desolate parish, with a barren and severe landscape wherever one looked: rocky, forested hills and small lakes comprised most of the region. People would not have been able to survive there, if they hadn't had the right to wander all over the countryside as peddlers. But the entire impoverished district was filled with old legends about poor farmhands and farm girls, who had gone out with a sack of petty wares on their backs and come home riding in tubs of gold with wagons full of money.

One of the most successful peddlers from the tales was Hede's grandfather. He had been the son of a poor musician and had grown up with the violin, and when he was seventeen he had gone out with a sack of wares. But wherever he went, he had the violin along as help with the trade. He had sometimes played and gotten people to dance and sold them silk tablecloths, combs, and needles. All transactions had occurred amid jokes and music, and it had gone so well that, in the end, he was able to buy Munkhyttan with the mine and foundry from the destitute owner.

That was how he had become a gentleman, and the beautiful daughter of the owner had married him.

Then the old Master and Mistress, as they were often called, thought about nothing except embellishing and adorning their property. It was for this reason the manor house had been moved out to the beautiful island which lay near the shore of the little lake, around which their fields and iron mine were spread. The upper story had been built during their time, because they liked being able to have room for many guests. They also built the large flight of steps with its two staircases. On the entire island, which had been covered with spruce trees, they planted deciduous trees. They had cleared thin, winding paths through the stony ground and built small pavilions that hung down over the lake like large birds' nests. The beautiful French roses that grew along the edge of the terrace, the Dutch furniture, the Italian violin: all this they had bought for the manor. They were also the ones who had had a wall built, which protected the orchard from the north wind and set up a grape arbor.

The old Master and Mistress had been happy, kind, old-fashioned people. The Mistress had perhaps wanted to seem somewhat aristocratic, but not the Master. Despite all the grandeur that surrounded him, he always wanted to remember where he had come from. In the office where he ran his business and where all the people came, his peddler's sack and the red-painted, homemade violin were hanging right over the old man's desk.

Even after he died, the sack and the violin hung in the same place. And every time they saw them, the eyes of the son and grandson filled with tears of gratitude. These meager tools had created Munkhyttan, and Munkhyttan was the best thing on earth.

However it came about, and it was probably because it seemed natural to the place, they had always lived a good and sweet and carefree life at Munkhyttan. For this reason the Hedes became devoted to the estate with a greater passion than was good for them. Gunnar Hede in particular was so attached to the property that people said it wasn't true to say he owned the estate. On the contrary, the old place in western Dalarna owned Gunnar Hede.

If he had not enslaved himself to a rambling old manor, some acres of fields and forest, and some overgrown apple trees, he probably would have continued with his studies or, better yet, started to study music which was probably his true calling in this world. But when he had come home from Uppsala and took account of the situation and actually found that the manor

must be sold if he couldn't earn a great deal of money quickly, he threw all of his other plans overboard and decided to become a peddler as his grandfather had done.

Hede's mother and fiancée implored him to sell the manor rather than sacrifice himself for it in that way, but he was adamant. He dressed himself in farmer's clothing, purchased wares, and started traveling through the land as a trader. He thought that within just a few years he would be able to earn enough money to pay off the debts and save the manor.

As far as the estate was concerned, he succeeded in his purpose. But he drew down a terrible misfortune upon himself.

He had been traveling with the sack for about a year when he decided that he would try to earn a lot of money all at once. He traveled far up north and purchased a large herd of goats, a couple of hundred at least. He and a friend wanted to drive all of them down to a large market in Värmland because goats cost twice as much in the south as in the north. If he could to sell all of his goats, he would make a tremendous profit.

It was still only November and the ground was bare when Hede and his friend started their trip with their herd of goats. Everything went well for them the first day, but on the second day it started to snow as they came to the great sixty-mile forest. There was a huge snowfall with strong winds and blizzard conditions. The goats soon had trouble making their way through the snow. Goats are very brave and hardy animals, and they fought for a long time, but the blizzard lasted for several days and nights, and it was incredibly cold.

Hede did everything he could to save the animals. But after the snow started, he was unable to get food or water for them. After they had waded through high snow for a day, the skin was torn from their legs. They were tormented by this and did not want to continue. When the first goat threw itself down on the side of the road and did not want to get up and follow the flock, Hede lifted it onto his shoulders and carried it. But then a second and a third lay down, and he couldn't carry all of them. He could only look the other way and keep going.

You might know what the sixty-mile forest means: Not a house, not a shack for miles and miles, only forest. Full-grown pines with hard bark and high branches, no young trees with soft bark and soft twigs for the animals to eat. If the snow had not come, they would have gotten through the forest within a few days; now they couldn't get through it at all. All of the goats remained there, and the people almost died as well.

They didn't meet a single person the entire time. No one helped them.

Hede tried to heave away the snow so that the goats could eat moss, but the snow was falling steadily and the moss was frozen to the ground. How would he have been able to find food for two hundred goats this way?

He bore it bravely, up until the goats started to wail. It had been a cheerful and high-spirited and quite quarrelsome flock the first day. He had had a hard time making sure that all of them stayed with the herd and that they didn't butt each other to death with their horns. But they seemed to understand that they couldn't save themselves, and their natures changed and they completely lost heart. They all started to bleat and complain, not weakly and softly like goats usually do, but quite loudly, louder and louder as their need became greater. And when he heard the bleating he started to think that he would go mad.

It was a wild and deserted forest with no help to be found. One animal after another collapsed in the road. The snow whirled around them and covered them. When Hede looked back at this row of drifts by the roadside, all of them hiding animal bodies where you could see horns and hooves sticking out, he became desperate.

He rushed over to the ones that let themselves to be covered by drifts, threw his switch over them, and hit them. It was the only way to save them. But they didn't move. He took them by the horns and dragged them forward. They let themselves be dragged, but did not take a single step forward themselves. When he let go of their horns, they licked his hands as if they were asking him to help them. As soon as he came near them, they began licking his hands.

All of this affected Hede so terribly he felt that he was starting to go mad.

Still things would not have gone so badly for him if he hadn't gone to visit someone he held very dear after everything that had happened in the woods. It was not his mother, but his fiancée, he wanted to see. He fancied that he immediately had to go and tell her that he had lost so much money that he would not be able to marry for many years. He actually went to see her, only because he wanted to hear her say that she loved him just as much, regardless of his misfortune. He thought that she would be able to rid him of the memory of the sixty-mile forest.

She might have been able to do that, but she didn't want to. She was already unhappy with the fact that he went around with a sack of wares and looked like a farmer. She felt that it was difficult to like him as much as she had before because of this. Now, when she heard that he was going to continue in this way for many years, she said that she couldn't wait for him any longer. Then Hede pretty much lost his mind.

He did not become entirely crazy. He had enough sense left to continue his trading. He actually did better business than others because it amused people to make fun of him, and he was always welcome in the homes of farmers. People teased him a great deal, but it was in a way good for him, since he did, after all, want to become rich.

In a few years he had earned enough money to pay off all of the debt and live without worry on his estate, but he didn't understand this; instead he continued to wander foolish and insane from house to house and didn't give a single thought to the fact that he was a gentleman.

### Chapter 3

Råglanda was the name of a district that lay far off in the eastern part of Värmland, very close to Dalarna. Here there was a large estate for the rector, and a small, humble parsonage for the pastor. As poor as they were, they had been charitable enough in the little parsonage to take in a foster child. It was a girl named Ingrid, and she had come to the house when she was thirteen years old.

The pastor had seen her at a market where she was sitting and crying outside a circus tent. He had stopped to ask her why she was crying. He learned that her blind grandfather was dead, and she no longer had any family. Now she was traveling with some circus folk, and they were good to her, but she was crying because she was so stupid she could not learn how to walk a tightrope and help earn her keep.

There was something sweet and mournful about the child that had moved and touched the minister. Without doubt, he told himself, he could not leave a small thing like her among these roving tramps. He went into the tent where he met Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren and offered to raise the child in his home. The old artists had started crying and said that although the girl was incapable of becoming a performer, they very much wanted to keep her. However, they thought that she would be happier in a real home with people who lived in the same place all year round. Therefore, they would leave her with the pastor if he would only promise them that she would be treated as one of his own children.

He made this promise to them, and since then the girl had lived at the parsonage. She was a quiet and gentle child, rich in affection and compassion for those around her. In the beginning, she was very much loved by her foster parents. But when she got older, she developed a strong desire to drift into dreams and fantasies. The realm of visions and imagination held great temptations for her. In the middle of the day, she could let her work drop into her lap as she sank into a dream. The pastor's wife was an efficient and hard-working person who did not like this. She complained about the girl being lazy and slow, and tormented her with her strictness, so that the girl became timid and unhappy.

At the age of nineteen, she fell gravely ill. No one really knew what it could be since this happened such a long time ago that there were no doctors in Råglanda. Things looked bleak for the girl. They soon saw that she was so sick, she would most likely die.

As for the girl, she did nothing but pray that the Lord would allow her to die. She really wanted to die, she said.

Then it was almost as if the Lord wanted to test her to see if she was serious. One night, she felt cold and stiff all over her body, and a heavy sleep fell over her. "This must be death," she said to herself.

But the remarkable thing was that she did not completely lose consciousness. She knew that she was lying as a dead person, and she knew that they wrapped her in sheets and laid her in a coffin. But she did not feel any dread or anguish over being buried, even though she was still alive. She had only one thought: that she was happy, because she got to die and leave life's cruelty behind.

But she was worried that they would notice that she only appeared to be dead, and that they would stop the burial. Life must have been very bitter for her since she did not fear death at all.

But no one discovered that she was still alive. She was driven to the church, carried out to the cemetery, and placed in a grave.

The grave was not filled in with dirt because, as was customary in Råglanda, she had been laid in the ground on a Sunday before the morning service. The funeral party had gone into the church after the funeral service and let the coffin sit in the open grave. But they intended to come and help the gravedigger throw in the dirt as soon as the church service was over.

The girl was aware of everything that was happening, but she felt no fear. Even if she had wanted to, she would not have been able to make a single movement to show that she was alive. Even if she had been able to move, she would have held herself still. She was still happy about being as good as dead.

But you really couldn't say that she lived. She didn't have her senses or her normal sense of consciousness. It was only that part of the soul that dreams dreams at night, which still lived within her.

Not even once did she think or understand how awful it would be for her if she woke up after the coffin had been buried. She had no more command over her reason than a person who is dreaming.

"I wonder," she thought, "if there could be anything in the entire world that could persuade me to live."

As soon as she had thought that, it seemed as though the lid to the coffin and the shroud, which lay over her face, became transparent, and she saw money, beautiful clothes, and lovely gardens with sweet fruits.

"No, I don't care about any of this," she said and closed her eyes to all of the beautiful things.

When she looked up again, they were gone, but in their place she saw clearly and with certainty that one of God's little angels was sitting on the edge of her grave.

"Good day, little angel!" she said to him.

"Good day, Ingrid!" said the angel. "While you are lying here with nothing to do, I am going to tell you about days long past."

Ingrid heard every word the angel said, but his voice was unlike any she had heard before. It was almost like a stringed instrument, whose notes were like words. It was not like singing, but like music from a violin or a harp.

"Ingrid," said the angel, "do you remember when your grandfather was still alive, you once met a young student who went with you from house to house and played your grandfather's violin the entire day?"

The girl's face lit up with a smile. "Do you think I have forgotten that?" she said. "Ever since that time, not a day has gone by that I haven't thought about him."

"And not one night, when you haven't dreamt about him?"

"No, not one night that I have not dreamt about him."

"And you want to die, even though you remember him so well," said the angel. "Then you would no longer be able to see him."

When he said that, the girl seemed to understand all the sweetness of love, but not even this could tempt her.

"No, no," she said, "I am afraid to live; I would rather die."

Then the angel waved his hand, and Ingrid saw before her a large, desolate wasteland. There were no trees and it was barren and dry, hot and seemingly unending. Things were lying here and there in the sand, and at first glance they looked like scattered rocks, but when she took a closer look she saw that they were animals: enormous living monsters with immense claws and huge mouths filled with teeth, lying on the sand waiting to ambush their prey. The student was wandering among these horrible creatures. He walked there without a care and without knowing that the shapes around him were alive.

"Warn him, warn him," Ingrid told the angel, filled with an unspeakable anguish. "Tell him they are alive and that he should be careful!"

"I am not allowed to speak to him," the angel said with its ringing voice. "You have to warn him yourself."

The girl felt with terror how she lay paralyzed and could not rush off and rescue the student. She made one futile effort after another trying to raise herself, but the power of death held her. But finally! She felt how her heart started beating, the blood forced its way through her veins, and the stiffness of death melted away from her body. She sat up and hurried over to him...

## Chapter 4

Nothing is as certain or true as that the sun loves the open spaces outside of little country churches. Hasn't anyone noticed that one never encounters as much sunshine as during the church service outside of a little, white-painted church? Nowhere else do the sun's beams knit such a tight web of light. Nowhere else does the air hold itself in such a reverent stillness. The sun stands there as it should and holds watch over the people, making sure that they do not stand in the churchyard and talk. It wants all of the people to sit properly inside the church and listen to the sermon; that is why it lets such a rich stream of light fall outside the church walls.

Perhaps one can not be completely certain that the sun stands watch outside of the small churches every Sunday, but this much is certain: The same morning that the girl had been placed in a grave in the cemetery at Råglanda, a quite blazing heat spread across the little area in front of the church. Even the pebbles looked as though they could catch on fire where they lay gleaming in the wheel ruts on the road. The short, trampled grass curled itself together so that it looked like dry moss, while the yellow dandelions adorning the lawn swelled on their long stems so that they became as large as asters.

A man from Dalarna came wandering down the road, one of those who goes around selling knives and scissors. He was dressed in a long, white, sheepskin coat, and he carried a large, black leather bag on his back. He had walked in this outfit for several hours without feeling hot, but when he left the road and came up to the churchyard, it didn't take a minute before he had to stop and take off his hat in order to wipe the sweat from his forehead.

When the man stood there without his hat, he looked both handsome and sane. He had a high and wide forehead, a deep wrinkle between his eyebrows, a nicely shaped mouth with thin lips. He wore his hair parted in the middle, shoulder-length. It hung down over his ears, and curled a little at the ends. He was tall and had a strong build, not heavy, but well formed in every

way. But there was something wrong with him. His glance was unsteady, and his irises wandered constantly, far back to the corners of his eyes, almost as if they were trying to hide. His mouth assumed expressions that seemed insane or distorted, somewhat idiotic and slack, and they didn't fit, didn't belong with the face.

He couldn't be completely sane either, since he carried around that heavy bag on a Sunday. Had he been in possession of his senses, he would have known that it was unnecessary since he couldn't sell anything anyway. Of all of the other people from Dalarna who traveled through the area, there was no one who bent their back under a sack on a Sunday; instead they went to God's house, free and straight like other people.

This poor man probably didn't know that it was the Sabbath until he stopped outside in the sunshine in the churchyard and heard the hymns from the church. However, he was sane enough to understand immediately that he couldn't do business that day. It became a terrible task for his brain to figure out what he was going to do with this day off.

He stood and stared in front of himself for a long time. When everything went as usual, he did not have a difficult time managing. He wasn't so far gone, since he could go from house to house during the week and take care of business. But he could never get used to Sunday. It always popped up like a big, unexpected problem.

His eyes stood completely still, and the muscles in his forehead swelled.

The first thing his brain suggested was to go inside the church and listen to the songs. But that suggestion was rejected. He wanted to hear the songs, but he didn't dare go inside the church. He wasn't afraid of the people, but in some churches there were such strange and dangerous paintings that represented beings that he would rather not think about.

Finally he worked his way to the thought that, since this was a church, there had to be a cemetery. As long as he had a cemetery to go to he was safe. No one could have offered him anything better, regardless of what it was. If he happened to see a cemetery during his wanderings, he would leave the road and go up to the cemetery and sit for a while, even if it was the middle of the work week.

Just when he was about to make his way up to the cemetery, he was confronted with a new obstacle. The cemetery at Råglanda is not right next to the church, which stands on a hill, but rather it is in a meadow a little past the meeting hall. He could not make his way to the cemetery gate without going along a road where the churchgoers' horses were tied up.

All of the horses stood with their heads sunk deep down into bunches of hay and bags of oats and chewed so that the fodder crunched between their teeth. Of course, they could not hurt the man, but he had other ideas about the risks involved in walking past such a long row of animals.

Two, three times he tried, but his courage failed so that he had to turn back. He wasn't afraid that the horses would bite or kick him. It sufficed that they were close enough to where they could see him. It sufficed that they could rattle their bridles and scrape the ground with their hooves.

Finally, there was a moment when all of the horses seemed to look down and were all eating at once. Then he began walking between them. He held his coat closed, so that it wouldn't flap about and give him away, and he tiptoed as quietly as possible. If one horse raised its eye to look at him, he immediately stopped and curtsied. He wanted to be polite in the midst of this enormous danger. The animals would surely be reasonable and understand that he couldn't bow with a sack of iron on his back. He had no other choice but to curtsy.

He sighed heavily, because it was such a difficult and troublesome thing in life to be afraid of all animals with four legs. Actually, he was only afraid of goats, and of horses, dogs, and cats he wouldn't have been afraid at all, if he could only know for sure that they weren't some kind of transformed goats. But he was never quite sure about that. So it was really just as bad for him as if he had been afraid of all four-legged animals.

It didn't pay for him to think about how strong he was, and that these small farm horses were usually completely harmless. A person can't think of such things when he has fear in his soul. It is a hard thing, fear, and it is a burden for the person who is possessed by it.

It was remarkable, then, that he made it past the entire row of horses. He took the last bit in two long strides, and when he came into the cemetery, he closed the iron gate after himself and stood there and shook his fist at the horses.

"Wretched, miserable, cursed billy goats!"

He did this with all animals; he couldn't help calling them all billy goats. And this was really stupid, because it had earned him a name that he didn't want. Everyone who met him called him the Goat. But he did not want to be addressed in this way. He wanted people to call him by his real name, but no one in this district seemed to know it.

He stood by the gate for a while and enjoyed having escaped the horses, but soon he wandered deeper into the cemetery. He stopped and curtsied at every cross and headstone. He didn't do it out of fear, now it was only out of pleasure in seeing these dear old friends. His appearance immediately became mild and pleasant. Just the same crosses and headstones that he had seen so many times before! How they were alike! How well he remembered them! He had to say hello to them.

How the cemetery pleased him! No animals grazed here, and no person would tease here. It was best when everything was lonely and empty like it was now, but even when there were people, they usually didn't bother him. He knew many beautiful meadows and fields that would have pleased him much more, but he could never be in peace there. In a way they couldn't compare with the cemetery. The cemetery was better even than the forest because in the forest there was a desolation so vast that it frightened him. Here it was quiet like the deepest part of the forest, but he wasn't without companionship. Here there were sleeping people under every stone and every tuft of grass. Just the right amount of companionship so that he didn't feel alone and ill at ease.

He quickly steered his way toward the newly opened grave. He went there partly because there were some shade trees, and, in part, because he liked the company. He thought it was likely that the dead person who had just been put to rest would be a better remedy for loneliness than the ones who had been buried long ago.

He almost knelt down with the large pile of dirt next to the grave at his back. He was able to pull the sack up, so that it stood steadily on the pile, and loosened the leather straps that held it tight. It was a great day, a free day, and he had even taken off his sheepskin coat. With great pleasure he sat down on the grass, so close to the grave that his long legs with their knee-high socks and coarse winter shoes hung over the edge of the grave.

He had to sit still for a long time and keep his eyes on the coffin. When a person is possessed by such fear as he was, one can never be too careful. But the coffin didn't move at all; it was impossible to suspect that it was hiding anything treacherous.

It was not until he was sure, that he stuck his hand in the side pocket of his sack and took out a violin and bow. At the same time he nodded to the dead one in the grave. He would be allowed to hear something beautiful since he was so still.

This was something very rare; very few were allowed to hear him play. No one was allowed to hear him in the houses where they usually set the dogs after him and called him the Goat. But it might happen that you would hear him in a cottage, where you spoke softly and moved slowly, and didn't ask him if he wanted to buy any goatskins. At a place like that, he would take out his violin and let them hear him play. That was a great honor, the greatest he could give to anyone.

There, where he sat on the edge of the grave and played, it didn't sound bad at all. He didn't play a wrong note, and he played so slowly and mildly that it barely could have been heard from the next grave.

You see the excellent part of it was that it wasn't the man who could play, but it was his violin, which remembered a few small melodies. They came forth from it as soon as he moved the bow across it. It might not have meant much for someone else, but for him, one who couldn't remember a single melody, it was the most precious gift to own a violin that played by itself.

He smiled and beamed while he played, like one who hears a child babbling and chattering. It was the violin that spoke and spoke; he only listened. It was just so strange, that beautiful things could be heard as soon as he moved the bow across the strings. The violin took care of it, knew exactly how it should be, and the man just sat and listened.

Songs grew out of the violin like grass grows from the earth. No one could understand how it happened. The Lord had arranged it that way.

The man from Dalarna had intended to sit still in this way the entire day and let the dear notes grow from the violin like small white and colorful flowers. He was going to play an entire meadow full of flowers, play an entire valley full, an entire large plain.

But the girl, who lay like a dead person down in the coffin, had of course heard the violin playing, and it had a remarkable effect on her. The notes had made her dream, and what she had seen in the dream had made her so upset that her heart had started beating, her blood had started flowing, and she had awoken.

Now it is important to note that what she had experienced while she appeared to be dead, the thoughts she had, and even the last dream, all of it was gone and forgotten the moment she regained consciousness. She didn't even know that she was lying in her own coffin; instead she thought that she was still sick at home in her own bed. She just thought it was strange that she was still alive. Just a moment ago, before she had fallen asleep, she had been the midst of her death throws. It should have been over for her a long time ago. She had said goodbye to her foster parents, her siblings, and to the servants.

The rector himself had been there to give her the sacrament because her foster father thought it would be too difficult to do it himself. Many days ago, she had turned her thoughts away from everything earthly. It was remarkable that she was not dead.

It surprised her that it was so dark in the room where she was lying. The candle had burned every night while she had been sick. They had also let the covers fall off of her. She lay there and became as cold as ice.

She raised herself a little to pull the covers over herself, but then she hit her head on the lid of the coffin and collapsed down in the coffin again with a small cry of pain.

She had hit her head quite hard and immediately fainted. She lay as quietly as before, and it seemed as if life had left her a second time. The man from Dalarna had heard both the bump and the cry, and had immediately put away the violin and started listening. But he didn't hear anything else. Nothing at all.

He sat himself in a position to spy on the coffin as curiously as he had when he first came. He sat and nodded, as if he wanted to answer yes to what he was himself thinking, namely that nothing here on earth is reliable. Here he had just had the most quiet and excellent friend, but was he deceived by him now?

He sat and looked at the coffin as if he was trying to see right through it. Finally, when it had become completely quiet, he took up the violin again and started to play. But the violin didn't want to. He had to stroke it as mildly and soothingly as possible, but still no melodies grew from it. It was so sad that he was ready to cry. He had intended to sit still and listen to his violin the entire day, and now it no longer wanted to play.

He understood the reason. The violin was worried and afraid of whatever it was that had moved inside the coffin. It had forgotten all of its songs and only thought about what it could have been that knocked on the lid of the coffin. That's the way it is: You forget everything when you are afraid.

He understood that he had to calm the violin, if he wanted to hear any more music.

Things had been going so well, better than they had in years. If there really was something in the coffin that was dangerous, wasn't it best just to let it out? Then the violin would be satisfied, and the beautiful flowers would grow from it again.

He resolutely opened his large sack and started searching among knives, saws, and axes, until he found a screwdriver. In the next instant, he was inside the grave, sitting there on all fours, taking the lid off of the coffin.

He took out one screw after another until he was finally able to raise the lid against the wall of the grave. At the same time, the shroud slid from the girl's face.

As soon as the fresh air reached her, Ingrid opened her eyes. There was light all around her. She must have been moved. Now she lay in a yellow room that had a green ceiling with a large chandelier.

The room was small and the bed was of the smallest size. Why did it feel like her arms and legs were bound? Was it so she would keep still in the small, small bed?

It was remarkable; they had laid a hymnbook under her chin. That was something you only did with corpses.

She had a small bouquet of flowers between her hands. Her foster mother had cut some sprigs from her flowering myrtle tree and put in them in her hands. Ingrid was surprised. What had come over her foster mother?

She saw that they had given her a pillow with wide lace and a batiste sheet that lay with beautiful pleats. She was very pleased because she liked having things that looked nice. But she would still rather have a warm quilt over her. It couldn't be good for a sick person to lie without a quilt.

Ingrid was ready to put her hands over her eyes and cry. She was so bitterly cold.

At the same time she felt something hard and cool next to her cheek. She started to smile: it was the small old, red wooden horse, three-legged Camilla, that lay beside her on the pillow. Her little brother, who could never sleep at night without having it with him in bed, had now left it with her. That was very sweet of her little brother. Ingrid had an even greater desire to cry when she thought about her little brother wanting to comfort her with the wooden horse. But she never got a chance to cry. The truth suddenly occurred to her. Her little brother had given her the wooden horse, and her mother had given Ingrid her white myrtle flowers, and the hymnbook lay under her chin because they thought that she was dead.

Ingrid grabbed the edge of the coffin with both hands and sat up. The little narrow bed was a coffin, and the little yellow room was a grave. It was all so difficult to understand. She couldn't grasp that this had happened to her, that she had been wrapped in a shroud and placed in a grave. It was probably the case that she was lying at home in her bed and saw or dreamed that other stuff. It would soon be apparent that this was not real and everything would return to normal.

All of sudden she came up with an explanation for everything. "I often have such strange dreams," she thought. "This is only something I am imagining." She let out a sigh of relief. She actually lay back down in the coffin. She was completely certain that this was her old bed—it wasn't really all that wide either.

The man from Dalarna stood in the grave the entire time, just beside Ingrid's feet. He only stood a few inches from her, but she hadn't seen him. That was probably because as soon as the dead person in the coffin had opened her eyes and started moving, he tried to curl up and hide in a corner to make himself invisible. She probably would have been able to see him, even though he held the coffin lid in front of himself like a shield, but until now a white fog had covered her eyes so that she had only been able to see things closest to her clearly. Ingrid couldn't even see that she had walls of sand around her. She thought that the sun was a large chandelier and the leaves from the linden tree were a ceiling.

The poor man from Dalarna stood and waited for the person in the coffin to hurry up and remove herself. It didn't occur to him that she wouldn't go of her own accord. She had knocked

because she wanted to come out. He stood with his head behind the lid for a long time, waiting for her to leave. He peeked around when he thought that she would have already left. But she hadn't moved and was still lying in her bed of wood shavings.

He was not pleased with this; he wanted it to be over with soon. It had been a long time since his violin had spoken as beautifully as it had today, and he longed to sit with it in peace and quiet.

Ingrid, who had almost dozed off, heard herself being spoken to in the singsongy dialect of Dalarna.

"I think it's about time for you to get up now."

As soon as he had said that, he stuck his head behind the lid again. He shook all over and he was close to dropping the lid.

But the white fog that had lain over Ingrid's eyes evaporated completely when she heard a person's voice. She saw a man standing, squeezed into a corner of the grave, holding a coffin lid in front of himself. She immediately saw that she couldn't just lie there and go on thinking that this was only a figment of her imagination. This was certainly a reality she had explain to herself. Without a doubt it appeared that the coffin was a coffin and the grave, a grave, and that Ingrid herself, a little while ago, had been nothing other than a shrouded and buried corpse.

For the first time during this whole ordeal, she became truly terrified about what had happened to her. To think: She could actually have been dead right now! She could have been an ugly, rotting corpse. She had been placed in the grave so that they could pour sand and dirt over her, and she hadn't been worth more than any old piece of earth; she had been completely rejected. The worms could gladly eat her. No one would have cared.

Ingrid desperately needed someone close to her during this great terror. She had recognized the Goat when he had stuck out his head. He was well-known at the parsonage, and she wasn't afraid of him at all. Now she wanted to have him next to her. She didn't care at all about him being a madman. He was, in any case, a living person. She wanted him to come close to her so that she could feel that she belonged among the living and not among the dead.

"Oh, for God's sake come over here!" she said on the verge of tears. She sat up in the coffin and stretched her arms out to him.

But the man from Dalarna had only one thought on his mind. When she wanted to lure him towards her, he gave his conditions.

"I will come, if you will go your way," he said.

Ingrid immediately tried to obey him and get up from the coffin, but she was so wrapped up in the sheets, she had a hard time getting up.

"You have to come and help me," she said. She only partly needed help, but mostly she was so afraid she might not have completely escaped death, she had to be near someone who was alive.

He actually came, squeezing between the coffin and the wall of the grave. He leaned over her, picked her up out of the grave, and placed her on the green grass beside the grave opening.

Ingrid couldn't help but throw her arms around his neck, lay her head on his shoulder, and sob. Later on, she never understood how she was able to do it, and that she hadn't been afraid of him. It was partly out of happiness over him being a human being, a living being, and it was out of gratitude for him saving her.

God, what would have happened to her if he hadn't been there? He was the one who had taken off the lid to the coffin and returned her to life. She didn't know exactly how it had happened, but she was certain that he had been the one who had opened the coffin. What would have become of her if he hadn't done that? She would have woken up shut inside the dark coffin. She would have banged and yelled. Who would have heard her laying six feet under ground? Ingrid didn't dare think about it. She was just filled with gratitude over having been saved. She had to have someone to thank. She had to lean her head on someone's shoulder and cry out of gratitude.

Probably the most remarkable thing out of all that had happened that day was that the man from Dalarna didn't push her away. He wasn't entirely sure if she was dead, and he knew that it didn't pay to treat the dead badly. But as soon as it was possible, he made himself free of her and ducked down into the grave. He put the lid back on the coffin, put the screws back in, and put it back just as tightly as it had been before. That way, the coffin would be completely still and the violin would regain its calm and its music.

Meanwhile, Ingrid sat in the grass and tried to think the matter over. She looked over at the church and saw all of the horses and carts on the road. She started to understand the situation. It was Sunday, they had buried her in the morning, and now they were at church.

Ingrid was gripped with an enormous terror. The sermon would soon be over, and the people would come out and see her. She didn't have anything on except for the sheet. She was practically naked. Good heavens, if so many people should come and see her like that! They would never forget it. She would be ashamed for the rest of her life.

She wondered where she would be able to find some clothes. She thought for a moment about putting on the man's fur coat, but it didn't seem like wearing that would bring her any closer to being a normal person anyway.

She quickly turned towards the madman, who was still working on the lid to the coffin.

"Hey you," she said to him. "You have to let me crawl into your pack."

In that same moment she was standing by the huge leather sack that held wares for an entire booth, and started to tear at it.

"Oh dear, come here and help me!"

She didn't have to ask in vain. When he saw that she was touching his sack, he immediately came up out of the grave.

"Hey you, are you touching my sack?" he said threateningly.

Ingrid didn't think about the fact that he was speaking with a harsh voice. She still saw him as her best friend. "Oh my dear friend," she said. "Help me so that the people don't come and see me! Empty these wares somewhere and put me in the pack and take me home! Oh do it, do it! I am from the parsonage, and it is only a little ways from here. You must know where it is."

The man stood and looked at her with a completely blank look. She didn't know if he had understood a word of what she had said.

She repeated it, but he showed no inclination to obey her.

She started to tear things from the sack again. Then he stomped his feet on the ground and grabbed the pack from her.

God, how could Ingrid get him to listen to her?

A violin and a bow were lying in the grass beside her. She didn't exactly know why, but she picked them up. She had spent so much time with fiddlers that she couldn't stand to see an instrument lying on the ground.

As soon as she touched the violin, the man let go of the pack, and snatched the violin away from her.

He appeared completely furious because she touched the violin. He looked mean.

What in the world was she going to do in order to get away before the people came out of the church?

She started promising him remarkable things, the way you do for children when you want them to behave.

"I will tell father that he should buy a dozen scythes from you. I will lock up all of the dogs when you come to the parsonage. I will ask mother to give you some good food to eat."

There was no sign that he wanted to give in.

She thought about the violin, and in despair she said: "If you take me to the parsonage, I will play for you."

Look! There was a smile on his face. That was surely what he wanted.

"I will play the violin for you the entire afternoon; I will play as long as you want."

“Do you want to teach the violin new songs?” he asked.

“I certainly do.”

In that same moment, Ingrid was both surprised and distressed. He took a firm hold on the sack and pulled it towards himself. He dragged it over the graves, crushing the pennycress and southernwood as beneath a roller.

He carried it towards a pile of dry leaves and brush and old bouquets of flowers that lay beside the cemetery wall. He pulled out everything that he had in the pack and hid it well under the pile.

When it was empty, he came back over to Ingrid.

“Now you can step in,” he said.

Ingrid stepped into the pack and curled up on the wooden bottom. The man tightened the straps as carefully as he did when he had his usual wares to carry; he bent down, so that he almost kneeled, put his arms in the straps, tightened the straps across his chest, and got up. After he had gone a few steps, he started laughing. The sack he carried on his back was so light that he could have danced with it.

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It wasn't more than two miles from the church to the parsonage. It was a road that the man could walk in just twenty minutes. Ingrid's only wish was that he would walk quickly so that she could make it home before the people from church and the funeral guests arrived there. She couldn't stand the idea that so many people might see her. It would be best if she got there, while only her foster mother and the maids were at home.

Ingrid had taken the little bouquet of myrtle flowers that her foster mother had placed in the coffin. She was so pleased by it that she kissed it over and over. It made her think kinder thoughts about her foster mother than ever before. Naturally, she would have had kind thoughts about her regardless. Anyone who comes directly from the grave thinks kind and bright thoughts about everything which lives and breaths on the face of the earth.

Ingrid now understood so very well that the pastor's wife must love her own children much more than she could love her foster daughter. Since they had so little money at the parsonage they couldn't hire a governess, it seemed now quite natural that she should watch her small siblings. But if her siblings were not kind towards her, it only meant that they were used to thinking of her as their servant. It wasn't easy for them to remember that she had been taken to the parsonage to be their sister.

Really, it all depended on their poverty. If father received another position, if he became dean or rector, then everything would be better. Then it would go back to the way it was in the beginning, when everyone loved her. Surely, everything would be like it had been before! Ingrid kissed her flowers. Mother might not have wanted to be hard. It was only the poverty that had made her so mean.

In any case, it didn't matter to her anymore how they would treat her. Nothing could bother her because, from now on, she always wanted to be happy about being alive. If it became difficult again, she would just think about her mother's flowers and her little brother's Camilla.

It was delightful enough to know that she was being carried up the road alive. That morning, no one thought that she would ever be carried through these curves and hills again. The smell of clover, the small birds that were singing, and the beautiful trees thick with foliage—all this was there to delight the living. Those things had not been for her at all.

But, as previously mentioned, she didn't have much time to think because in twenty minutes the man had arrived at the parsonage.

Only the pastor's wife and the maids were home, just as Ingrid had hoped. The pastor's wife had been preparing for the funeral dinner the entire morning. Now she was waiting for the guests to arrive, and everything was just about done. She had just been in the bedroom and gotten herself ready in her black dress.

She looked over at the road to the church, but no one was on it. Then she decided to go out to the kitchen and taste the food.

She was quite satisfied because everything had turned out well, and you can't help being pleased by such things, even if you are in mourning. There was only one maid in the kitchen, and she had come from the wife's own home, so she thought she could confide in her.

"You know, Lisa," she said, "I think that almost anyone would be content with such a funeral dinner."

"I wish she could look down at the earth and see what a fuss you are making over her," Lisa said. "It would make her happy."

"Oh," said the pastor's wife, "she would probably never be happy with me."

"She is dead now," said the maid. "I will not be the one to speak ill of someone who has barely made it into the ground."

"I have often had to hear harsh words from my husband for her sake," said the foster mother.

The fact was that the pastor's wife needed to talk to someone about the dead girl. She had a bad conscience because of her, and that was why she had prepared a large funeral feast. She thought that her bad conscience would disappear with all the trouble she went to for the funeral, but it hadn't worked that way. Her husband also went with a bad conscience and said that they had not treated the girl like one of their own children, as they had promised to do when they adopted her. He said that it would have been better if they had never taken her, since they couldn't help showing that they cared more for their own children. Now the foster mother needed to talk to someone about the girl so that she would know if people thought she had been mean to her.

She saw how Lisa started vehemently stirring one of the pots, as if she had a hard time controlling her indignation. She was a smart girl who understood how to ingratiate herself to her mistress.

"You would think," started Lisa, "that if you had a mother who always watched over you and made sure that you were clean and neat, you would want to obey her and try to please her. And if you were allowed to be in a good pastor's home and be raised among better people, you would try to be useful, and not just go around dreaming silly dreams. I just wonder now how it would have been, if you hadn't gone and taken in that poor child. She would probably have wandered around with the circus people and died in the streets like a wretch."

A man from Dalarna came walking across the yard, one who carried a sack on his back, even though it was Sunday. He came quietly through the kitchen door and curtsied when he came in, even though no one greeted him in return. Both the pastor's wife and the maid saw him, but when they saw who it was they didn't bother to stop their conversation.

The pastor's wife was eager to continue. She knew that she would hear exactly what she needed in order to clear her conscience.

"It is probably just as well that she is gone," she said.

"I will say ma'am," the maid said eagerly, "I think the pastor feels the same way, or at least I think he soon will. There will be peace in the house now, you see, and that will make him happy."

"Oh yes," said the foster mother, "I was forced to go against him. He wanted to spend so much money on her clothes, that it was completely crazy. He was so particular about her getting as much as the others that sometimes she even got more. It cost a lot because she was fully grown."

"Ma'am, are you going to let Greta have her good dress?"

"Yes, either Greta will have it, or I'll take it myself."

"The poor thing didn't leave much behind."

"No one asked that she leave anything to be handed down," said the foster mother. "I would have been satisfied if I had a good word to remember her by."

It was just the kind of thing one says when one has a bad conscience and wants to defend oneself against it. The foster mother really didn't mean these things.

The man from Dalarna behaved in the same way as he did when he came to sell things. For a little while he stood and looked around in the kitchen and handled the sack with the greatest care as he placed it on the table and loosened the straps and ropes. Then he looked around one more time, just making sure that he wouldn't be attacked by a dog or cat, straightened his back, and started opening the two leather flaps that were fastened with countless straps and knots.

"Don't bother opening your sack today," said Lisa. "It is Sunday, and you know very well that we won't buy anything."

She didn't say anymore when the lunatic continued to undo the straps. She turned toward the pastor's wife. This was a perfect time for her to curry favor.

"I don't even know if she was nice to the children. I often heard them crying and complaining in the nursery."

"Such as she was to their mother, she was towards them," said the pastor's wife. "But now they are crying because she is dead, of course."

"They don't know what's best for them," said the girl, "but you can be sure that in a month's time no one will be crying for her sake."

At that moment, both of them turned from the stove and looked over at the table where the man was standing opening the sack. They had heard something unusual, something like a sigh or a sob. The man had just opened the inner flap, and out of the sack came the recently buried foster daughter, just as she had been when they laid her in the coffin.

But she wasn't completely like herself. She was even more dead now, in a way, than she was when they buried her. Then she had had almost the same color as she had when she was alive, now her face was a ghostly gray, her lips were blue, and her eyes were terribly sunken.

She didn't say anything, but great despair could be seen in her face, and the bouquet of myrtle that she had gotten from her foster mother was stretched out towards her in a reproachful appeal.

It wasn't a sight that a human being could stand. The foster mother immediately fainted. The maid stood still for a second, looked at the daughter, then at the mother, then put her hands over her eyes and ran into the other room shutting the door firmly after her.

"No," she said. "She hasn't come back for me; I don't have to be a part of this."

But Ingrid turned towards the man from Dalarna.

"Put me back in and take me away from here! Listen! Listen! Take me away! Take me back to where you found me!"

Then the man happened to look outside. There was a long row of wagons and carts coming up the road to the house. Oh no, oh no, he did not want to stay there. He didn't like this place at all.

Ingrid curled up in the bottom of the sack and didn't ask for anything else, only sobbed. Flaps and buckles were closed over her, and she was lifted up onto his back and carried away. Those who came to the funeral feast laughed heartily at the Goat, who hurried away and curtsied at every horse that he met.

## Chapter 5

Mother Anna Stina was an old woman who lived deep in the forest. She used to come and work at the parsonage; she came down from the hills as if called when they were going to bake or do the wash. She was a kind and smart old woman, and she and Ingrid had been good friends. As soon as the girl was able to think clearly, she decided to ask the old woman for help.

"Listen," she said to the man, "when you come up to the main road, turn off into the woods. Go forward until you come to a footpath! There you want to go to the left. Keep going

straight until you come to a large sandpit. From there you will see a cottage; I want you to carry me there, and then I will play for you.”

The short and harsh tone she used hurt her ears when she gave him orders. She had to speak that way in order to be obeyed; it wouldn't work any other way. As if she were entitled to give orders to another person—she who didn't even have the right to live!

She would never again feel like she had the right to live after this. That was the terrible thing about what had happened. She had been at the parsonage for six years, and had not even made herself well-liked enough that they wished she were still alive. A person nobody loves does not have the right to live.

She could not have said how she knew that it was so, but it was quite clear to her. Ever since she had heard that they didn't like her, an iron fist had gripped her heart, squeezing it, trying to force it to stop beating. It was basically life itself that had been denied her. The instant that she had come back from the dead, she felt a zest for life burning intensely and boldly within her. Now her reason for living had been torn away from her.

It was worse than a death sentence. It was much more gruesome than a normal death sentence. She knew what it was like. It was like when one cuts down trees; not in the usual way when you just chop off the trunk, but when you cut the roots from the trunk and leave it standing in the ground to die. The tree stands there and doesn't understand why it no longer gets nutrients and moisture. It fights and struggles to live, but the leaves get smaller, there are no new shoots, and the bark crumbles away. And it must die because it has become cut off from the source of life. So it is; it must die.

Finally the man from Dalarna put the sack down on a stone slab outside of the little cottage, which stood in the middle of the wild forest.

The cottage door was closed, but as soon as Ingrid had gotten out of the sack, she found the key under the threshold, opened the door, and stepped inside.

Ingrid knew the cottage well and everything that was in it. It was not the first time she had come here for comfort. It was not the first time she had come to old Anna Stina and explained that she couldn't stand it at home, that her foster mother was so hard on her, and that she didn't want to return to the parsonage.

But every time she had come, the old lady had talked sense to her and had calmed her. She had made a dreadful kind of coffee for her, which didn't contain a single bean, only peas and chicory, but it had still put courage in her. And in the end she had gotten her to laugh at all of it and cheered her up so that she had waltzed down the wooded hills all the way home.

Even if Anna Stina had been home brewing her dreadful coffee, it wouldn't have helped Ingrid this time. But the old lady was down at the parsonage for Ingrid's funeral because the pastor's wife had not forgotten to invite any of the people the girl had liked. That was probably also because of her bad conscience.

But inside of Anna Stina's little cottage, everything looked the same. When Ingrid saw the bench with the wooden lid and the clean and shiny table, the cat, and the coffee pot, she didn't feel at all comforted or cheered up, but she understood that she now found herself in a place where she could give free reign to her sorrow.

It was a relief that she didn't need to think about anything but crying and lamenting.

She immediately went over to the bench, threw herself down on the wooden lid, and cried; she didn't know for how long.

The man stood outside on the stone slab; he did not want to go into the cottage because of the cat. He waited for Ingrid to come out and play for him. He had taken out the violin quite a while ago. Since it took so long for her to come, he started to play himself.

He played softly and quietly, as he usually did. The violin music could barely be heard by the girl inside.

Ingrid felt one shudder after another going through her body. She had felt the same way when she was ill. She felt like she was going to become sick again. It would probably be the best thing if fever took her and killed her for real.

When she heard the violin music, she sat up and looked around with wild eyes. Who was playing? Was it her student? Had he finally come?

She understood almost right away that it had to be the man from Dalarna, and she lay down again with a sigh.

She couldn't follow along with what was being played, but as soon as she closed her eyes, the violin adopted the student's voice. She also heard what he said; he spoke to her foster mother and defended Ingrid. He spoke as beautifully as he had spoken to Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren. He said that Ingrid needed a great deal of love. This is what she had been missing. That is why she hadn't always done her work, but let the dreams tempt her. No one would believe how she could toil and struggle for the one that loved her. She would bear sorrow, sickness, contempt, and poverty for him. For him, she would become strong as a giant and patient as a slave.

Ingrid heard clearly how he spoke, and a serenity fell over her. Of course it was true; if only her foster mother had loved her, she would have seen what Ingrid was capable of. But since she hadn't liked her, Ingrid had been powerless. Yes, of course it was true.

She no longer shook with fever. She only lay there and listened to the student speak.

She probably dozed, because over and over again she thought she was lying in the grave, and it was always the student who lifted her out of the coffin. She lay and quarreled with him about it. "You come now, when I'm only dreaming," she said.

"I am always the one who comes and helps you, Ingrid," he said. "You know this very well. I lift you from the grave; I carry you on my shoulders; I play and make you calm. It is always me."

The thing that kept bothering her was that she was supposed to get up and play for the man from Dalarna. She got up several times to do this, but she didn't have the strength.

As soon as she sank back on the bench, she dreamed. She sat curled up in the sack, and the student carried her through the woods. It was always him.

"But it wasn't you," she said to him.

"Of course it was me," he said and smiled at her contradictions. "You have gone and thought about me every day for all these years. You understand that I had to help you out of such a great danger."

She thought this completely obvious, and then she started to see that he was right and that it was him.

This was such a blissful thought that she woke anew. Love gripped her and shook her very being. It could not have been more real if she had seen and spoken with her beloved.

"Why doesn't he come for real?" she said almost aloud. "Why does he only come in my dreams?"

She didn't dare move, for then her feelings of love would flee. It was as though a timid bird had landed on her shoulder, and she was afraid of scaring it away.

If she moved, the bird would fly away and sorrow would gain power over her.

When she finally awoke, it was dusk in the cottage. She must have slept through the entire afternoon and evening. This time of the year nightfall didn't come until after ten o'clock.

The violin playing was also over; the man must have gone his way.

Mother Anna Stina had not come yet. She would probably stay away the entire night.

It didn't really matter to the girl; she didn't feel like doing anything other than lying down and sleeping again. She was afraid of all the sorrow and despair that came over her as she soon as she woke up.

But then she had a new thing to think about. Who had closed the door, who had laid Mother Anna Stina's large shawl over her, and who had laid some bread beside her on the bench?

Had he done all of this for her, the Goat?

For an instant she seemed to see both dream and reality standing next to each other, competing over who would comfort her. The dream stood sunny and smiling and poured love's happiness over her to cheer her up. But the poor, harsh, hard side of life also came with a little sliver of kindness to show it didn't mean to be as cruel to her as it seemed.

## Chapter 6

Ingrid and Anna Stina came walking through the dark forest. They had been wandering for four days and slept in shepherds' huts for three nights. Ingrid was tired and spent, her face was transparent and pale, her eyes were sunken and shining with fever. The old lady cast furtive glances now and then in her direction and asked God to maintain the girl's strength so that she would not fall down and die on a patch of moss. Sometimes the old lady couldn't help glancing nervously backwards. She had an uneasy sense that Death was sneaking after them through the woods to take her back, she who had been betrothed to him with Godly words and the casting of earth.

Anna Stina was small and wide with a large, square face that looked so wise that it was at the same time beautiful. She was not superstitious; she lived alone in the middle of the woods without fearing trolls or fairies. But when she went alongside Ingrid, she felt as surely as if she had been told that she was walking beside someone who didn't belong to this world. She had gotten this idea when she had found Ingrid in her cottage on Monday morning.

She had not come home Sunday night because at the parsonage the pastor's wife had become very ill, and Mother Anna Stina, who had a way with sick people, stayed to watch over her. The entire night she had listened to the pastor's wife deliriously talking about Ingrid having appeared, but the old woman had not believed her.

When she finally came home and saw the girl, the old lady immediately wanted to return to the parsonage and tell them that it hadn't been a ghost they had seen. But when she said as much, Ingrid had become so upset, she hadn't dared do it. Life had almost fluttered away from her like a flame from a candle going out because of a strong draft. She could have died as easily as a caged bird. Death was on the prowl after Ingrid; she had to watch over her and proceed carefully if she was to live.

As mentioned before, the old lady hardly knew whether Ingrid was a ghost or not, since she had so little life in her. There was no point talking sense to her; she just obeyed her wish to not let anyone know that she was alive. The old lady tried to arrange things as best she could. She had a sister who worked as a housekeeper at a large place in Dalarna, and she decided to take Ingrid to her and persuade her sister Stava to give the girl a place at the manor. Ingrid would have to be satisfied with being a mere servant. There was nothing else for her to do.

They were now on their way to this manor. Mother Anna Stina knew the district so well that they didn't have to take the road at all; instead they walked along deserted forest paths. But even that had gone badly. Their shoes were worn down on one side, their skirts were dirty and ragged, and a small savage tree branch had made a huge tear in the arm of Ingrid's dress.

On the afternoon of the fourth day, they came out of the forest where they could see a deep valley. Down in the valley was a lake, and near the shore there was a tall island where the manor raised itself up into the sky. When Anna Stina saw the manor house, she said that it was called Munkhyttan, and it was where her sister worked.

Up in the woods they tried to make themselves presentable. They retied their scarves, wiped their shoes with moss, and washed up in a forest stream. Anna Stina tried to fold the arm of Ingrid's dress so that the tear wouldn't be as noticeable.

The old lady sighed when she looked at Ingrid and felt completely hopeless. Not only did Ingrid not look good in the clothes she had borrowed from the old woman, which didn't fit her at

all, but as weak as the girl looked, Anna Stina knew that her sister Stava would never hire her. It was like hiring a breath of wind. The girl wasn't any more useful than a sick butterfly.

As soon as they were ready, they set off down the hill towards the lake. They had only a little bit farther to go, and then they came to the manor house.

And what a manor house!

There were large, neglected fields where the forest was taking over and trees were starting to grow. There was a bridge that went over to the island, which looked so rickety they thought it would barely hold until they reached the other side. There was an allée that led from the bridge up to the house, which was overgrown like a pasture, and there was a blown-down tree lying across the road.

It was quite pretty up there on the island, so pretty that one could very well have had a castle there. But there wasn't a single flower planted in the garden, and in the large park the trees were crowding each other out, and black grass snakes slithered on the green, muddy roads.

Anna Stina became worried when she saw the decay and mumbled to herself: "How could this happen? Is my sister Stava dead? Why does she let it look like this? It was different thirty years ago when I was here last. What in God's name is going on with Stava?" She couldn't imagine how such chaos could reign anywhere Stava lived.

Ingrid came slowly and reluctantly after her. The instant she put her foot on the bridge, she noticed that there were not two people walking there, but three.

There was someone who had come to meet her, and then turned and accompanied her. Ingrid didn't hear any footsteps, but the one who had joined them flitted along just beside her. She could see that someone was there.

She became terribly frightened and tried to get Anna Stina to turn around, tried to say that this place was bewitched and that she didn't dare go any farther. But before she was able to say anything, the stranger came up next to her, and she recognized him.

He was only dimly visible at first. Now he could be seen clearly; she could see that it was him, the student.

It was no longer ghostly or horrible for her that he walked there. It was only wonderful and appropriate that he had come to meet her. It was as though he had been the one who had brought her here and wanted to show her by coming and greeting her.

He went with her over the bridge, along the allée, and all the way up to the house.

She couldn't keep from constantly turning her head to the left. This is where she glimpsed his face, just beside her cheek. She barely saw a face, only an unspeakably beautiful smile that came caressingly close to her. But if she turned her head completely to the left, to get a good look, then it was no longer there. No, it wasn't something that would let itself be seen that clearly. But as soon as she looked ahead, she caught a glimpse of it, just beside her.

The one accompanying her didn't speak. He didn't do anything other than smile, but that was enough for her. It was just enough to show her that there was one person in the world who loved her faithfully.

She felt his presence like something real and was completely convinced that he protected her and watched over her. This sweet knowledge erased all of the despair that her foster mother's hard words had woken in her.

Ingrid felt herself to be a part of life once more. She had the right to live because someone loved her.

In this way, she came into the kitchen at Munkhyttan with a rosy color on her cheeks and with her eyes shining. Completely fragile, gentle, and translucent, but as beautiful as a newly opened rose.

She was lost in her dream and didn't know much about where she was, but what surprised her so much she almost woke up was that a new Anna Stina stood over by the stove. She stood there, small and broad, with a large square face just like the other's. But why was she dressed so nicely in a white cap, tied with a string under her chin, and a black cotton dress? Ingrid

was so dizzily unclear in her head that a long time passed before she understood that this must be Stava.

She felt Anna Stina's worried glances focused on her and tried to pull herself together in order to greet her. However, nothing seemed important except the fact that he had come to her.

Behind the kitchen there was a small, small room with blue-striped upholstery. They were taken in there, and Stava gave them food and coffee.

Anna Stina immediately started talking about the reason they had come. She spoke for a long time, saying that she knew her sister was in such good standing with her mistress that she was entrusted with hiring the help at the manor house. Stava did not answer, but Ingrid got a glance that said a great deal: that Stava wouldn't have gained this kind of confidence if she had chosen people who were like Ingrid.

Anna Stina spoke highly of Ingrid and said that she was a good girl. Until now she had had a position at a parsonage, but now since she had become an adult, she had the desire to learn something more, and so Anna Stina wanted to take her to someone who could teach her more than anyone else could.

Stava did not answer any of this either. Her glances didn't hide the fact that she wondered why this person, who had a place at a parsonage, didn't have her own clothes, and instead had to borrow Anna Stina's.

The old lady started talking about her circumstances, how she sat alone in the forest, abandoned by all of her kin. Then this girl had come running over the hills so many evenings and early in the morning to look after her. That is why she now thought and hoped that one day she would be able to make sure the girl had a good position.

Stava said that it was a pity that they had come such a long way for a position. If the girl was any good, then she should have looked for work at a manor house in their own district.

Mother Anna Stina now understood that her mission was not going well and, therefore, she continued on with harsh words: "You have been sitting here in great comfort and prosperity, Stava, and I have struggled in poverty. I have never asked you for anything until today. Now you want me to leave here like an old beggar woman to whom you give a meal but nothing more!"

Stava smiled a little, then she said: "Sister Anna Stina, you are not telling me the truth. I am also from Råglanda, and I want to know in which farmer's hut in that district one finds eyes and a face like hers."

She pointed at Ingrid and continued: "I understand, Anna Stina, that you want to help someone who looks like this, but I don't understand how you think your sister Stava has become so imbecilic that you can come and lie to her."

Anna Stina was so frightened by this that she was unable to speak, but Ingrid decided to confide in the old lady and immediately started telling her story in her low, beautiful voice.

Ingrid had barely spoken a few words about how she had lain in the grave and how the man from Dalarna had saved her before old Stava turned red and quickly bent over to try and hide it. Her embarrassment had only lasted for a moment, but it had to mean something good, because she looked friendly afterwards.

Soon she began to ask a lot of detailed questions about everything; most of all she wanted to know about the madman, if Ingrid had been afraid of him. "Oh no, he wasn't dangerous at all; he wasn't crazy," said Ingrid. "He could both buy and sell. He was only frightened."

Ingrid thought it was hardest to explain what she had heard her foster mother say. But she talked about it honestly, even though she had a lump in her throat.

Stava went up to her and pushed back her scarf and then looked her in the eyes. She patted her on the cheek. "Skip that, young lady, if you want to!" she said. "I don't need to know about it."

"Now the two of you will have to excuse me," she said, "but I have to take coffee into Mrs. Hede. I will come back soon to hear the rest."

When she came back, she said that she had told her mistress about the young girl who had lain in the grave. Now Mrs. Hede wanted to see her.

They were taken up the stairs to the second floor and into the mistress's little parlor.

Anna Stina stayed by the door to the elegant room, but Ingrid did not feel shy. She immediately went up to the old lady and took her hand. She might have been shy in front of much less imposing people, but she wasn't shy in this house. She only felt an endless happiness over having come there.

"And this is our little friend who has been buried," said Mrs. Hede and gave her a friendly nod. "Will you be so kind as to tell me your story? I sit here all alone and I hear nothing, you know."

So Ingrid started telling her story all over again. But she hadn't gotten very far before she was interrupted. Mrs. Hede did the same thing as Stava. She stood up, pushed back her scarf, and looked her in the eyes. "Yes, yes," she said, talking to herself. "I can understand that. I can understand that he obeyed those eyes."

For the first time in her life, Ingrid was praised for her courage. Mrs. Hede thought that she had been very brave to dare entrust herself to a madman.

She said that she had probably been afraid, but she had been more afraid that people would see her looking that way. He wasn't dangerous, he was almost sensible, and he was very nice.

Mrs. Hede wanted to know what his name was, but Ingrid did not know. She hadn't heard any name other than the Goat.

Mrs. Hede asked her several times how he usually behaved when he came to do his selling. Had she not laughed at him and didn't she think that he looked terrible, the Goat? It was strange to hear her calling someone "The Goat." She said it with an endless bitterness, and still she said it over and over again.

No, Ingrid didn't think that. She didn't laugh at the unfortunate.

Mrs. Hede looked more gentle than her words made her seem. "You must really understand madmen," she said. "It is a great gift. Most people are afraid of those poor human beings."

She had listened to Ingrid until the end and sat and brooded. "Then since you have no other home," she said, "I will invite you to stay here with me. I sit here alone, an old woman, and you will keep me company, and I will make sure that you have everything you need. Are you pleased with that?"

"There will come a time," Mrs. Hede continued, "when we must inform your parents that you are alive, but in the meantime everything should stay as it is so that you have time to calm down. You shall call me Aunt, but what shall I call you?"

"Ingrid. Ingrid Berg."

"Ingrid," said Mrs. Hede thoughtfully. "I would rather call you something else. As soon as you came in here with your star-like eyes, I thought that you should be called Mignon."

When the girl understood that she would find a real home here, it felt like a new confirmation that in some mysterious way she had been brought here. She whispered a thank you to her invisible protector before she went to thank Mrs. Hede, Stava, and Mother Anna Stina.

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Ingrid was lying in a canopied bed, rocking on the feather mattress four and a half feet thick. The sheets had open work embroidery an inch wide and the silk cover were embroidered with Swedish crowns and French lilies. The bed was so wide that she could lie however she wished, both lengthwise and sideways, and so high, that she got up onto it by climbing two steps. High up near the ceiling, a cupid sat and draped mottled bed curtains over her, and, near the bedposts, other cupids sat and lifted them up into festoons.

In the same room where the bed stood, there was a curved dresser, inlaid with lemon wood, and Ingrid could take out of it as many white, scented linens as she wanted. There was even a cabinet with many beautiful and colorful silk and muslin dresses, which hung there and wondered which one she would choose to wear.

When she woke up in the morning, a tray with coffee lay beside her, shining with silver and old East Indian porcelain. Every morning she sank her small, white teeth into soft, white bread and a wonderful almond pastry. Everyday she dressed herself in a light muslin dress with a fichu tied in the back. Her hair was done up high on her head, and her forehead was wreathed in slender curls.

On the wall in between the windows she had a narrow mirror with a wide frame where she could see herself and nod at what she saw and ask: "Is it you, is it really you? How have you come to be here?"

During the day when Ingrid left the room with the canopied bed, she would sit in the elegant parlor and embroider or paint on silk, and when she tired of that, she strummed a guitar and sang little melodies and spoke with Mrs. Hede, who taught her to speak French and thought it a pleasure to raise the girl to be a proper lady.

But it was a bewitched castle that the girl had come to. She had a hard time getting away from this thought. She had thought so from the very first moment, and the thought always came back to her.

No one came there, and no one left. Only a few of the rooms were used in the large house, and no one went into the others. No one went into the garden, and no one took care of it. At the house there was only one boy who was a farmhand and an old man who chopped wood. Stava only had two girls who helped her in the kitchen and in the barn.

But there was always good food on the table, and Mrs. Hede and Ingrid were always attended to and dressed as fine and aristocratic women.

If there was nothing else that flourished at the old manor, at least it was fertile ground for dreams. Even if no other plants were tended there, Ingrid took care of her dream roses. They grew around her as soon as she had a moment to herself. She felt as if her red dream roses built a canopy over her.

Around the island where the trees bent themselves toward the water and sent long branches out over the reeds, and where the bushes and tall trees flourished, there was a path where Ingrid used to walk. It was curious for her to see initials carved into the tree trunks and to see the old benches and resting places and a few dilapidated pavilions, so decayed that she didn't dare walk inside them.

To think that there had been people here, that there had been life and infatuation and love, that this had not always been a bewitched castle!

The enchantment was strongest here. Here the smiling face came towards her. Here she could walk and thank him, the student, because he had allowed her to come here where she was so happy, where they loved her and she had come to forget the others who had been harsh towards her.

If he hadn't been the one who arranged everything, it would have been impossible for her to stay here—completely impossible.

She knew very well that it had to be him. She had never had such wild thoughts before. She had always thought about him, but she had never felt that he was close to her, that he had taken care of her.

The only thing she wondered about was when he would actually come, because he would certainly be coming. It was not possible that he would not come here. He had left a part of his soul on these paths.

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The summer passed as did the fall, and it was leading up to Christmas.

“Miss Ingrid!” said Stava one day with a certain mischief. “I think that you should know that the young master, who owns this house, comes home for Christmas. At least he usually does,” she said with a sigh.

“And Mrs. Hede has never mentioned that she has a son!” said Ingrid.

But she didn’t feel any surprise. It was more like she had known it the whole time.

“No one has told you anything about him,” said Stava, “because the mistress has forbidden us to speak of him.”

And then Stava didn’t want to say anymore.

Ingrid did not want to ask about it either. She was shy about wanting to know anything for certain. She had raised her hopes so high that she was afraid that they would shatter. The truth could be nice to know, but it might also be bitter and devastate her beautiful dreams.

After this, he was around her night and day. There was barely time for her to talk with anyone else. She had to be with him the entire time.

One day she noticed that snow had been shoveled from the allée. She was almost afraid. Is he coming now?

The day after, Mrs. Hede sat by the window all day and looked down at the road. Ingrid sat farther back in the room. She didn’t dare sit by the window out of nervousness.

“Do you know for whom I am waiting today?” Mrs. Hede asked suddenly.

The girl nodded; she didn’t trust her voice to be able to answer.

“Has Stava told you that my son is strange?”

Ingrid shook her head.

“He is very strange. . . . He . . . I cannot talk about it; I can’t. You will see for yourself.”

It sounded heart wrenching, and Ingrid was quite shaken. What was it here at this house that made everything so strange? Was there something awful that she didn’t know about? Were Mrs. Hede and her son at odds? What was it? What could it be?

One moment completely happy, the next, shaking with doubt! She had to conjure an entire series of visions in order to assure herself that it was he who was coming.

She couldn’t exactly say why she was so certain that he would be the son of this particular house. The son could just as well be someone else, for all she knew. Oh God, it was so hard, having never heard his name!

It was a long day. They sat waiting in silence the entire afternoon.

Then the boy came driving with a load of wood for Christmas, and the horse stood and waited down by the road as the wood was being taken from the load.

“Ingrid,” said Mrs. Hede urgently, “run down and tell Anders to drive away with the horse! Immediately, immediately!”

The girl ran down the stairs to the veranda. But when she got there she forgot to yell to the boy. Just behind the load, she saw a tall man with a white sheepskin coat and a large sack on his back. She didn’t need to see how he stopped and curtsied and curtsied in order to recognize him.

“But, but . . .” she put her hand to her head and breathed deeply. How would she ever be able to figure this out? Was it for the sake of this man that the mistress had sent her down here? And the boy—why did he take the horse away so quickly? Why did he take off his cap and greet him? What did the madman have to do with anyone here at this house?

Then the truth came over Ingrid, struck her such a devastating blow that she could have screamed. It was not her beloved who had watched over her. It was the madman. She had been allowed stay because she had spoken well of him. Because his mother had wanted to finish a good deed that he had started!

That Goat—he was the young master.

But no one would come to her, no one had brought her here, no one had waited for her. They were only dreams, whims, and visions.

Oh how bitter! If only she had never expected him!

But at night, when Ingrid was lying in the canopied bed under the mottled bed curtains, she dreamed over and over again that she had seen the student come home. "It wasn't you that came," she said then. "Of course it was I," he answered her. And, in her dream, she believed him.

## Chapter 7

One day, during the week after Christmas, Ingrid was sitting by the window in the little parlor embroidering. Mrs. Hede sat on the sofa and knitted, as she now did every day. It was completely quiet in the room.

The young master Hede had been home for one week. During the entire time, Ingrid had not seen him. He lived like a peasant even in his own home, slept in the servants quarters, and ate in the kitchen. He never came in to see his mother.

Ingrid knew that both Mrs. Hede and Stava were expecting her to do something for Hede that she would at least try to get him to stay at home. She grieved over the fact that it was impossible for her to do what they wanted. She was in despair over the lethargy that had come over her since her hopes had shattered.

That very day Stava had just come in and told them that Hede was packing up his things to go. This time he wasn't even staying as long as he usually did during his Christmas visit, she said with a reproachful glance at Ingrid.

Ingrid understood everything they had been expecting her to do, but she just couldn't. She continued her work without saying anything.

Stava left, and silence fell over the room again. Ingrid had completely forgotten that she wasn't alone, and suddenly a kind of trance fell over her, in which all of her sorrowful thoughts coalesced into a vision.

She imagined that she was wandering through the entire manor house. She went through many halls and rooms; she saw the furniture covered with gray linen covers, paintings and lights covered with tulle, and there was a heavy layer of dust on the floor that whirled around when she walked. But finally she came to a room where she had never been before; it was quite small, and the walls and ceiling were black. Then she saw more clearly that the walls were not painted black, nor were they covered with black cloth, but they were so dark due to the fact that the ceiling and walls were covered with bats—the entire room was nothing other than big bat cave. A pane was missing from one of the windows, so she could understand how so many could have entered that they covered the entire room. They hung motionless in their winter sleep. Not a single one moved when she walked in.

But she was seized with such fear when she saw this that she started to shake and tremble. It was terrible, seeing so clearly this mass of animals hanging there. All of them had their black wings wrapped around them like capes; all of them had stuck one long claw into the wall and were hanging thus in an immobile sleep.

She saw it so distinctly, that she wondered if Stava knew that an entire room had been invaded by bats.

In her thoughts she went to Stava and asked if she had been to this room and seen all of the animals.

"Of course I have seen them," said Stava. "It is their room. I'm sure you know that there isn't an old manor house in the country that doesn't leave a room for bats."

"I have never heard anything like that before," said Ingrid.

"When you've been in the world as long as I have you will see I speak the truth," said Stava.

"I can't understand how anyone can put up with something like that," said Ingrid.

"We must," said Stava. "Those bats are Mistress Sorrow's birds, and she has commanded us to take them in."

Ingrid saw that Stava did not want to talk about it anymore. She went back to her embroidery, but could not stop wondering who Mistress Sorrow could be and how she could have such power here that she could compell Stava to open a room for the bats.

Just as she thought this, she saw a black sleigh, being pulled by black horses, come driving up to the veranda.

She saw Stava go out and curtsy deeply. An old woman stepped down from the sleigh wearing a black velvet cloak with several layers of collars over her shoulders. She had a crooked back and had a hard time walking. She could barely lift her feet in order to walk up the stairs.

“Ingrid,” said Mrs. Hede and looked up from her knitting. “I thought I heard Mistress Sorrow come. It had to be her bell that jingled. Have you noticed that she never has large sleighbells on her horses, only one tiny, tiny bell? But you can hear it, you can hear it! Now go down to the front hall, Ingrid, and welcome Mistress Sorrow!”

When Ingrid came down to the front hall, Mistress Sorrow stood and spoke with Stava out on the veranda. They did not notice her.

Ingrid saw with surprise that the old woman with the crooked back had something hidden under all of her collars that looked like a black ruffled veil. It was well tucked in and hidden. Ingrid had to look very closely before she saw it was a pair of large bat wings that she was trying to hide in this way. The girl became more curious than ever about Mistress Sorrow and tried to see her face, but she was looking out over the property, so it was impossible. Then, when she stretched her hand out to Stava, Ingrid saw that she had one finger that was much longer than the others, and on the tip there was a large, curved claw.

“Everything is the same here at the house?” she said.

“Yes, Mistress Sorrow,” said Stava.

“You haven’t planted any flowers or moved any trees? You haven’t fixed the bridge or taken the weeds from the avenue?”

“No, Mistress.”

“It is just as it should be,” said Mistress Sorrow. “You haven’t dared try to find more ore in the mine or cut down the forest where it is invading the fields?”

“No, Mistress.”

“You haven’t cleaned out the well?”

“No, we haven’t cleaned out the well.”

“This is a good place,” said Mistress Sorrow. “I like it here. In a few years my birds will be able to live in the entire house. You are very kind to my birds.”

Stava curtsied humbly at this praise.

“How is everything else here at the house?” said Mistress Sorrow. “How did you celebrate Christmas?”

“We celebrated Christmas in our usual way,” said Stava. “Mrs. Hede sits inside, knitting day in and day out, thinking only of her son, not knowing that it is a holiday. We let Christmas Eve pass like any other day. No presents and no lights.”

“No tree, no Christmas fare?”

“No trip to the church either, Mistress; not even candles in the windows on Christmas morning.”

“Why would your mistress want to celebrate the Son of God, when he won’t cure her own son?” said Mistress Sorrow.

“No, why would she.”

“You have him home again, I imagine. Maybe he is better now?”

“No, he is not better. He is just as frightened.”

“Does he still act like a peasant? Does he go inside the house?”

“We cannot get him to come inside the house. He is afraid of his mother, as you know, Mistress.”

“He eats in the kitchen and sleeps in the servants’ quarters?”

“Yes, he does.”

“And you don’t know how to make him well?”

“We don’t know anything. We don’t understand anything.”

Mistress Sorrow was silent for a moment. When she started speaking again she had a sharp and harsh tone in her voice.

“That is all very well, Stava, but I am still not satisfied with you.”

At that moment, she turned around and looked Ingrid sharply in the face.

Ingrid recoiled. Mistress Sorrow had a little, wrinkled face, squeezed together at the bottom so that her lower jaw was almost not visible. She had teeth that were like the teeth of a saw, and a lot of hair on her upper lip. Her eyebrows were just a tuft, and her skin was completely brown.

Ingrid wondered if Stava didn’t see the same thing as she did. Mistress Sorrow was not a human being. She was just an animal.

Mistress Sorrow opened her mouth and bared her teeth when she saw Ingrid.

“When she came here,” she said to Stava, “you thought that she had been sent. You could tell by her eyes that she had been sent to save him. She had a way with madmen. Well, how has it gone?”

“It hasn’t worked at all. She has done nothing.”

“I took care of that,” said Mistress Sorrow. “It was my doing that you didn’t tell her why she was allowed to stay here. If she had known the truth, she wouldn’t have had such rosy hopes of meeting the one she loved. If she hadn’t had hopes, she wouldn’t have felt such incredible disappointment. If the disappointment hadn’t paralyzed her, she might have been able to do something for the madman. Now she hasn’t looked at him. She hates him because he isn’t the one he was supposed to be. That is my doing, Stava, my doing.”

“You know your business, Mistress,” said Stava.

Mistress Sorrow took out her lace handkerchief and dried her red-rimmed eyes. It seemed to be a gesture of satisfaction.

“Oh, don’t try and fool me,” she said. “You don’t like the fact that I have taken that room for my birds. You don’t like the fact that I will soon have the entire house. I know that. You and your mistress thought you could trick me. But that is not the case.”

“Yes,” said Stava, “You have nothing to worry about. It is no use. The young master is leaving today. He has packed his things, so he will certainly go. Everything that Mrs. Hede and I have been dreaming about this fall is of no use. Nothing has happened. We thought that she might at least be able to get him to stay home, but despite all the good things we have done for her, she has done nothing for us.”

“Yes, she has been terrible, I know that,” said Mistress Sorrow. “But in any case, she should leave now. That is what I want to speak to your mistress about.”

Mistress Sorrow started to drag herself up the stairs to the second floor with her unsteady legs. With every step she lifted her wings a little bit as if it might help. She would probably have preferred flying.

Ingrid followed her. She was strangely drawn and enchanted. The most beautiful woman in the world would not have compelled her as much.

When Ingrid entered the little parlor, Mistress Sorrow sat next to Mrs. Hede on the sofa whispering intimately with her, as if they were dear old friends.

“You understand that you shouldn’t keep her here with you,” said Mistress Sorrow ingratiatingly. “You, who can’t stand flowers growing in your garden, certainly can’t stand to have a young girl walking around in your house. A little bit of happiness and gaiety follows someone like that, but that isn’t suitable for you.”

“No, I was just sitting here thinking about that.”

“Find her a position as a companion some other place, but don’t keep her here!”

She got up to take her leave. "That was all I wanted to tell you," she said. "How are you feeling otherwise?"

"Knives and scissors cut at my heart all day long," answered Mrs. Hede. "I am only alive as long as he is home. It is worse than usual, much worse this time. I won't last much longer."

Ingrid jumped; Mrs. Hede was ringing her bell. She had been fantasizing so vividly that she was surprised to find that Mrs. Hede was alone and that the black sleigh wasn't standing in front of the door.

She had rung for Stava, but she didn't come. She asked Ingrid to go to her room and call her.

Ingrid went, but the little blue-striped room was empty. The girl decided to ask in the kitchen where Stava was, but before she opened the door, she heard Hede talking. She stopped; she couldn't bring herself to meet him.

But she struggled with herself. It wasn't his fault that he wasn't the one she had been expecting. She would try to do something for him. She should try and convince him to stay at home. Before, she hadn't had such an aversion to him. He wasn't that awful.

She bent over and looked through the keyhole.

Hede sat by the table and ate, in the same way he did at other places. The maids egged him on so they could hear the strange things he said.

They asked him whom he was going to marry.

Hede smiled; he was very pleased at being asked something like that. "Her name is Grave Lily, you know very well," he said.

No, the maid didn't know that she had such a fine name.

"But where is she from?"

"She doesn't have a home, and no land," said Hede. "She lives in my sack."

The girl said that was a strange home, and asked about her parents.

"She doesn't have a father or mother," said Hede. "She is as beautiful as a blossom; she has grown up in a garden."

He spoke with clarity, but when he tried to describe how fair his fiancée was, he got confused. He spoke a lot of words, but they were all mixed up. One couldn't follow his train of thought, but he was greatly pleased with his speech. He sat beaming and smiling.

Ingrid hurried away. She couldn't stand it. She couldn't do anything for him. He was repulsive to her.

She had barely gotten to the stairs when she felt new pangs of conscience. She had been given so many good things, and now she was unwilling to give anything in return.

In order to overcome her distaste, she tried to imagine Hede as a gentleman. How did he look, before, in fine clothes, with his hair combed back? She closed her eyes and thought about it. No, it was impossible! She couldn't see him as any different than he was now.

In that same moment, she saw the contours of her beloved's face near her. It hovered to her left, wonderfully clear.

The face didn't smile this time. His lips were quivering in pain, and a terrible suffering was inscribed in sharp lines at his mouth.

Ingrid stood still in the middle of the stairway looking at it. It was there, flickering lightly. Nothing more substantial than a sunspot reflected from cut glass in a chandelier, but as visible and as real. She thought about the vision she had just had, but this wasn't like that. This was real.

When she had looked at the face for a while, the lips started moving; they spoke, but she didn't hear a sound. She tried to see what they were saying, tried to read the words from his lips, like the deaf do, and it worked.

"Don't let me go!" said his lips. "Don't let me go!"

And the anguish with which this was said! If someone had been lying at her feet, begging for his life, it would not have affected her more. She was so moved she was shaking. It was the

most heart-wrenching thing she had experienced in her entire life. She had never believed that someone could plead for something with such desperate anguish.

Time and time again the lips bade: "Don't let me go!" And every time, the anguish grew deeper and deeper

Ingrid didn't understand anything, only stood still, gripped by an indescribable compassion.

She thought that it must be more than life itself that was at stake for this person; it had to be his soul as well.

His lips had stopped moving; they hung open in limp despair.

When his lips took on this slack expression, she let out a small cry and tumbled a little down the steps. She recognized the madman's face, as she had just seen it. "No, no, no!" she said. "It can't be so, it mustn't be; it can't. It isn't possible that it is him."

In that same instant the face was gone.

She sat for maybe a whole hour in the cold stairway and cried in hopeless despair. But at last, hope came to her, bright uplifting hope. She now dared to raise her head again.

Everything that had happened meant that she was supposed to save him. She was brought here for this reason. She would be given the great, great joy of saving him.

In the little parlor, Mrs. Hede was speaking with Stava. It sounded pitifully moving when she begged Stava to convince her son to stay a few more days.

Stava became cold and harsh. "I can ask him, all right," she said, "but you know that no one can get him to stay longer than he wants to."

"We have enough money. He doesn't need to go. Can't you tell him . . . ?"

At that moment Ingrid came in. The door opened silently for her. She glided through the room with light, swaying steps. Her eyes were shining as if they were looking at something wonderful, remote.

When Mrs. Hede saw her, she drew her eyebrows together a little bit. A desire to be mean, to cause pain, gripped her.

"Ingrid," she said, "come here! I must speak with you about your future."

The girl had collected her guitar and was on her way out of the room. She turned towards Mrs. Hede.

"About my future . . ." she said and brushed her forehead. "My future is already decided," she said with a little martyred smile. She went out of the room without saying anything else.

Mrs. Hede and Stava looked at each other in surprise. They started to deliberate about where the girl would be sent.

But when Stava came down to her room, Ingrid sat there and sang little melodies and played on her guitar. Hede sat across from her and listened with a luminous face.

## Chapter 8

Ever since Ingrid had recognized Gunnar Hede in the crazy man, she had thought of nothing other than curing him. But it was a difficult task, and she had no idea where to begin.

In the beginning, she only thought about trying to get him to stay home. That was easy enough. Just to hear her play the violin or guitar for a little while every day, he would sit patiently from morning until night and wait for her in Stava's room.

She thought that it would be a great step if she could get him to go into the other rooms. But he didn't dare to. She decided to shut herself up in a room and told him that he wouldn't hear any more music if he didn't come in. After she had stayed in there for two days, he started packing up his things to go away, and then she had to give up.

He had a great partiality for her and put her before anyone else, but he couldn't give up any of his fear for her.

She asked him to take off the sheepskin coat and walk around in a normal coat. He immediately did as she asked, but he went back to his old ways the next day. When she hid it from him, he came in with the farmhand's coat on, and so he might as well have his own.

He was always afraid and very careful that no one came too close to him. Not even Ingrid was allowed to sit right next to him.

One day she said to him that he had to promise her something: He had to stop curtsying to the cat. She wasn't asking him anything as difficult as not to curtsy to horses and dogs, but he couldn't really be afraid of a little cat.

"Yes," he said, "the cat is a goat."

"It can't be a buck or a goat," she said. "It doesn't have any horns." This made him happy. It was as though he finally had found a way to tell the difference between goats and other animals.

The next day he happened to see Stava's cat. "That goat doesn't have any horns," he said, and laughed proudly. He walked past it and sat down on the sofa to listen to Ingrid's music. But after a little while he became uneasy, and he got up and went over to the cat and curtsied.

Ingrid became wild with despair. She took him by the arm and shook him. He ran out the door and didn't show his face till the next day.

"Child, child," said Mrs. Hede. "You do what I do, try like I do. You are going to scare him so that he won't dare see you anymore. It is better to let him alone. We are satisfied with things as they are, as long as he stays home."

There wasn't anything else to do but sit and wring her hands in sorrow over the fact that a beautiful, amiable person would be forgotten inside of this lunatic.

Ingrid only wondered if she hadn't been brought here to do something more than sit and play her grandfather's melodies for him. Would it be like this forever? Would it never be any different?

She also used to tell him stories. And in the middle of one of the stories his face would clear, and he would say something wonderful and fine and beautiful. A sane person could never have thought of it. But that was all that was needed to raise her courage, and once again they were caught up in these endless attempts at a cure.

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It was late one afternoon, and the moon was on its way up. White snow lay on the ground, and on the lake there was gray, shimmering ice. The trees stood blackish brown, and the sky was burning red after the sunset.

Ingrid decided to go down to the water to go ice skating. She walked down a small footpath that had been trampled through the snow. Gunnar Hede followed after her. There was something subdued in his behavior, like a dog that follows its master.

Ingrid looked tired. There was no light in her eyes, and her skin was grayish and pale.

As she was walking, she started wondering if the disappearing day was pleased with itself, if it was in exultation that it had set fire to the large, burning-red sunset to the west.

She knew herself that it was not on this day or any other day she would have had reason to light a celebratory bonfire. During the entire month that had passed since she had recognized Gunnar Hede, she had achieved nothing.

Today she walked with great anguish. It was as though she would waste all of her love on this. She had started to forget the student and only think about the patient. Everything light and beautiful and playful disappeared from her love. It was only heavy, heavy seriousness.

She was completely overcome with despair as she wandered towards the lake. She didn't understand what should be done and felt that she had to give up altogether. God, God, to have

him walking after her, strong and healthy to look at and at the same time so hopelessly sick and incurable!

They were down by the lake, and she put on her ice skates. She wanted to convince him to go as well, and she put on his ice skates for him, but he fell down as soon as he set foot on the ice. He crawled to land and sat down on a rock, and she skated away from him.

Right in front of the rock where Gunnar Hede was sitting was a little island, overgrown with leafless birch and aspen, and behind it was the glowing evening sky that was still fiery red. The beautiful, light treetops raised themselves up into the red with such beauty that it was impossible not to notice.

It is usually the case that when one recognizes a place one recalls particular details, since you can't very well know how even the things you know best look from every angle and direction. In particular, Munkhyttan was recognizable by that little island. If you hadn't seen the house in many years, you would still have recognized it because of that little island and the way its dark tree crowns stretched towards the sunset.

Hede sat completely still and looked at the island, the light tree branches, and the gray ice that spread out in all directions.

It was the most familiar sight for him. There was nothing on the whole estate that he knew as well. Because, as mentioned, it was always that island that drew people's attention. Soon he was sitting and looking at the island without thinking about it, as one does with very familiar things. He sat for a long time and stared; nothing disturbed him, not a person, no wind, nothing unfamiliar. He didn't see Ingrid; she had rushed far out onto the ice.

There came such rest and calm over Gunnar Hede, the kind of calmness you feel when you feel at home. Comfort and calm flowed from the little island. It quieted the eternal uneasiness that tortured him.

Hede always thought that he walked among enemies and always thought about protecting himself. It had been many years since he had felt the kind of peace that allowed him to forget himself, but now it came to him.

While Gunnar Hede sat this way and thought about nothing, he started to make an entirely mechanical movement, as one does when one is in habitual situations. Since he sat there with the ice in front of him and his ice skates on, he stood up and started gliding out on the lake. He thought just as little about this, as one does about using a fork and spoon when eating.

He glided off towards the middle; it was the best surface for skating imaginable. He was far away from land before he noticed what he had done.

"Splendid ice," he thought. "I wonder why I didn't go out here earlier today."

"I was out all the more yesterday," he told himself. "I don't want to waste a day of my holidays."

It must have been because Gunnar Hede had done something that he had normally done before he got sick, that something of his former self had awakened in him. Thoughts and ideas that belonged to his old life started surfacing in his consciousness. And at the same time all of the thoughts that belonged to his sickness sank into oblivion.

As he usually did when he skated, he made a long swing out on the lake to go past a sharp point. He did it instinctively, but when he had come past the point, he knew that he usually skated out there in order to see if there was light in his mother's window.

"Now she thinks it is high time I came inside, but she will have to wait. The ice is too good."

Indefinable feelings of joy awoke in him, caused by the sensation of gliding across the ice and the beautiful evening. On such moonlit nights, one ought to go ice skating. He liked this gradual transition into night. The light still lingered, but the calm was already there. All the best of both night and day!

There was one more ice skater out on the ice. It was a young girl. He didn't know if he knew her, but he steered towards her to get a closer look. No, it was no one he knew, but he couldn't help saying a few words about how splendid the ice was as he went past her.

The stranger has to be a city girl; she definitely wasn't used to being spoken to suddenly. She had looked absolutely frightened when he said a few words to her. Of course, he was also strangely outfitted. He was dressed in full peasant garb.

No, he wouldn't frighten her off. He turned around and headed back out. The ice was big enough for the both of them.

But Ingrid was ready to scream from surprise. There he had come, grand and elegant, with his arms across his chest, the brim of his hat turned up, his hair swept back so that it didn't hang in front of his ears.

He had spoken with the voice of an educated man, with scarcely a hint of the Dalarna dialect.

She didn't give herself much time to think and headed towards land.

She came running into the kitchen. Didn't know how she was going to explain this concisely and clearly enough.

"Stava, the young master has come home!"

The kitchen was empty, both Stava and the girls were out. There was no one in Stava's room either. Ingrid rushed through the entire house, went into rooms where no one usually went, the whole time calling out: "Stava, Stava! The young master has come home!"

She was completely beside herself, still standing and yelling in the upstairs hallway even when the two girls, Stava, and Mrs. Hede had joined with her. She said the same thing over and over again, too shaken to be quiet.

None of them misunderstood what she was saying. All four of them stood there just as wild as she, faces twitching, with their hands shaking.

Ingrid turned from one to the other in despair. She was going to explain and give orders, but what had she intended to say? Oh that her senses would fail her! She looked beseechingly at Mrs. Hede. What was it, what did I want?

The old woman gave some orders with a low, trembling voice. She almost whispered. "Light the candles and a fire in the young master's room! Lay out the master's clothes!"

It wasn't the time or the place for Stava to quibble. But there was a certain hint of pride in her voice when she answered: "There is always a fire in the young master's room. The young master's clothes are always waiting for him."

"Ingrid, go up to your room," said the mistress of Munkhyttan.

The young girl did exactly the opposite. She went into the parlor, stood by the window, sobbing and shaking, unaware that she wasn't being quiet and still.

She impatiently brushed away the tears in her eyes so that she could look down at the snow-covered plain that stretched out from the house. As long as she wasn't crying, nothing could escape her in this bright moonlight. Then he came.

"There, there!" she called to Mrs. Hede. "He is walking briskly; he is running! Just come here and see!"

The mistress of Munkhyttan sat still by the fire. She didn't move. She strained to hear, as the others strained to see.

She asked Ingrid to be quiet, so that she could hear how he walked. Yes, yes, she would be quiet. Mrs. Hede would be able to hear how he walked. She gripped the window frame tightly, as if it would help her.

"You will be quiet," she whispered, "so that she can hear how he walks."

Mrs. Hede sat leaning forward, listening with her entire soul. Did she already hear his steps in the yard? Now she waited for him to head towards the kitchen. Ingrid could see that she didn't dare believe anything other than that he would go towards the kitchen. Did she hear how the main staircase was creaking? Did she hear that it was the door to the front hall that was being

opened? Did she hear with what speed he took off up the stairs to the second floor? Two, three steps at a time! Had his mother heard this? These were not the shuffling steps of a peasant, as they had been when he went out.

It was almost frightening to hear him come up to the parlor door. Both of them would have screamed if he had come in.

But he turned away, went across the hall and towards his own rooms.

Mrs. Hede sank back into the chair and closed her eyes. Ingrid thought that she would have liked to have died right then.

Without opening her eyes, she stretched out her hand. Ingrid crept forward and took it, and she drew her close. "Mignon, Mignon," she said. "It was the right name after all."

"No," she continued. "We must not cry now. We can't talk about this now. Take a stool and sit here by the fire! We shall remain calm, my dear. We will speak of something else. We have to be completely calm when he comes."

Hede came in after a half hour. Tea was waiting on the table, and the candles were lit. He was dressed quite differently; he looked like a gentleman. Ingrid and Mrs. Hede squeezed each other's hands hard.

They had sat and prepared for his arrival. It was impossible to know what he would say or do, said Mrs. Hede. He was always unpredictable. But the two of them would remain calm no matter what.

Ingrid had indeed become calm. A great, great feeling of bliss had seized her, and this had calmed her fears. She was like someone being taken up into heaven. She rested without care in the arms of angels carrying her upward, upward.

Hede did not seem confused in the slightest. "I am just coming in," he said, "to say that I have such a terrible headache, that I must go to bed right away. I felt it coming on when I was still down on the ice."

Mrs. Hede did not reply. It was so simple, but she could not have anticipated it. It took about a second for her to comprehend that he didn't know anything about his illness, that he was living in the past.

"But could I first have a cup of tea?" he said and looked a little surprised at the silence.

Mrs. Hede went up to the tea tray. He looked at her. "Have you been crying, Mother? Why are you so quiet?"

"We have been sitting and talking about a sad story, my young friend and I," said Mrs. Hede and pointed at Ingrid.

"Oh, forgive me!" he said. "I didn't see that we had a guest."

The young girl came into the light, as beautiful as someone who knows that heaven's gates will open for her in the next instant.

He greeted her stiffly. He clearly did not know who she was. His mother introduced them.

He looked fleetingly at Ingrid.

"I saw Miss Berg on the ice a while ago," he said.

He didn't know anything about her, had never spoken with her before.

## Chapter 9

A happy time had now come. Gunnar Hede wasn't exactly healthy, but those closest to him were happy enough to imagine he was on the mend. Much of his memory was still gone. He had no memory of long periods of his life. He could not play the violin, his knowledge was almost entirely gone, and his mind was very weak, so much that he really didn't want to read or write. But he was certainly much better: He wasn't afraid, he liked his mother, and he had taken back

the clothes and habits of a gentleman. Mrs. Hede and her entire household were understandably exultant.

Hede was in an excellent mood. He was happy and chatty the entire day, never brooded, avoided things he couldn't understand, never spoke about anything mentally taxing.

He entertained himself mostly with physical activity. He took Ingrid sledding and ice-skating; he didn't say much to her, but she enjoyed being able to go along. He was kind towards Ingrid, like he was with everyone, but not the least bit in love with her.

He brooded a great deal about his fiancée, why she hadn't written and things like that. But that concern also passed after a little while. He quickly brushed aside all depressing thoughts.

Ingrid didn't think that he could get better this way. One day, he would have to be forced to look inside himself, which he didn't dare do now. But she didn't dare force him to do it now, neither she nor anyone else. If he came to like her just a little, she thought that she would be able to do it then.

But she thought, first of all, they all needed a bit of happiness.

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Around this time, a little child died at the parsonage in Råglanda where Ingrid had been raised, and so, the gravedigger was going to prepare a grave for it.

The man was digging the grave close to the same place where they had dug one for Ingrid the previous summer. When he had come down a few feet in the ground he happened to expose a corner of her coffin.

The grave digger couldn't keep from smiling to himself, due to the fact that he had heard how the dead person, who was lying in this coffin, had appeared as a ghost. Supposedly on the same day as the funeral, she had screwed off the lid to the coffin, gotten out of the grave, and showed up at the parsonage. Well, the pastor's wife wasn't that well-liked right now, and the people of the district had liked having a story to tell about her.

The gravedigger thought that if only people knew how snugly the dead lie here in the ground, and how well the lids. . .

His train of thought was abruptly interrupted. On the corner that he had just exposed, the lid was lying a bit crooked, and one of the screws wasn't screwed in.

He didn't say anything, didn't think anything either, but he stopped digging for a while and whistled through the entire Värmland regiment's reveille, because he had been a soldier.

Then he thought that it was best to get to the bottom of things. It wasn't good for a gravedigger to have such thoughts about the dead—that they might arise and grow powerful on dark autumn nights. In all haste, he shoveled away more dirt. Then he started banging on the coffin with the shovel.

The coffin answered very clearly that it was empty, empty, empty.

Half an hour later, the gravedigger was standing in the parsonage. There was a lot of guessing and wondering. As far as they all could understand, the girl had been in the sack of the man from Dalarna. But where had she gone?

Mother Anna Stina was standing by the oven in the pastor's house, taking care of the baking of the bread for the new funeral feast. She stood for a long time and listened quietly to everyone talking, without saying a word. She just took care of the baking, making sure it didn't burn, shuffling the baking sheets in and out of the oven every instant, so she was dangerous to approach because of the long bread paddle. Then, all of a sudden, she took off her apron, wiped most of the sweat and soot from her face, and went in to see the pastor, almost before she knew what she was doing.

It was no wonder after all this, that one day in March, a little red pastor's sleigh painted with green tulips, and a little reddish-brown rectory horse stopped outside the steps to Munkhyttan.

Of course, Ingrid had to come home to her mother. The pastor had come to fetch her. He didn't say much about them being happy that she was alive and that sort of thing. But one could see by looking at him that he was greatly pleased. He had not been able to forgive himself for not having been kind enough to his foster daughter, and now he was beaming with happiness about being able to start over with her and make it better this time.

Not a word was said about why she had run away. Why bring up such things only to torment oneself after such a long time? But Ingrid understood that the pastor's wife had had a rough time and had been plagued with a bad conscience, and that they wanted to have her back in order to be kind towards her. She understood that she was almost forced to go home to the parsonage to show that she didn't bear any ill will towards her foster parents.

Everyone thought it was natural that she should go home for a week or two. Why shouldn't she? She couldn't use the excuse that she was needed here. She could probably stay away for a few weeks without causing Gunnar Hede any harm. It was difficult for her, but it was probably best that she went when everyone seemed to want her to.

It is possible that she wanted them to ask her to stay. She sat down in the sleigh with the feeling that Mrs. Hede or Stava would come and lift her out again and carry her back inside. It was completely impossible to grasp that she was riding down the allée, through the woods, and that Munkhyttan was disappearing behind her.

But could it be that they didn't want to keep her there out of the sheer kindness of their hearts? They might think that a young, lively girl would want to leave the loneliness of Munkhyttan, that she had tired of watching over a madman. She lifted her hand and wanted to grab the reins to try and turn the horse. It occurred to her now that she was miles from the house that maybe this is why they had let her go. She wanted to go back and ask them.

It was like trying to find your way through a confusing forest, living with all of the great muteness that surrounded her. No one gave her answers or advice. She got as much of a response from pine trees and spruce, squirrels and owls as she did from people.

\*

It didn't really matter how she was treated back at the parsonage. She thought she was treated well, but, as already mentioned, it didn't matter. Even if she had been in a castle or an enchanted garden, it wouldn't have mattered. There is no bed soft enough for one who yearns.

In the beginning she had asked every day, as humbly as possible, if they might let her go back now that she had had the great pleasure of seeing her mother and her siblings again. But then the roads were in a terrible state. She just had to wait until the frost had left the ground. It wasn't a matter of life and death for her to go back to that place.

It was hard for Ingrid to understand why it irritated people when she said that she wanted to go back to Munkhyttan. It was like that with both her mother and father and all of the other people in the district. One shouldn't long for any other place in the world when one is in Råglanda.

She found out that it was best if she didn't even mention leaving. There was an endless stream of obstacles as soon as she mentioned it. It wasn't enough for them that the road was still wretched. They put up fences, and walls, and moats around her. She was to knit coverlets, weave, and plant in the flowerbeds. Of course she wouldn't want to go away before the big birthday celebration at the rectory! She couldn't go before Karin Landberg had her wedding!

There was nothing else to do, but lift up her hands to the spring sky and ask it to hurry up with its work. Just ask for sunshine and warmth, just beg the kind sun that she turn her attention to the border woods, send in small sharp beams through the trees to melt the snow under them. Dear, dear, sun, it doesn't matter if the snow is melted in the valley, as long as the mountains are bare, as long as the forest paths become passable, as long as the girls move out to the shielings, as long as the swamps dry up, as long as the shortest road to Munkhyttan becomes passable.

Ingrid knew who wouldn't wait for a ride or beg for travel money just as long as the forest paths were passable. She knew just who would leave the parsonage on a bright night, knew who would do this without asking a single soul for permission.

She thought that she had longed for spring before. It was something that everyone did—wait for the spring. But Ingrid now knew that she had never longed for it before. Oh no, oh no, what she had felt before didn't deserve to be called longing!

Before she had waited for green leaves and anemones and thrush song and cuckoo calls. That was childishness and nothing else. Anyone just thinking of beauty was not longing for spring. One should take and kiss the first piece of earth that sticks up from the snow. One should pick the first shriveled nettle leaf, just to feel the burn on your skin and know that it is now spring.

Everyone was profoundly kind towards her. Even though she never said anything, they couldn't escape the thought that she was always thinking about leaving.

"I can't understand why you want to go back to that place and watch over that lunatic," said Karin Landberg one day. It was as though she had read Ingrid's mind.

"Oh, she has gotten that out of her head now!" said the pastor's wife before the girl could answer.

When Karin had left, the pastor's wife said: "People are wondering about that—you wanting to leave us." Ingrid was silent. "They say that when Hede became better, you fell in love with him."

"Oh no, not since he became better," said Ingrid, and she wanted to laugh.

"Yes, well, regardless, he can't be worth marrying," said her foster mother. "Father and I have spoken about it, and we think that it would be better for you to stay here with us."

"It is kind of you that you want me to stay," said Ingrid. She was probably moved by them wanting to be so kind towards her.

They didn't believe her, regardless of how resigned she became. She didn't know by which sign they could divine her longing. Now her foster mother had said that she wasn't allowed to go there again. But the pastor's wife wasn't satisfied with that.

"They could send for you, if they needed you there," she said.

Ingrid almost laughed again. It would be the strangest thing indeed if a letter came from an enchanted castle. She wondered if her foster mother believed that the elf king would send for his captive once she had hidden at her mother's.

But if her foster mother only knew how many messages she got! It would make her head spin.

Messages came in her dreams at night, and messages came to her in visions during the day. He let Ingrid know that he needed her. He was so sick, so sick.

She knew that he was going crazy again, and that she had to go to him. If someone had told her the news, she would have immediately replied that she already knew.

Her large, starry eyes looked farther and farther away. No one seeing that expression could expect her to remain calm and sitting pretty at home.

It isn't very hard to look at a person and see whether she is content or yearning for something else. You only need to see a little glimmer of happiness in her eyes when she comes from her work or when she is sitting by the fire. But there was no glimmer of happiness in Ingrid's eyes, except when she saw the mountain stream dancing out of the forest. It was paving the way for her.

It happened one day that Ingrid sat alone with Karin Landberg, and she started to tell her about her life at Munkhyttan. Karin was horrified. How could Ingrid put up with all of that?

As previously mentioned, Karin Landberg was getting married. She was now at that point when she could talk of nothing other than her fiancé. She knew nothing that he hadn't taught her, and she couldn't do anything without asking him first.

Then Karin realized that Olof had said something that she could use to discourage Ingrid

just in case Ingrid had started to like the lunatic. Karin started telling Ingrid how crazy Hede had really been. Olof had told her that when he was at the market last autumn, a few men said that the Goat wasn't crazy at all—he just pretended to be in order to attract customers. But Olof had claimed that he was crazy. In order to prove it he had gone over to the livestock vendors and bought a wretched little goat. Olof only had to put the goat in front of Hede on the table where he had his knives laid out, and Hede ran away from both his wares and his sack. Everyone laughed terribly at how scared he was. It wasn't possible for Ingrid to care about someone who was that crazy.

It was quite possibly careless of Karin Landberg not to look up at Ingrid's face while she was telling this story. If she had seen how her eyebrows drew together, she might have been warned.

“And you want to marry someone who has done something like that!” said Ingrid. “I think it would be better to marry the Goat himself.”

Ingrid expressed herself quite clearly and firmly, and this was unusual for Ingrid, who was normally so mild-mannered, to say something so harsh, it cut right to Karin's heart. She worried for several days afterward that Olof wasn't everything she wanted him to be. It totally soured Karin's life, until she decided to tell Olof all about it, and then he was noble enough to comfort her and alleviate her concerns.

It isn't easy to wait for the spring in Värmland. It can be sunny and warm in the evening and still the ground might be white with snow the next morning. The gooseberry bushes and lawns were green, but the birch woods stood bare and stubborn, not wanting to bud.

By Pentacost it was spring in the valley, but Ingrid's prayers hadn't helped. Not a single girl had been sent to the shielings in the woods, not a single marsh was dry, and there was no way to get through the forest.

That Sunday, both Ingrid and her foster mother were at church. It was such an important holiday that they were allowed to ride in a wagon. In the past, Ingrid had enjoyed driving into the churchyard at full speed while those who stood by the stone wall and by the roadside took off their hats and greeted them, and those who stood in the middle of the road had to jump out of the way as if they were completely overwhelmed. Nowadays nothing made her happy. “Longing takes the scent from the rose and the shine from the full moon,” as the saying goes.

But Ingrid liked what she heard in church. It was good to hear that the disciples were comforted in their longing through a joyful miracle. She liked how Jesus comforted those who were so desperate in their longing for him.

While Ingrid and everyone else sat in the church, a tall man from Dalarna came walking down the road. He had a fur coat on and that heavy pack on his back like someone who can't tell the difference between winter and summer, weekdays and holidays. He didn't go inside the church, but sneaked anxiously past the horses tied up alongside the road and into the churchyard.

He sat on a grave and thought about all of the dead people that still slept, and about one who had woken to life. He was still sitting there when people came out of the church.

Karin Landberg's Olof was one of the first out of the church, and when he happened to glance over at the cemetery, he saw the man from Dalarna. It is hard to say if it was curiosity or something else that drove him, but he went over to speak with the man. He wanted to see if it was possible that he, who was supposed to be cured, was crazy again.

It was quite possible. He immediately explained to the young man that he sat there waiting for someone named Grave Lily. She was supposed to come and play for him. She could play so that the sun danced and the stars frolicked.

Then Karin Landberg's Olof said to him that the one he was waiting for was standing over by the churchyard. All he had to do was stand up, and he could see her standing over there. She would probably be happy to see him.

The pastor's wife and Ingrid were about to sit down in the wagon when a tall man from Dalarna hurried over to them. He came quickly, despite all of the horses that he had to curtsy for, and he waved eagerly at the young girl.

As soon as Ingrid saw him, she stood completely still. She couldn't say if she was more happy about seeing him than in despair about him being crazy again. She forgot everything else in the world.

Her eyes started shining. In that moment, she didn't see the poor, unfortunate person. She only felt the presence of the beautiful soul she had longed herself sick over.

There were church people all around, and they all had to look at her. No one could take their eyes off her face. She didn't make a move to go towards him; she just stood still and waited for him. But those who saw how she shined with happiness could almost believe that it was some great and wonderful person who came towards her and not a madman.

Later they said that it was almost as though there had been a connection between his soul and hers, a secret connection so deeply unconscious, human reason couldn't fathom it.

But when Hede was only a few steps away from Ingrid, her foster mother grabbed her firmly, plucked her up, and set her in the wagon. She didn't want a meeting between the two of them here in the churchyard, in front of so many people. As soon as they were up in the wagon, the farmhand put the horses in full gallop.

A few awful, wild howls sounded after them. The pastor's wife thanked God that she had been able to get the girl into the wagon.

It wasn't much later in the afternoon before a farmer came to the parsonage to speak with the pastor. He came to talk about the crazy man from Dalarna. He had gone completely insane now; they had to tie him up. What was the pastor's advice? What should they do with him?

The pastor didn't have any advice other than that they should take him home. He told the farmer who he was and where he lived.

Later that night, he explained everything to Ingrid. It was best to tell her the truth so that she would let common sense rule.

But when night came, she realized that she didn't have time to wait for spring. She left, poor girl, to take the main road to Munkhyttan. She would still get there, even though she knew the way was twice as long as the forest paths.

## Chapter 10

It was the day after Pentecost in the afternoon. Ingrid was walking along the main road. It was a sunny area: small, low hills and small patches of birch forest between the fields and sometimes in them. There were flowers of rowanberry and bird cherry, light, resinous leaves on the aspen; the ditches on the sides of the road were filled with clear, murmuring water, so the newly washed stones on the bottom were glittering and shining.

Ingrid went along and grieved over him—he who had become crazy again. She wondered if she was going to be able to do something for him, wondered if it would be any use that she had run away like this.

She was hungry and tired; her shoes were already starting to fall apart. She thought that the best thing to do would be to turn back. She would probably never make it there.

She became more and more distressed the longer she wandered. She couldn't help wondering if there was any point to coming now that he had gone completely crazy. It was too late; there was no hope of doing anything now.

But as soon as she had thought about turning around, she saw Hede's face next to her cheek, just as she had seen it so often before. Then she had renewed hope, believed that he called for her, felt a strong certainty and reassurance that she would probably be able to cure him.

Just as Ingrid raised her head and looked a little less distressed, she met up with some strange companions.

A little horse was coming, pulling a little cart, and on the cart sat a fat woman, and beside the cart, was a thin, worn man with a long mustache.

Out here in the country, where no one understood artists, Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren always tried to look like simple, ordinary people. The little cart, which they drove around with, was well covered. No one would suspect that it contained fireworks, magic tricks, and puppets.

No one could know that the fat lady who sat high up on the load and looked like a rich matron was the former Miss Viola, who at one time had flown through the air. Or that the man who walked there, looking much like a discharged soldier, was the same Mr. Blomgren who sometimes would break up the monotony of the journey by doing somersaults over the horse and throwing his voice for the thrushes and finches by the road so that the birds went crazy.

The horse was a small, small little fellow who used to pull a carousel; that is why he never moved without music. Therefore Mrs. Blomgren most often sat up on the cart playing a harmonica, but as soon as they met someone, she put it in her pocket so no one would suspect that they were artistic types of the sort country folk have no respect for. In this manner they didn't get very far, but they weren't in any hurry.

The blind fiddler had to wander a little ways behind the others so that he wouldn't give away the fact that he was part of the group. The blind man had a little dog as his guide; he wasn't allowed to be led around by a child. It would have constantly reminded Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren of a little girl named Ingrid. It would have been too painful.

Now they were all out in the county because of spring. Regardless of the good earnings they could have in the cities, Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren had to get out in the country this time of year. They were artists, Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren.

They didn't recognize Ingrid, and she went past them first without saying hello because she was in a hurry and afraid of being delayed. But she soon thought that this was mean and heartless and turned back.

If Ingrid had been capable of happiness then, the old people's delight at the meeting would have done the trick. There was a long conversation of terrible gibberish. The little horse turned its head time and again to see if the carousel had broken.

Strangely enough, it was Ingrid who spoke the most. The old people saw right away that she had been crying, and they became so concerned that she was forced to tell them about all of her misfortunes and adventures.

It was a relief for Ingrid to explain because the old people had their special way of taking everything. They clapped their hands when she told them how she had come out of the grave, and when she told them how she had frightened the pastor's wife.

They caressed and praised her because she had left the parsonage. Nothing heavy or worrisome existed for them, instead everything was light and full of hope.

They didn't have any way of measuring reality; that is why they were so immune to its harshness. They compared everything they heard with puppet shows and melodramas. A little bit of sorrow and misery also had a place melodrama, but only in order to increase the impact. Naturally everything would be fine. Everything ended well in such plays.

There was something contagious about all of this optimism. Ingrid knew that they didn't understand how great her misfortune was, but it cheered her just to listen to them.

But Ingrid also received real help from them. They told her that they had eaten dinner at Torsåker's Inn a little while ago and, just when they had gotten up from the table, some farmers came driving into the yard with a madman. Mrs. Blomgren couldn't stand seeing madmen, and wanted to leave immediately, so Mr. Blomgren had obliged her. But think, what if it was Ingrid's madman! They had no sooner told her than Ingrid said it probably was him and wanted to leave.

But then Mr. Blomgren asked his wife in his formal way: weren't they there solely and entirely for the sake of spring, and did it matter where they went? And old Mrs. Blomgren asked

with just as much pathos if he could imagine that she would abandon their darling Ingrid before she had achieved her life's happiness?

So, the carousel horse was turned around, and it became more difficult to talk because the harmonica had to be played. As soon as Mrs. Blomgren wanted to say something she had to hand over the instrument to Mr. Blomgren, and when Mr. Blomgren wanted to talk he handed it back to his wife. The little horse stopped every time the harmonica was switched from mouth to mouth.

They had only comforting things to say to Ingrid the entire time. They brought up all of the stories that they had seen performed in the puppet theater. They comforted her with "Sleeping Beauty," and they comforted her with "Cinderella." They comforted her with all the stories in the world.

Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren examined Ingrid when they saw her eyes start to light up a little bit. "Artist's eyes!" they said and nodded in satisfaction at each other. "What did we say? Artist's eyes!"

In some indefinable way they had discovered that Ingrid had come to be one of them—an artist. They thought that she was acting in a drama. It was a triumph in their old age.

They traveled as quickly as they could. The old pair was only worried that Ingrid's madman wouldn't be at the inn when they got there.

But he was still there, and even worse was that no one knew how to get him out of there.

Both of the farmers from Råglanda who had come there with him had locked him in one of the guestrooms while they were waiting for a horse. When they left him, he had been tied with his arms behind his back, but, however he had managed it, he had been able to get his hands loose from the ropes, and when they had come to get him, he had stood there free and unrestrained. In a complete rage, he had grabbed a chair to use as a weapon to hit them. They had only had enough time to get out and bar the door. Now the farmers were walking around waiting for the innkeeper and his boys to come home so that there would be enough of them to tie him up again.

The hope that Ingrid's old friends had kindled in her was not extinguished. She understood that Hede was worse than ever, but she still had hope. It wasn't their stories, but it was their great kindness that had brought her hope.

She asked to be let in to the room with Hede. She said that she knew him and that he wouldn't hurt her. But the farmers replied that they weren't that crazy. The man in there would kill anyone who came in and couldn't defend themselves.

Ingrid sat quietly for a long time and thought. She thought about how wonderful it was that just today she happened to meet Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren. There had to be some purpose to it. They wouldn't have come her way if there hadn't been some purpose to it.

Ingrid started thinking about how Hede had gotten better the last time. Couldn't she get him to do something now that would remind him of something familiar, that would lead him away from his crazy thoughts? She thought and thought.

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Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren sat on a bench outside the inn and looked unhappier than anyone could have thought possible. They were almost ready to start crying.

Then she went over to them, dear, sweet Ingrid, and smiled at them in such a way as only she could. She caressed their wrinkled cheeks and asked them if they would make her happy by letting her see a performance like the ones she used to see every day once upon a time. It would be a great comfort to her.

Well, they said no at first because they just weren't in a happy artistic frame of mind, but when she treated them to a few more smiles, they could not refuse her. They went out to the cart and unpacked their costumes.

When they were ready, and when the blind man had been called for, Ingrid chose the place for the performance. She didn't want them to perform in the front yard, instead she took them into the inn's garden, because there was a garden right next to the inn. Most of it was just

naked herb beds, where nothing had come up, but here and there stood a blooming apple tree. Ingrid said that she wanted to see them perform under one of the blooming apple trees.

A few peasant boys and girls came running when they heard the violin, so there was a small audience. But it was just too difficult for Mr. and Mrs. Blomgren to perform. Ingrid asked too much of them. They were much too distressed.

It was unfortunate that Ingrid had taken them over to the garden-side of the inn. This is the direction that the guest rooms faced, and Ingrid probably hadn't thought about that. Mrs. Blomgren was ready to run off when she heard a window open violently to one of the guest rooms. What if the madman should hear the music, and what if he were to jump out of the window and come down to them!

But Mrs. Blomgren calmed down when she saw who was standing at the window. It was a young man of agreeable appearance. He was wearing a shirt with no coat, but in general he was dressed quite properly. His expression was calm, he was smiling, and with his hand he brushed the hair from his forehead.

Mr. Blomgren was working and concentrating so much on the performance that he didn't notice anything. Mrs. Blomgren, who didn't have to do anything except throw kisses at the crowd, could pay attention to everything.

Wasn't it amazing how the child, Ingrid, had now lit up all of a sudden? Her eyes were bright like never before, and her face had become so white that she really shone. All of this radiance was directed towards the man up in the window.

He didn't stand and ponder any longer, but stepped up on the windowsill and jumped down to them. He went up to the blind man and asked if he could borrow his violin.

Ingrid immediately took the violin from the blind man and handed it to the stranger. "Play the waltz from the Freischütz," she said.

The stranger started to play, and Ingrid smiled, but at the same time she looked so heavenly that Mrs. Blomgren thought she would dissolve into a sunbeam and fly away from them.

But when Mrs. Blomgren heard the stranger play, she recognized him. "Yes," she said to herself. "Yes, it is him. Oh, that is why she wanted us old folk to perform."

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Gunnar Hede, who had gone into his room so angry he had wanted to kill someone, had thus heard a blind man play outside his window. This had taken him back to an episode from his past.

He started to wonder where his own violin was, and then he remembered that Ålin had taken it with him, and now there was nothing else for him to do but to ask if he could borrow the blind man's violin and play until he became calm. He was so terribly shaken.

As soon as he had the blind man's violin in his hands, he started to play. It didn't occur to him that he wouldn't be able to play. He had no idea that during the past several years he had been able to play nothing more than a few poor melodies.

He was absolutely caught in the notion that he was in Uppsala outside the house with the Virginia creeper. He expected the performers to start dancing as they had done the last time.

Hede tried to play livelier tunes in order to get them to dance, but his fingers were stiff and stubborn, and the bow didn't want to obey him. He worked so hard that drops of sweat appeared on his forehead. Finally he got to the right song, the one they had danced to the last time. He played it so appealingly, so seductively, that it really could melt one's heart.

But the old acrobats did not start dancing. It had been a long time since they had seen Hede in Uppsala. They didn't remember how they had become enchanted that time. They had no idea what he expected them to do.

Hede turned towards Ingrid looking for an answer as to why the performers weren't dancing. In the same moment he saw her eyes beaming, as radiantly as they were back then, he

became so surprised that he stopped playing.

He stood there for a moment and looked around the group. They all fixed him with strange, uneasy glances.

It was impossible to play when people were staring this way. He quite simply walked away from them. He saw a group of blooming apple trees far off in the garden. This is where he went.

He surely saw that nothing fit with the notion he had just had—that Ålin had locked him in and that he was in Uppsala. The garden was too large, and the house was not covered with red vine leaves. No, this couldn't be Uppsala.

But he really didn't care where he was. He felt like he hadn't played in ages and now he had gotten hold of a violin. Now he would play.

He put the violin up to his chin and started. Again he was hindered by the stiff movement of his fingers. He could only produce the simplest of tunes.

"Here, I will definitely be starting over from the beginning," he said. He smiled and started playing a little minuet. It was the first one he had learned. His father had played it first, and he had played afterwards by ear. He immediately saw the whole scene in front of him. He heard the words, "The little prince was going to dance, but he broke his little foot."

Then he tried other small dance tunes, the ones he had played as a schoolboy. He had been urged to come to the girls' boarding school and play for their dance rehearsals. He saw the little girls jumped and turned around and heard how the dance teacher tapped the beat.

Now he started to become bolder. He played the first note of one of Mozart's violin quartets. When he had learned it, he had been in high school in Falun. It had happened that some old men had practiced the quartet for a concert. The first violin had become sick, and he had been allowed to take over the part, as young as he was. He had been a little proud then.

Gunnar Hede really didn't think about anything else except getting his fingers to work correctly when he played these childish exercises. But he soon noticed that something wonderful was happening to him.

He had a clear sense that inside his mind there was a great darkness, something that hid his past. As soon as he tried to remember something, it was like trying to find it in a dark room. But when he played, part of the darkness fell away. Without realizing it, so much of the darkness had disappeared that he could now remember his childhood and school days.

Now he decided to let the violin lead; maybe it could drive away all of the darkness.

Such was the case: for every part that he played, a little crumb of the concealing darkness fell away. The violin drew him forward from year to year, reminded him of his studies, his friends, his pastimes. The darkness stood tightly in front of him, but when he went towards it, armed with the violin, it disappeared step by step. Sometimes he looked behind himself to see if it had closed in behind him. But it was only clear day behind him.

The violin played a series of duets for violin and piano. He only played a few bars of each of them. Then the darkness retreated a bit, and he remembered his fiancée, the time of their engagement.

He would have liked to have lingered there a while, but there was still a lot of darkness to play away. He didn't have time.

He then came upon a hymn. He had heard it one time when he had been sad. He remembered that he had been sitting in a country church when he heard it, but why had he been sad? Because he was a poor peddler selling his wares in town. It was a hard life. It was difficult to remember.

The bow flew like a whirlwind over the strings and, again, a large patch of darkness crumbled away. He saw the great woods, the animals covered in snow, the shapes that the snow drifts made over them. He remembered his trip to see his fiancée and how she had broken the engagement. All of this suddenly became clear to him.

He didn't feel happiness or sorrow over any of what he remembered. The important thing was that he remembered; remembering was an endless pleasure in itself.

After this, the bow stopped of its own accord. It didn't want to take him any farther. And still there was more, much more, he needed to remember. Even yet, the darkness stood like a solid wall in front of him.

He forced the bow to continue. It played two small insignificant melodies, the most pathetic he had ever heard. How had his bow learned anything like this?

The darkness didn't budge at all before these melodies. They didn't tell him anything. But from them grew an anguish the likes of which he had never known. An insane, terrible fear: the soul's, the fallen spirits' unreasoning horror.

He stopped playing; he couldn't stand it. What was in these melodies; what was it?

The darkness did not retreat before them. And the horrible thing was that he thought that as soon as he stopped resisting the darkness with his violin, pushing it before him, the shroud of darkness came rushing back towards him and sought to envelop him.

He had stood and played with his eyes half closed; now he opened his eyes and looked out into the world of reality. Then he saw Ingrid, who had stood there and listened to him the entire time.

He asked her, without expecting an answer, only so that he could fend off the darkness for one moment.

"When did I play this last?"

But Ingrid only stood there shaking. She stood with her decision made. Regardless of how it went, he would now know the truth. Regardless of how it went, she would tell him.

She was afraid, but brave, in any case, and endlessly resolute. He could not avoid her now. He would not be allowed to slip away from her.

But despite all this courage, she didn't dare tell Hede directly that these were the melodies he used to play while he was crazy; she sidestepped the question.

"You used to play them at home at Munkhyttan this past winter," she said.

There were many secrets surrounding Hede. Why did this girl address him so familiarly? She wasn't a peasant; she wore her hair like a lady, swept up and crowned with small curls. Her dress was homemade, but she wore a fine lace collar around her neck. Her skin was white, and her hands were small. The beautiful face with the dreamy eyes didn't seem to belong to a peasant girl. Hede's memory couldn't tell him anything about her. Then why did she address him so familiarly? How did she know that he had played this at home?

"What is your name?" he said. "Who are you?"

"I am Ingrid, whom you saw in Uppsala many years ago, and whom you comforted because I couldn't learn how to dance on the tightrope."

This referred to a part of the past that had already cleared for Hede. He remembered her well.

"How you have grown and become beautiful, Ingrid!" he said. "How fine you are! What a splendid brooch you have!" He had sat looking at her brooch a long time now. He seemed to recognize it; it was much like a brooch of enamel and pearls that had belonged to his mother.

The girl answered quickly: "I received the brooch from your mother. You have probably seen it before."

Hede now put down the violin and walked over to Ingrid. He asked with great force: "How is it possible? How can you be wearing her brooch? Why don't I know that you know my mother?"

Ingrid grew frightened; her face turned gray with terror. She knew what the next question would be.

"I don't know anything, Ingrid. I don't know why I am here. I don't know why you are here. Why don't I know this?"

"Oh, no, don't ask me!" She pulled away and threw up her hands as if for protection.

“Do you not want to say?”

“Don’t ask, don’t ask!”

He grabbed her tightly around the wrists in order to force the truth. “Just tell me! I am of perfectly sound mind. Why are there things that I don’t remember?”

She saw something wild and threatening in his eyes. He knew already what she was going to tell him. She felt that it was an impossible thing to tell a person that they had been crazy. It was much harder than she thought it would be. Impossible; it was impossible.

“Say it!” he repeated. But she heard in his voice that he didn’t want to hear it. He could kill her if she told him.

Then she called upon all of her love and looked Gunnar Hede straight in the eyes and said: “You haven’t been entirely sane.”

“For a long time?”

“I don’t really know. Maybe three, four years . . .”

“Been completely crazy?”

“No, of course not! You have bought and sold and stood at the markets.”

“How was I crazy then?”

“You were afraid.”

“Of what was I afraid?”

“Of animals. . . .”

“Of goats, maybe?”

“Yes, mostly it was goats.”

Hede had stood and held her tightly by her wrists this entire time. Now he cast her hands away rather violently. He turned away from Ingrid, raging in fury, as if she had nastily imparted some malicious slander.

But that feeling was replaced by one that upset him even more. As clearly as if it had been painted, he saw in front of him a tall man from Dalarna, bent under an enormous sack. He intends to enter a farmer’s cottage, but a miserable dog comes out towards him. He stops, curtsies and curtsies, and doesn’t dare go in before a man comes out of the cottage laughing and drives away the dog.

When he saw this, the terrible anguish came back to him.

In the midst of this anguish the vision disappeared, but now there were voices. There was yelling and screaming around him. Laughter, insults were flying high. Shrill children’s voices yell the most gruesome and terrible things. There is one word, a name, that is repeated, yelled, screamed, whispered, ringing in his ears: “The Goat! The Goat!”

All of this had to do with him, Gunnar Hede! He had lived this. As a sane man, he felt the same unspeakable fear that he had born as a lunatic. But now, he wasn’t afraid of something external; now he was afraid of himself.

“This is me. This has been me,” he said and wrung his hands. In the next moment, he fell to his knees in front of a small bench, bent over it and wept, wept.

“And this has been me!” He lamented between sobs. “This has been me!”

Did he have the courage to bear that thought? A ridiculed, scorned madman!

“Oh, let me be crazy again!” he said and hit the bench hard. “A person can’t survive this.”

He held his breath for a moment. The darkness came towards him like a prayed-for savior. It came sweeping towards him, like the fog rolls in. He had a smile on his lips. He felt how his features slackened and how he regained the look of a madman.

This was better. The other could not be born or endured. Pointed at, laughed at, ridiculed, mad! No—better to be crazy again and not know it. Why should he return to his life? Everyone must loathe him.

The darkness enveloped him with its first, light, drifting veils.

Ingrid stood there, saw and heard his anguish, and realized that everything would soon be lost all over again. She saw very well that the madness was taking hold of him again.

She was completely terrified; all courage was gone. But before he went crazy again, and became so afraid that no one could come near him, she at least wanted to say goodbye to him and her happiness.

Hede felt how Ingrid came and kneeled next to him, put her arm around his neck, her cheek next to his, and kissed him.

She did not consider herself too good to come near him, the madman, nor too good to kiss him!

A faint hissing could be heard in the darkness. The flickering wisps of darkness retreated and seemed to become snakes, aiming straight at him, hissing in fury over not being able to bite him.

“Don’t take it so hard!” said Ingrid. “Don’t take it so hard! No one will think about all of that, if only you get well again.”

“I want to be crazy again,” he said. “I can’t endure this. I can’t go around thinking about the way I was.”

“Of course you can,” Ingrid said.

“No one can forget it,” he complained. “I was so terrible. No one can like me.”

“I like you,” she said.

He looked up doubtfully.

“You kissed me so that I wouldn’t become crazy again. You feel sorry for me.”

“Oh, I don’t mind kissing you again,” she said.

“You are only saying that because I need to hear it.”

“Do you need to hear that someone likes you?”

“If I need to? God, if I need to? Oh child!” he said, pulling away from her. “How am I going to endure knowing that every person will think as soon as they see me: ‘He has been crazy. He curtsied for dogs and cats.’”

A new fit came over him. He lay crying with his head in his hands.

“It is better to go crazy again. I hear them taunting me, and I see myself. And there is so much anguish, anguish, anguish . . .”

Then Ingrid’s patience broke.

“That’s right,” she yelled, “go ahead and go crazy! It’s so manly of you to go crazy in order to avoid a little anguish.”

She sat biting her lip, fighting back the tears, and when she couldn’t spit out the words fast enough, she took him by the arm and shook him.

She was exasperated, beside herself with fury because he wanted to escape her again, because he wasn’t fighting and struggling.

“What do you care about me? What do you care about your mother? Be crazy then. Then you will have it easy!”

She shook him again.

“To escape the anguish, you say. Never mind the anguish of the one who has been waiting for you all her life and you never come! If you cared for anyone but yourself, you would fight this illness and become well. But you don’t care about anyone.

“You can be so beautiful and moving in those visions and dreams where you ask for help, but in reality you don’t want any help. You just imagine that your suffering is the greatest on earth. But there are others who have it worse than you.”

Hede looked up finally and looked her fully and deeply in the eyes. She wasn’t exactly pretty right then. Tears were streaming, and she was grimacing when she tried to force out the words between sobs.

But it was beautiful for him to see her so wild. A strange calm came over him, and a great humble gratitude. Here was something great and wonderful that had come to him at the moment of his ruin. This had to be great love, great love.

He sat complaining over his wretchedness, while love stood knocking at the door. He wouldn't be just tolerated if he came back. He wouldn't just be laughed at all the time.

Here was really someone who loved him, who longed for him. She spoke very harshly with him, but he heard love trembling in every word. He thought that she offered him thrones and kingdoms.

She told him that while he had been sick he had saved her life. He had woken her from the dead, taken her away, protected her. But it wasn't enough for her. She wanted him for herself.

When she had kissed him, he felt a sweet balm spread over his sick soul, but he still hadn't dared believe that it was love that motivated her. But he could not doubt her fury and her tears. He was loved, he, a poor, dreadful person, he, a poor monster.

And in the face of the great, humble bliss awakened in Hede, the rest of the darkness retreated. It was pushed aside like a heavy, rattling curtain, and he saw clearly before him the realm of terror through which he had wandered. But it was also there that he met Ingrid, where he lifted her out of the grave, where he played for her in the forest cottage, where she worked with him to cure him.

But not only the memory of her came back. At the same time the feelings that she had inspired in him were rekindled. He was filled with love. He felt the same burning desire he had felt near the church at Råglanda when she had been snatched away from him.

In the realm of terror, in the great desert, a flower had still grown that had comforted him with scent and color. Now he felt how love had persevered. The wild desert plant had led to life's Eden and had taken root, grown, and flourished. When he felt this, he knew that he was saved, that the darkness had found its conqueror.

Ingrid had become quiet. She was tired as after completing a difficult job, but she was also calm as if she had executed it in the best possible way. She knew that she had victory in her hands.

Hede finally broke the silence.

"I promise you that I will bear it," he said.

"Thank you!" she said.

Nothing more was said just then.

Hede didn't think he could tell her how much he loved her. It couldn't be put into words, only shown each day and every moment of a long life.