



South Tyrol – Land of Myths and Legends

A Siffian Servant Goes to Rosswagen

There was once a servant from Siffian who was a good and virtuous man. One summer night, he went up the mountain to Rosswagen in order to see for himself whether or not what the people of Ritten were saying was indeed true: that the devil and his royal entourage appear there, surrounded by witches. So he stood up there and waited.

As fatigue overcame him, he sat down on the stone. He did not know, however, that the stone was used in witchcraft: it was Satan's seat. The night was bright, and he began having all kinds of thoughts about how he could get rich with the help of Satan. Finally, after nothing happened for a long time, he got bored and started to yawn sleepily. The timing was perfect, because the clock at Gißmann struck twelve midnight just then. Now, it was a Thursday and the witches were thus commanded to Taiding (assembly), dense fog welled up from the depths and an eerie light penetrated the clouds. Just as Satan's trumpeter signalled the general march, which awakened the man; he came to just as the vanguard of the witch's squadron started riding up to Rosswagen.

The riders were almost all very young, and included many a well-known face: The first ones rode on black horses that hissed fiery vapour from their nostrils. Just behind galloped Barbara Pachlerin, the Witch of Sarntal, atop half a pig. To her right and left, the Witch of Pemmer – who was Satan's favourite witch because she was so bold – and the Dairymaid of Gasters scampered, each on a fiery broom; in their wake, the Schwarzhartner rode on a fleet-footed deer with incredibly long antlers.

Then the bailiff's wife of Lengmoos burst through, atop a horrible worm: the strangely twisted, knobby stick in her right hand heralded that the gentlewoman held an important role in Satan's entourage.

The procession the servant witnessed was endless. The leaders rose from their strange mounts, lined up around the stone upon which sat the servant of Siffian, and looked at the stranger with a hellish grin. Still, though, he remained seated. When the circle of fiends began to tighten around him, he grew feared that he might succumb to this throng from hell. He jumped up and through the hole that was still open in the witches' circle, and ran down the mountain path lightning quick – as if Rosswagen were only a stone's throw from Siffian.

The idea of getting rich, of course, was completely beaten out of his head.