



South Tyrol – Land of Myths and Legends

Huisele the Piper

There was once a little man living in Tulfes who went by the name of Huisele the Piper. He lived in a hut high up on the mountain, where the meadows were sparse and the trees looked quite bleak. Nevertheless, Huisele still got along quite well in the world. He had a covenant with the devil, knew all manner of black arts, and could transform himself as he wished. From this, he understood to live at other people's expense and to suffer no lack. He did even better for himself than many reputable farmers.

It was only one time that things went badly for him. It was a hot summer day, and Huisele was extremely thirsty. The sorcerer transformed into a fly, flew into the nearest farmhouse, and crept through the keyhole into the milk room, where there were a number of bowls of milk. The fly drank as much milk as he wanted – until he fell in the middle of the bowl and could not reach the edge. The farmer's wife, who had come up to get the servants their afternoon milk, suffered quite a fright. When she saw the fly wriggling in the milk, she reached in with her index finger and threw the animal on the ground. Back on solid ground, Huisele regained his strength and was able to make his escape.

Now between Oberlana and Tschermes, there is a rock face known as the Rafeinwand from whence ruinous water flows; it had repeatedly almost completely destroyed the farm estates of both of these two villages. There, Huisele the Piper was like a feared warlock: if he wanted to send a thunderstorm down to the people of the Adige, he would lead a pair of cats with the necessary water up over the Rafeinwand – a sight that the local residents had sometimes seen and much more often heard, because he would usually drive the cats pulling his cart whistling loudly, what the cats understood well. In fact, Huisele still practices his craft in the area even today – although not as frequently as before. If somebody hears loud whistling sounds coming from the Rafeinwand, he will immediately tell his neighbours, and they will be afraid because they know that a big thunderstorm is on its way. The people say "For what other reason would Huisele the Piper bring so much water over the wall if not to cause bad weather?"

Huisele often stayed in Pens as well, which is in Sarntal. In that valley, however, there was no water for the wizard to use except that from Lake Durnholz. But that was very far away: in order to fetch the water from the lake, Huisele had to go over a mountain that stretched all the way from Pens and Durnholz. The piper built himself a cart, loaded up his sieve basket (which is known in these parts as a Reiter) and hitched the cart to his two black cats, which pulled the cart to Durnholz Lake. There, he filled the baskets with water, and not a single drop ran through the holes, even if he had gone twice as far as it is from Durnholz Lake to Pens!

One day, Huisele was in an absolute rage – something had really set him off. When he arrived at the lake with his team of cats, so looking out of the valley, it struck him that

it would be a fabulous idea to submerge the whole of Sarntal, so that none of the valley's people could ever get in his way again. So he went back, and when he was on the mountain top, he said "Run water! Burn fire!" and made a lot of signs in the air. Immediately, a terrible storm came about: hail pelted down, as if someone were throwing down buckets of it, and lightning hit inside the houses here and there. But the bell at St. Johann im Walde tolled early enough and drove away the storm before it did any more damage. The warlock was extremely angry, but he had no more power so shouted furiously down into the valley: "If it weren't for the bell of Sarn, I would have flushed out the whole Sarntal Valley!"

At long last, the measure of Huisele's sins was full. Once, when he was haying high up on his mountain top meadow in Tulfes, the devil seized him and drove him into the valley. Even today, you can still see the enormous rift that the Prince of Darkness made when he took Huisele the Piper.