



## South Tyrol – Land of Myths and Legends

### Manz the Warlock

**M**anz was a vagabond, magician, beggar and con man all rolled into one and is said to have lived in Oberinn long ago. Once he was fuming mad at Val Sarentino (Sarntal) because someone who lived in that valley had insulted him. Now, he wanted to transform Val Sarentino into a lake in order to take revenge. To accomplish this, he wanted to create a landslide between Jenesian and Ritten that would close off Val Sarentino. He started up the magic in earnest: it pulled pitch-black clouds forth from every corner of the world, lightning flash struck upon lightning flash, and there was so much thunder and rain that people reckoned Judgement Day was upon them.

When the bright day had suddenly become dark night, storm-warning bells began to peal in all the neighbouring towers – and the clouds, lightning, hail and thunder were forced out of the valley and over the mountains! Manz was furious when he saw his plans had been thwarted, and said:

“The Devil take  
The Plattlerin of Jenesian,  
The town bull of Pauls,  
The Lövotsch of Langfenn and  
The goat bells of Wangen!”

Then he went away, angry. At Schwarzegg and Ritten, you can still see chasms today that that resulted from those storms. They even still say to disobedient children: “If you don’t behave, Manz will come.”

One time, this well-known practitioner of the Black Arts was staying on the Avelengo (Hafling) alpine pasture and did all sorts of magic. He mowed a lawn in an instant and cropped bushes and rocks as thin as blades of grass. He mowed a dengelstock anvil in half, as if it were straw. When a scythe was dull, he sharpened it with a piece of wood. When the bell rang eleven o’clock in Avelengo, he said that he had to go to Innsbruck for lunch – and at once he was gone! He often drove up via the steepest, most inaccessible cliffs, with a loud “Hello!” The black horses snorted fire. Because of these and other similar feats of magic, he was feared far and wide – to such an extent that his simple appearance anywhere was enough to would set the whole area into panic.

Finally, his dance card of sins was full. Even hell itself deserted him. As he was sitting in a mountain hut at Aschl, a posse from Merano (Meran) surrounded him. They held a cross in front of the chamber window and drew a second cross in chalk on the door so that he couldn’t use his magic powers to flee. As Manz became aware of the impending danger, he turned himself into a horsefly, buzzing like a madman all over the walls in an attempt to escape through a hole or crack. The search was in vain: each fissure, even the keyhole itself, was indeed blocked. The horsefly asked the servant, who was inside the chamber, if he would wipe off the cross on the door. However, he stood steadfast,

even though the horsefly threatened him with death and ruin.

Soon the marshal arrived, caught the ferocious horsefly, locked it in a box, wrapped it in a consecrated cloth, and brought the beast buzzing – sometimes quite savagely – to Merano. There, they took the horsefly out of the box, put it in a copper kettle, and covered the kettle with a copper plate. The animal struggled against making contact with the copper for a long time. Finally, exhausted, it allowed its wings to drop. The very instant that it had touched the bottom of the kettle, the magic was released and the fly was again Manz – who couldn’t fit into the pot, of course. They took off the lid and forged the warlock to the kettle with chains. In this way, they made any hope of escape impossible: copper is resistant to all magic. They loaded the kettle onto a cart, on which a pious Capuchin priest was also seated, and led him to the gallows. Along the way, Manz repeatedly asked the boys who were watching the procession if they would like to throw mud at him, but the judges had prohibited doing so with a hefty penalty. Because if Manz could obtain even a small pellet of earth, his magic would have worked again and he could have broken his shackles and chains as if they were the lightest of cobwebs.

When they arrived at the Passer Bridge, the devil wanted to demolish it. The joints of the bridge had already begun to crack, and the pillars had started swaying. Two jet-black birds plunged out of the skies, with wild fluttering and bloodcurdling shrieks, and settled on Manz’s shoulders. The priest threw sacred objects down into the Passer River and sprinkled the magician and the bridge with holy water. As a result, the power of hell was broken and the black birds turned into stinking, greyish smoke that dissipated into the air.

Seeing that he had been abandoned by the devil, Manz shouted in a fury, “You wretched bugger! A drop of water has never warded me off, but it has driven you away.” The warlock was not spared, and was burned at Sinich. Not a blade of grass has grown at the execution site since.