



South Tyrol – Land of Myths and Legends

Oberleitner the Sorcerer

Oberleitner, from Terenten, had made a covenant with the devil. The Bettel (devil) gave him a lot of books, from which he could learn many spells. In exchange, though, he must give his soul to evil.

Oberleitner wasn't of the mind that it was such a bad deal, after all, for Satan had promised him that he would only take him when his cow would give birth to a white calf. He'll be waiting a good long time, thought the man, because nary a Pustertal cow throws even one white calf over the course of her entire life. So he put the witches' books in a box and courageously learned the black arts from them.

Now one of his favourite pastimes was shooting. Oh, how well could Oberleitner shoot now! If game came onto his land, he would make it freeze – standing still as it were nailed to the spot – until he had taken down his rifle. Then he really shot him up good. When he went with his servant to hunt in Zillertal Valley, he would say at around 10:00 a.m.: "My wife is already boiling the Krapfen crullers at home so we have to get there quickly. Just put your feet on mine!" In the blink of an eye, they would be out of the valley and right back home!

One time, a servant had stolen three Star of rye and was planning on selling it. He had buried the grain for the time being, just until he found a buyer. But Oberleitner knew very well what he had done, though, and froze the servant: all he could do was stand there, rooted to the spot where he had buried the rye, until the sorcerer arrived to free him.

Oberleitner and his servant were back in Zillertal hunting ibex one day, and he was attacked. He didn't want to use his black magic because he was afraid that the servant would be hurt if he left him. The attackers didn't want to do anything to the servant, though: they gladly let him go. Oberleitner, happy that he was now free, simply disappeared.

He once said that, in such and such a farm where a white calf would soon be born, they should ensure that the calf would be quickly thrown into the Reinz, a large stream. The farmer, who really did have a little white calf thrown in his barn, did not follow the instructions of the sorcerer but pretended that the calf had wandered into the great river. "How did the river look?" asked Oberleitner. "Turbid" replied the farmer. "You didn't throw it in!" the magician said angrily. After that, the farmer no longer dared keep the calf: he really threw it into the stream, and the water ran red as blood and wild animals suddenly swam around on both sides of the river.

One day, the cow in his own barn did throw a white calf. When Oberleitner found out, he grew deathly pale and ordered his servant to throw all of his books into the Reinz. The servant, however, secretly put many of them aside – for he wanted to learn magic himself – and threw the rest into the Reinz. Leitner was wise to this piece of mischief, though, and commanded the servant again to throw those books into the

water. Again, the servant only partially did as he was told, and he kept a few books. Only when Oberleitner told him a third time to throw the books into the water did that last book finally go into the Reinz.

When the first books were thrown in, mind you, the water merely foamed; when the second group followed, the water foamed and hissed, terrifying the servant; as the last one flew in, the river angrily tossed waves over the banks.

After that, the magician was quickly converted – before the Devil came to fetch him – and did penance. Since that time, he has never turned his eyes to heaven but only looked at the floor in pure regret.