

The Dilemma of the Baroness

As he left for a visit to his outlying districts, the jealous baron warned his pretty wife: "Do not leave the castle while I am gone, or I will punish you severely when I return!"

But as the hours passed, the young baroness grew lonely, and despite her husband's warning, decided to visit her friend who lived in the countryside nearby.

The castle was located on an island in a wide, fast-flowing river, with a drawbridge linking the island and the land at the narrowest point in the river.

"Surely my husband will not return before dawn," she thought, and she ordered her servants to lower the drawbridge and leave it down until she returned.

After spending several pleasant hours with her friend playing music, talking, and dancing, the baroness returned to the drawbridge, only to find it blocked by a madman wildly waving a long and cruel knife.

"Do not attempt to cross this bridge, Baroness, or I will kill you," he raved.

Fearing for her life, the baroness sought out a boatman on the river, explained her plight to him, and asked him to take her across the river on his boat.

"I will do it, but only if you can pay my fee of five Marks."

"But I have no money with me!" the baroness protested.

"That is too bad. No money, no ride," the boatman said flatly.

Her fear growing, the baroness ran back crying to the home of her friend, and after explaining the situation, begged for enough money to pay the boatman his fee.

"I never loan money to anyone," he said, "not even to my best friends. Besides, if you had not disobeyed your husband, this would not have happened."

With dawn approaching and her last resource exhausted, the baroness returned to the drawbridge, attempted in desperation to cross to the castle, and was slain by the madman.

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