

# *The Devil and the Dressmaker*

During the month of August, the heat is overwhelming, and the flies in houses with stables are aggravating and do not allow you an instant of repose. They buzz endlessly around you, and nibble at you, not only at your hands and your face, but also at your legs through the light fabric of pants.

A little dressmaker named Rudecônes who was at a farm one day suffered so much from the cruelty of these cursed gnats, that he went to work under a plum tree in the garden.

The plums were ripe, and the tailor ate the fruits that fell into his hand gluttonously to calm the thirst that devoured him.

Nonetheless, fearing that he would become sick from overeating, he finished by swearing: "The Devil take me if I eat any more!"

At that instant, a beautiful plum fell onto his shoulder. It was so appetizing that it disappeared into his mouth.

"This time, I'm finished," he cried. "The Devil take me if I eat another."

A fruit, still brighter and more beautiful than the previous one, came falling down between his legs, and tempted him so badly that he sent it to join its comrade.

Suddenly, hearing a noise before him, the tailor turned his head and saw the Devil, who was moving towards him, showing him a sack into which he gave the sign to enter.

Rudecônes pretended not to understand, but Satan took him by the ear, saying:

"Servant, you belong to me. Had you not sworn, 'The Devil take me if I eat another plum?' You have eaten two."

Despite the poor man's cries and resistance, the Devil shoved him into the sack that he threw over his shoulder.

While passing through a pasture, Satan reminded himself that he had to attend a wedding, and left his load under a greenweed bush, with the intention of returning later to claim it.

A country bumpkin brought his beasts to the field and found the pouch. He gave it a kick and heard a snort.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"I am the dressmaker, Rudecônes, whom the Devil has trapped in a sack. Free me, I beg of you!"

"What will you give me in exchange?"

“I shall sew all your ragged clothes free of charge, and I shall mend your longjohns as long as I live.”

“I agree on those conditions. Swear to it.”

“I swear.”

And the bumpkin untied the sack, from which the dressmaker got out faster than he had ever entered.

“If you want,” the peasant continued, “we’ll go play a trick on the Devil.”

“How?”

“I have a billy goat so mean that my master wants to get rid of him. To punish him, we’ll put him in your place, and send him to Hell.”

They seized the beast by its horns and put it in the sack.

At dusk, Satan returned to search for his prisoner, threw the sack over his shoulders, and went into his realm.

Once he had arrived in Hell, the billy-goat was released, but, as the ground burned his feet, he leapt around in a disorderly manner, and injured four small devils who were playing hopscotch with peas.

“What have you brought here?” cried the other devils.

“It’s a tailor who, I see, has changed into a billy-goat.”

“Take him outside, and don’t bring any more tailors here.”

The billy-goat was chased from Hell, and it was from that moment on that tailors, not being able to go to Hell, are always admitted into Heaven.

Told by Father Constant Tual, tailor at Bain, age 72.  
Adolphe Orain. *Contes du Pays Gallo*. Honoré Champion, 1904.  
Translated by Michelle Collins.