

The Korrigans and the Young Girl

A man and a woman had five girls and seven boys. As soon as the children were old enough, they had them learn crafts; two of the boys only put on airs.

“We will do whatever pleases us,” they said, “and we will not put even one hand towards working the land, we will go hunting.”

One day, they left very early in the morning after having said:

“Bring us provisions, for we will stay out maybe two or three days without returning.”

Upon arriving in a forest of firs, they saw game, and, before they began to hunt, they each ate a bit, then they each went in a different direction. One of the hunters took a hare, and began searching for his brother and asked whether he had killed anything.

“I killed two men.”

“But,” said the first who had approached him, “those are two korrigans¹. You must have seen them in the trees.”

“I didn’t see them. We must hide them, because only we are hunting, and they will know that we did it.”

They hid them in a hawthorn bush and left. After having arrived in a forest farther away, they saw a dozen armed people, who said to them:

“Hunters, have you been in these woods for long?”

“We have just arrived.”

“Two of our masters were killed, and we have heard rifles being fired. If you came on horse, maybe you would have seen the two who were killed.”

“We saw no one. We just entered the woods.”

“Do you plan on remaining here long? If you want, we can take the path together,” said the korrigans.

“We’d like to,” said the two hunters.

When they arrived on a path far away, they entered a large house, asked to eat and drink, and the korrigans said to them:

“You’re not very old yet!”

One of the two was twenty-three years old and the other twenty-four.

“If you would like to always remain with us,” said the korrigans, “you will marry whoever and do whatever you want.”

¹ *Daou ozegan.*

“We’re stopping nowhere, and we do not have the time to get to know any young girls.”

“You will find more than you could ever want.”

They arrived next to a pond where women and young girls were washing clothes, and the young girls were laughing the whole time to mock them. One of the korrigans said to them:

“There are two young men with us. Who do you want to marry?”

“I would like that,” said one girl, “because I am tired of washing clothes every day. As long as I am happy, that’s all that I ask.”

Her comrade, who was next to her, replied saying the same thing.

“But don’t lead us down the bad paths.”

“You don’t have to be afraid. None of us will say a word to you, but you will not sleep at your houses before the wedding day, and you must accompany us night and day. We will have plenty of fun, we will see every country, and you will get married in the first city where we arrive.”

The next morning, after having eaten, they went on the highways and the woods.

Someone old arrived and said to the twelve korrigans:

“You must have gone mad, having brought the two same rascals who killed your two masters with you.”

“We don’t believe that,” said one.

“It’s true, it’s true.”

“Too bad, because, although that may be the case, since they have been with us, we have had nothing to complain about.”

The old man said to them:

“Pay attention, for they will not always remain peaceful. When they get angry, perhaps you will suffer as well!”

The korrigans replied:

“There are twelve of us. We are not afraid, they won’t do anything to us.”

“In the first forest you see,” he said, “you will pass by my house, a young girl will be on the doorstep and will tell you to enter. Since you have traveled across the world, you have never seen a girl more beautiful, gold and silver make her shine from afar.”

After having arrived at that house, they saw the young girl and could not get a good look at her; they were straining their eyes. She said to them:

“Come in. Maybe you are thirsty and hungry. I’m afraid that my husband will never arrive; he is a great sorcerer, but I am not his daughter, and I am neither a family member nor ally of his. I have been here for eight years; I was keeping cows, he passed once next to the stable and I follow him without knowing why, he bewitched me, but he has never said anything to me, and he isn’t here often.”

One of the korrigans said to her:

“Are you afraid of staying alone?”

“Not at all. The doors are wooden, but, at night when I go to shut them, they are iron and no one can enter.”

She put meat, bread, and cider on the table. They did not tire of speaking to her, and their eyes did not leave her; the more that they looked at her, the more beautiful they found her, and the two brothers who were outside of the house said to themselves:

“We have each taken a laundress with nothing and, if we had waited, one of us, maybe, would have married this young girl.”

“Now, it’s too late, and I’m sure that one of the korrigans will take her.”

“I would not have any trouble believing it.”

They stayed there for eight days, and, on the ninth, they left, but the eldest of the korrigans said to the young man of twenty-three:

“You will marry her, but you must come with us.”

And he said to the young girl:

“Wouldn’t you like to marry this young man?”

“I would be quite happy to, because I am tired of not seeing anyone here, while I lack nothing and I am the mistress. The sorcerer is probably dead somewhere, because never has he stayed away for so long. If I knew this, we would not have parted and we would have remained together, because here neither gold nor silver is lacking. I’m going to go and shut the doors; in fifteen days, we will know whether he is coming back, and, if he has not returned, we will remain at his house.”

They went back on the road and looked on all sides to see if they could see him coming. The korrigans had not said to the young girl that they had seen him. They went nine or ten miles without encountering anyone, and she kept saying:

“Something bad has happened to him.”

They arrived next to a fountain, and, being thirsty, they began to drink the water and said to the young girl:

“Aren’t you going to drink?”

“No, I’m not thirsty. My heart is heavy.”

Then, a voice came out of the fountain and said:

“You do not have to take the trouble. Don’t go much farther; you can return to the house from where you came, for he has been dead for nine days, and there you will be the masters, and you will lack neither land nor anything that you need for work, you will run the household, since there are seventeen of you in your group, you will not need to hire servants, there will be enough of you to work, the men will be occupied with their work, the women will go on walks, prepare the meals, sew, and do the washing.”

They returned to the house, built a new one at the edge of the other, and were happy. One day, they heard a noise and believed that the house was falling down, and the women said:

“Tonight, we’re going to lose our lives.”

The old korrigan wanted to reassure them:

‘ “You have nothing to fear, my children. No one will harm you here; it is the sorcerer who has come to visit his land.”

Someone said:

“We can’t see or hear the dead.”

Around midnight, there was a wild dance, and they had all went to bed; it was other korrigans and girls who had come to dance to frighten them, and who, the next morning, said to the old korrigan:

“For a long time, we have searched for you, and we were warned that you had come to live here, we wanted to see you, we’re leaving to go on a long voyage, upon our return, you may not be at the same place.”

After ten years, the old korrigan died, as well as four others, and the beautiful girl said to her companions:

“Let’s not remain in this house; let’s build a new one.”

They took money with them (the price of a horse), had a château built, and lived in it together.

Joseph Frison. “Les korrigans et la jeune fille.” *Revue des traditions populaires*

29:4 (April 1914): 165-69.

Translated by Michelle Collins.