# Hans Jagenteufel

It is commonly believed that if any person is guilty of a crime for which he deserves to lose his head, he will, if he escape punishment during his lifetime, be condemned after his death to wander about with his head under his arm.In the year 1644 a woman of Dresden went out early one Sunday morning into a neighbouring wood for the purpose of collecting acorns. In an open space, at a spot not very far from the place which is called the Lost Water, she heard somebody blow a very strong blast upon a hunting-horn, and immediately afterwards a heavy fall succeeded, as though a large tree had fallen to the ground. The woman was greatly alarmed, and concealed her little bag of acorns among the grass. Shortly afterwards the horn was blown a second time, and on looking round she saw a man without a head, dressed in a long grey cloak, and riding upon a grey horse. He was booted and spurred, and had a bugle-horn hanging at his back.As he rode past her very quietly she regained her courage, went on gathering the acorns, and when evening came returned home undisturbed.Nine days afterwards, the woman returned to that spot for the purpose of again collecting the acorns, and as she sat down by the Forsterberg, peeling an apple, she heard behind her a voice calling out to her—"Have you taken a whole sack of acorns and nobody tried to punish you for doing so?""No," said she. "The foresters are very kind to the poor, and they have done nothing to me—the Lord have mercy on my sins!"With these words she turned about, and there stood he of the grey cloak, but this time he was without his horse, and carried his head, which was covered with curling brown hair, under his arm.The woman shrank from him in alarm, but the spirit said—"Ye do well to pray to God to forgive you your sins, it was never my good lot to do so."Thereupon he related to her how that he had lived about one hundred and thirty years before, and was called Hans Jagenteufel, as his father had been before him, and how his father had often besought him not to be too hard upon poor people, how he had paid no regard to the advice his father had given him, but had passed his time in drinking and carousing, and in all manner of wickedness, for which he was now condemned to wander about the world as an evil spirit.

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