

Twelve Tales

by

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ISBN 9789465126401

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Author's note

The Twelve Tales are tales of fantasy, magic, longing and (mis)understanding; daily aspects of life described in short stories.

This is a revised version of an earlier publication as "Twelve Stories". In hindsight, the term "Tales" was more suitable. Also, after a thorough rereading, several corrections have been made.

The author
November 2024

The Magic Apple

One day an old man entered a village inn. It was a peculiar old man, clearly not someone from the village, nor from the country the village was in and most likely not even from the neighbouring countries. His hair was white and his hands were like leather tanned by the sun. A pointy, brimmed hat covered most of his head, but the shadow it cast on his face could not hide his fierce eyes, which seemed to glow like a fire in the dark. His other facial features were obscured by a long white beard that continued straight from his hair along his cheeks down to his waist. He wore a broad grey travelling cloak over his clothes, made of a flowing foreign fabric.

Standing in the doorway, he took in the rustic scene of this typical village inn. The dimly lit room was small, with a stained wooden floor and small dusty windows on either side of the door. A few tables here and there were accompanied by worn out wooden chairs, most of them occupied by locals.

His appearance raised quite some interest in the village inn, because the villagers were not used to seeing strangers. People turned to the entrance and looked, while conversations slowly came to a halt. Most people were farmers and craftsmen, not learned but made wise by the ways of their small world. This man didn't fit into their daily life and therefore he was an interesting distraction.

In a silence that did not seem to bother him, the old man strode to a free table and sat himself down on one of the chairs. No one moved or spoke. The innkeeper, who was also staring without moving, received a strong nudge between the ribs from his wife and he rushed towards the old man.

"Can... can I get you something, Sir?" he asked, nervously turning a filthy piece of dishcloth in his hands. The old man