



Icelandic Folk Legends: Tales of apparitions, outlaws and things unseen

Alda Sigmundsdottir

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The Icelandic nation has a long and rich history of storytelling. Throughout centuries characterized by hardship, poverty and dark winters, the Icelanders kept their spirits high and moral values intact by telling each other stories. In this collection of 15 Icelandic folk legends, we get a glimpse of the world-view of the Icelanders in centuries past as they endeavored to understand and cope with the natural phenomena around them. There are stories of malicious ghosts, outlaws living in carved-out boulders, hidden people residing in grassy knolls, trolls that are tripped up by their own stupidity, and much more. In addition, there is one story exemplifying a fairy tale motif that scholars have discovered to be unique to Iceland: that of the good stepmother (The Story of Himinbjörg). Throughout we get a powerful sense of the Icelanders' beliefs, values and fears, as well as their strong need to cling to all that was pure and good.

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