

ANCIENT GHOSTS

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The old graves on our moor

My uncle liked to read books about curiosities and research.

– Listen, in Denmark they have found an ancient corpse in the mire, and it hasn't even decomposed! It has been there for thousands of years and still has its clothes and utilities, the mire has conserved it like ice. Had he been tortured before he was put in to the ground, it seemed like it.

Uncle Niillas showed me the picture, an ugly darkened man, like he was all made of tendon. I thought it was uneasy to see, but I was that much old that I tried to play tough and studied the pictures in the book meticulously. My eyes stopped on a hideous, frightening picture. The skin of the mire-corpse was wrinkled like old leather. Horrifying, I thought.

Uncle was a big man, he had to lean forward when he came through the door. He was always serious when he told about the scientists. Scientists had been to our village as well, and they had put marks on the old graves on our moor. It probably made him uncomfortable that the scientists had disturbed them. Can you imagine, old graves, and we walked past them every day.

Stones were placed in a circle, side by side. Uncle Niillas told that the scientists had used a measuring method with carbon to determine the age of the bones under the ground. Real old graves, and we children should definitely not go anywhere near them, they

were not supposed to be disturbed at all. We knew where each single one of the graves was placed. To play there was strictly forbidden.

What did it mean to be scared by ghosts, we had heard of it, but we didn't know what it was. It seemed terrifying though, to be scared by them.

But, I had to run past the moor during the dark winter months on my way home, and to avoid the big rift in the creek. My playmates lived on the other side of the creek. Sometimes my cousins did walk me halfway. This time they didn't come with me.

I was so afraid of walking alone in the dark. I tried to see if the light from our house appeared behind the moor. I was going to cross the creek, the ice was not yet covered by snow, and I took careful steps on the black ice. In the moonlight I saw bubbles through the ice and seaweed that moved with the stream at the bottom by the shore. I lit with my flashlight and it seemed scary to cross the creek, but it was so much shorter to cross it than to walk around it. It was frightening, but I toughened up. I rushed my steps so I would be home as fast as I could.

That's when I slipped. I felt my head hit the ice hard. I heard a strange echoing sound when my head hit the ice, and saw flashing lights before my eyes. There I laid alone, and no one had seen me. I had almost passed out.

I couldn't jump up, or make a sound, I just laid there. I had probably wounded my head, it was really hurting. The stars in the sky seemed to go round and round when I opened my eyes.

But apparently someone had seen me, suddenly there was someone beside me, and I hadn't even heard him coming. He was silent, I couldn't see who it was in the dark, but he was really big. My eyes were still flickering, I couldn't see well yet. I felt his fur coat burst when he lifted me by the shoulders, the hair, or something like it, flew up to my nose.

– Uncle Niillas, I had permission to cross the creek, I cried. I thought I was going to get yelled at for crossing the ice alone. I wondered, why was he wearing that kind of clothes?

The man didn't say anything, he lifted me up on his back, and started to walk to our house. The whole world was spinning. I crouched against his back, it was probably for the best so that he wouldn't slip on the ice with me on his back.

We were arriving to our moor, I saw the light from our house close by. But then, he stopped, and put me down. My head was still spinning, I tried to keep my balance so I wouldn't fall.

He grabbed me by the hand. I was startled, the hand was dry, like rotten, wrinkled leather! I looked at him, he was much older than me. I couldn't see his face, there was only a shadow when the moon shone above. He had stopped right by the old graves on our moor.

I got scared, and ran as fast as I could to our house. I didn't dare to look back, who was he, and what kind of strange person was that??

I came inside as quickly as I could, to safety. Mother and uncle Niillas were in the kitchen eating. I stared outside the window with round eyes, I didn't see anyone standing on the moor in the moon-

light. But, who was my silent helper, he who stayed on the moor, by the old graves?

My uncle and mother probably thought that I had seen a vision, when I had hit my head so hard. I had gotten a big wound on my head and my mother blew on it through the wool hat so it would heal.

First my mother had to shake the hair off my wool hat, it was covered in reindeer hair like if I had rolled around on an old fur.