

husband was indeed tempted. But he had sworn to be faithful to his wife -- and besides, he still, after all these years, found her quite alluring. With not a small degree of regret, he said no -- he would remain true to the woman he loved. When Marcy heard of this, she was crushed. "What did I marry?" she cried out in despair. "A eunuch?" She gave up bridge and began living a hermitlike existence. She ignored all her husband's concerned inquiries and refused to answer the phone. At length, unable even to eat, she wasted away. At the funeral, her husband was inconsolable. "All I ever wanted," he moaned over and over, "Was for her to be happy!" The husbands scowled at this, and their women all bowed their heads and blushed for his poor dead wife.

MORAL: You're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

-- David Hall

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THE INNKEEPER OF "THE STAG"

-- translated from Spessart Sagen (Aschaffenburg, 1972)

Many, many years ago in the Lohr inn, "The Stag," there was an innkeeper who mixed water in his wine and sold it as pure vintage. One day three men, small and sporting long beards, came into the tavern. Each of the little fellows ordered a good half pint of wine, and what did the innkeeper do? As usual, he poured water in the wine and brought the brimming glasses to the table.

But the three men were of the race of dwarfs and recognized the swindle right away. They winked at one another, nodded earnestly, and the first one said out loud: "The wine-faker must come inside." The innkeeper jumped to attention behind the bar. "Who should come inside?" he asked. "That thief of an innkeeper," said the second dwarf abruptly, even louder than the first. "Inside where should he come?" jeered the innkeeper of "The Stag." "Inside the crock," cried the third in a thunderous voice, and instantly the innkeeper was banished into a huge wine crock.

Then the dwarfs dragged it outside into the forest and buried it beneath a tall tree. And in fact many a person passing by there has heard the wailing of the old innkeeper of "The Stag." But no one has ever found the right word to save him.