

## The Grey Woman

Long ago in Castle Hohenbaden there lived a countess who thought only of herself and her wealth, but who oppressed her subjects. She demanded of them high taxes and constantly had them pushed to work harder. However, those who resisted orders, grumbled or refused to obey were thrown mercilessly into the damp cellar, often cruelly tortured.

One evening the countess carried her only infant son to the tower of the castle, held him out over the parapet and pointed to the land at the foot of their residence. "Look out there and count villages, farms and acreages! It is endless. As far as your eyes can see, men and women are subservient to you. One day when it's your turn, force them with your whip and spare them no labour, so that you can live well on this earth!"

But no sooner had the selfish woman ended her taunting call, the child slipped from her arms and quickly plunged into the depths. As pale as a ghost she hurried down the stairs to look for the little son among the maze of rocks in front of the castle. But although she sent out all the servants and maids through the forest, the child was never found.

Henceforth, the countess searched restlessly through the corridors and rooms of the castle and screamed for her child. Even as she lay in her grave she found no rest.

Today, when on dark rainy nights a storm howls through the weathered walls and hisses through the cracks, the greedy woman walks in a grey coat through the deserted rooms – her tangled white hair fluttering around her forehead, and her hoarse, shrill voice still wailing.

*www.schloss-hohenbaden.de* accessed 12.03.2013  
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