

The Soldier and the Stranger

Russia

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a soldier from a small village. When it came time for him to go home on leave, he decided to walk there.

Just outside the village lived a miller. They had been good friends before he joined the army, and as he approached his house, he wondered if his old friend still lived there.

He knocked on the door and the miller greeted him warmly. He invited him inside for some food and drink, and the soldier ended up staying for hours, the two of them talking late into the night.

The soldier looked outside and noticed it was very dark. "I should be on my way. My family must be wondering where I am."

"Nonsense. You'll stay here tonight and set out to finish your journey in the morning," said the miller. "It's dangerous out there at night."

"Dangerous? What do you mean?"

"Lately, townsfolk have told of a strange creature that wanders near the graveyard. At night he haunts the village, and scares everyone!"

"Oh, come now. Listen to yourself – that's just silly gossip. Besides, I'm a soldier – I've seen much worse. I'll be on my way. Thank you, friend, for the food and conversation. I'll see you in the morning."

Off he went towards his family's home. He continued on down the road, which passed the graveyard. When he got close to it, he noticed a dark figure darting about. For a moment, he was spooked.

"Oh, come on," he thought to himself. "It's just silly gossip, remember? I'll bet it's nothing." He summoned up his courage and got closer. As he approached he could see it was a man, sewing a hole in a pair of boots. He seemed to be struggling.

"What are you doing here?" the man said when he noticed the soldier, sounding startled.

"I wanted to make sure you were alright."

"Ah, I'm fine," said the stranger. "I'm on my way to a wedding. Come, enjoy some food and friends with me."

They walked along the road and came upon the wedding party. They were given food and drink and

welcomed as if they were great friends of the family. At first, everything went smoothly, but as the night went on the man started acting strange. After so much food and dancing, the bride and groom grew tired and fell asleep. He pricked their fingers with a small pin and drained a few drops of their blood in vials he brought with him.

"What was that for?" asked the soldier as they began to walk home.

"Mark my words: Tomorrow morning no one will be able to wake them."

"How do you know this?"

"The only way to revive them would be to pour their missing blood back into those wounds. I've got the blood."

The soldier stood silently, astounded. Could this man be the creature the townsfolk were afraid of?

The man continued to talk as they walked along the road. "I am invincible," he said. "Even moreso than you. I can take on anything! The only thing that can defeat me is a fire. If any of it were to touch me, I would turn to dust."

Finally, they came upon the graveyard.

"Well, here we are," said the man. The soldier was just about to say his goodbyes when he noticed the man staring at him strangely.

"This is where I must leave you ... but not before I eat you!"

"What?" cried the soldier, but before he knew it the stranger sprang up and knocked him to the ground, flashing two long, sharp fangs at him. They struggled, and the soldier was sure he was finished.

But then, all of a sudden, he heard a rooster crowing. It was morning! The man fell backwards onto the ground, motionless. The soldier snatched the vials of blood out of his pocket and ran home.

When he got there, his family was waiting at the door

"Thank goodness you're here! There's been a tragedy in town."

"What's the matter?" he asked, but he was pretty sure of the answer.

"There was a wedding last night," replied his father, "but the bride and bridegroom have fallen asleep in the night and can't be woken. We fear they will never wake again."

"I can bring them to life again. Tell me, where are they?"

"Make your way back to their home. Don't waste a

minute!”

The soldier took off down the road. He did just as the strange man had told him: He found the tiny pinpricks in their fingers, and poured their blood over it. Suddenly, just like magic, they were revived!

“How did you do that?” their family wondered in awe.

“That strange man at the wedding last night,” said the soldier, “he is the creature that’s been stalking your town. He told me all his secrets ... including how to defeat him. Tonight, we shall go to the graveyard and build a fire. Then, he will turn to dust.”

The next evening, he called the townsfolk together and asked them all to bring wood with them to the graveyard. They marched in, dragged the monster out of his grave, and set their wood on fire. The second he smelled smoke, he suddenly dissolved into a pile of dust. The townsfolk cheered, and the soldier collected his ashes and threw them into the wind, so he would never be in the town again. From that time forth there was peace in the village.



The monster in this story lives in a graveyard and likes blood.

What monster is he most like?

- a. Vampire
- b. Witch
- c. Werewolf

How is the monster most like the monster you chose?

How is he different?

