

The Wild Hunt

Germany

Many different versions of “the wild hunt” story have been told in Europe since ancient times. This is a very old version from Germany.

A LONG TIME AGO, there was a hunter named Hackelbarend. Hackelbarend loved to hunt, more than anything else in life, and he spent all his time stalking in the woods, hunting wild game.

He even did this on Sundays. Back then, Sundays were supposed to be used only for church, and doing anything else could mean punishment not only by law, but by the gods themselves.

In time, Hackelbarend was caught. He was banished by the gods to another realm, doomed to hunt for all eternity for a prey that could never be found.

One evening, two young men were walking through the woods, on their way to visit their sweethearts. They laughed and joked on the way there, their laughter breaking through the peacefulness of the woods at night.

Suddenly, they heard a strange noise.

“What is that?” one of them said.

“I don’t know. It sounds like ... like dogs barking,” He said nervously.

“Let’s just keep walking,” the first one said, and they tiptoed further into the woods.

The barking got louder and louder, but the two walked on, trying not to show the other one his fright. As they came to a clearing, they saw a pack of huge, ghostly hounds race across the sky. At the back was Hackelbarend, shouting at his spectral horde.

The two men froze. They were both very scared, so to lighten the mood, one of the men began barking back at the dogs. “Woof! Woof!” he said. “You can’t scare us! You’re nothing but a ghost. You’re not even real.”

The noises suddenly stopped. The two men looked around them to see what happened. When they looked back up to the sky, the dogs had disappeared.

Then, the sounds started again; this time much, much closer. The sound seemed to get closer and closer, until it sounded as if the dogs were right behind them!

The two men were never heard from again. It is said

that, if you walk through the forest late at night, you may see Hackelbarend and his wild hunt soaring through the skies. If they can’t find the prey they’re looking for... they just might take you instead!



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Write your own wild hunt myth. Try writing the story with a different setting, a different time period, or with different characters.

Why did the man mock the dogs?

Why do you think Hackelbarend decided to punish the two men?

