

COUNT WOLF

LILLIANES

A farmer in Lillianes was baking bread when a wolf cautiously approached the oven. Although he did not seem to have threatening intentions, the young man wanted him out of the way. He took a scoop of embers and threw it at the animal, but he stubbornly kept moving forward. The wolf barely retreated, whining, when some embers reached his snout, but he promptly stepped forward again with a resigned air.

To the farmer, irritation turned to laughter: such perseverance was well worth a reward. He tossed the beast a loaf of bread and, astonished, he saw that the animal caught it on the fly and retreated contentedly, holding the bread between his teeth.

A few days later the young man went to the fair in Biella, to buy his fiancée a wedding dress. On the way a stranger stopped him, declaring himself his debtor: a few nights before, in fact, the peasant had unknowingly broken the spell that had been cast upon him. Having been transformed into a wolf by a witch near Lake Mucrone, he had waited for someone to treat him like a human being for a long time: that would have restored his original appearance: by throwing him a loaf of bread, the mountain man had finally vanquished the curse.

The man was an earl, and he was a generous soul, inviting his rescuer to accept the sum needed to build a new house.

The remains of the building, which everyone calls Courtil do Counto, can still be seen today on a hill between the villages of Barbià and Salé, along the road from Lillianes to Santa Margherita and from there to Oropa.

Taken from: T. GATTO CHANU, *Fiabe e leggende della Valle d'Aosta*, Rome, Newton & Compton Editions, 2004