

## THE PINE FOREST OF LA MAGDELEINE

### LA MAGDELEINE

Not a single tree once grew near La Magdeleine, and one had to go far to find some wood to warm one's bones. One year, on Christmas Eve, a good man found himself out of wood and had to leave under a snowfall, pulling his sled behind him, so as not to leave the woodshed empty.

When he returned, he found a child in the house with his wife. The little soul probably got lost in the white expanse of snow that made navigation difficult. He had knocked at the door trembling with cold, and the woman had welcomed him and warmed him in her arms. But the man could not succeed in getting the little child to tell them who he was and where he came from.

At night, the peasants put the child in their bed and kept on watching him sleep quietly at length, telling each other that it would be nice to keep him with them, since they had no children true, life was miserable up there and there was not a single tree in all the surroundings that offered some shade in summer and a few branches to throw into the fire in winter.

By morning, the little child had disappeared and there was no trace of his footsteps in the snow around the house. But, not far from that, a thick pine forest stretched out: that was the reward for the generous hospitality offered by the mountain people to the Child on the night of Holy Christmas.

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