



ÁLFABORG

Once upon the time a farmer lived at Jökulsá, which is the closest farm to Álfaborg west of the Fjardará river. He had a maidservant whose name was Gudrun. One Sunday in summer the entire household went to church at Desjarmyri, except the maidservant Gudrun. Her mistress asked her to round up the sheep and milk the ewes. Then she was to skim the milk and churn the butter. The household went off to church and the girl set off to round the sheep. When she had milked the ewes, she let them out on to the gravel banks below the farm. Then she started to cook dinner and when she had finished her work she went outside to look out for the ewes and take a look around. She saw many people riding along the path below the homefield. They were wearing brightly coloured clothing and rode fine, spirited horses. She was most astonished, for everybody should have left for church earlier. All these people rode by farm, except for one woman who rode up the homefield to the farmhouse.

The woman was quite elderly, but looked well and had a noble countenance. She greeted the girl and said: "Give me some buttermilk to drink, my girl." Gudrun ran indoors, filled a wooden jug with buttermilk and brought it out to her, and the woman took the jug and drank. When she looked up from the jug, the girl asked: "What is your name?" The woman did not reply, but drank again. The maidservant then asked the same question again. When the woman had drunk from the jug and replaced the lid, the girl saw that she reached into her bodice, took a beautiful linen cloth, placed it over the jug lid and passed it to her as she thanked her. Then the girl asked a third time: "What is your name?" "My name is Borghildur, Miss Curiosity," said the woman as she spurred her horse and rode away from the farm to follow the rest. Gudrun the maidservant watched them; the last thing she saw was that they disappeared behind a grey rock at Kollutungur, which leads to Kækjudalur.

After a long time the people of the household returned from church in the evening. The girl then told them what had happened during the day and showed them the cloth the woman had given her. It was so beautiful that nobody had ever seen such a fine cloth. It is said to have been passed down among Icelandic gentlewoman through the ages. The riders seen by the maidservant were believed to have been elves from Álfaborg, on their way to church in Kækjudalur.