

one of the horses a demon. This was a new word to her, but she felt that it was a suitable word for “them.” Her fantasies about “Shadow Land” were so strong that she would even dream about it in her restless sleep. So it was only natural that she would turn her back on the mountains as she left the farm. Her primitive instinct led her to Trondheim where she would find people – hoping to find help now that she was lonely and in need. But she soon realised that nobody would open their door to strangers at a time when the plague followed in the footsteps of those who travelled through the country. What better place for the plague to spread unchecked than in

those narrow streets and in the houses that were built so close to each other?

It had taken her the whole day just to creep through the city gates. She managed eventually. She had followed a family that lived in the city and that were to return again after a short spell outside the city gates. She had walked over to the other side of the cart and edged her way past the guards. But once she had entered, she had not found help. Nothing, that is, except a few dry crusts of bread which were thrown at her now and then from a window. Just barely enough to keep her from the grave.

She could hear the sounds of drunkenness and noise from the

marketplace by the cathedral. Once, foolishly, she had gone there in order to seek the company of others like herself. But it didn't take her long to realise the brutal fact that this was not a good place for an attractive young girl. Seeing the mob had been a shock. She tried to put it out of her mind but she couldn't quite forget the experience.

She had walked for several days and her feet ached. The long, long way to Trondheim had taxed Silje's energy – and as she found no comfort in the city, her gut feeling was despondency. She felt a painful sense of despondency.

She heard the rats squeal in the doorway she had begun to walk towards, hoping to get a couple of

hours' sleep. So she turned away and continued her hopeless wandering.

Unconsciously, she was drawn towards the glow of fire by the mountain outside Trondheim. Fire meant warmth even if it also meant that corpses were being cremated. The big pyre had burned for three days and three nights now. And next to it was the scaffold.

She hurriedly mumbled a prayer: "Lord Jesus, keep me from all the evil of these lost souls! Give me courage and strength so that with Your grace I can rest there safely for a short while! I so desperately need to feel the warmth from the pyre so that my frozen limbs won't perish."

Her innocent heart was filled with dread as her gaze became firmly fixed on the rising warmth of the pyre. Silje plodded towards the western gates.

Meanwhile, Charlotte Meiden, a young noblewoman, was out on a secret errand. She walked in her fine silk shoes through the filthy streets, which were overflowing with dirt since the frost had blocked the gutter. She cradled a tightly wrapped bundle while she sneaked away from her father's mansion to the city gates, desperately humming a dance melody, a pavane, in an attempt to keep her mind off what she was doing.

It wasn't easy for her to move. Her lips were white. She had beads of