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The Angel of Death

by Sheena Blackhall

This story that I heard was told to me by Stanley Robertson who died recently and when he was a young laddie his family were travellers and they would camp up round about Ballater and this was the story he told me about it. It was the Pass of Ballater they used to camp, there's an auld silver mine there and also there's nesting falcons up there sometimes. But the maist of the travellers aye went to this place. And the young loons and bairns would be sent out dry hunting that's gaun round the houses hawking asking for this that and the rest of it. This particular laddie was out dry hunting and he - it was late at night, it was dreich and the rain was beginning to come doon in schmoorichs and he was getting wet and caul and it was turning dark and he could see a coach coming ahin him and it was driven by horses and the coach stopped and he said 'laddie are you setting off far?' and he said 'I'm going to Ballater, he said I'm going to the pass, would you like a hurl?'. 'Oh yes, ' he said, 'I would like a hurl'. Well he said 'Dinna sit inside ma loon, you sit up'. So he had to sit up beside the coachman, beautiful black horses, and he to sit up beside the coachman and he says 'there's a few wee places I've to stop at'. Now the first hoose he stopped at he was in for a whiley and the laddie noticed a woman come out of it all dressed in white frae top to bottom and she never spoke, she just got inside the coach. They carried on a wee whiley after that and the same thing happened at the next place except this time it was a man came out of the hoose and all dressed in white and never a word was said and just in to the coach and the third place they come to the laddie thought 'I'm going to follow to see what's happening here'. He creepit up through the heather and this was a croftie way up the hill and he saw the coachman going off and he lookit through the windae. Here was a corpse steekit out and the coachman touched the corpse on the shoulder and the spirit rose up all dressed in white and come down and followed him and got in to the coach and the laddie kent then that that was the Angel of Death. 'Oh' he says, 'I dinna want to be going hame with the Angel o Death, I'm nae going to bide in this coach' so he jumped off and took to his heels and ran like the living wind and when he got to Ballater his heart was in his moo because he looked through the trees there was his caravan up in a lowe and his caravan was kent as the Evening Star and he ran up and he said 'It's nae the Evening Star is it?' and the other travellers said 'oh I'm sorry laddie it is' and he broke down and grat and grat but then his mum and dad and his family came round about him and they said 'Oh but at least it's just the caravan' and he said 'Is aabody aaricht?' and they said 'Aye'. 'Oh well' his mither says 'no, your

favourite doggie's dead, dead in the fire' (because you see the Angel of Death never goes away empty handed but it didnae come for a living body this time, it come for a living beast).

This is the transcript of the audio file available at
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