



South Tyrol – Legends of the Dolomites



The Latemar Mountains, which are situated in the western Dolomites between South Tyrol and Trentino opposite the Rosengarten Massif, are graced with a very pretty ridge leading down to rolling vineyards. The people of the Fleimstal Valley call this ridge *la procession de le pope* or the Procession of the Dolls. The reason for this is as follows:

In a quiet larch forest not far from the Karer Pass, once sat several young shepherds. An old man came, and told them that he had lost his knife the very spot where they were sitting. The children were sitting. The children were sure that they had not found it. They immediately began looking for the knife, but could not find it. Meanwhile the sun had set, and the people of the Valòndja were already saying their prayers. The children had to herd the cattle home, and the old man set off in the direction of Latemar Mountain.

On the way home, the children did see something in the grass. The eldest child, a girl named Menega, realised that it was a beautiful knife with a gilded handle. She told the other children to come on with the cattle, and ran to see if she could still catch up with the old man. She ran as fast as she could, and reached him on the slopes of Latemar Mountain. The man was very pleased to have his knife back again, and promised to give something to the honest little girl who found it if she would only say what it was that she would like. Menega was a bit very embarrassed. At last, she admitted that what she really would like was a beautiful doll. The old man told her that she should come back the following day, together with the other children, and show you a whole lot of dolls tomorrow, and you can choose the one you like best. Now, there's no time to dilly dally, you must go home right away because it's already dawn. The evil Striès del Mòs (Scree Witches) come at this hour."

The girl was frightened, so she took her leave and hurried down into the valley. On the way home, she met a stranger. At first Menega was afraid, but the woman gave the shy girl quite a friendly greeting, and the two fell into conversation. "You lucky, lucky girl," said the stranger, "that old man is a very wealthy Venetian who lives in the mountainous region of the Latemar. He has wonderful treasures to call his own. He has two different types of dolls: one type wears a white, yellow and red silk dress. But the others have brocaded robes, pearl jewellery, and golden crowns. Tomorrow, if he should show you only the dolls in the silk robes, don't be satisfied with them. Instead, say:

Dolls of stone
With scraps of silk:
Stay where you are and
Behold Latemar!