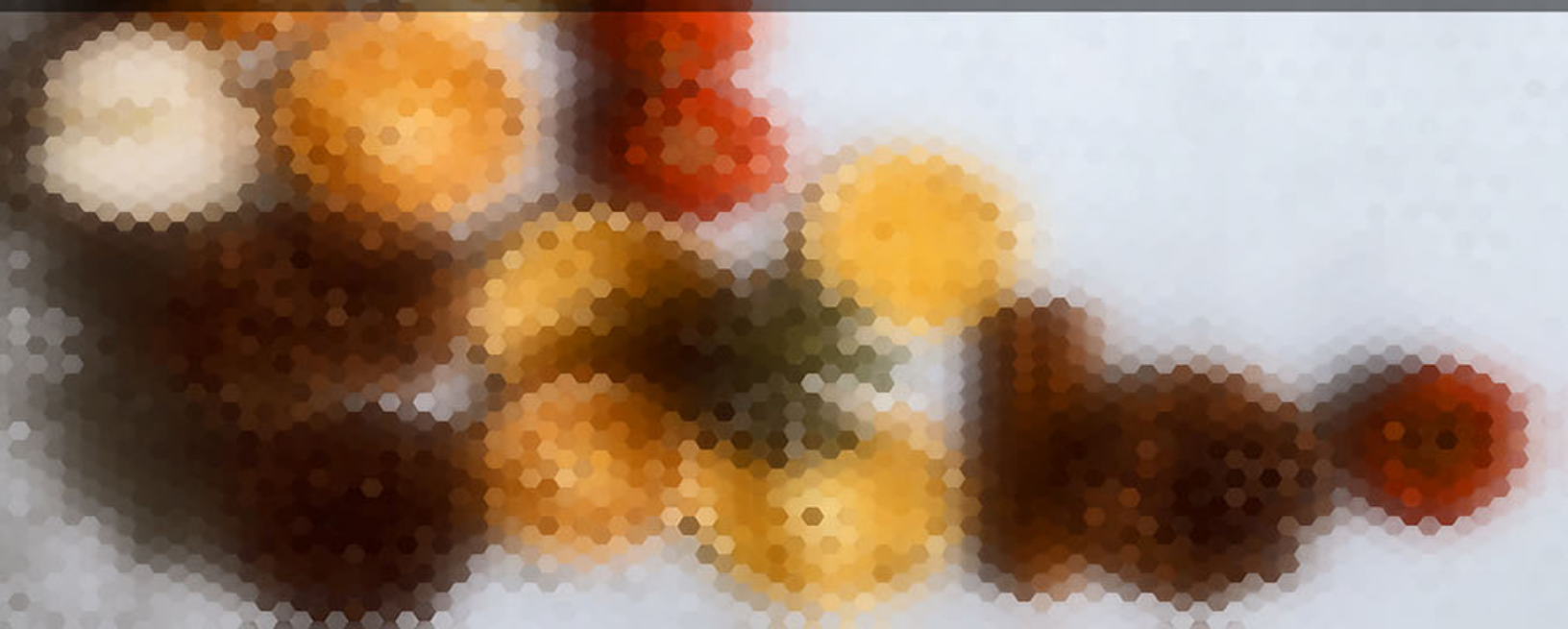


SELMA LAGERLÖF

**THE LEGEND OF THE
CHRISTMAS ROSE &
OTHER CHRISTMAS
STORIES**



Selma Lagerlöf

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The Holy Night

(Selma Lagerlöf)

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There was a man who went out in the dark night to borrow live coals to kindle a fire. He went from hut to hut and knocked. "Dear friends, help me!" said he. "My wife has just given birth to a child, and I must make a fire to warm her and the little one."

But it was way in the night, and all the people were asleep.

No one replied.

The man walked and walked. At last, he saw the gleam of a fire a long way off. Then he went in that direction and saw that the fire was burning in the open. Many sheep were sleeping around the fire, and an old shepherd sat and watched over the flock.

When the man who wanted to borrow fire came up to the sheep, he saw that three big dogs lay asleep at the shepherd's feet. All three awoke when the man approached and opened their great jaws, as though they wanted to bark; but not a sound was heard. The man noticed that the hair on their backs stood up and that their sharp, white teeth glistened in the firelight. They dashed toward him.

He felt that one of them bit at his leg and one at this hand and that one clung to this throat. But their jaws and teeth wouldn't obey them, and the man didn't feel a thing.

Now the man wished to go farther, to get what he needed. But the sheep lay back to back, so close to one