

Tug of War

By Jonas Lie



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For the last two or three days the weather had been terrific; but on the third day it so far cleared up that one of the men who belonged to the fishing station thought that they might manage to drag the nets a bit that day. The others, however, were not inclined to venture out. Now it is the custom for the various crews to lend each other a hand in pushing off the boats, and so it happened now. When, however, they came to the *Femböring*, which was drawn up a good distance ashore, they found the oars and the thwarts turned upside down in the boat, and, more than that, despite all their exertions, it was impossible to move the boat from the spot. They tried once, twice, thrice; but it was of no use. But then one of them, who was known to have second sight, said that, from what he saw, it would be best not to touch the boat at all that day; it was too heavy for the might of man to move. One of the crew, however, who belonged to the fishing-station (he was a smart lad of fourteen), was amusing them all the time with all manner of pranks and tomfoolery. He now caught up a heavy stone, and pitched it with all his might right into the stern of the boat. Then, suddenly and plainly visible to them all, out of the boat rushed a Draug in seaman's clothes, but with a heavy crop of seaweed instead of a head. It had been weighing down the boat by sitting in the stern, and now dashed into the sea, so that the foam spirted all over them. After that the *Femböring* glided quite smoothly into the water. Then the man with second sight looked at the boy, and said that he should not have done so. But the lad went on laughing as before, and said he didn't believe in such stuff. When they had come home in the

evening, and the folks lay sleeping in the fishing-station, they heard, about twelve o'clock at night, the lad yelling for help; it even seemed to one of them, by the light of the train-oil lamp, as if a heavy hand were stretching forward from the door right up to the bench on which the lad lay. The lad, yelling and struggling, had already been dragged as far as the door before the others had so far come to their senses as to think of grasping him round the body to prevent him from being dragged right out. And now, in mid doorway, a hard fight began, the Draug dragging him by the legs, while the whole crew tugged against him with the boy's arms and upper limbs. Thus, amidst yelling and groaning, they swayed to and fro all through the midnight hour, backwards and forwards, in the half-open door; and now the Draug, and now the men, had the most of the boy on their side of the doorway. All at once the Draug let go, so that the whole crew fell higgledy-piggledy backwards on to the floor. Then they found that the boy was dead; it was only then that the Draug had let him go.