

# The Alphabet of Sleep

During the night there was a **raging thunderstorm**, but in the morning the weather was bright and sunny. Downstairs in the barroom (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (was/were/had) four **bearded, green-clad** men, holding long tobacco pipes and playing cards. They **ignored our greetings** and seemed to **exchange glances of secret understanding**. Once again, the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (only/alone/one) **pleasant sight** was Mario's face, with his **quick black eyes**.

While we **paid our bill**, (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (that/who/which) was **ridiculously** low, he **winked at us on the sly**. We stepped outside and **made our way** through the village toward the mountains. The dog we had seen the night before watched (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (to/we/us) leave; his **gloomy** master was probably still asleep.

For a day and a half we **tramped steadily farther** into the mountains. The countryside, which was **bathed in the beautiful colors of autumn**, became ever (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (such/much/more) **deserted**. Despite this, we now and then had the **uneasy feeling** that we were (6) \_\_\_\_\_ (been/being/just) followed. Once we thought we saw the **pricked-up ears** of a dog far behind us, and (7) \_\_\_\_\_ (with/at/on) another occasion we spotted a **distant lump of rock** that was the same color as the jacket worn by the man **at the inn**.

On the afternoon of the second day, when we **reached the open grassland** above the **tree line**, black clouds **rolled in from nowhere**, and we were caught (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (by/at/in) a **violent** storm. We **had little choice** (9) \_\_\_\_\_ (and/but/so) to **head back for the shelter** of the trees as quickly as we could. But before we could get there the rain started to **come down in torrents**, and the thunder **clapped** loudly.

It was fortunate that we (10) \_\_\_\_\_ (were/happened/had) to come across an **abandoned logging hut** in the forest. **With considerable effort** we pushed open the door and gratefully **settled in the shelter** (11) \_\_\_\_\_ (of/within/between) the hut's wooden walls.

After half an hour the **skies cleared** and the sun shone brightly **once more**. It was actually a **rather nice spot**, and we decided to spend the night so that we (12) \_\_\_\_\_ (could/should/did) not have to unpack and **pitch the tent**. We tried **to get a fire** started with some **damp** wood in the hut's **rusty stove** without success.

(13) \_\_\_\_\_ (Finally/Fortunately/Unfortunately), up in the **loft** was an **old supply of hay**, and we decided to use that instead. But as my companion crawled back across the loft with his arms (14) \_\_\_\_\_ (filled/fill/full) of straw, **his collar got caught on** a nail in the **roof**. (15) \_\_\_\_\_ (during/while/when) freeing himself, he **inadvertently loosened a plank** and discovered, **crammed** into the **rafters**, a package wrapped in **moth-eaten canvas** and (16) \_\_\_\_\_ (held/kept/stuck) together by **decaying leather straps**. We carefully took it down, **unwrapped** it, and found that **it contained** a book. On the **cover** (17) \_\_\_\_\_ (are/had/were) the words: The Alphabet of Sleep

As we were **gingerly leafing** through the pages, a **handwritten note** fell (18) \_\_\_\_\_ (over/out/down). The ink was faded, and the paper was **yellowed with age**, but we were just (19) \_\_\_\_\_ (could/able/unable) to **decipher** the words...

That evening, once we had **settled down** and read the **entire** book, we **discovered** that Johann Poberschnigg had a **remarkably modern view** of sleep and must have been a very wise man. Later, we took his book (20) \_\_\_\_\_ (by/to/with) us and **copied it out** at home, **adding our own comments**. Before we **continue with** the story of our adventures (21) \_\_\_\_\_ (on/in/by) these **strange** mountains, we will let you see this **amazing volume**.