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THE PARSON'S WIDOW

Svensk Filmindustri 1920

- B) Directed by Carl Th. Dreyer.  
Scenario: Carl Th. Dreyer from Kristoffer Janson's Short Story.  
Camera: George Schnéevoigt.
- C) Margarethe Pedersdotter - Hildur Carlberg  
Söfren Ivarson - Einar Rød  
Mari - Greta Almroth  
Gunvor - Mathilde Nielsen  
Steinar - Emil Nelsengreen
- and Olav Ankrust, Lorentz Thyholdt, Kurt Welin.
- 1) Now as a thousand years ago the waterfall sings by the old, Norwegian village.
- 1A) If we listen closely, it tells a lot about the days gone by.
- 2) (In Gothic writing) Listen, oh listen my tongue sounds,  
gather everybody from far-away and near.  
To parson's election I invite you,  
we are in want of a good shepherd.
- 2A) The congregation was to choose a new parson, and people gathered from near and far.
- 3) Those two had wandered over the mountain from the neighboring parish.
- 3A) Söfren had struggled through the poor student days and was now applying for the vacant position.

- 4) Mari had waited for Söfren during all these years.
- 4A) Not until he had obtained a benefice would her father allow them to marry.
- 5) His competitors to the post trusted their fine clothes and the learning with which they had stuffed themselves in Copenhagen.
- 5A) The three candidates sat outside the church -- like sheep in a trap.
- 5B) All of them sweating the cold sweat, they wished for the devil himself to take their competitors away.
- 6) Man was created in the beginning unlike all other creatures, being created in the image of God. But we must consider closely why God created Man so magnificent and perfect.
- 6A) Indeed, God created human beings in His likeness so that He would have an assembly which could know Him, worship Him and honor Him eternally.
- 7) I shall speak to you about Bileam's ass and God's strange power and marvelous deeds, with which He was able to open the mouth of a soulless animal, so it spoke like a man.
- 7A) Everybody laughed - except one.
- 8) Two learned applicants have appeared here before me.
- 9) One took us as far back as we can have possibly come -- to Paradise.
- 9A) Let him stay there -- and he will not need a job here!
- 10) The other chose the text: Am I not an ass? But what has an ass to do on the pulpit?

- 11) My friends, I do not take you to Paradise; neither shall I liken you unto asses, for that you are too clever. But I shall take you to the interior of the earth, deep into the jaws of hell.
- 12) Therefore, beware my friends, that we are not swallowed up by the jaws of hell.
- 12A) The congregation had appointed five distinguished men to make the decision.
- 13) When the two theologians from Copenhagen felt that they couldn't teach their goal by words alone, they joined forces and invited everybody to a feast.

REEL 2

- 14) In common decency they had to invite Söfren too -- they quickly grew to regret that.
- 14A) Mari had found a nice hidden vantage point from where she could survey the battle.
- 14B) Finally came the big moment where the decision-makers had to make a decision.
- 15) According to the law the late parson's widow has a right to demand that the successor marries her.
- 16) As the widow insists on her right, we have asked her to come here tonight so the candidates may have a look at her.
- 17) Night has fallen already. Will you do me the honor to accompany me to the parsonage:
- 17A) This is the parsonage.



- 18) Söfren had heard that Madam Margarethe was skilled in magic; but he thought that hardly anything would happen to him because he entered her house.
- 19) My lot is not pleasant. It is now the fourth time I must descend to the post like a domestic utensil.
- 19A) But when one has become as attached to a place as I have, for every day God gives you, your soul becomes more and more a part of every table, every chair and every candlestick...
- 20) ... but if you part with what has become a part of your life, your innermost heart is torn open -- and you die.
- 21) You are not bound to any maiden, are you?
- 21A) Söfren thought that if he were to tell the truth he might risk that Madam Margarethe would take away all the good food.
- 22) I hope, you will be content to stay here tonight? It is dark, and it is a long way to the inn.
- 23) The next morning Söfren woke up late.
- 24) Söfren was dressed in a black suit that was put at the side of his bed. Never had he been so well dressed.
- 25) This night I have slept like in Abraham's bosom.
- 26) Well, there I have never slept.
- 26A) In front of him Söfren saw a glistening white and fat herring. It was cleaned carefully and he was drawn to it by a strange magic force.

- 27) Madam Margarethe's two old servants had been with her as long as could be remembered.
- 28) When Söfren had eaten the herring and emptied the bottle of snaps, he felt so strange --
- 29) -- like in a fog he saw the parson's widow, not old and ugly, but as a young, smiling maid.
- 30) Madam Margarethe, I love you. Let me stay here and have good days.
- 31) Wasn't it so, Mr. Söfren, that you offered me your heart and hand and asked me to be your wife?
- 31A) I'll stand by what I've said. A man is as good as his word.
- 32) Of course you have your freedom. You have your room and I have mine. I only wish to stay on the vicarage and manage everything as before.
- 32A) Söfren got out into the fresh air and the fog cleared. In the brutal light of reality he realized what had happened.
- 32B) Your breath smells from snaps.
- 33) But how has the parson's widow bewitched you?
- 34) With a herring she gave me.
- 34A) It made me so light-headed that I proposed to her.
- 35) You I cannot have without the post -- and that I can only have if I marry the old woman.
- 36) But when she dies, I inherit everything, and then we can get married.

37) Can Madam Margarethe really not see who it is?

REEL 3

38) Why, it is my sister Mari.

38A) I would ask Madam Margarethe if she could stay at the vicarage in return for helping in the household.

39) Don't you think the old one has finished soon?

40) A few weeks later a neighboring parson officiated at the wedding.

40A) While waiting for the bride and groom the wedding party danced an old-fashioned lancier.

41) We have come to ask if the curate will marry our much respected and highly loved vicar, Mr. Söfren Ivarson --

41A) -- and our pious and proper Margarethe Pedersdotter, widow after the esteemed Niels Hansson.

41B) I ask of you Söfren Ivarson whether you have given to any living woman a promise of marriage which could be a hinderance for this marriage?

42) Even though both bride and bridegroom would rather have celebrated the wedding quietly, it was custom in the area that a big celebration was held.

42A) The wedding ring is a circle without ending because it symbolizes that the love on which marriage rests likewise ought to be forever and without end.

- 43) Therefore we will now drink to the health of the bridal couple and wish them a long and happy life.
- 43A) The day after the wedding Mr. Söfren tried to take the lead again.
- 44) I advise her that neither she nor her fellows swagger so much in the future. Now I am master of the house!
- 45) Mr. Söfren bristles, Steinar. You go and brush him!
- 46) I advise him to attend to his peasants and his sermons in the future. Do not try to play master here; I am the master of the house!
- 46A) Excuse me, Madam Margarethe.

REEL 4

- 47) Time went by. In respect to Madame Margarethe, she tried the patience of the two young people -- partly because she did not die yet, and partly because she seemed to be present everywhere and to know everything.
- 47A) Söfren realized begrudgingly that the opportunities to see Mari alone were scarce.
- 47B) This was not the only time Söfren had bad luck.
- 47C) Madam Margarethe. Madam Margarethe.
- 48) The Vicar has been pleased to glance lovingly at me.
- 49) Just release the young master!



- 49A) The Parson ought to know that I am a proper woman.
- 49B) Finally Söfren didn't see any other solution than to behave like the peasant youths used to.
- 50) Suddenly I had a stomach ache and wanted to ask my sister for some tincture.
- 51) If he needs tincture, he better come to me.
- 51A) Söfren had to admit to himself that he had been beaten, but a few days later he tried again.
- 52) Ducky!
- 53) That is the limit, that he cannot leave us young girls alone.
- 53A) ... and furthermore he calls me Sweetie -- what nerve!-
- 54) One evening they sat together all three, working.
- 55) Does Madam Margarethe know that the peasants say that you got your former husband through magic?
- 56) I have thought a good deal about the herring you offered me -- was it -- real?
- 57) No, you may be sure that it was bewitched!
- 58) The peasants also tell that you have some tincture that can prolong one's life.
- 59) Can't he see that it must be the truth. Just look at me. I can live at least another hundred years!

- 59A) One night a few days later when the full moon lit Madam Margarete's room.
- 60) Well I Never! The Evil One in the parson's slippers!
- 61) A couple of hours passed -- Madam Margarete held out still.
- 62) So that is how the Devil looks!

REEL 5

- 63) Poor Söfren -- he did one stupid thing after another. He was lucky that Madam Margarete treated him like a schoolboy who needed to mature.
- 63A) But one day something happened that became of the greatest importance to everybody.
- 64) Hadn't he better go and prepare his Sunday sermon?
- 64A) Sofren thought that Madam Margarete might as well stay up there for a while. Maybe then he could get together with Mari -- just the two of them.
- 64B) But Mari happened to be where Söfren least expected.
- 64C) Watch out, Madam Margarete! The ladder is gone!!
- 65) The thigh-bone is broken, and she has a concussion of the brain -- but she will recover.
- 65A) Many weeks passed before Söfren was allowed to visit Mari.
- 66) During those weeks Söfren learned to love Madam Margarete, who took care of Mari as if she was her own child.
- 67) I am reminded of my own youth --
- 68) My first husband and I had been betrothed for many years when he applied for the post here and learned that he could have it only if he took over the predecessor's widow --
- 69) We knew that the widow was weak and could hardly live long, so it was a great temptation for us.
- 70) Yes, God forgive us. We built our happiness on the hope of the death of another human being.
- 71) Five years we had to wait. But the memories of thirty happy years are forever attached to these rooms, and in the cementary there is a grave that is never out of my thoughts.
- 71A) Forgive us, Madam Margarete!!

- 72) Mari and I are not sister and brother -- she is my fiancée. We have also waited for your death, Madam Margarete!
- 73) Poor Children! You poor children!
- 73A) Before long Mari had recovered thanks to Madam Margarete's loving care.
- 74) After Mari's recovery Madam Margarete was completely transformed. She spent half of her days in the cementary.
- 74A) One morning Madam Margarete did not come down for breakfast.
- 75) (in writing)  
Do not forget, when my mortal remains are taken away, to put a horseshoe over the door and strew linseed after me so that I shall not haunt the house and disturb your peace.
- 76) Eight days later Margarete Pedersdotter was buried.
- 77) Thank you for all the good days I have spent here.
- 78) (*Fustica italics*)  
I raise my voice like the bells  
in praise of the Almighty God  
asking people to church  
sounding in dirge finally.
- 79) After her own wish Madam Margarete was buried with her first husband. Söfren and his wife often visited the grave to pay respect to the memory of of their benefactor.
- 80) We owe a debt of gratitude to her, Mari. She taught you to be a good housewife, and she taught me to be an honourable man.