**THE THIRD STORY**

Day the First

MELCHIZEDEK THE JEW, WITH A STORY OF THREE RINGS, ESCAPETH A PARLOUS SNARE SET FOR HIM BY SALADIN

Neifile having made an end of her story, which was commended of all, Filomena, by the queen's good pleasure, proceeded to speak thus: "The story told by Neifile bringeth to my mind a parlous case the once betided a Jew; and for that, it having already been excellent well spoken both of God and of the verity of our faith, it should not henceforth be forbidden us to descend to the doings of mankind and the events that have befallen them, I will now proceed to relate to you the case aforesaid, which having heard, you will peradventure become more wary in answering the questions that may be put to you. You must know, lovesome[[46]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_46_46) companions[[47]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_47_47) mine, that, like as folly ofttimes draweth folk forth of happy estate and casteth them into the utmost misery, even so doth good sense extricate the wise man from the greatest perils and place him in assurance and tranquillity. How true it is that folly bringeth many an one from fair estate unto misery is seen by multitude of examples, with the recounting whereof we have no present concern, considering that a thousand instances thereof do every day manifestly appear to us; but that good sense is a cause of solacement I will, as I promised, briefly show you by a little story.

Saladin,—whose valour was such that not only from a man of little account it made him Soldan of Babylon, but gained him many victories over kings Saracen and Christian,—having in divers wars and in the exercise of his extraordinary munificences expended his whole treasure and having an urgent occasion for a good sum of money nor seeing whence he might avail to have it as promptly as it behoved him, called to mind a rich Jew, by name Melchizedek, who lent at usance in Alexandria, and bethought himself that this latter had the wherewithal to oblige him, and he would; but he was so miserly that he would never have done it of his freewill and Saladin was loath29 to use force with him; wherefore, need constraining him, he set his every wit awork to find a means how the Jew might be brought to serve him in this and presently concluded to do him a violence coloured by some show of reason.

Accordingly he sent for Melchizedek and receiving him familiarly, seated him by himself, then said to him, 'Honest man, I have understood from divers persons that thou art a very learned man and deeply versed in matters of divinity; wherefore I would fain know of thee whether of the three Laws thou reputest the true, the Jewish, the Saracen or the Christian.' The Jew, who was in truth a man of learning and understanding, perceived but too well that Saladin looked to entrap him in words, so he might fasten a quarrel on him, and bethought himself that he could not praise any of the three more than the others without giving him the occasion he sought. Accordingly, sharpening his wits, as became one who felt himself in need of an answer by which he might not be taken at a vantage, there speedily occurred to him that which it behoved him reply and he said, 'My lord, the question that you propound to me is a nice one and to acquaint you with that which I think of the matter, it behoveth me tell you a little story, which you shall hear.

An I mistake not, I mind me to have many a time heard tell that there was once a great man and a rich, who among other very precious jewels in his treasury, had a very goodly and costly ring, whereunto being minded, for its worth and beauty, to do honour and wishing to leave it in perpetuity to his descendants, he declared that whichsoever of his sons should, at his death, be found in possession thereof, by his bequest unto him, should be recognized as his heir and be held of all the others in honour and reverence as chief and head. He to whom the ring was left by him held a like course with his own descendants and did even as his father had done. In brief the ring passed from hand to hand, through many generations, and came at last into the possession of a man who had three goodly and virtuous sons, all very obedient to their father wherefore he loved them all three alike. The young men, knowing the usance of the ring, each for himself, desiring to be the most honoured among his folk, as best he might, besought his father, who was now an old man, to leave him the ring, whenas he came to die. The worthy man, who loved them all alike and knew not himself how to choose to which he had liefer leave the ring, bethought himself, having promised it to each, to seek to satisfy all three and privily let make by a good craftsman other two rings, which were so like unto the first that he himself scarce knew which was the true. When he came to die, he secretly gave each one of his sons his ring, wherefore each of them, seeking after their father's death, to occupy the inheritance and the honour and denying it to the others, produced his ring, in witness of his right, and the three rings being found so like unto one another that the true might not be known, the question which was the father's very heir abode pending and yet pendeth. And so say I to you, my lord, of the three Laws to the three peoples given of God the Father, whereof you question me; each people deemeth itself30 to have his inheritance, His true Law and His commandments; but of which in very deed hath them, even as of the rings, the question yet pendeth.'

Saladin perceived that the Jew had excellently well contrived to escape the snare which he had spread before his feet; wherefore he concluded to discover to him his need and see if he were willing to serve him; and so accordingly he did, confessing to him that which he had it in mind to do, had he not answered him on such discreet wise. The Jew freely furnished him with all that he required, and the Soldan after satisfied him in full; moreover, he gave him very great gifts and still had him to friend and maintained him about his own person in high and honourable estate."

**THE TENTH STORY**

Day the Second

PAGANINO OF MONACO STEALETH AWAY THE WIFE OF MESSER RICCIARDO DI CHINZICA, WHO, LEARNING WHERE SHE IS, GOETH THITHER AND MAKING FRIENDS WITH PAGANINO, DEMANDETH HER AGAIN OF HIM. THE LATTER CONCEDETH HER TO HIM, AN SHE WILL; BUT SHE REFUSETH TO RETURN WITH HIM AND MESSER RICCIARDO DYING, SHE BECOMETH THE WIFE OF PAGANINO

Each of the honourable company highly commended for goodly the story told by their queen, especially Dioneo, with whom alone for that present day it now rested to tell, and who, after many praises bestowed upon the preceding tale, said, "Fair ladies, one part of the queen's story hath caused me change counsel of telling you one that was in my mind, and determine to tell you another,—and that is the stupidity of Bernabo (albeit good betided him thereof) and of all others who give themselves to believe that which he made a show of believing and who, to wit, whilst going about the world, diverting themselves now with this woman and now with that, imagine that the ladies left at home abide with their hands in their girdles, as if we knew not, we who are born and reared among the latter, unto what they are fain. In telling you this story, I shall at once show you how great is the folly of these folk and how greater yet is that of those who, deeming themselves more potent than nature herself, think by dint of sophistical inventions[[140]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_140_140) to avail unto that which is beyond their power and study to bring others to that which they themselves are, whenas the complexion of those on whom they practise brooketh it not.

There was, then, in Pisa a judge, by name Messer Ricciardo di Chinzica, more gifted with wit than with bodily strength, who, thinking belike to satisfy a wife by the same means which served him to despatch his studies and being very rich, sought with no little diligence to have a fair and young lady to wife; whereas, had he but known to counsel himself as he counselled others, he should have shunned both the one and the other. The thing came to pass according to his wish, for Messer Lotto Gualandi gave him to wife a daughter of his, Bartolomea by name, one of the fairest and handsomest young ladies of Pisa, albeit there be few there that are not very lizards to look upon. The judge accordingly brought her home with the utmost pomp and having held a magnificent wedding, made shift the first night to hand her one venue for the consummation of the marriage, but came within an ace of making a stalemate of it, whereafter, lean and dry and scant of wind as he was, it behoved him on the morrow bring himself back to life with malmsey and restorative confections and other remedies. Thenceforward, being now a better judge of his own powers than he was, he fell to teaching his wife a calendar fit for children learning to read and belike made afore121time at Ravenna,[[141]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_141_141) for that, according to what he feigned to her, there was no day in the year but was sacred not to one saint only, but to many, in reverence of whom he showed by divers reasons that man and wife should abstain from carnal conversation; and to these be added, to boot, fast days and Emberdays and the vigils of the Apostles and of a thousand other saints and Fridays and Saturdays and Lord's Day and all Lent and certain seasons of the moon and store of other exceptions, conceiving belike that it behoved to keep holiday with women in bed like as he did bytimes whilst pleading in the courts of civil law. This fashion (to the no small chagrin of the lady, whom he handled maybe once a month, and hardly that) he followed a great while, still keeping strait watch over her, lest peradventure some other should teach her to know working-days, even as he had taught her holidays. Things standing thus, it chanced that, the heat being great and Messer Ricciardo having a mind to go a-pleasuring to a very fair country-seat he had, near Monte Nero, and there abide some days to take the air, he betook himself thither, carrying with him his fair lady. There sojourning, to give her some diversion, he caused one day fish and they went out to sea in two boats, he in one with the fishermen, and she in another with other ladies. The sport luring them on, they drifted some miles out to sea, well nigh without perceiving it, and whilst they were intent upon their diversion, there came up of a sudden a galliot belonging to Paganino da Mare, a famous corsair of those days. The latter, espying the boats, made for them, nor could they flee so fast but he overtook that in which were the women and seeing therein the judge's fair lady, he carried her aboard the galliot, in full sight of Messer Ricciardo, who was now come to land, and made off without recking of aught else. When my lord judge, who was so jealous that he misdoubted of the very air, saw this, it booteth not to ask if he was chagrined; and in vain, both at Pisa and otherwhere, did he complain of the villainy of the corsairs, for that he knew not who had taken his wife from him nor whither he had carried her. As for Paganino, finding her so fair, he deemed himself in luck and having no wife, resolved to keep her for himself. Accordingly, seeing her weeping sore, he studied to comfort her with soft words till nightfall, when, his calendar having dropped from his girdle and saints' days and holidays gone clean out of his head, he fell to comforting her with deeds, himseeming that words had availed little by day; and after such a fashion did he console her that, ere they came to Monaco, the judge and his ordinances had altogether escaped her mind and she began to lead the merriest of lives with Paganino. The latter carried her to Monaco and there, over and above the consolations with which he plied her night and day, he entreated her honourably as his wife. After awhile it came to Messer Ricciardo's ears where his wife was and he, being possessed with the most ardent desire to have her again and bethinking himself that none other might thoroughly suffice122 to do what was needful to that end, resolved to go thither himself, determined to spend any quantity of money for her ransom. Accordingly he set out by sea and coming to Monaco, there both saw and was seen of the lady, who told it to Paganino that same evening and acquainted him with her intent. Next morning Messer Ricciardo, seeing Paganino, accosted him and quickly clapped up a great familiarity and friendship with him, whilst the other feigned not to know him and waited to see at what he aimed. Accordingly, whenas it seemed to him time, Messer Ricciardo discovered to him, as best and most civilly he knew, the occasion of his coming and prayed him take what he pleased and restore him the lady. To which Paganino made answer with a cheerful countenance, 'Sir, you are welcome, and to answer you briefly, I say thus; it is true I have a young lady in my house, if she be your wife or another's I know not, for that I know you not nor indeed her, save in so much as she hath abidden awhile with me. If you be, as you say, her husband, I will, since you seem to me a civil gentleman, carry you to her and I am assured that she will know you right well. If she say it is as you avouch and be willing to go with you, you shall, for the sake of your civility, give me what you yourself will to her ransom; but, an it be not so, you would do ill to seek to take her from me, for that I am a young man and can entertain a woman as well as another, and especially such an one as she, who is the most pleasing I ever saw.' Quoth Messer Ricciardo, 'For certain she is my wife, an thou bring me where she is, thou shalt soon see it; for she will incontinent throw herself on my neck; wherefore I ask no better than that it be as thou proposest.' 'Then,' said Paganino, 'let us be going.' Accordingly they betook themselves to the corsair's house, where he brought the judge into a saloon of his and let call the lady, who issued forth of a chamber, all dressed and tired, and came whereas they were, but accosted Messer Ricciardo no otherwise than as she would any other stranger who might have come home with Paganino. The judge, who looked to have been received by her with the utmost joy, marvelled sore at this and fell a-saying in himself, 'Belike the chagrin and long grief I have suffered, since I lost her, have so changed me that she knoweth me not.' Wherefore he said to her, 'Wife, it hath cost me dear to carry thee a-fishing, for that never was grief felt like that which I have suffered since I lost thee, and now meseemeth thou knowest me not, so distantly dost thou greet me. Seest thou not that I am thine own Messer Ricciardo, come hither to pay that which this gentleman, in whose house we are, shall require to thy ransom and to carry thee away? And he, of his favour, restoreth thee to me for what I will.' The lady turned to him and said, smiling somewhat, 'Speak you to me, sir? Look you mistake me not, for, for my part, I mind me not ever to have seen you.' Quoth Ricciardo, 'Look what thou sayest; consider me well; an thou wilt but recollect thyself, thou wilt see that I am thine own Ricciardo di Chinzica.' 'Sir,' answered the lady, 'you will pardon me; belike it is not so seemly a thing as you imagine for me to look much on you. Nevertheless I have seen enough of you to know that I never before set eyes on you.' Ricciardo,123 concluding that she did this for fear of Paganino and chose not to confess to knowing him in the latter's presence, besought him of his favour that he might speak with her in a room alone. Paganino replied that he would well, so but he would not kiss her against her will, and bade the lady go with him into a chamber and there hear what he had to say and answer him as it should please her. Accordingly the lady and Messer Ricciardo went into a room apart and as soon as they were seated, the latter began to say, 'Alack, heart of my body, sweet my soul and my hope, knowest thou not thy Ricciardo, who loveth thee more than himself? How can this be? Am I so changed? Prithee, fair mine eye, do but look on me a little.' The lady began to laugh and without letting him say more, replied, 'You may be assured that I am not so scatterbrained but that I know well enough you are Messer Ricciardo di Chinzica, my husband; but, what time I was with you, you showed that you knew me very ill, for that you should have had the sense to see that I was young and lusty and gamesome and should consequently have known that which behoveth unto young ladies, over and above clothes and meat, albeit for shamefastness they name it not; the which how you performed, you know. If the study of the laws was more agreeable to you than your wife, you should not have taken her, albeit it never appeared to me that you were a judge; nay, you seemed to me rather a common crier of saints' days and sacraments and fasts and vigils, so well you knew them. And I tell you this, that, had you suffered the husbandmen who till your lands keep as many holidays as you allowed him who had the tilling of my poor little field, you would never have reaped the least grain of corn. However, as God, having compassion on my youth, hath willed it, I have happened on yonder man, with whom I abide in this chamber, wherein it is unknown what manner of thing is a holiday (I speak of those holidays which you, more assiduous in the service of God than in that of the ladies, did so diligently celebrate) nor ever yet entered in at this door Saturday nor Friday nor vigil nor Emberday nor Lent, that is so long; nay, here swink we day and night and thump our wool; and this very night after matinsong, I know right well how the thing went, once he was up. Wherefore I mean to abide with him and work; whilst I am young, and leave saints' days and jubilees and fasts for my keeping when I am old; so get you gone about your business as quickliest you may, good luck go with you, and keep as many holidays as you please, without me.' Messer Ricciardo, hearing these words, was distressed beyond endurance and said, whenas he saw she had made an end of speaking. 'Alack, sweet my soul, what is this thou sayest? Hast thou no regard for thy kinsfolk's honour and thine own? Wilt thou rather abide here for this man's whore and in mortal sin than at Pisa as my wife? He, when he is weary of thee, will turn thee away to thine own exceeding reproach, whilst I will still hold thee dear and still (e'en though I willed it not) thou shalt be mistress of my house. Wilt thou for the sake of a lewd and disorderly appetite, forsake thine honour and me, who love thee more than my life? For God's sake, dear my hope, speak no124 more thus, but consent to come with me; henceforth, since I know thy desire, I will enforce myself [to content it;] wherefore, sweet my treasure, change counsel and come away with me, who have never known weal since thou wast taken from me.' Whereto answered the lady, 'I have no mind that any, now that it availeth not, should be more tender of my honour than I myself; would my kinsfolk had had regard thereto, whenas they gave me to you! But, as they had then no care for my honour, I am under no present concern to be careful of theirs; and if I am herein *mortar*[[142]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_142_142) sin, I shall abide though it be in pestle[[142]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm#Footnote_142_142) sin. And let me tell you that here meseemeth I am Paganino's wife, whereas at Pisa meseemed I was your whore, seeing that there, by season of the moon and quadratures of geometry, needs must be planets concur to couple betwixt you and me, whereas here Paganino holdeth me all night in his arms and straineth me and biteth me, and how he serveth me, let God tell you for me. You say forsooth you will enforce yourself; to what? To do it in three casts and cause it stand by dint of cudgelling? I warrant me you are grown a doughty cavalier since I saw you last! Begone and enforce yourself to live, for methinketh indeed you do but sojourn here below upon sufferance, so peaked and scant o' wind you show to me. And yet more I tell you, that, should he leave me (albeit meseemeth he is nowise inclined thereto, so I choose to stay,) I purpose not therefor ever to return to you, of whom squeeze you as I might, there were no making a porringer of sauce; for that I abode with you once to my grievous hurt and loss, wherefore in such a case I should seek my vantage elsewhere. Nay, once again I tell you, here be neither saints' days nor vigils; wherefore here I mean to abide; so get you gone in God's name as quickliest you may, or I will cry out that you would fain force me.' Messer Ricciardo, seeing himself in ill case and now recognizing his folly in taking a young wife, whenas he was himself forspent, went forth the chamber tristful and woebegone, and bespoke Paganino with many words, that skilled not a jot. Ultimately, leaving the lady, he returned to Pisa, without having accomplished aught, and there for chagrin fell into such dotage that, as he went about Pisa, to whoso greeted him or asked him of anywhat, he answered nought but 'The ill hole[[143]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_143_143) will have no holidays;'[[144]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_144_144) and there, no great while after, he died. Paganino, hearing this and knowing the love the lady bore himself, espoused her to his lawful wife and thereafter, without ever observing saints' day or vigil or keeping Lent, they wrought what while their legs would carry them and led a jolly life of it. Wherefore, dear my ladies, meseemeth Bernabo, in125 his dispute with Ambrogiuolo, rode the she-goat down the steep."[[145]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_145_145)

This story gave such occasion for laughter to all the company that there was none whose jaws ached not therefor, and all the ladies avouched with one accord that Dioneo spoke sooth and that Bernabo had been an ass. But, after the story was ended and the laughter abated, the queen, observing that the hour was now late and that all had told and seeing that the end of her seignory was come, according to the ordinance commenced, took the wreath from her own head and set it on that of Neifile, saying, with a blithe aspect, "Henceforth, companion dear, be thine the governance of this little people"; and reseated herself. Neifile blushed a little at the honour received and became in countenance like as showeth a new-blown rose of April or of May in the breaking of the day, with lovesome eyes some little downcast, sparkling no otherwise than the morning-star. But, after the courteous murmur of the bystanders, whereby they gladsomely approved their goodwill towards the new-made queen, had abated and she had taken heart again, she seated herself somewhat higher than of wont and said, "Since I am to be your queen, I will, departing not from the manner holden of those who have foregone me and whose governance you have by your obedience commended, make manifest to you in few words my opinion, which, an it be approved by your counsel, we will ensue. To-morrow, as you know, is Friday and the next day is Saturday, days which, by reason of the viands that are used therein,[[146]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_146_146) are somewhat irksome to most folk, more by token that Friday, considering that He who died for our life on that day suffered passion, is worthy of reverence; wherefore I hold it a just thing and a seemly that, in honour of the Divinity, we apply ourselves rather to orisons than to story-telling. As for Saturday, it is the usance of ladies on that day to wash their heads and do away all dust and all uncleanliness befallen them for the labours of the past week; and many, likewise, use, in reverence of the Virgin Mother of the Son of God, to fast and rest from all manner of work in honour of the ensuing Sunday. Wherefore, we being unable fully to ensue the order of living taken by us, on like wise methinketh we were well to rest from story-telling on that day also; after which, for that we shall then have sojourned here four days, I hold it opportune, an we would give no occasion for newcomers to intrude upon us, that we remove hence and get us gone elsewhither; where I have already considered and provided. There when we shall be assembled together on Sunday, after sleeping,—we having to-day had leisure enough for discoursing at large,[[147]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_147_147)—I have bethought myself,—at once that you may have more time to consider and because it will be yet goodlier that the license of our story-telling be somewhat straitened126 and that we devise of one of the many fashions of fortune,—that our discourse shall be OF SUCH AS HAVE, BY DINT OF DILIGENCE,[[148]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_148_148) ACQUIRED SOME MUCH DESIRED THING OR RECOVERED SOME LOST GOOD. Whereupon let each think to tell somewhat that may be useful or at least entertaining to the company, saving always Dioneo his privilege." All commended the speech and disposition of the queen and ordained that it should be as she had said. Then, calling for her seneschal, she particularly instructed him where he should set the tables that evening and after of what he should do during all the time of her seignory; and this done, rising to her feet, she gave the company leave to do that which was most pleasing unto each. Accordingly, ladies and men betook themselves to a little garden and there, after they had disported themselves awhile, the hour of supper being come, they supped with mirth and pleasance; then, all arising thence and Emilia, by the queen's commandment, leading the round, the ditty following was sung by Pampinea, whilst the other ladies responded:

What lady aye should sing, and if not I,  
Who'm blest with all for which a maid can sigh?  
Come then, O Love, thou source of all my weal,  
All hope and every issue glad and bright  
Sing ye awhile yfere  
Of sighs nor bitter pains I erst did feel,  
That now but sweeten to me thy delight,  
Nay, but of that fire clear,  
Wherein I, burning, live in joy and cheer,  
And as my God, thy name do magnify.  
  
Thou settest, Love, before these eyes of mine  
Whenas thy fire I entered the first day,  
A youngling so beseen  
With valour, worth and loveliness divine,  
That never might one find a goodlier, nay,  
Nor yet his match, I ween.  
So sore I burnt for him I still must e'en  
Sing, blithe, of him with thee, my lord most high.  
  
And that in him which crowneth my liesse  
Is that I please him, as he pleaseth me,  
Thanks to Love debonair;  
Thus in this world my wish I do possess  
And in the next I trust at peace to be,  
Through that fast faith I bear  
To him; sure God, who seeth this, will ne'er  
The kingdom of His bliss to us deny.

After this they sang sundry other songs and danced sundry dances and played upon divers instruments of music. Then, the queen deeming it time to go to rest, each betook himself, with torches before him, to his chamber, and all on the two following days, whilst applying themselves to those things whereof the queen had spoken, looked longingly for Sunday.

**THE TENTH STORY**

Day the Third

ALIBECH, TURNING HERMIT, IS TAUGHT BY RUSTICO, A MONK, TO PUT THE DEVIL IN HELL, AND BEING AFTER BROUGHT AWAY THENCE, BECOMETH NEERBALE HIS WIFE

Dioneo, who had diligently hearkened to the queen's story, seeing that it was ended and that it rested with him alone to tell, without awaiting commandment, smilingly began to speak as follows: "Charming ladies, maybe you have never heard tell how one putteth the devil in hell; wherefore,183 without much departing from the tenor of that whereof you have discoursed all this day, I will e'en tell it you. Belike, having learned it, you may catch the spirit[[202]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_202_202) thereof and come to know that, albeit Love sojourneth liefer in jocund palaces and luxurious chambers than in the hovels of the poor, yet none the less doth he whiles make his power felt midmost thick forests and rugged mountains and in desert caverns; whereby it may be understood that all things are subject to his puissance.

To come, then, to the fact, I say that in the city of Capsa in Barbary there was aforetime a very rich man, who, among his other children, had a fair and winsome young daughter, by name Alibech. She, not being a Christian and hearing many Christians who abode in the town mightily extol the Christian faith and the service of God, one day questioned one of them in what manner one might avail to serve God with the least hindrance. The other answered that they best served God who most strictly eschewed the things of the world, as those did who had betaken them into the solitudes of the deserts of Thebais. The girl, who was maybe fourteen years old and very simple, moved by no ordered desire, but by some childish fancy, set off next morning by stealth and all alone, to go to the desert of Thebais, without letting any know her intent. After some days, her desire persisting, she won, with no little toil, to the deserts in question and seeing a hut afar off, went thither and found at the door a holy man, who marvelled to see her there and asked her what she sought. She replied that, being inspired of God, she went seeking to enter into His service and was now in quest of one who should teach her how it behoved to serve Him.

The worthy man, seeing her young and very fair and fearing lest, an he entertained her, the devil should beguile him, commended her pious intent and giving her somewhat to eat of roots of herbs and wild apples and dates and to drink of water, said to her, 'Daughter mine, not far hence is a holy man, who is a much better master than I of that which thou goest seeking; do thou betake thyself to him'; and put her in the way. However, when she reached the man in question, she had of him the same answer and faring farther, came to the cell of a young hermit, a very devout and good man, whose name was Rustico and to whom she made the same request as she had done to the others. He, having a mind to make a trial of his own constancy, sent her not away, as the others had done, but received her into his cell, and the night being come, he made her a little bed of palm-fronds and bade her lie down to rest thereon. This done, temptations tarried not to give battle to his powers of resistance and he, finding himself grossly deceived by these latter, turned tail, without awaiting many assaults, and confessed himself beaten; then, laying aside devout thoughts and orisons and mortifications, he fell to revolving in his memory the youth and beauty of the damsel and bethinking himself what course he should take with her, so as to win to184 that which he desired of her, without her taking him for a debauched fellow.

Accordingly, having sounded her with sundry questions, he found that she had never known man and was in truth as simple as she seemed; wherefore he bethought him how, under colour of the service of God, he might bring her to his pleasures. In the first place, he showeth her with many words how great an enemy the devil was of God the Lord and after gave her to understand that the most acceptable service that could be rendered to God was to put back the devil into hell, whereto he had condemned him. The girl asked him how this might be done; and he, 'Thou shalt soon know that; do thou but as thou shalt see me do.' So saying, he proceeded to put off the few garments he had and abode stark naked, as likewise did the girl, whereupon he fell on his knees, as he would pray, and caused her abide over against himself.[[203]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_203_203)

E cosí stando, essendo Rustico, piú che mai, nel suo disidero acceso, per lo vederla cosí bella, venue la resurrezion della carne; la quale riguardando Alibech, e maravigliatasti, disse: Rustico, quella che cosa è, che io ti veggio, che cosí si pigne in fuori, e non l' ho io? O figliuola mia, disse Rustico, questo è il diavolo, di che io t'ho parlato, e vedi tu ora: egli mi dà grandissima molestia, tanta, che io appena la posso sofferire. Allora disse la giovane. O lodato sia Iddio, ché io veggio, che io sto meglio, che non stai tu, ché io non ho cotesto diavolo io. Disse Rustico, tu di vero; ma tu hai un' altra cosa, che non l'ho io, et haila in iscambio di questo. Disse Alibech: O che? A cui Rustico disse: Hai l'inferno; e dicoti, che io mi credo, che Dio t'abbia qui mandata per la salute dell' anima mia; perciòche, se questo diavolo pur mi darà questa noia, ove tu cogli aver di me tanta pietà, e sofferire, che io in inferno il rimetta; tu mi darai grandissima consolazione, et a Dio farai grandissimo piacere, e servigio; se tu per quello fare in queste parti venuta se; che tu di. La giovane di buona fede rispose O padre mio, poscia che io ho l'inferno, sia pure quando vi piacerà mettervi il diavolo. Disse allora Rustico: Figliuola mia benedetta sia tu: andiamo dunque, e rimettiamlovi sí, che egli poscia mi lasci stare. E cosí detto, menate la giovane sopra uno de' loro letticelli, le 'nsegnò, come star si dovesse a dover incarcerare quel maladetto da Dio. La giovane, che mai piú non aveva in inferno messo diavolo alcuno, per la prima volta sentí un poco di noia; perché ella disse a Rustico.

Per certo, padre mio, mala cosa dee essere questo diavolo, e veramente nimico di Iddio ché ancora all'inferno, non che altrui duole quando, egli v'è dentro rimesso. Disse Rustico: Figliuola, egli non averrà sempre cosí: e per fare, che questo non avvenisse, da sei volte anziche di su il letticel si movesero, ve 'l rimisero; tantoche per quella volta gli trasser sí la superbia del capo, che egli si stette volentieri in pace. Ma ritornatagli poi nel seguente tempo piú volte, e la giovane ubbidente185 sempre a trargliela si disponesse, avvenne, che il giuoco le cominciò a piacere; e cominciò a dire a Rustico. Ben veggio, che il ver dicevano que valenti uomini in Capsa, che il servire a Dio era cosí dolce cosa, e per certo io non mi ricordo, che mai alcuna altra ne facessi, che di tanto diletto, e piacere mi fosse, quanto è il rimettere il diavolo in inferno; e perciò giudico ogn' altra persona, che ad altro che a servire a Dio attende, essere una bestia. Per la qual cosa essa spesse volte andava a Rustico, e gli diceva. Padre mio, io son qui venuta per servire a Dio, e non per istare oziosa; andiamo a rimittere il diavolo in inferno. La qual cosa faccendo, diceva ella alcuna volta. Rustico, io non so perché il diavolo si fugga di ninferno, ché s' egli vi stesse cosí volentiere, come l'inferno il riceve, e tiene; agli non sene uscirebbe mai. Cosí adunque invitando spesso la giovane Rustico, et al servigio di Dio confortandolo, se la bambagia del farsetto tratta gli avea, che egli a talora sentiva freddo, che un' altro sarebbe sudato; e perciò egli incominciò a dire alla giovane, che il diavolo non era da gastigare, né da rimettere in inferno, se non quando egli per superbia levasse il capo; e noi, per la grazia, di Dio, l'abbiamo sí sgannato, che egla priega Iddio di starsi in pace: e cosí alquanto impose di silenzio alla giovane. La qual, poiche vide che Rustico non la richiedeva a dovere il diavolo rimittere in inferno, gli disse un giorno. Rustico, se il diavolo tuo è gastigato, e piú non ti dà noia me il mio ninferno non lascia stare: perché tu farai bene, che tu col tuo diavolo aiuti ad attutare la rabbia al mio inferno; come io col mio ninferno ho ajutato a trarre la superbia al tuo diavolo.

*Transcriber's Note:* The following is a 1903 translation of this passage by J.M. Rigg (from Project Gutenberg Etext No. 3726):

Whereupon Rustico, seeing her so fair, felt an accession of desire, and therewith came an insurgence of the flesh, which Alibech marking with surprise, said:—"Rustico, what is this, which I see thee have, that so protrudes, and which I have not?" "Oh! my daughter," said Rustico, "'tis the Devil of whom I have told thee: and, seest thou? he is now tormenting me most grievously, insomuch that I am scarce able to hold out." Then:—"Praise be to God," said the girl, "I see that I am in better case than thou, for no such Devil have I." "Sooth sayst thou," returned Rustico; "but instead of him thou hast somewhat else that I have not." "Oh!" said Alibech, "what may that be?" "Hell," answered Rustico: "and I tell thee, that 'tis my belief that God has sent thee hither for the salvation of my soul; seeing that, if this Devil shall continue to plague me thus, then, so thou wilt have compassion on me and permit me to put him in hell, thou wilt both afford me great and exceeding great solace, and render to God an exceeding most acceptable service, if, as thou sayst, thou art come into these parts for such a purpose." In good faith the girl made answer:—"As I have hell to match your Devil, be it, my father, as and when you will." Whereupon:—"Bless thee, my daughter," said Rustico, "go we then, and put him there, that he leave me henceforth in peace." Which said, he took the girl to one of the beds and taught her the posture in which she must lie in order to incarcerate this spirit accursed of God. The girl, having never before put any devil in hell, felt on this first occasion a twinge of pain: wherefore she said to Rustico:—

"Of a surety, my father, he must be a wicked fellow, this devil, and in very truth a foe to God; for there is sorrow even in hell—not to speak of other places—when he is put there." "Daughter," said Rustico, "'twill not be always so." And for better assurance thereof they put him there six times before they quitted the bed; whereby they so thoroughly abased his pride that he was fain to be quiet. However, the proud fit returning upon him from time to time, and the girl addressing herself always obediently to its reduction, it so befell that she began to find the game agreeable, and would say to Rustico:—"Now see I plainly that 'twas true, what the worthy men said at Capsa, of the service of God being so delightful: indeed I cannot remember that in aught that ever I did I had so much pleasure, so much solace, as in putting the Devil in hell; for which cause I deem it insensate folly on the part of any one to have a care to aught else than the service of God." Wherefore many a time she would come to Rustico, and say to him:—"My father, 'twas to serve God that I came hither, and not to pass my days in idleness: go we then, and put the Devil in hell." And while they did so, she would now and again say:—"I know not, Rustico, why the Devil should escape from hell; were he but as ready to stay there as hell is to receive and retain him, he would never come out of it." So, the girl thus frequently inviting and exhorting Rustico to the service of God, there came at length a time when she had so thoroughly lightened his doublet that he shivered when another would have sweated; wherefore he began to instruct her that the Devil was not to be corrected and put in hell, save when his head was exalted with pride; adding, "and we by God's grace have brought him to so sober a mind that he prays God he may be left in peace;" by which means he for a time kept the girl quiet. But when she saw that Rustico had no more occasion for her to put the Devil in hell, she said to him one day:—"Rustico, if thy Devil is chastened and gives thee no more trouble, my hell, on the other hand, gives me no peace; wherefore, I with my hell have holpen thee to abase the pride of thy Devil, so thou wouldst do well to lend me the aid of thy Devil to allay the fervent heat of my hell."

Rustico, who lived on roots and water, could ill avail to answer her calls and told her that it would need overmany devils to appease hell, but he would do what he might thereof. Accordingly he satisfied her bytimes, but so seldom it was but casting a bean into the lion's mouth; whereas the girl, herseeming she served not God as diligently as she would fain have done, murmured somewhat. But, whilst this debate was toward between Rustico his devil and Alibech her hell, for overmuch desire on the one part and lack of power on the other, it befell that a fire broke out in Capsa and burnt Alibech's father in his own house, with as many children and other family as he had; by reason whereof she abode heir to all his good. Thereupon, a young man called Neerbale, who had spent all his substance in gallantry, hearing that she was alive, set out in search of her and finding her, before the court[[204]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_204_204) had laid hands upon her father's estate, as that of a man dying without heir, to Rustico's great satisfaction, but against her own will, brought her back to Capsa, where he took her to wife and succeeded, in her right, to the ample inheritance of her father.

There, being asked by the women at what she served God in the desert, she answered (Neerbale having not yet lain with her) that she served Him at putting the devil in hell and that Neerbale had done a grievous sin in that he had taken her from such service. The ladies asked, 'How putteth one the devil in186 hell?' And the girl, what with words and what with gestures, expounded it to them; whereat they set up so great a laughing that they laugh yet and said, 'Give yourself no concern, my child; nay, for that is done here also and Neerbale will serve our Lord full well with thee at this.' Thereafter, telling it from one to another throughout the city, they brought it to a common saying there that the most acceptable service one could render to God was to put the devil in hell, which byword, having passed the sea hither, is yet current here. Wherefore do all you young ladies, who have need of God's grace, learn to put the devil in hell, for that this is highly acceptable to Him and pleasing to both parties and much good may grow and ensue thereof."

A thousand times or more had Dioneo's story moved the modest ladies to laughter, so quaint and comical did his words appear to them; then, whenas he had made an end thereof, the queen, knowing the term of her sovranty to be come, lifted the laurel from her head and set it merrily on that of Filostrato, saying: "We shall presently see if the wolf will know how to govern the ewes better than the ewes have governed the wolves." Filostrato, hearing this, said, laughing, "An I were hearkened to, the wolves had taught the ewes to put the devil in hell, no worse than Rustico taught Alibech; wherefore do ye not style us wolven, since you yourselves have not been ewen. Algates, I will govern the kingdom committed to me to the best of my power." "Harkye, Filostrato," rejoined Neifile, "in seeking to teach us, you might have chanced to learn sense, even as did Masetto of Lamporecchio of the nuns, and find your tongue what time your bones should have learnt to whistle without a master."

Filostrato, finding that he still got a Roland for his Oliver,[[205]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_205_205) gave over pleasantry and addressed himself to the governance of the kingdom committed to him. Wherefore, letting call the seneschal, he was fain to know at what point things stood all and after discreetly ordained that which he judged would be well and would content the company for such time as his seignory should endure. Then, turning to the ladies, "Lovesome ladies," quoth he, "since I knew good from evil, I have, for my ill fortune, been still subject unto Love for the charms of one or other of you; nor hath humility neither obedience, no, nor the assiduous ensuing him in all his usances, in so far as it hath been known of me, availed me but that first I have been abandoned for another and after have still gone from bad to worse; and so I believe I shall fare unto my death; wherefore it pleaseth me that it be discoursed to-morrow of none other matter than that which is most conformable to mine own case, to wit, OF THOSE WHOSE LOVES HAVE HAD UNHAPPY ENDING, for that I in the long run look for a most unhappy [issue to mine own]; nor was the name by which you call me conferred on me for otherwhat187 by such an one who knew well what it meant."[[206]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_206_206) So saying, he rose to his feet and dismissed every one until supper-time.

The garden was so goodly and so delightsome that there was none who elected to go forth thereof, in the hope of finding more pleasance elsewhere. Nay, the sun, now grown mild, making it nowise irksome to give chase to the fawns and kids and rabbits and other beasts which were thereabout and which, as they sat, had come maybe an hundred times to disturb them by skipping through their midst, some addressed themselves to pursue them. Dioneo and Fiammetta fell to singing of Messer Guglielmo and the Lady of Vergiu,[[207]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_207_207) whilst Filomena and Pamfilo sat down to chess; and so, some doing one thing and some another, the time passed on such wise that the hour of supper came well nigh unlooked for; whereupon, the tables being set round about the fair fountain, they supped there in the evening with the utmost delight.

As soon as the tables were taken away, Filostrato, not to depart from the course holden of those who had been queens before him, commanded Lauretta to lead up a dance and sing a song. "My lord," answered she, "I know none of other folk's songs, nor have I in mind any of mine own which should best beseem so joyous a company; but, an you choose one of those which I have, I will willingly sing it." Quote the king, "Nothing of thine can be other than goodly and pleasing; wherefore sing us such as thou hast." Lauretta, then, with a sweet voice enough, but in a somewhat plaintive style, began thus, the other ladies answering:

No maid disconsolate  
Hath cause as I, alack!  
Who sigh for love in vain, to mourn her fate.  
  
He who moves heaven and all the stars in air  
Made me for His delight  
Lovesome and sprightly, kind and debonair,  
E'en here below to give each lofty spright  
Some inkling of that fair  
That still in heaven abideth in His sight;  
But erring men's unright,  
Ill knowing me, my worth  
Accepted not, nay, with dispraise did bate.  
  
Erst was there one who held me dear and fain  
Took me, a youngling maid,  
Into his arms and thought and heart and brain,  
Caught fire at my sweet eyes; yea time, unstayed  
Of aught, that flits amain  
And lightly, all to wooing me he laid.  
I, courteous, nought gainsaid  
And held[[208]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_208_208) him worthy me;  
188But now, woe's me, of him I'm desolate.  
  
Then unto me there did himself present  
A youngling proud and haught,  
Renowning him for valorous and gent;  
He took and holds me and with erring thought[[209]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_209_209)  
To jealousy is bent;  
Whence I, alack! nigh to despair am wrought,  
As knowing myself,—brought  
Into this world for good  
Of many an one,—engrossed of one sole mate.  
  
The luckless hour I curse, in very deed,  
When I, alas! said yea,  
Vesture to change,—so fair in that dusk wede  
I was and glad, whereas in this more gay  
A weary life I lead,  
Far less than erst held honest, welaway!  
Ah, dolorous bridal day,  
Would God I had been dead  
Or e'er I proved thee in such ill estate!  
  
O lover dear, with whom well pleased was I  
Whilere past all that be,—  
Who now before Him sittest in the sky  
Who fashioned us,—have pity upon me  
Who cannot, though I die,  
Forget thee for another; cause me see  
The flame that kindled thee  
For me lives yet unquenched  
And my recall up thither[[210]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_210_210) impetrate.

Here Lauretta made an end of her song, wherein, albeit attentively followed of all, she was diversely apprehended of divers persons, and there were those who would e'en understand, Milan-fashion, that a good hog was better than a handsome wench;[[211]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_211_211) but others were of a loftier and better and truer apprehension, whereof it booteth not to tell at this present. Thereafter the king let kindle store of flambeaux upon the grass and among the flowers and caused sing divers other songs, until every star began to decline, that was above the horizon, when, deeming it time for sleep, he bade all with a good night betake themselves to their chambers.

**HERE ENDETH THE THIRD DAY  
OF THE DECAMERON**

**THE FOURTH STORY**

Day the Fourth

GERBINO, AGAINST THE PLIGHTED FAITH OF HIS GRANDFATHER, KING GUGLIELMO OF SICILY, ATTACKETH A SHIP OF THE KING OF TUNIS, TO CARRY OFF A DAUGHTER OF HIS, WHO BEING PUT TO DEATH OF THOSE ON BOARD, HE SLAYETH THESE LATTER AND IS AFTER HIMSELF BEHEADED

Lauretta, having made an end of her story, was silent, whilst the company bewailed the illhap of the lovers, some blaming Ninetta's anger and one saying one thing and another another, till presently the king, raising his head, as if aroused from deep thought, signed to Elisa to follow on; whereupon she began modestly, "Charming ladies, there are many who believe that Love launcheth his shafts only when enkindled of the eyes and make mock of those who hold that one may fall in love by hearsay; but that these are mistaken will very manifestly appear in a story that I purpose to relate, wherein you will see that report not only wrought this, without the lovers having ever set eyes on each other, but it will be made manifest to you that it brought both the one and the other to a miserable death.

Guglielmo, the Second, King of Sicily, had (as the Sicilians pretend) two children, a son called Ruggieri and a daughter called Costanza. The former, dying before his father, left a son named Gerbino, who was diligently reared by his grandfather and became a very goodly youth and a renowned for prowess and courtesy. Nor did his fame abide confined within the limits of Sicily, but, resounding in various parts of the world, was nowhere more glorious than in Barbary, which in those days was tributary to the King of Sicily. Amongst the rest to whose ears came the magnificent fame of Gerbino's valour and courtesy was a daughter of the King of Tunis, who, according to the report of all who had seen her, was one of the fairest creatures ever fashioned by nature and the best bred and of a noble and great soul. She, delighting to hear tell of men of valour, with such goodwill received the tales recounted by one and another of the deeds valiantly done of Gerbino and they so pleased her that, picturing to herself the prince's fashion, she became ardently enamoured of him and discoursed more willingly of him than of any other and hearkened to whoso spoke of him.

On the other hand, the great renown of her beauty and worth had won to Sicily, as elsewhither, and not without great delight nor in vain had it reached the ears of Gerbino; nay, it had inflamed him with love of her, no less214 than that which she herself had conceived for him. Wherefore, desiring beyond measure to see her, against he should find a colourable occasion of having his grandfather's leave to go to Tunis, he charged his every friend who went thither to make known to her, as best he might, his secret and great love and bring him news of her. This was very dexterously done by one of them, who, under pretence of carrying her women's trinkets to view, as do merchants, throughly discovered Gerbino's passion to her and avouched the prince and all that was his to be at her commandment. The princess received the messenger and the message with a glad flavour and answering that she burnt with like love for the prince, sent him one of her most precious jewels in token thereof. This Gerbino received with the utmost joy wherewith one can receive whatsoever precious thing and wrote to her once and again by the same messenger, sending her the most costly gifts and holding certain treaties[[237]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_237_237) with her, whereby they should have seen and touched one another, had fortune but allowed it.

But, things going thus and somewhat farther than was expedient, the young lady on the one hand and Gerbino on the other burning with desire, it befell that the King of Tunis gave her in marriage to the King of Granada, whereat she was beyond measure chagrined, bethinking herself that not only should she be separated from her lover by long distance, but was like to be altogether parted from him; and had she seen a means thereto, she would gladly, so this might not betide, have fled from her father and betaken herself to Gerbino. Gerbino, in like manner, hearing of this marriage, was beyond measure sorrowful therefor and often bethought himself to take her by force, if it should chance that she went to her husband by sea. The King of Tunis, getting some inkling of Gerbino's love and purpose and fearing his valour and prowess, sent to King Guglielmo, whenas the time came for despatching her to Granada, advising him of that which he was minded to do and that, having assurance from him that he should not be hindered therein by Gerbino or others, he purposed to do it. The King of Sicily, who was an old man and had heard nothing of Gerbino's passion and consequently suspected not that it was for this that such an assurance was demanded, freely granted it and in token thereof, sent the King of Tunis a glove of his. The latter, having gotten the desired assurance, caused equip a very great and goodly ship in the port of Carthage and furnish it with what was needful for those who were to sail therein and having fitted and adorned it for the sending of his daughter into Granada, awaited nought but weather.

The young lady, who saw and knew all this, despatched one of her servants secretly to Palermo, bidding him salute the gallant Gerbino on her part and tell him that she was to sail in a few days for Granada, wherefore it would now appear if he were as valiant a man as was said and if he loved her as much as he had sundry times declared to her. Her messenger did his errand excellent well and returned to Tunis, whilst Gerbino, hearing this and215 knowing that his grandfather had given the King of Tunis assurance, knew not what to do. However, urged by love and that he might not appear a craven, he betook himself to Messina, where he hastily armed two light galleys and manning them with men of approved valour, set sail with them for the coast of Sardinia, looking for the lady's ship to pass there. Nor was he far out in his reckoning, for he had been there but a few days when the ship hove in sight with a light wind not far from the place where he lay expecting it.

Gerbino, seeing this, said to his companions, 'Gentlemen, an you be the men of mettle I take you for, methinketh there is none of you but hath either felt or feeleth love, without which, as I take it, no mortal can have aught of valour or worth in himself; and if you have been or are enamoured, it will be an easy thing to you to understand my desire. I love and love hath moved me to give you this present pains; and she whom I love is in the ship which you see becalmed yonder and which, beside that thing which I most desire, is full of very great riches. These latter, an ye be men of valour, we may with little difficulty acquire, fighting manfully; of which victory I desire nothing to my share save one sole lady, for whose love I have taken up arms; everything else shall freely be yours. Come, then, and let us right boldly assail the ship; God is favourable to our emprise and holdeth it here fast, without vouchsafing it a breeze.'

The gallant Gerbino had no need of many words, for that the Messinese, who were with him being eager for plunder, were already disposed to do that unto which he exhorted them. Wherefore, making a great outcry, at the end of his speech, that it should be so, they sounded the trumpets and catching up their arms, thrust the oars into the water and made for the Tunis ship. They who were aboard this latter, seeing the galleys coming afar off and being unable to flee,[[238]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_238_238) made ready for defence. The gallant Gerbino accosting the ship, let command that the masters thereof should be sent on board the galleys, an they had no mind to fight; but the Saracens, having certified themselves who they were and what they sought, declared themselves attacked of them against the faith plighted them by King Guglielmo; in token whereof they showed the latter's glove, and altogether refused to surrender themselves, save for stress of battle, or to give them aught that was in the ship.

Gerbino, who saw the lady upon the poop, far fairer than he had pictured her to himself, and was more inflamed than ever, replied to the showing of the glove that there were no falcons there at that present and consequently there needed no gloves; wherefore, an they chose not to give up the lady, they must prepare to receive battle. Accordingly, without further parley, they fell to casting shafts and stones at one another, and on this wise they fought a great while, with loss on either side. At last, Gerbino, seeing that he did little to the purpose, took a little vessel he had brought with him out of Sardinia and setting fire therein, thrust it with both the galleys aboard the ship. The Saracens, seeing this and knowing that they must of necessity surrender216 or die, fetched the king's daughter, who wept below, on deck and brought her to the ship's prow; then, calling Gerbino, they butchered her before his eyes, what while she called for mercy and succour, and cast her into the sea, saying, 'Take her; we give her to thee, such as we may and such as thine unfaith hath merited.'

Gerbino, seeing their barbarous deed, caused lay himself alongside the ship and recking not of shaft or stone, boarded it, as if courting death, in spite of those who were therein; then,—even as a hungry lion, coming among a herd of oxen, slaughtereth now this, now that, and with teeth and claws sateth rather his fury than his hunger,—sword in hand, hewing now at one, now at another, he cruelly slew many of the Saracens; after which, the fire now waxing in the enkindled ship, he caused the sailors fetch thereout what they might, in payment of their pains, and descended thence, having gotten but a sorry victory over his adversaries. Then, letting take up the fair lady's body from the sea, long and with many tears he bewept it and steering for Sicily, buried it honourably in Ustica, a little island over against Trapani; after which he returned home, the woefullest man alive.

The King of Tunis, hearing the heavy news, sent his ambassadors, clad all in black, to King Guglielmo, complaining of the ill observance of the faith which he had plighted him. They recounted to him how the thing had passed, whereat King Guglielmo was sore incensed and seeing no way to deny them the justice they sought, caused take Gerbino; then himself,—albeit there was none of his barons but strove with prayers to move him from his purpose,—condemned him to death and let strike off his head in his presence, choosing rather to abide without posterity than to be held a faithless king. Thus, then, as I have told you, did these two lovers within a few days[[239]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_239_239) die miserably a violent death, without having tasted any fruit of their loves."

**THE FIFTH STORY**

Day the Fourth

LISABETTA'S[[240]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_240_240) BROTHERS SLAY HER LOVER, WHO APPEARETH TO HER IN A DREAM AND SHOWETH HER WHERE HE IS BURIED, WHEREUPON SHE PRIVILY DISINTERRETH HIS HEAD AND SETTETH IT IN A POT OF BASIL. THEREOVER MAKING MOAN A GREAT WHILE EVERY DAY, HER BROTHERS TAKE IT FROM HER AND SHE FOR GRIEF DIETH A LITTLE THEREAFTERWARD

Elisa's tale being ended and somedele commended of the king, Filomena was bidden to discourse, who, full of compassion for the wretched Gerbino and his mistress, after a piteous sigh, began thus: "My story, gracious ladies, will not treat of folk of so high condi217tion as were those of whom Elisa hath told, yet peradventure it will be no less pitiful; and what brought me in mind of it was the mention, a little before, of Messina, where the case befell.

There were then in Messina three young brothers, merchants and left very rich by their father, who was a man of San Gimignano, and they had an only sister, Lisabetta by name, a right fair and well-mannered maiden, whom, whatever might have been the reason thereof, they had not yet married. Now these brothers had in one of their warehouses a youth of Pisa, called Lorenzo, who did and ordered all their affairs and was very comely and agreeable of person; wherefore, Lisabetta looking sundry times upon him, it befell that he began strangely to please her; of which Lorenzo taking note at one time and another, he in like manner, leaving his other loves, began to turn his thoughts to her; and so went the affair, that, each being alike pleasing to the other, it was no great while before, taking assurance, they did that which each of them most desired.

Continuing on this wise and enjoying great pleasure and delight one of the other, they knew not how to do so secretly but that, one night, Lisabetta, going whereas Lorenzo lay, was, unknown to herself, seen of the eldest of her brothers, who, being a prudent youth, for all the annoy it gave him to know this thing, being yet moved by more honourable counsel, abode without sign or word till the morning, revolving in himself various things anent the matter. The day being come, he recounted to his brothers that which he had seen the past night of Lisabetta and Lorenzo, and after long advisement with them, determined (so that neither to them nor to their sister should any reproach ensue thereof) to pass the thing over in silence and feign to have seen and known nothing thereof till such time as, without hurt or unease to themselves, they might avail to do away this shame from their sight, ere it should go farther. In this mind abiding and devising and laughing with Lorenzo as was their wont, it befell that one day, feigning to go forth the city, all three, a-pleasuring, they carried him with them to a very lonely and remote place; and there, the occasion offering, they slew him, whilst he was off his guard, and buried him on such wise that none had knowledge of it; then, returning to Messina, they gave out that they had despatched him somewhither for their occasions, the which was the lightlier credited that they were often used to send him abroad about their business.

Lorenzo returning not and Lisabetta often and instantly questioning her brothers of him, as one to whom the long delay was grievous, it befell one day, as she very urgently enquired of him, that one of them said to her, 'What meaneth this? What hast thou to do often of him? An thou question of him with Lorenzo, that thou askest thus218 more, we will make thee such answer as thou deservest.' Wherefore the girl, sad and grieving and fearful she knew not of what, abode without more asking; yet many a time anights she piteously called him and prayed him come to her, and whiles with many tears she complained of his long tarrying; and thus, without a moment's gladness, she abode expecting him alway, till one night, having sore lamented Lorenzo for that he returned not and being at last fallen asleep, weeping, he appeared to her in a dream, pale and all disordered, with clothes all rent and mouldered, and herseemed he bespoke her thus: 'Harkye, Lisabetta; thou dost nought but call upon me, grieving for my long delay and cruelly impeaching me with thy tears. Know, therefore, that I may never more return to thee, for that, the last day thou sawest me, thy brothers slew me.' Then, having discovered to her the place where they had buried him, he charged her no more call him nor expect him and disappeared; whereupon she awoke and giving faith to the vision, wept bitterly.

In the morning, being risen and daring not say aught to her brothers, she determined to go to the place appointed and see if the thing were true, as it had appeared to her in the dream. Accordingly, having leave to go somedele without the city for her disport, she betook herself thither,[[241]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_241_241) as quickliest she might, in company of one who had been with them[[242]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_242_242) otherwhiles and knew all her affairs; and there, clearing away the dead leaves from the place, she dug whereas herseemed the earth was less hard. She had not dug long before she found the body of her unhappy lover, yet nothing changed nor rotted, and thence knew manifestly that her vision was true, wherefore she was the most distressful of women; yet, knowing that this was no place for lament, she would fain, an she but might, have borne away the whole body, to give it fitter burial; but, seeing that this might not be, she with a knife did off[[243]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_243_243) the head from the body, as best she could, and wrapping it in a napkin, laid it in her maid's lap. Then, casting back the earth over the trunk, she departed thence, without being seen of any, and returned home, where, shutting herself in her chamber with her lover's head, she bewept it long and bitterly, insomuch that she bathed it all with her tears, and kissed it a thousand times in every part. Then, taking a great and goodly pot, of those wherein they plant marjoram or sweet basil, she set the head therein, folded in a fair linen cloth, and covered it with earth, in which she planted sundry heads of right fair basil of Salerno; nor did she ever water these with other water than that of her tears or rose or orange-flower water. Moreover she took wont to sit still near the pot and to gaze amorously upon it with all her desire, as upon that which held her Lorenzo hid; and after she had a great while looked thereon, she would bend over it and fall to weeping so sore and so long that her tears bathed all the basil, which, by dint of long and assiduous219 tending, as well as by reason of the fatness of the earth, proceeding from the rotting head that was therein, waxed passing fair and very sweet of savour.

The damsel, doing without cease after this wise, was sundry times seen of her neighbours, who to her brothers, marvelling at her waste beauty and that her eyes seemed to have fled forth her head [for weeping], related this, saying, 'We have noted that she doth every day after such a fashion.' The brothers, hearing and seeing this and having once and again reproved her therefor, but without avail, let secretly carry away from her the pot, which she, missing, with the utmost instance many a time required, and for that it was not restored to her, stinted not to weep and lament till she fell sick; nor in her sickness did she ask aught other than the pot of basil. The young men marvelled greatly at this continual asking and bethought them therefor to see what was in this pot. Accordingly, turning out the earth, they found the cloth and therein the head, not yet so rotted but they might know it, by the curled hair, to be that of Lorenzo. At this they were mightily amazed and feared lest the thing should get wind; wherefore, burying the head, without word said, they privily departed Messina, having taken order how they should withdraw thence, and betook themselves to Naples. The damsel, ceasing never from lamenting and still demanding her pot, died, weeping; and so her ill-fortuned love had end. But, after a while the thing being grown manifest unto many, there was one who made thereon the song that is yet sung, to wit:

Alack! ah, who can the ill Christian be,  
That stole my pot away?" etc.[[244]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_244_244)

**THE TENTH STORY**

Day the Sixth

FRA CIPOLLA PROMISETH CERTAIN COUNTRY FOLK TO SHOW THEM ONE OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL'S FEATHERS AND FINDING COALS IN PLACE THEREOF, AVOUCHETH THESE LATTER TO BE OF THOSE WHICH ROASTED ST. LAWRENCE

Each of the company being now quit of his[[309]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_309_311) story, Dioneo perceived that it rested with him to tell; whereupon, without awaiting more formal commandment, he began on this wise, silence having first been imposed on those who commended Guido's pregnant retort: "Charming ladies, albeit I am privileged to speak of that which most liketh me, I purpose not to-day to depart from the matter whereof you have all very aptly spoken; but, ensuing in your footsteps, I mean to show you how cunningly a friar of the order of St. Anthony, by name Fra Cipolla, contrived with a sudden shift to extricate himself from a snare[[310]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_310_312) which had been set for him by two young men; nor should it irk you if, for the complete telling of the story, I enlarge somewhat in speaking, an you consider the sun, which is yet amiddleward in the sky.

Certaldo, as you may have heard, is a burgh of Val d' Elsa situate in our country, which, small though it be, was once inhabited by gentlemen and men of substance; and thither, for that he found good pasture there, one of the friars of the order of St. Anthony was long used to resort once a year, to get in the alms bestowed by simpletons upon him and his brethren. His name was Fra Cipolla and he was gladly seen there, no less belike, for his name's sake[[311]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_311_313) than for other reasons, seeing that these parts produce onions that are famous throughout all Tuscany. This Fra Cipolla was little of person, red-haired and merry of countenance, the jolliest rascal in the world, and to boot, for all he was no scholar, he was so fine a talker and so ready of wit that those who knew him not would not only have esteemed him a great rhetorician, but had avouched him to be Tully himself or may be Quintilian; and he was gossip or friend or well-wisher[[312]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_312_314) to well nigh every one in the country.

One August among others he betook himself thither according to his wont, and on a Sunday morning, all the goodmen and goodwives of the villages around being come to hear mass at the parish church, he came forward, whenas it seemed to him time, and said, 'Gentlemen and ladies, it is, as you know, your usance to send every year to the poor of our lord Baron St. Anthony of your corn and of your oats, this little and that much, according to his means and his devoutness, to the intent that the blessed St. Anthony may keep watch over your312 beeves and asses and swine and sheep; and besides this, you use to pay, especially such of you as are inscribed into our company, that small due which is payable once a year. To collect these I have been sent by my superior, to wit, my lord abbot; wherefore, with the blessing of God, you shall, after none, whenas you hear the bells ring, come hither without the church, where I will make preachment to you after the wonted fashion and you shall kiss the cross; moreover, for that I know you all to be great devotees of our lord St. Anthony, I will, as an especial favour show you a very holy and goodly relic, which I myself brought aforetime from the holy lands beyond seas; and that is one of the Angel Gabriel's feathers, which remained in the Virgin Mary's chamber, whenas he came to announce to her in Nazareth.' This said, he broke off and went on with his mass.

Now, when he said this, there were in the church, among many others, two roguish young fellows, hight one Giovanni del Bragioniera and the other Biagio Pizzini, who, after laughing with one another awhile over Fra Cipolla's relic, took counsel together, for all they were great friends and cronies of his, to play him some trick in the matter of the feather in question. Accordingly, having learned that he was to dine that morning with a friend of his in the burgh, they went down into the street as soon as they knew him to be at table, and betook themselves to the inn where he had alighted, purposing that Biagio should hold his servant in parley, whilst Giovanni should search his baggage for the feather aforesaid, whatever it might be, and carry it off, to see what he should say to the people of the matter.

Fra Cipolla had a servant, whom some called Guccio[[313]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_313_315) Balena,[[314]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_314_316) others Guccio Imbratta[[315]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_315_317) and yet others Guccia Porco[[316]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_316_318) and who was such a scurvy knave that Lipo Topo[[317]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_317_319) never wrought his like, inasmuch as his master used oftentimes to jest of him with his cronies and say, 'My servant hath in him nine defaults, such that, were one of them in Solomon or Aristotle or Seneca, it would suffice to mar all their worth, all their wit and all their sanctity. Consider, then, what a man he must be, who hath all nine of them and in whom there is neither worth nor wit nor sanctity.' Being questioned whiles what were these nine defaults and having put them into doggerel rhyme, he would answer, 'I will tell you. He's a liar, a sloven, a slugabed; disobedient, neglectful, ill bred; o'erweening, foul-spoken, a dunderhead; beside which he hath divers other peccadilloes, whereof it booteth not to speak. But what is most laughable of all his fashions is that, wherever he goeth, he is still for taking a wife and hiring a house; for, having a big black greasy beard, him-seemeth he is so exceeding handsome and agreeable that he conceiteth himself all the women who see him fall in love with him, and if you let him alone, he would313 run after them all till he lost his girdle.[[318]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_318_320) Sooth to say, he is of great assistance to me, for that none can ever seek to speak with me so secretly but he must needs hear his share; and if it chance that I be questioned of aught, he is so fearful lest I should not know how to answer, that he straightway answereth for me both Ay and No, as he judgeth sortable.'

Now Fra Cipolla, in leaving him at the inn, had bidden him look well that none touched his gear, and more particularly his saddle-bags, for that therein were the sacred things. But Guccio, who was fonder of the kitchen than the nightingale of the green boughs, especially if he scented some serving-wench there, and who had seen in that of the inn a gross fat cookmaid, undersized and ill-made, with a pair of paps that showed like two manure-baskets and a face like a cadger's, all sweaty, greasy and smoky, leaving Fra Cipolla's chamber and all his gear to care for themselves, swooped down upon the kitchen, even as the vulture swoopeth upon carrion, and seating himself by the fire, for all it was August, entered into discourse with the wench in question, whose name was Nuta, telling her that he was by rights a gentleman and had more than nine millions of florins, beside that which he had to give others, which was rather more than less, and that he could do and say God only knew what. Moreover, without regard to his bonnet, whereon was grease enough to have seasoned the caldron of Altopascio,[[319]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_319_321) and his doublet all torn and pieced and enamelled with filth about the collar and under the armpits, with more spots and patches of divers colours than ever had Turkey or India stuffs, and his shoes all broken and hose unsewn, he told her, as he had been the Sieur de Châtillon,[[320]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_320_322) that he meant to clothe her and trick her out anew and deliver her from the wretchedness of abiding with others,[[321]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_321_323) and bring her to hope of better fortune, if without any great wealth in possession, and many other things, which, for all he delivered them very earnestly, all turned to wind and came to nought, as did most of his enterprises.

The two young men, accordingly, found Guccio busy about Nuta, whereat they were well pleased, for that it spared them half their pains, and entering Fra Cipolla's chamber, which they found open, the first thing that came under their examination was the saddle-bags wherein was the feather. In314 these they found, enveloped in a great taffetas wrapper, a little casket and opening this latter, discovered therein a parrot's tail-feather, which they concluded must be that which the friar had promised to show the people of Certaldo. And certes he might lightly cause it to be believed in those days, for that the refinements of Egypt had not yet made their way save into a small part of Tuscany, as they have since done in very great abundance, to the undoing of all Italy; and wherever they may have been some little known, in those parts they were well nigh altogether unknown of the inhabitants; nay the rude honesty of the ancients yet enduring there, not only had they never set eyes on a parrot, but were far from having ever heard tell of such a bird. The young men, then, rejoiced at finding the feather, laid hands on it and not to leave the casket empty, filled it with some coals they saw in a corner of the room and shut it again. Then, putting all things in order as they had found them, they made off in high glee with the feather, without having been seen, and began to await what Fra Cipolli should say, when he found the coals in place thereof.

The simple men and women who were in the church, hearing that they were to see the Angel Gabriel's feather after none, returned home, as soon as mass was over, and neighbor telling it to neighbor and gossip to gossip, no sooner had they all dined than so many men and women flocked to the burgh that it would scarce hold them, all looking eagerly to see the aforesaid feather. Fra Cipolla, having well dined and after slept awhile, arose a little after none and hearing of the great multitude of country folk come to see the feather, sent to bid Guccio Imbratta come thither with the bells and bring his saddle-bags. Guccio, tearing himself with difficulty away from the kitchen and Nuta, betook himself with the things required to the appointed place, whither coming, out of breath, for that the water he had drunken had made his belly swell amain, he repaired, by his master's commandment, to the church door and fell to ringing the bells lustily.

When all the people were assembled there, Fra Cipolla, without observing that aught of his had been meddled with, began his preachment and said many words anent his affairs; after which, thinking to come to the showing of the Angel Gabriel's feather, he first recited the Confiteor with the utmost solemnity and let kindle a pair of flambeaux; then, pulling off his bonnet, he delicately unfolded the taffetas wrapper and brought out the casket. Having first pronounced certain ejaculations in praise and commendation of the Angel Gabriel and of his relic, he opened the casket and seeing it full of coals, suspected not Guccio Balena of having played him this trick, for that he knew him not to be man enough; nor did he curse him for having kept ill watch lest others should do it, but silently cursed himself for having committed to him the care of his gear, knowing him, as he did, to be negligent, disobedient, careless and forgetful.

Nevertheless, without changing colour, he raised his eyes and hands to heaven and said, so as to be heard of all, 'O God, praised be still thy puissance!' Then, shutting the casket and turning to the people, 'Gentlemen and ladies,'315 quoth he, 'you must know that, whilst I was yet very young, I was dispatched by my superior to those parts where the sun riseth and it was expressly commanded me that I should seek till I found the Privileges of Porcellana, which, though they cost nothing to seal, are much more useful to others than to us. On this errand I set out from Venice and passed through Borgo de' Greci,[[322]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_322_324) whence, riding through the kingdom of Algarve and Baldacca,[[323]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_323_325) I came to Parione,[[324]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_324_326) and from there, not without thirst, I came after awhile into Sardinia. But what booteth it to set out to you in detail all the lands explored by me? Passing the straits of San Giorgio,[[325]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_325_327) I came into Truffia[[326]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_326_328) and Buffia,[[327]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_327_329) countries much inhabited and with great populations, and thence into the land of Menzogna,[[328]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_328_330) where I found great plenty of our brethren and of friars of other religious orders, who all went about those parts, shunning unease for the love of God, recking little of others' travail, whenas they saw their own advantage to ensue, and spending none other money than such as was uncoined.[[329]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_329_331) Thence I passed into the land of the Abruzzi, where the men and women go in clogs over the mountains, clothing the swine in their own guts;[[330]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_330_332) and a little farther I found folk who carried bread on sticks and wine in bags. From this I came to the Mountains of the Bachi, where all the waters run down hill; and in brief, I made my way so far inward that I won at last even to India Pastinaca,[[331]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_331_333) where I swear to you, by the habit I wear on my back, that I saw hedge-bills[[332]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_332_334) fly, a thing incredible to whoso hath not seen it. But of this Maso del Saggio will confirm me, whom I found there a great merchant, cracking walnuts and selling the shells by retail.

Being unable to find that which I went seeking, for that thence one goeth thither by water, I turned back and arrived in those holy countries, where, in summer-years, cold bread is worth four farthings a loaf and the hot goeth for nothing. There I found the venerable father my lord Blamemenot Anitpleaseyou, the very worshipful Patriarch of Jerusalem, who, for reverence of the habit I have still worn of my lord Baron St. Anthony, would have me see all the holy relics that he had about316 him and which were so many that, an I sought to recount them all to you, I should not come to an end thereof in several miles. However, not to leave you disconsolate, I will tell you some thereof. First, he showed me the finger of the Holy Ghost, as whole and sound as ever it was, and the forelock of the seraph that appeared to St. Francis and one of the nails of the Cherubim and one of the ribs of the Verbum Caro[[333]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_333_335) Get-thee-to-the-windows and some of the vestments of the Holy Catholic Faith and divers rays of the star that appeared to the Three Wise Men in the East and a vial of the sweat of St. Michael, whenas he fought with the devil, and the jawbone of the death of St. Lazarus and others. And for that I made him a free gift of the Steeps[[334]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_334_336) of Monte Morello in the vernacular and of some chapters of the Caprezio,[[335]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_335_337) which he had long gone seeking, he made me a sharer in his holy relics and gave me one of the teeth of the Holy Rood and somewhat of the sound of the bells of Solomon's Temple in a vial and the feather of the Angel Gabriel, whereof I have already bespoken you, and one of the pattens of St. Gherardo da Villa Magna, which not long since at Florence I gave to Gherardo di Bonsi, who hath a particular devotion for that saint; and he gave me also of the coals wherewith the most blessed martyr St. Lawrence was roasted; all which things I devoutly brought home with me and yet have. True it is that my superior hath never suffered me to show them till such time as he should be certified if they were the very things or not. But now that, by certain miracles performed by them and by letters received from the patriarch, he hath been made certain of this, he hath granted me leave to show them; and I, fearing to trust them to others, still carry them with me.

Now I carry the Angel Gabriel's feather, so it may not be marred, in one casket, and the coals wherewith St. Lawrence was roasted in another, the which are so like one to other, that it hath often happened to me to take one for the other, and so hath it betided me at this present, for that, thinking to bring hither the casket wherein was the feather, I have brought that wherein are the coals. The which I hold not to have been an error; nay, meseemeth certain that it was God's will and that He Himself placed the casket with the coals in my hands, especially now I mind me that the feast of St. Lawrence is but two days hence; wherefore God, willing that, by showing you the coals wherewith he was roasted, I should rekindle in your hearts the devotion it behoveth you have for him, caused me take, not the feather, as I purposed, but the blessed coals extinguished by the sweat of that most holy body. So, O my blessed children, put off your bonnets and draw near devoutly to behold them; but first I would have you knew that whoso is scored with these coals, in the form of the sign of the cross, may rest assured, for the whole year to come, that fire shall not touch him but he shall feel it.'

Having thus spoken, he opened the317 casket, chanting the while a canticle in praise of St. Lawrence, and showed the coals, which after the simple multitude had awhile beheld with reverent admiration, they all crowded about Fra Cipolla and making him better offerings than they were used, besought him to touch them withal. Accordingly, taking the coals in hand, he fell to making the biggest crosses for which he could find room upon their white smocks and doublets and upon the veils of the women, avouching that how much soever the coals diminished in making these crosses, they after grew again in the casket, as he had many a time proved. On this wise he crossed all the people of Certaldo, to his no small profit, and thus, by his ready wit and presence of mind, he baffled those who, by taking the feather from him, had thought to baffle him and who, being present at his preachment and hearing the rare shift employed by him and from how far he had taken it and with what words, had so laughed that they thought to have cracked their jaws. Then, after the common folk had departed, they went up to him and with all the mirth in the world discovered to him that which they had done and after restored him his feather, which next year stood him in as good stead as the coals had done that day."

This story afforded unto all the company alike the utmost pleasure and solace, and it was much laughed of all at Fra Cipolla, and particularly of his pilgrimage and the relics seen and brought back by him. The queen, seeing the story and likewise her sovantry at an end, rose to her feet and put off the crown, which she set laughingly on Dioneo's head, saying, "It is time, Dioneo, that thou prove awhile what manner charge it is to have ladies to govern and guide; be thou, then, king and rule on such wise that, in the end, we may have reason to give ourselves joy of thy governance." Dioneo took the crown and answered, laughing, "You may often enough have seen much better kings than I, I mean chess-kings; but, an you obey me as a king should in truth be obeyed, I will cause you enjoy that without which assuredly no entertainment is ever complete in its gladness. But let that talk be; I will rule as best I know."

Then, sending for the seneschal, according to the wonted usance, he orderly enjoined him of that which he should do during the continuance of his seignory and after said, "Noble ladies, it hath in divers manners been devised of human industry[[336]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_336_338) and of the various chances [of fortune,] insomuch that, had not Dame Licisca come hither a while agone and found me matter with her prate for our morrow's relations, I misdoubt me I should have been long at pains to find a subject of discourse. As you heard, she avouched that she had not a single gossip who had come to her husband a maid and added that she knew right well how many and what manner tricks married women yet played their husbands. But, letting be the first part, which is a childish matter, methinketh the second should be an agreeable subject for discourse; wherefore I will and ordain it that, since Licisca hath given us occasion therefor, it be discoursed to-morrow318 OF THE TRICKS WHICH, OR FOR LOVE OR FOR THEIR OWN PRESERVATION, WOMEN HAVE HERETOFORE PLAYED THEIR HUSBANDS, WITH OR WITHOUT THE LATTER'S COGNIZANCE THEREOF."

It seemed to some of the ladies that to discourse of such a matter would ill beseem them and they prayed him, therefore, to change the theme proposed; wherefore answered he, "Ladies, I am no less cognizant than yourselves of that which I have ordained, and that which you would fain allege to me availed not to deter me from ordaining it, considering that the times are such that, provided men and women are careful to eschew unseemly actions, all liberty of discourse is permitted. Know you not that, for the malignity of the season, the judges have forsaken the tribunals, that the laws, as well Divine as human, are silent and full licence is conceded unto every one for the preservation of his life? Wherefore, if your modesty allow itself some little freedom in discourse, not with intent to ensue it with aught of unseemly in deeds, but to afford yourselves and others diversion, I see not with what plausible reason any can blame you in the future. Moreover, your company, from the first day of our assembling until this present, hath been most decorous, nor, for aught that hath been said here, doth it appear to me that its honour hath anywise been sullied. Again, who is there knoweth not your virtue? Which, not to say mirthful discourse, but even fear of death I do not believe could avail to shake. And to tell you the truth, whosoever should hear that you shrank from devising bytimes of these toys would be apt to suspect that you were guilty in the matter and were therefore unwilling to discourse thereof. To say nothing of the fine honour you would do me in that, I having been obedient unto all, you now, having made me your king, seek to lay down the law to me, and not to discourse of the subject which I propose. Put off, then, this misdoubtance, apter to mean minds than to yours, and good luck to you, let each of you bethink herself of some goodly story to tell." When the ladies heard this, they said it should be as he pleased; whereupon he gave them all leave to do their several pleasures until supper-time.

The sun was yet high, for that the discoursement[[337]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_337_339) had been brief; wherefor Dioneo having addressed himself to play at tables with the other young men, Elisa called the other ladies apart and said to them, "Since we have been here, I have still wished to carry you to a place very near at hand, whither methinketh none of you hath ever been and which is called the Ladies' Valley, but have never yet found an occasion of bringing you thither unto to-day; wherefore, as the sun is yet high, I doubt not but, an it please you come thither, you will be exceeding well pleased to have been there." They answered that they were ready and calling one of their maids, set out upon their way, without letting the young men know aught thereof; nor had they gone much more than a mile, when they came to the Ladies' Valley. They entered therein by a very strait way, on one side whereof ran a very clear319 streamlet, and saw it as fair and as delectable, especially at that season whenas the heat was great, as most might be conceived. According to that which one of them after told me, the plain that was in the valley was as round as if it had been traced with the compass, albeit it seemed the work of nature and not of art, and was in circuit a little more than half a mile, encompassed about with six little hills not over-high, on the summit of each of which stood a palace builded in guise of a goodly castle. The sides of these hills went sloping gradually downward to the plain on such wise as we see in amphitheatres, the degrees descend in ordered succession from the highest to the lowest, still contracting their circuit; and of these slopes those which looked toward the south were all full of vines and olives and almonds and cherries and figs and many another kind of fruit-bearing trees, without a span thereof being wasted; whilst those which faced the North Star[[338]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_338_340) were all covered with thickets of dwarf oaks and ashes and other trees as green and straight as might be. The middle plain, which had no other inlet than that whereby the ladies were come thither, was full of firs and cypresses and laurels and various sorts of pines, as well arrayed and ordered as if the best artist in that kind had planted them; and between these little or no sun, even at its highest, made its way to the ground, which was all one meadow of very fine grass, thick-sown with flowers purpurine and others. Moreover, that which afforded no less delight than otherwhat was a little stream, which ran down from a valley that divided two of the hills aforesaid and falling over cliffs of live rock, made a murmur very delectable to hear, what while it showed from afar, as it broke over the stones, like so much quicksilver jetting out, under pressure of somewhat, into fine spray. As it came down into the little plain, it was there received into a fair channel and ran very swiftly into the middest thereof, where it formed a lakelet, such as the townsfolk made whiles, by way of fishpond, in their gardens, whenas they have a commodity thereof. This lakelet was no deeper than a man's stature, breast high, and its waters being exceeding clear and altogether untroubled with any admixture, it showed its bottom to be of a very fine gravel, the grains whereof whoso had nought else to do might, an he would, have availed to number; nor, looking into the water, was the bottom alone to be seen, nay, but so many fish fleeting hither and thither that, over and above the pleasure thereof, it was a marvel to behold; nor was it enclosed with other banks than the very soil of the meadow, which was the goodlier thereabout in so much as it received the more of its moisture. The water that abounded over and above the capacity of the lake was received into another channel, whereby, issuing forth of the little valley, it ran off into the lower parts.

Hither then came the young ladies and after they had gazed all about and much commended the place, they took counsel together to bathe, for that the heat was great and that they saw the lakelet before them and were in no fear of being seen. Accordingly, bidding320 their serving maid abide over against the way whereby one entered there and look if any should come and give them notice thereof, they stripped themselves naked, all seven, and entered the lake, which hid their white bodies no otherwise than as a thin glass would do with a vermeil rose. Then, they being therein and no troubling of the water ensuing thereof, they fell, as best they might, to faring hither and thither in pursuit of the fish, which had uneath where to hide themselves, and seeking to take them with the naked hand. After they had abidden awhile in such joyous pastime and had taken some of the fish, they came forth of the lakelet and clad themselves anew. Then, unable to commend the place more than they had already done and themseeming time to turn homeward, they set out, with soft step, upon their way, discoursing much of the goodliness of the valley.

They reached the palace betimes and there found the young men yet at play where they had left them; to whom quoth Pampinea, laughing. "We have e'en stolen a march on you to-day." "How?" asked Dioneo. "Do you begin to do deeds ere you come to say words?"[[339]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_339_341) "Ay, my lord," answered she and related to him at large whence they came and how the place was fashioned and how far distant thence and that which they had done. The king, hearing tell of the goodliness of the place and desirous of seeing it, caused straightway order the supper, which being dispatched to the general satisfaction, the three young men, leaving the ladies, betook themselves with their servants to the valley and having viewed it in every part, for that none of them had ever been there before, extolled it for one of the goodliest things in the world. Then, for that it grew late, after they had bathed and donned their clothes, they returned home, where they found the ladies dancing a round, to the accompaniment of a song sung by Fiammetta.

The dance ended, they entered with them into a discourse of the Ladies' Valley and said much in praise and commendation thereof. Moreover, the king, sending for the seneschal, bade him look that the dinner be made ready there on the following morning and have sundry beds carried thither, in case any should have a mind to lie or sleep there for nooning; after which he let bring lights and wine and confections and the company having somedele refreshed themselves, he commanded that all should address themselves to dancing. Then, Pamfilo having, at his commandment, set up a dance, the king turned to Elisa and said courteously to her, "Fair damsel, thou has to-day done me the honour of the crown and I purpose this evening to do thee that of the song; wherefore look thou sing such an one as most liketh thee." Elisa answered, smiling, that she would well and with dulcet voice began on this wise:

Love, from thy clutches could I but win free,  
321Hardly, methinks, again  
Shall any other hook take hold on me.  
I entered in thy wars a youngling maid,  
Thinking thy strife was utmost peace and sweet,  
And all my weapons on the ground I laid,  
As one secure, undoubting of defeat;  
But thou, false tyrant, with rapacious heat,  
Didst fall on me amain  
With all the grapnels of thine armoury.  
  
Then, wound about and fettered with thy chains,  
To him, who for my death in evil hour  
Was born, thou gav'st me, bounden, full of pains  
And bitter tears; and syne within his power  
He hath me and his rule's so harsh and dour  
No sighs can move the swain  
Nor all my wasting plaints to set me free.  
  
My prayers, the wild winds bear them all away;  
He hearkeneth unto none and none will hear;  
Wherefore each hour my torment waxeth aye;  
I cannot die, albeit life irks me drear.  
Ah, Lord, have pity on my heavy cheer;  
Do that I seek in vain  
And give him bounden in thy chains to me.  
  
An this thou wilt not, at the least undo  
The bonds erewhen of hope that knitted were;  
Alack, O Lord, thereof to thee I sue,  
For, an thou do it, yet to waxen fair  
Again I trust, as was my use whilere,  
And being quit of pain  
Myself with white flowers and with red besee.

Elisa ended her song with a very plaintive sigh, and albeit all marvelled at the words thereof, yet was there none who might conceive what it was that caused her sing thus. But the king, who was in a merry mood, calling for Tindaro, bade him bring out his bagpipes, to the sound whereof he let dance many dances; after which, a great part of the night being now past, he bade each go sleep.

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**THE FOURTH STORY**

Day the Seventh

TOFANO ONE NIGHT SHUTTETH HIS WIFE OUT OF DOORS, WHO, AVAILING NOT TO RE-ENTER BY DINT OF ENTREATIES, FEIGNETH TO CAST HERSELF INTO A WELL AND CASTETH THEREIN A GREAT STONE. TOFANO COMETH FORTH OF THE HOUSE AND RUNNETH THITHER, WHEREUPON SHE SLIPPETH IN AND LOCKING HIM OUT, BAWLETH REPROACHES AT HIM FROM THE WINDOW

The king no sooner perceived Elisa's story to be ended than, turning without delay to Lauretta, he signified to her his pleasure that she should tell; whereupon she, without hesitation, began thus, "O Love, how great and how various is thy might! How many thy resources and thy devices! What philosopher, what craftsman[[348]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_348_350) could ever have availed or might avail to teach those shifts, those feints, those subterfuges which thou on the spur of the moment suggestest to whoso ensueth in thy traces! Certes, all others' teaching is halting compared with thine, as may very well have been apprehended by the devices which have already been set forth and to which, lovesome ladies, I will add one practised by a woman of a simple wit enough and such as I know none but Love could have taught her.

There was once, then, in Arezzo, a rich man called Tofano and he was given to wife a very fair lady, by name Madam Ghita, of whom, without knowing why, he quickly waxed jealous. The lady, becoming aware of this, was despited thereat and questioned him once and again of the reason of his jealousy; but he was able to assign her none, save such as were general and naught; wherefore it occurred to her mind to cause him die of the disease whereof he stood without reason in fear. Accordingly, perceiving that a young man, who was much to her taste, sighed for her, she proceeded discreetly to come to an understanding with him and things being so far advanced between them that there lacked but with deeds to give effect to words, she cast about for a means of bringing this also to pass; wherefore, having already remarked, amongst her husband's other ill usances, that he delighted in drinking, she began not only to commend this to him, but would often artfully incite him thereto. This became so much his wont that, well nigh whensoever it pleased her, she led him to drink even to intoxication, and putting him to bed whenas she saw him well drunken, she a first time foregathered with her lover, with whom many a time thereafter she continued to do so in all security. Indeed, she grew to put such trust in her husband's drunkenness that not only did she make bold to bring her gallant into the house, but went whiles to pass a great part of the night with him in his own house, which was not very far distant.

The enamoured lady continuing on this wise, it befell that the wretched husband came to perceive that she, whilst encouraging him to drink, natheless herself drank never; wherefore suspicion took him that it might be as334 in truth it was, to wit, that she made him drunken, so she might after do her pleasure what while he slept, and wishing to make proof of this, an it were so, he one evening, not having drunken that day, feigned himself, both in words and fashions, the drunkenest man that was aye. The lady, believing this and judging that he needed no more drink, put him to bed in all haste and this done, betook herself, as she was used to do whiles, to the house of her lover, where she abode till midnight. As for Tofano, no sooner did he know the lady to have left the house than he straightway arose and going to the doors, locked them from within; after which he posted himself at the window, so he might see her return and show her that he had gotten wind of her fashions; and there he abode till such time as she came back. The lady, returning home and finding herself locked out, was beyond measure woeful and began to essay an she might avail to open the door by force, which, after Tofano had awhile suffered, 'Wife,' quoth he, 'thou weariest thyself in vain, for thou canst nowise come in here again. Go, get thee back whereas thou hast been till now and be assured that thou shalt never return thither till such time as I shall have done thee, in respect of this affair, such honour as beseemeth thee in the presence of thy kinsfolk and of the neighbours.'

The lady fell to beseeching him for the love of God that it would please him open to her, for that she came not whence he supposed, but from keeping vigil with a she-neighbour of hers, for that the nights were long and she could not sleep them all out nor watch at home alone. However, prayers profited her nought, for that her brute of a husband was minded to have all the Aretines[[349]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_349_351) know their shame, whereas none as yet knew it; wherefore, seeing that prayers availed her not, she had recourse to threats and said, 'An thou open not to me, I will make thee the woefullest man alive.' 'And what canst thou do to me?' asked Tofano, and Mistress Tessa, whose wits Love had already whetted with his counsels, replied, 'Rather than brook the shame which thou wouldst wrongfully cause me suffer, I will cast myself into this well that is herenigh, where when I am found dead, there is none will believe otherwise than that thou, for very drunkenness, hast cast me therein; wherefore it will behove thee flee and lose all thou hast and abide in banishment or have thy head cut off for my murderer, as thou wilt in truth have been.'

Tofano was nowise moved by these words from his besotted intent; wherefore quoth she to him, 'Harkye now, I can no longer brook this thy fashery, God pardon it thee! Look thou cause lay up[[350]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_350_352) this distaff of mine that I leave here.' So saying, the night being so dark that one might scarce see other by the way, she went up to the well and taking a great stone that lay thereby, cried out, 'God pardon me!' and let it drop into the water. The stone, striking the water, made a very great noise, which when Tofano heard, he verily believed that she had cast herself in; wherefore, snatching up the bucket and the rope, he rushed out of335 the house and ran to the well to succour her. The lady, who had hidden herself near the door, no sooner saw him run to the well than she slipped into the house and locked herself in; then, getting her to the window, 'You should water your wine, whenas you drink it,' quoth she, 'and not after and by night.' Tofano, hearing this, knew himself to have been fooled and returned to the door, but could get no admission and proceeded to bid her open to him; but she left speaking softly, as she had done till then, and began, well nigh at a scream, to say, 'By Christ His Cross, tiresome sot that thou art, thou shalt not enter here to-night; I cannot brook these thy fashions any longer; needs must I let every one see what manner of man thou art and at what hour thou comest home anights.' Tofano, on his side, flying into a rage, began to rail at her and bawl; whereupon the neighbours, hearing the clamour, arose, both men and women, and coming to the windows, asked what was to do. The lady answered, weeping, 'It is this wretch of a man, who still returneth to me of an evening, drunken, or falleth asleep about the taverns and after cometh home at this hour; the which I have long suffered, but, it availing me not and I being unable to put up with it longer, I have bethought me to shame him therefor by locking him out of doors, to see and he will mend himself thereof.'

Tofano, on the other hand, told them, like an ass as he was, how the case stood and threatened her sore; but she said to the neighbours, 'Look you now what a man he is! What would you say, were I in the street, as he is, and he in the house, as am I? By God His faith, I doubt me you would believe he said sooth. By this you may judge of his wits; he saith I have done just what methinketh he hath himself done. He thought to fear me by casting I know not what into the well; but would God he had cast himself there in good sooth and drowned himself, so he might have well watered the wine which he hath drunken to excess.' The neighbours, both men and women, all fell to blaming Tofano, holding him at fault, and chid him for that which he said against the lady; and in a short time the report was so noised abroad from neighbour to neighbour that it reached the ears of the lady's kinsfolk, who came thither and hearing the thing from one and another of the neighbours, took Tofano and gave him such a drubbing that they broke every bone in his body. Then, entering the house, they took the lady's gear and carried her off home with them, threatening Tofano with worse. The latter, finding himself in ill case and seeing that his jealousy had brought him to a sorry pass, for that he still loved his wife heartily,[[351]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_351_353) procured certain friends to intercede for him and so wrought that he made his peace with the lady and had her home again with him, promising her that he would never be jealous again. Moreover, he gave her leave to do her every pleasure, provided she wrought so discreetly that he should know nothing thereof; and on this wise, like a crack-brained churl as he was, he made peace after suffering damage. So long live Love and death to war and all its company!"

**THE SECOND STORY**

Day the Ninth

AN ABBESS, ARISING IN HASTE AND IN THE DARK TO FIND ONE OF HER NUNS, WHO HAD BEEN DENOUNCED TO HER, IN BED WITH HER LOVER AND THINKING TO COVER HER HEAD WITH HER COIF, DONNETH INSTEAD THEREOF THE BREECHES OF A PRIEST WHO IS ABED WITH HER; THE WHICH THE ACCUSED NUN OBSERVING AND MAKING HER AWARE THEREOF, SHE IS ACQUITTED AND HATH LEISURE TO BE WITH HER LOVER

Filomena was now silent and the lady's address in ridding herself of those whom she chose not to love having been commended of all, whilst, on the other hand, the presumptuous hardihood of the two gallants was held of them to be not love, but madness, the queen said gaily to Elisa, "Elisa, follow433 on." Accordingly, she promptly began, "Adroitly, indeed, dearest ladies, did Madam Francesca contrive to rid herself of her annoy, as hath been told; but a young nun, fortune aiding her, delivered herself with an apt speech from an imminent peril. As you know, there be many very dull folk, who set up for teachers and censors of others, but whom, as you may apprehend from my story, fortune bytimes deservedly putteth to shame, as befell the abbess, under whose governance was the nun of whom I have to tell.

You must know, then, that there was once in Lombardy a convent, very famous for sanctity and religion, wherein, amongst the other nuns who were there, was a young lady of noble birth and gifted with marvellous beauty, who was called Isabetta and who, coming one day to the grate to speak with a kinsman of hers, fell in love with a handsome young man who accompanied him. The latter, seeing her very fair and divining her wishes with his eyes, became on like wise enamoured of her, and this love they suffered a great while without fruit, to the no small unease of each. At last, each being solicited by a like desire, the young man hit upon a means of coming at his nun in all secrecy, and she consenting thereto, he visited her, not once, but many times, to the great contentment of both. But, this continuing, it chanced one night that he was, without the knowledge of himself or his mistress, seen of one of the ladies of the convent to take leave of Isabetta and go his ways. The nun communicated her discovery to divers others and they were minded at first to denounce Isabetta to the abbess, who was called Madam Usimbalda and who, in the opinion of the nuns and of whosoever knew her, was a good and pious lady; but, on consideration, they bethought themselves to seek to have the abbess take her with the young man, so there might be no room for denial. Accordingly, they held their peace and kept watch by turns in secret to surprise her.

Now it chanced that Isabetta, suspecting nothing of this nor being on her guard, caused her lover come thither one night, which was forthright known to those who were on the watch for this and who, whenas it seemed to them time, a good part of the night being spent, divided themselves into two parties, whereof one abode on guard at the door of her cell, whilst the other ran to the abbess's chamber and knocking at the door, till she answered, said to her, 'Up, madam; arise quickly, for we have discovered that Isabetta hath a young man in her cell.' Now the abbess was that night in company with a priest, whom she ofttimes let come to her in a chest; but, hearing the nuns' outcry and fearing lest, of their overhaste and eagerness, they should push open the door, she hurriedly arose and dressed herself as best she might in the dark. Thinking to take certain plaited veils, which nuns wear on their heads and call a psalter, she caught up by chance the priest's breeches, and such was her haste that, without remarking what she did, she threw them over her head, in lieu of the psalter, and going forth, hurriedly locked the door after her, saying, 'Where is this accursed one of God?' Then, in company with the others, who were so ardent and so intent upon having Isabetta taken in default that they434 noted not that which the abbess had on her head, she came to the cell-door and breaking it open, with the aid of the others, entered and found the two lovers abed in each other's arms, who, all confounded at such a surprise, abode fast, unknowing what to do.

The young lady was incontinent seized by the other nuns and haled off, by command of the abbess, to the chapter-house, whilst her gallant dressed himself and abode await to see what should be the issue of the adventure, resolved, if any hurt were offered to his mistress, to do a mischief to as many nuns as he could come at and carry her off. The abbess, sitting in chapter, proceeded, in the presence of all the nuns, who had no eyes but for the culprit, to give the latter the foulest rating that ever woman had, as having by her lewd and filthy practices (an the thing should come to be known without the walls) sullied the sanctity, the honour and the fair fame of the convent; and to this she added very grievous menaces. The young lady, shamefast and fearful, as feeling herself guilty, knew not what to answer and keeping silence, possessed the other nuns with compassion for her. However, after a while, the abbess multiplying words, she chanced to raise her eyes and espied that which the former had on her head and the hose-points that hung down therefrom on either side; whereupon, guessing how the matter stood, she was all reassured and said, 'Madam, God aid you, tie up your coif and after say what you will to me.'

The abbess, taking not her meaning, answered, 'What coif, vile woman that thou art? Hast thou the face to bandy pleasantries at such a time? Thinkest thou this that thou hast done is a jesting matter?' 'Prithee, madam,' answered Isabetta, 'tie up your coif and after say what you will to me.' Thereupon many of the nuns raised their eyes to the abbess's head and she also, putting her hand thereto, perceived, as did the others, why Isabetta spoke thus; wherefore the abbess, becoming aware of her own default and perceiving that it was seen of all, past hope of recoverance, changed her note and proceeding to speak after a fashion altogether different from her beginning, came to the conclusion that it is impossible to withstand the pricks of the flesh, wherefore she said that each should, whenas she might, privily give herself a good time, even as it had been done until that day. Accordingly, setting the young lady free, she went back to sleep with her priest and Isabetta returned to her lover, whom many a time thereafter she let come thither, in despite of those who envied her, whilst those of the others who were loverless pushed their fortunes in secret, as best they knew."

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**THE FIFTH STORY**

Day the Tenth

MADAM DIANORA REQUIRETH OF MESSER ANSALDO A GARDEN AS FAIR IN JANUARY AS IN MAY, AND HE BY BINDING HIMSELF [TO PAY A GREAT SUM OF MONEY] TO A NIGROMANCER, GIVETH IT TO HER. HER HUSBAND GRANTETH HER LEAVE TO DO MESSER ANSALDO'S PLEASURE, BUT HE, HEARING OF THE FORMER'S GENEROSITY, ABSOLVETH HER OF HER PROMISE, WHEREUPON THE NIGROMANCER, IN HIS TURN, ACQUITTETH MESSER ANSALDO OF HIS BOND, WITHOUT WILLING AUGHT OF HIS

Messer Gentile having by each of the merry company been extolled to the very skies with the highest praise, the king charged Emilia follow on, who confidently, as if eager to speak, began as follows: "Dainty dames, none can with reason deny that Messer Gentile wrought magnificently; but, if it be sought to say that his magnanimity might not be overpassed, it will not belike be uneath to show that more is possible, as I purpose to set out to you in a little story of mine.

In Friuli, a country, though cold, glad with goodly mountains and store of rivers and clear springs, is a city called Udine, wherein was aforetime a fair and noble lady called Madam Dianora, the wife of a wealthy gentleman named Gilberto, who was very debonair and easy of composition. The lady's charm procured her to be passionately loved of a noble and great baron by name Messer Ansaldo Gradense, a man of high condition and everywhere renowned for prowess and courtesy. He loved her fervently and did all that lay in his power to be beloved of her, to which end he frequently solicited her with messages, but wearied himself in vain. At last, his importunities being irksome to the lady and she seeing that, for all she denied him everything he sought of her, he stinted not therefor to love and solicit her, she determined to seek to rid herself of him by means of an extraordinary and in her judgment an impossible demand; wherefore she said one day to a woman, who came often to her on his part, 'Good woman, thou hast many times avouched to me that Messer Ansaldo loveth me over all things and hast proffered me marvellous great gifts on his part, which I would have him keep to himself, seeing that never thereby might I be prevailed upon to love him or comply with his wishes; but, an I could be certified that he loveth me in very deed as much as thou sayest, I might doubtless bring myself to love him and do that which he willeth; wherefore, an he choose to certify me of this with that which I shall require of him, I shall be ready to do his commandments.' Quoth the good woman, 'And what is that, madam, which you would have him do?' 'That which I desire,' replied the lady, 'is this; I will have, for this coming month of January, a garden, near this city, full of green grass and flowers and trees in full leaf, no otherwise than as it were May; the which if he contrive not, let him never more send me thee nor any other, for that, an he importune me more, so surely as I have hitherto kept his pursuit hidden from my husband479 and my kinsfolk, I will study to rid myself of him by complaining to them.'

The gentleman, hearing the demand and the offer of his mistress, for all it seemed to him a hard thing and in a manner impossible to do and he knew it to be required of the lady for none otherwhat than to bereave him of all hope, determined nevertheless to essay whatsoever might be done thereof and sent into various parts about the world, enquiring if there were any to be found who would give him aid and counsel in the matter. At last, he happened upon one who offered, so he were well guerdoned, to do the thing by nigromantic art, and having agreed with him for a great sum of money, he joyfully awaited the appointed time, which come and the cold being extreme and everything full of snow and ice, the learned man, the night before the calends of January, so wrought by his arts in a very goodly meadow adjoining the city, that it appeared in the morning (according to the testimony of those who saw it) one of the goodliest gardens was ever seen of any, with grass and trees and fruits of every kind. Messer Ansaldo, after viewing this with the utmost gladness, let cull of the finest fruits and the fairest flowers that were there and caused privily present them to his mistress, bidding her come and see the garden required by her, so thereby she might know how he loved her and after, remembering her of the promise made him and sealed with an oath, bethink herself, as a loyal lady, to accomplish it to him.

The lady, seeing the fruits and flowers and having already from many heard tell of the miraculous garden, began to repent of her promise. Natheless, curious, for all her repentance, of seeing strange things, she went with many other ladies of the city to view the garden and having with no little wonderment commended it amain, returned home, the woefullest woman alive, bethinking her of that to which she was bounden thereby. Such was her chagrin that she availed not so well to dissemble it but needs must it appear, and her husband, perceiving it, was urgent to know the reason. The lady, for shamefastness, kept silence thereof a great while; but at last, constrained to speak, she orderly discovered to him everything; which Gilberto, hearing, was at the first sore incensed, but presently, considering the purity of the lady's intent and chasing away anger with better counsel, he said, 'Dianora, it is not the part of a discreet nor of a virtuous woman to give ear unto any message of this sort nor to compound with any for her chastity under whatsoever condition. Words received into the heart by the channel of the ears have more potency than many conceive and well nigh every thing becometh possible to lovers. Thou didst ill, then, first to hearken and after to enter into terms of composition; but, for that I know the purity of thine intent, I will, to absolve thee of the bond of the promise, concede thee that which peradventure none other would do, being thereto the more induced by fear of the nigromancer, whom Messer Ansaldo, an thou cheat him, will maybe cause make us woeful. I will, then, that thou go to him and study to have thyself absolved of this thy promise, preserving thy chastity, if thou mayst anywise contrive it; but, an it may not480 be otherwise, thou shalt, for this once, yield him thy body, but not thy soul.'

The lady, hearing her husband's speech, wept and denied herself willing to receive such a favour from him; but, for all her much denial, he would e'en have it be so. Accordingly, next morning, at daybreak, the lady, without overmuch adorning herself, repaired to Messer Ansaldo's house, with two of her serving-men before and a chamberwoman after her. Ansaldo, hearing that his mistress was come to him, marvelled sore and letting call the nigromancer, said to him, 'I will have thee see what a treasure thy skill hath gotten me.' Then, going to meet her, he received her with decency and reverence, without ensuing any disorderly appetite, and they entered all[[454]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_454_456) into a goodly chamber, wherein was a great fire. There he caused set her a seat and said, 'Madam, I prithee, if the long love I have borne you merit any recompense, let it not irk you to discover to me the true cause which hath brought you hither at such an hour and in such company.' The lady, shamefast and well nigh with tears in her eyes, answered, 'Sir, neither love that I bear you nor plighted faith bringeth me hither, but the commandment of my husband, who, having more regard to the travails of your disorderly passion than to his honour and mine own, hath caused me come hither; and by his behest I am for this once disposed to do your every pleasure.' If Messer Ansaldo had marvelled at the sight of the lady, far more did he marvel, when he heard her words, and moved by Gilberto's generosity, his heat began to change to compassion and he said, 'God forbid, madam, an it be as you say, that I should be a marrer of his honour who hath compassion of my love; wherefore you shall, what while it is your pleasure to abide here, be no otherwise entreated than as you were my sister; and whenas it shall be agreeable to you, you are free to depart, so but you will render your husband, on my part, those thanks which you shall deem befitting unto courtesy such as his hath been and have me ever, in time to come, for brother and for servant.'

The lady, hearing these words, was the joyfullest woman in the world and answered, saying, 'Nothing, having regard to your fashions, could ever make me believe that aught should ensue to me of my coming other than this that I see you do in the matter; whereof I shall still be beholden to you.' Then, taking leave, she returned, under honourable escort, to Messer Gilberto and told him that which had passed, of which there came about a very strait and loyal friendship between him and Messer Ansaldo. Moreover, the nigromancer, to whom the gentleman was for giving the promised guerdon, seeing Gilberto's generosity towards his wife's lover and that of the latter towards the lady, said, 'God forbid, since I have seen Gilberto liberal of his honour and you of your love, that I should not on like wise be liberal of my hire; wherefore, knowing it[[455]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_455_457) will stand you in good stead, I intend that it shall be yours.' At this the gentleman was ashamed and481 studied to make him take or all or part; but, seeing that he wearied himself in vain and it pleasing the nigromancer (who had, after three days, done away his garden) to depart, he commended him to God and having extinguished from his heart his lustful love for the lady, he abode fired with honourable affection for her. How say you now, lovesome ladies? Shall we prefer [Gentile's resignation of] the in a manner dead lady and of his love already cooled for hope forspent, before the generosity of Messer Ansaldo, whose love was more ardent than ever and who was in a manner fired with new hope, holding in his hands the prey so long pursued? Meseemeth it were folly to pretend that this generosity can be evened with that."

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**THE TENTH STORY**

Day the Tenth

THE MARQUESS OF SALUZZO, CONSTRAINED BY THE PRAYERS OF HIS VASSALS TO MARRY, BUT DETERMINED TO DO IT AFTER HIS OWN FASHION, TAKETH TO WIFE THE DAUGHTER OF A PEASANT AND HATH OF HER TWO CHILDREN, WHOM HE MAKETH BELIEVE TO HER TO PUT TO DEATH; AFTER WHICH, FEIGNING TO BE GROWN WEARY OF HER AND TO HAVE TAKEN ANOTHER WIFE, HE LETTETH BRING HIS OWN DAUGHTER HOME TO HIS HOUSE, AS SHE WERE HIS NEW BRIDE, AND TURNETH HIS WIFE AWAY IN HER SHIFT; BUT, FINDING HER PATIENT UNDER EVERYTHING, HE FETCHETH HER HOME AGAIN, DEARER THAN EVER, AND SHOWING HER HER CHILDREN GROWN GREAT, HONOURETH AND LETTETH HONOUR HER AS MARCHIONESS

The king's long story being ended and having, to all appearance, much pleased all, Dioneo said, laughing, "The good man,[[478]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_478_480) who looked that night to abase the phantom's tail upright,[[479]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_479_481) had not given a brace of farthings of all the praises that you bestow on Messer Torello." Then, knowing that it rested with him alone to tell, he proceeded: "Gentle ladies mine, it appeareth to me that this day hath been given up to Kings and Soldans and the like folk; wherefore, that I may not remove overfar from you, I purpose to relate to you of a marquess, not an act of magnificence, but a monstrous folly, which, albeit good ensued to him thereof in the end, I counsel not any to imitate, for it was a thousand pities that weal betided him thereof.

It is now a great while agone since the chief of the house among the Marquesses of Saluzzo was a youth called Gualtieri, who, having neither wife nor children, spent his time in nought but hunting and hawking nor had any thought of taking a wife nor of having children; wherein he deserved to be reputed very wise. The thing, however, not pleasing his vassals, they besought him many times to take a wife, so he might not abide without an heir nor they without a lord, and offered themselves to find him one of such a fashion and born of such parents that good hopes might be had of her and he be well content with her; whereto he answered, 'My friends, you constrain me unto that which I was altogether resolved never to do, considering how hard a thing it is to find a wife whose fashions sort well within one's own humour and how great an abundance there is of the contrary sort and how dour a life is his who happeneth upon a woman not well suited unto him. To say that you think, by the manners and fashions of the parents, to know the daughters, wherefrom you argue to give me a wife such as will please me, is a folly, since I know not whence you may avail to know their fathers nor yet the secrets of their mothers; and even did you know them, daughters are often unlike their parents. However, since it e'en pleaseth you to bind me in these chains, I am content to do your desire; but, that I may not517 have occasion to complain of other than myself, if it prove ill done, I mean to find a wife for myself, certifying you that, whomsoever I may take me, if she be not honoured of you as your lady and mistress, you shall prove, to your cost, how much it irketh me to have at your entreaty taken a wife against mine own will.'

The good honest men replied that they were content, so he would but bring himself to take a wife. Now the fashions of a poor girl, who was of a village near to his house, had long pleased Gualtieri, and himseeming she was fair enough, he judged that he might lead a very comfortable life with her; wherefore, without seeking farther, he determined to marry her and sending for her father, who was a very poor man, agreed with him to take her to wife. This done, he assembled all his friends of the country round and said to them, 'My friends, it hath pleased and pleaseth you that I should dispose me to take a wife and I have resigned myself thereto, more to complease you than of any desire I have for marriage. You know what you promised me, to wit, that you would be content with and honour as your lady and mistress her whom I should take, whosoever she might be; wherefore the time is come when I am to keep my promise to you and when I would have you keep yours to me. I have found a damsel after mine own heart and purpose within some few days hence to marry her and bring her home to my house; wherefore do you bethink yourselves how the bride-feast may be a goodly one and how you may receive her with honour, on such wise that I may avouch myself contented of your promise, even as you will have cause to be of mine.' The good folk all answered joyfully that this liked them well and that, be she who he would, they would hold her for lady and mistress and honour her as such in all things; after which they all addressed themselves to hold fair and high and glad festival and on like wise did Gualtieri, who let make ready very great and goodly nuptials and bade thereto many his friends and kinsfolk and great gentlemen and others of the neighbourhood. Moreover, he let cut and fashion store of rich and goodly apparel, after the measure of a damsel who seemed to him like of her person to the young woman he was purposed to marry, and provided also rings and girdles and a rich and goodly crown and all that behoveth unto a bride.

The day come that he had appointed for the nuptials, Gualtieri towards half tierce mounted to horse, he and all those who were come to do him honour, and having ordered everything needful. 'Gentlemen,' quoth he, 'it is time to go fetch the bride.' Then, setting out with all his company, he rode to the village and betaking himself to the house of the girl's father, found her returning in great haste with water from the spring, so she might after go with other women to see Gualtieri's bride come. When the marquess saw her, he called her by name, to wit, Griselda, and asked her where her father was; to which she answered bashfully, 'My lord, he is within the house.' Thereupon Gualtieri dismounted and bidding all await him, entered the poor house alone, where he found her father, whose name was Giannucolo, and said to him, 'I am come to marry Griselda, but first I would fain know of her somewhat in518 thy presence.' Accordingly, he asked her if, an he took her to wife, she would still study to please him, nor take umbrage at aught that he should do or say, and if she would be obedient, and many other like things, to all of which she answered ay; whereupon Gualtieri, taking her by the hand, led her forth and in the presence of all his company and of every one else, let strip her naked. Then, sending for the garments which he had let make, he caused forthright clothe and shoe her and would have her set the crown on her hair, all tumbled as it was; after which, all marvelling at this, he said, 'Gentlemen, this is she who I purpose shall be my wife, an she will have me to husband.' Then, turning to her, where she stood, all shamefast and confounded, he said to her, 'Griselda, wilt thou have me to thy husband?' To which she answered, 'Ay, my lord.' Quoth he, 'And I will have thee to my wife'; and espoused her in the presence of all. Then, mounting her on a palfrey, he carried her, honourably accompanied, to his mansion, where the nuptials were celebrated with the utmost splendour and rejoicing, no otherwise than as he had taken to wife the king's daughter of France.

The young wife seemed to have, together with her clothes, changed her mind and her manners. She was, as we have already said, goodly of person and countenance, and even as she was fair, on like wise she became so engaging, so pleasant and so well-mannered that she seemed rather to have been the child of some noble gentleman than the daughter of Giannucolo and a tender of sheep; whereof she made every one marvel who had known her aforetime. Moreover, she was so obedient to her husband and so diligent in his service that he accounted himself the happiest and best contented man in the world; and on like wise she bore herself with such graciousness and such loving kindness towards her husband's subjects that there was none of them but loved and honoured her with his whole heart, praying all for her welfare and prosperity and advancement; and whereas they were used to say that Gualtieri had done as one of little wit to take her to wife, they now with one accord declared that he was the sagest and best-advised man alive, for that none other than he might ever have availed to know her high worth, hidden as it was under poor clothes and a rustic habit. Brief, it was no great while ere she knew so to do that, not only in her husband's marquisate, but everywhere else, she made folk talk of her virtues and her well-doing and turned to the contrary whatsoever had been said against her husband on her account, whenas he married her.

She had not long abidden with Gualtieri ere she conceived with child and in due time bore a daughter, whereat he rejoiced greatly. But, a little after, a new[[480]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_480_482) thought having entered his mind, to wit, to seek, by dint of long tribulation and things unendurable, to make trial of her patience, he first goaded her with words, feigning himself troubled and saying that his vassals were exceeding ill content with her, by reason of her mean extraction, especially since they saw that she bore children, and that they did nothing but519 murmur, being sore chagrined for the birth of her daughter. The lady, hearing this, replied, without anywise changing countenance or showing the least distemperature, 'My lord, do with me that which thou deemest will be most for thine honour and solace, for that I shall be content with all, knowing, as I do, that I am of less account than they[[481]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_481_483) and that I was unworthy of this dignity to which thou hast advanced me of thy courtesy.' This reply was mighty agreeable to Gualtieri, for that he saw she was not uplifted into aught of pridefulness for any honour that himself or others had done her; but, a little after, having in general terms told her that his vassals could not brook this girl that had been born of her, he sent to her a serving-man of his, whom he had lessoned and who said to her with a very woeful countenance, 'Madam, an I would not die, needs must I do that which my lord commandeth me. He hath bidden me take this your daughter and....' And said no more. The lady, hearing this and seeing the servant's aspect and remembering her of her husband's words, concluded that he had enjoined him put the child to death; whereupon, without changing countenance, albeit she felt a sore anguish at heart, she straightway took her from the cradle and having kissed and blessed her, laid her in the servant's arms, saying, 'Take her and punctually do that which thy lord hath enjoined thee; but leave her not to be devoured of the beasts and the birds, except he command it thee.' The servant took the child and reported that which the lady had said to Gualtieri, who marvelled at her constancy and despatched him with the child to a kinswoman of his at Bologna, praying her to bring her up and rear her diligently, without ever saying whose daughter she was.

In course of time the lady again conceived and in due season bore a male child, to her husband's great joy; but, that which he had already done sufficing him not, he addressed himself to probe her to the quick with a yet sorer stroke and accordingly said to her one day with a troubled air, 'Wife, since thou hast borne this male child, I have nowise been able to live in peace with these my people, so sore do they murmur that a grandson of Giannucolo should become their lord after me; wherefore I misdoubt me, an I would not be driven forth of my domains, it will behove me do in this case that which I did otherwhen and ultimately put thee away and take another wife.' The lady gave ear to him with a patient mind nor answered otherwhat then, 'My lord, study to content thyself and to satisfy thy pleasure and have no thought of me, for that nothing is dear to me save in so much as I see it please thee.' Not many days after, Gualtieri sent for the son, even as he had sent for the daughter, and making a like show of having him put to death, despatched him to Bologna, there to be brought up, even as he had done with the girl; but the lady made no other countenance nor other words thereof than she had done of the girl; whereat Gualtieri marvelled sore and affirmed in himself that no other woman could have availed to do this that she did; and had he not seen her tender her children with the utmost fondness,520 what while it pleased him, he had believed that she did this because she recked no more of them; whereas in effect he knew that she did it of her discretion. His vassals, believing that he had caused put the children to death, blamed him sore, accounting him a barbarous man, and had the utmost compassion of his wife, who never answered otherwhat to the ladies who condoled with her for her children thus slain, than that that which pleased him thereof who had begotten them, pleased her also.

At last, several years being passed since the birth of the girl, Gualtieri, deeming it time to make the supreme trial of her endurance, declared, in the presence of his people, that he could no longer endure to have Griselda to wife and that he perceived that he had done ill and boyishly in taking her, wherefore he purposed, as far as in him lay, to make interest with the Pope to grant him a dispensation, so he might put her away and take another wife. For this he was roundly taken to task by many men of worth, but answered them nothing save that needs must it be so. The lady, hearing these things and herseeming she must look to return to her father's house and maybe tend sheep again as she had done aforetime, what while she saw another woman in possession of him to whom she willed all her weal, sorrowed sore in herself; but yet, even as she had borne the other affronts of fortune, so with a firm countenance she addressed herself to bear this also. Gualtieri no great while after let come to him from Rome counterfeit letters of dispensation and gave his vassals to believe that the Pope had thereby licensed him to take another wife and leave Griselda; then, sending for the latter, he said to her, in presence of many, 'Wife, by concession made me of the Pope, I am free to take another wife and put thee away, and accordingly, for that mine ancestors have been great gentlemen and lords of this country, whilst thine have still been husbandmen, I mean that thou be no more my wife, but that thou return to Giannucolo his house with the dowry which thou broughtest me, and I will after bring hither another wife, for that I have found one more sorted to myself.'

The lady, hearing this, contained her tears, contrary to the nature of woman, though not without great unease, and answered, 'My lord, I ever knew my mean estate to be nowise sortable with your nobility, and for that which I have been with you I have still confessed myself indebted to you and to God, nor have I ever made nor held it mine, as given to me, but have still accounted it but as a loan. It pleaseth you to require it again and it must and doth please me to restore it to you. Here is your ring wherewith you espoused me; take it. You bid me carry away with me that dowry which I brought hither, which to do you will need no paymaster and I neither purse nor packhorse, for I have not forgotten that you had me naked, and if you account it seemly that this my body, wherein I have carried children begotten of you, be seen of all, I will begone naked; but I pray you, in requital of my maidenhead, which I brought hither and bear not hence with me, that it please you I may carry away at the least one sole shift over and above my dowry.' Gualtieri, who521 had more mind to weep than to otherwhat, natheless kept a stern countenance and said, 'So be it; carry away a shift.' As many as stood around besought him to give her a gown, so that she who had been thirteen years and more his wife should not be seen go forth of his house on such mean and shameful wise as it was to depart in her shift; but their prayers all went for nothing; wherefore the lady, having commended them to God, went forth his house in her shift, barefoot and nothing on her head, and returned to her father, followed by the tears and lamentations of all who saw her. Giannucolo, who had never been able to believe it true that Gualtieri should entertain his daughter to wife and went in daily expectation of this event, had kept her the clothes which she had put off the morning that Gualtieri had married her and now brought them to her; whereupon she donned them and addressed herself, as she had been wont to do, to the little offices of her father's house, enduring the cruel onslaught of hostile fortune with a stout heart.

Gualtieri, having done this, gave out to his people that he had chosen a daughter of one of the Counts of Panago and letting make great preparations for the nuptials, sent for Griselda to come to him and said to her, 'I am about to bring home this lady, whom I have newly taken to wife, and mean, at this her first coming, to do her honour. Thou knowest I have no women about me who know how to array me the rooms nor to do a multitude of things that behove unto such a festival; wherefore do thou, who art better versed than any else in these household matters, order that which is to do here and let bid such ladies as it seemeth good to thee and receive them as thou wert mistress here; then, when the nuptials are ended, thou mayst begone back to thy house.' Albeit these words were all daggers to Griselda's heart, who had been unable to lay down the love she bore him as she had laid down her fair fortune, she replied, 'My lord, I am ready and willing.' Then, in her coarse homespun clothes, entering the house, whence she had a little before departed in her shift, she fell to sweeping and ordering the chambers and letting place hangings and cover-cloths about the saloons and make ready the viands, putting her hand to everything, as she were some paltry serving-wench of the house, nor ever gave over till she had arrayed and ordered everything as it behoved. Thereafter, having let invite all the ladies of the country on Gualtieri's part, she awaited the day of the festival, which being come, with a cheerful countenance and the spirit and bearing of a lady of high degree, for all she had mean clothes on her back, she received all the ladies who came thither.

Meanwhile, Gualtieri, who had caused the two children be diligently reared in Bologna by his kinswoman, (who was married to a gentleman of the Panago family,) the girl being now twelve years old and the fairest creature that ever was seen and the boy six, had sent to his kinsman[[482]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_482_484) at Bologna, praying him be pleased to come to Saluzzo with his son and daughter and take order to bring with him a goodly and honourable company and bidding him tell every522 one that he was carrying him the young lady to his wife, without otherwise discovering to any aught of who she was. The gentleman did as the marquess prayed him and setting out, with the girl and boy and a goodly company of gentlefolk, after some days' journey, arrived, about dinner-time, at Saluzzo, where he found all the countryfolk and many others of the neighbourhood awaiting Gualtieri's new bride. The latter, being received by the ladies and come into the saloon where the tables were laid, Griselda came to meet her, clad as she was, and accosted her blithely, saying, 'Welcome and fair welcome to my lady.' Thereupon the ladies (who had urgently, but in vain, besought Gualtieri to suffer Griselda to abide in a chamber or lend her one of the gowns that had been hers, so that she might not go thus before his guests) were seated at table and it was proceeded to serve them. The girl was eyed by every one and all declared that Gualtieri had made a good exchange; and among the rest Griselda commended her amain, both her and her young brother.

Gualtieri perceiving that the strangeness of the case in no wise changed her and being assured that this proceeded not from lack of understanding, for that he knew her to be very quick of wit, himseemed he had now seen fully as much as he desired of his lady's patience and he judged it time to deliver her from the bitterness which he doubted not she kept hidden under her constant countenance; wherefore, calling her to himself, he said to her, smiling, in the presence of every one, 'How deemest thou of our bride?' 'My lord,' answered she, 'I deem exceeding well of her, and if, as I believe, she is as discreet as she is fair, I doubt not a whit but you will live the happiest gentleman in the world with her; but I beseech you, as most I may, that you inflict not on her those pangs which you inflicted whilere on her who was sometime yours; for methinketh she might scarce avail to endure them, both because she is younger and because she hath been delicately reared, whereas the other had been in continual fatigues from a little child.' Thereupon, Gualtieri, seeing she firmly believed that the young lady was to be his wife nor therefore spoke anywise less than well, seated her by his side and said to her, 'Griselda, it is now time that thou reap the fruits of thy long patience and that those who have reputed me cruel and unjust and brutish should know that this which I have done I wrought to an end aforeseen, willing to teach thee to be a wife and to show them how to take and use one and at the same time to beget myself perpetual quiet, what while I had to live with thee; the which, whenas I came to take a wife, I was sore afraid might not betide me, and therefore, to make proof thereof, I probed and afflicted thee after such kind as thou knowest. And meseeming, for that I have never perceived that either in word or in deed hast thou departed from my pleasure, that I have of thee that solace which I desired, I purpose presently to restore thee, at one stroke, that which I took from thee at many and to requite thee with a supreme delight the pangs I have inflicted on thee. Wherefore with a joyful heart take this whom thou deemest my bride and her brother for thy children and mine; for these be they whom523 thou and many others have long accounted me to have barbarously let put to death; and I am thy husband, who loveth thee over all else, believing I may vaunt me that there is none else who can be so content of his wife as can I.'

So saying, he embraced her and kissed her; then, rising up, he betook himself with Griselda, who wept for joy, whereas the daughter, hearing these things, sat all stupefied, and tenderly embracing her and her brother, undeceived her and many others who were there. Thereupon the ladies arose from table, overjoyed, and withdrew with Griselda into a chamber, where, with happier augury, pulling off her mean attire, they clad her anew in a magnificent dress of her own and brought her again to the saloon, as a gentlewoman, which indeed she appeared, even in rags. There she rejoiced in her children with wonder-great joy, and all being overjoyed at this happy issue, they redoubled in feasting and merrymaking and prolonged the festivities several days, accounting Gualtieri a very wise man, albeit they held the trials which he had made of his lady overharsh, nay, intolerable; but over all they held Griselda most sage. The Count of Panago returned, after some days, to Bologna, and Gualtieri, taking Giannucolo from his labour, placed him in such estate as befitted his father-in-law, so that he lived in honour and great solace and so ended his days; whilst he himself, having nobly married his daughter, lived long and happily with Griselda, honouring her as most might be. What more can here be said save that even in poor cottages there rain down divine spirits from heaven, like as in princely palaces there be those who were worthier to tend swine than to have lordship over men? Who but Griselda could, with a countenance, not only dry,[[483]](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23700/23700-h/23700-h.htm" \l "Footnote_483_485) but cheerful, have endured the barbarous and unheard proofs made by Gualtieri? Which latter had not belike been ill requited, had he happened upon one who, when he turned her out of doors in her shift, had let jumble her furbelows of another to such purpose that a fine gown had come of it."

Dioneo's story being finished and the ladies having discoursed amain thereof, some inclining to one side and some to another, this blaming one thing and that commending it, the king, lifting his eyes to heaven and seeing that the sun was now low and the hour of vespers at hand, proceeded, without arising from session, to speak thus, "Charming ladies, as I doubt not you know, the understanding of mortals consisteth not only in having in memory things past and taking cognizance of things present; but in knowing, by means of the one and the other of these, to forecast things future is reputed by men of mark to consist the greatest wisdom. To-morrow, as you know, it will be fifteen days since we departed Florence, to take some diversion for the preservation of our health and of our lives, eschewing the woes and dolours and miseries which, since this pestilential season began, are continually to be seen about our city. This, to my judgment, we have well and honourably done; for that, an I have known to see aright, albeit merry stories and belike incentive524 to concupiscence have been told here and we have continually eaten and drunken well and danced and sung and made music, all things apt to incite weak minds to things less seemly, I have noted no act, no word, in fine nothing blameworthy, either on your part or on that of us men; nay, meseemeth I have seen and felt here a continual decency, an unbroken concord and a constant fraternal familiarity; the which, at once for your honour and service and for mine own, is, certes, most pleasing to me. Lest, however, for overlong usance aught should grow thereof that might issue in tediousness, and that none may avail to cavil at our overlong tarriance,—each of us, moreover, having had his or her share of the honour that yet resideth in myself,—I hold it meet, an it be your pleasure, that we now return whence we came; more by token that, if you consider aright, our company, already known to several others of the neighbourhood, may multiply after a fashion that will deprive us of our every commodity. Wherefore, if you approve my counsel, I will retain the crown conferred on me until our departure, which I purpose shall be to-morrow morning; but, should you determine otherwise, I have already in mind whom I shall invest withal for the ensuing day."

Much was the debate between the ladies and the young men; but ultimately they all took the king's counsel for useful and seemly and determined to do as he proposed; whereupon, calling the seneschal, he bespoke him of the manner which he should hold on the ensuing morning and after, having dismissed the company until supper-time, he rose to his feet. The ladies and the young men, following his example, gave themselves, this to one kind of diversion and that to another, no otherwise than of their wont; and supper-time come, they betook themselves to table with the utmost pleasure and after fell to singing and carolling and making music. Presently, Lauretta leading up a dance, the king bade Fiammetta sing a song, whereupon she very blithely proceeded to sing thus:

If love came but withouten jealousy,  
I know no lady born  
So blithe as I were, whosoe'er she be.  
If gladsome youthfulness  
In a fair lover might content a maid,  
Virtue and worth discreet,  
Valiance or gentilesse,  
Wit and sweet speech and fashions all arrayed  
In pleasantness complete,  
Certes, I'm she for whose behoof these meet  
In one; for, love-o'erborne,  
All these in him who is my hope I see.  
  
But for that I perceive  
That other women are as wise as I,  
I tremble for affright  
And tending to believe  
The worst, in others the desire espy  
Of him who steals my spright;  
Thus this that is my good and chief delight  
Enforceth me, forlorn,  
Sigh sore and live in dole and misery.  
  
If I knew fealty such  
In him my lord as I know merit there,  
I were not jealous, I;  
525But here is seen so much  
Lovers to tempt, how true they be soe'er,  
I hold all false; whereby  
I'm all disconsolate and fain would die,  
Of each with doubting torn  
Who eyes him, lest she bear him off from me.  
  
Be, then, each lady prayed  
By God that she in this be not intent  
'Gainst me to do amiss;  
For, sure, if any maid  
Should or with words or becks or blandishment  
My detriment in this  
Seek or procure and if I know't, ywis,  
Be all my charms forsworn  
But I will make her rue it bitterly.

No sooner had Fiammetta made an end of her song than Dioneo, who was beside her, said, laughing, "Madam, you would do a great courtesy to let all the ladies know who he is, lest you be ousted of his possession through ignorance, since you would be so sore incensed thereat." After this divers other songs were sung and the night being now well nigh half spent, they all, by the king's commandment, betook themselves to repose. As the new day appeared, they arose and the seneschal having already despatched all their gear in advance, they returned, under the guidance of their discreet king, to Florence, where the three young men took leave of the seven ladies and leaving them in Santa Maria Novella, whence they had set out with them, went about their other pleasures, whilst the ladies, whenas it seemed to them time, returned to their houses.