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**Antonfrancesco Grazzini (Il Lasca): Two plays—"Il Frate"
("The Friar"), "La Pinzochera" ("The Bawd"). Translated with
an introduction**

D'Orazio, Marino, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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A

ANTONFRANCESCO GRAZZINI (IL LASCA): TWO PLAYS

IL FRATE (THE FRIAR)

LA PINZOCHERA (THE BAWD)

Translated with an Introduction

by

MARINO D'ORAZIO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1991

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Date Jan 30, 1991

Frank J. Nullo
Chair of Examining Committee

Date Jan 30, 1991

Frank J. Nullo
Executive Officer

Professor Hermann Haller

Professor Frank Rosengarten

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The City University of New York

To my wife, Mary Sue, and my children, Giovanna, Pino, and Luciano: with love and gratitude for their unwavering support of this perpetual student.

And to Mary Jo Goodall, who typed the entire manuscript and whose invaluable assistance allowed me to finish the job: her skills on the word processor are matched only by her unselfishness and generosity.

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INTRODUCTION

I

Antonfrancesco Grazzini (Il Lasca) was one of the most active literary figures in the Florence of the Cinquecento. He was born in that city in 1503 and always lived there until his death in 1584. In the course of his life he tried his hand at most current literary genres: the novella, burlesque and serious poetry, and comedy. He also collected and edited the contemporary and traditional poetry of Tuscany, and was an editor of the works of Burchiello and Berni.

His collection of novelle, the Cene, admittedly written in the tradition of the Decameron, is generally considered to be his major work. It was supposed to be a collection of thirty stories told by ten young people on three consecutive winter evening gatherings. Grazzini apparently worked on the Cene throughout his life, but unfortunately never completed the third night stories before his death. Hence we have only twenty-two stories. These provide us, however, with a wonderful picture of contemporary Florence, ranging from the coarsely humorous, to the macabre, and even to the tragic.

Grazzini also wrote a great deal of poetry in his lifetime. His most accomplished verses are burlesque rime, most of which are polemical or satirical in nature, and deal with most contemporary subjects and polemics. This introduction, of necessity, cannot attempt even a superficial discussion

of Grazzini's novelle or poetry. The interested reader is referred to Robert J. Rodini's excellent book, Antonfrancesco Grazzini: Poet, Dramatist, and Novelliere, for an excellent general discussion of these works. My notes will indicate how greatly indebted I am to professor Rodini's book.

Although the Cene is generally considered to be his major work, Grazzini certainly deserves to be considered one of the most important Florentine writers of comedy in the Renaissance. Some of his plays have apparently been lost, however, we do possess now seven five-act comedies and one complete farce in three acts: the five act plays are La Pinzochera (The Bawd), La Gelosia, La Spiritata, La Strega, La Sibilla, I Parentadi, and L'Arzigogolo; the farce is Il Frate. According to Grazzini's own Tavola Delle Opere, all of these, except L'Arzigogolo, were written between c.1540 and 1566. None of these plays has, to my knowledge, until now, been available to English readers.

As a matter of fact, only three of these comedies were actually staged during Grazzini's lifetime. Il Frate, as the prologue points out, was performed on the evening of the Epiphany in 1540 at the home of Maria da Prato in Florence. La Gelosia was also staged in his native city during the Carnival in 1550 at the church of Santa Maria Novella. La Spiritata was performed about ten years later in Bologna (the location and the exact date remain unknown), and then again in Florence during the Carnival of 1561 at a banquet

at the home of Bernadetto De'Medici. It is only toward the end of the Nineteenth Century that another comedy sees the stage: La Strega was performed at the Teatro Scribe in Torino on December 27, 1886. It seems that no other play has actually been performed.¹

Very little is known of Grazzini's early life other than the fact that his father, Grazzino d'Antonio, was a notary and descendant of a noble family dating back to the Thirteenth Century. Not until the formation of the Accademia degli Umidi in 1540 do we have any definite biographical information concerning Grazzini. The Accademia degli Umidi, a literary society made up of members of the Florentine middle class, for the most part merchants and artisans, was formed for the purpose of fostering the use of Tuscan as a literary language, and was made up of young men of modest culture. The title Umidi (the damp ones) was chosen, according to an Eighteenth Century historian, Marco Antonio Lastrì, in order to hail vigor and nourishment, since all good which comes to man has its source in dampness. Its members took on nicknames such as L'Humoroso (The Damp), Il Frigido (The Cold), Lo Spumoso (The Foamy). Grazzini was called Il Lasca (The Roach: a small fresh water fish).²

Robert Rodini points out that unlike the Florentine Academies of the Quattrocento whose members were classicists dedicated to the philological exegesis of ancient texts and other literary and linguistic concerns, the Accademia degli

Umidi, like others founded elsewhere in Tuscany in the Cinquecento, was formed with the primary purpose of doing battle with classical humanistic biases in order to restore the volgare to its former glory. The Accademia degli Umidi was the first academy of any significance to be established in Florence since the heyday of Marsilio Ficino and the Orti Oricellari in the Fifteenth Century. Rodini goes on to say that the climate for the flowering of the academies was provided by the stabilization of the political situation in Florence when Cosimo De Medici took absolute control of the city in 1537.³

Of course the restoration of the volgare to its valid place, had already been accomplished with the publication of Pietro Bembo's Prose della Volgar Lingua in 1525. With his defense of the Florentine/Tuscan tongue modeled on the language of Boccaccio for prose and of Petrarca for poetry, Bembo firmly established the credentials of the volgare as a literary language. Bembo's propositions, according to Vittore Branca, offered a practical solution to Italian writers not necessarily of Tuscan origin (who were always increasing in number), who could learn, by studying the great models, how to use a literary language not native to them.⁴ Bembo wanted the volgare to be Tuscan/Florentine, but not the contemporary spoken language: ("l'essere a questi tempi nato fiorentino, a ben voler fiorentino scrivere, non e` di molto vantaggio").⁵

It's clearly a literary, even an archaic solution. Grazzini and his circle on the other hand, in the tradition of Varchi and Machiavelli, favored a Tuscan tongue actually spoken. In order to further this more "democratic" program in both language and literature, Grazzini, in addition to his own writings, devoted a great deal of time and energy in collecting and editing the traditional poetry of his region, and, in fact, in 1548 he published an edition of the poems of Francesco Berni.⁶

Grazzini's initial participation in the Accademia degli Umidi, later called the Accademia Fiorentina, was short lived. He was expelled in 1547, probably most of all, according to Rodini, because of his attacks on Pier Francesco Giambullari whose outlandish theory that Tuscan derived not from Latin but from Aramaic seemed to him absurd.⁷ After twenty years during which he led an active literary life, Grazzini was reinstated in 1566. He was finally one of the founders, with Salviati, of the Accademia della Crusca in 1582.

It is generally agreed by modern critics that Grazzini was basically just an educated middle class citizen. In fact he was a member of the profession of the Speziali (pharmacists), and his education was such that he could not enter into the lists of Renaissance humanists. Robert Rodini sums it up thus:

Grazzini's ignorance of classical languages indicates that he received the minimum of formal training, but his en-

thusiasm for the popular poetry of his native Florence . . . the obvious influence on his own poetry of Francesco Berni and the Florentine burlesque poets, as well as of Dante and Petrarch, his dedication to Boccaccio and his familiarity with the Italian novella, his ability to incorporate into his own comedies elements of the classical and modern comic theatre attest to a preparation in literature which may have been the result of readings done, not under the supervision of a teacher but under the influence of the literary groups with which he early became associated.*

Whether or not Grazzini knew Latin or Greek, he nevertheless participated with full vigor in the artistic polemics of his time between the proponents of "modern" literature, and the imitators of classical models. He, at least in theory, was emphatically on the side of the moderns. In fact, the prologues of his comedies are full of polemics against the theater of classical imitation, against which he constantly affirms he is rebelling. In almost all the prologues he repeatedly gibes at slavish imitations of the ancients, and proclaims himself free of them. In the first prologue to La Gelosia he describes ancient comedy as highly artificial, lacking in invention, full of hackneyed tricks, and always relying on contrived recognition scenes. The so-called "new" comedies he declares to be even worse, being merely patchworks of ancient and modern materials,

*Beginning with Giovanni Gentile, the critical tradition seems to have concluded that Grazzini knew little Latin and no Greek. It seems unlikely, however, that one who took such active part in the life of the Academies and its associated polemics did not have a working knowledge of Latin at least.

written with the justification that they rely on the authority of Plautus, Terence, and Menander. He sees himself instead as a modern writer in whose comedies we will not find the usual ancient devices such as long-lost children, disguises, worn-out recognition scenes, and the like.⁹ (See, also, the Prologo to La Spiritata).

In the prologue to La Strega, Prologo and Argomento debate the issue.

Prologo: . . .ma dico bene che
l'osservanza dei precetti antichi, come
ne insegna Aristotile e Orazio, sono
necessarissimi.

Argomento: Tu armeggi, fratello:
Aristotile e Orazio videro i tempi loro,
ma i nostri sono d'un'altra maniera:
abbiamo altri costumi, altra religione e
altro modo di vivere, e pero bisogna far
le commedie in altro modo; in Firenze
non si vive come si viveva gia in Atene
e in Roma: non ci sono schiavi, non ci
si usano figliuoli adottivi, non ci
vengono i ruffiani a vender le
fanciulle, ne' i soldati dal di' d'oggi
nei sacchi delle citta' o de' castelli
pigliano piu le bambine in fascia, e
allevandole per lor figliuole, fanno
loro la dote, ma attendono a rubare
quanto piu possono, e se per sorte
capitasser loro nelle mani, o fanciulle
grandicelle o donne maritate (se gia non
pensassero cavarne buona taglia),
torrebbero loro la virginita' e
l'onore.¹⁰

[Prologo: . . .I do say that observance
of the ancient precepts as Aristotle and
Horace teach is most necessary.

Argomento: You miss the point, brother.
Aristotle and Horace saw their own
times, but ours are of another kind; we
have other manners and another religion,
and another way of living, and therefore

comedies must be made in another fashion. In Florence, we no longer live as they once did in Athens or Rome: we have no slaves, we are not accustomed to adopted sons, panders do not go about selling girls here, nor do soldiers, in sacking cities or castles, take children in swaddling clothes, to raise them up as daughters and give a dowry to; rather, they are intent on robbing as much as they can, and if, by chance, young maidens or married women fall into their hands, (and if they didn't think to dig up a good ransom) they would take their virginity and their honor.]*

The argument that comedy should not be tied to ancient models nor portray old and outmoded customs is repeated elsewhere. For example, in the prologue to L'Arzigogolo, Grazzini repeats that comedies should portray reality, current customs, and contemporary life. In fact, in the prologue to Il Frate, Grazzini captures succinctly the elements necessary for writing modern comedy: "In truth neither the rules nor philosophy with all seven liberal arts can teach you how to write comedies. Instead, good judgment, natural instinct, invention, sound knowledge of arrangement, appropriate dialogue, experience of different people, a familiarity with the poets, especially with the first and most honored writers of comedies, indicate to others the true and straight road to a praiseworthy and happy end."¹¹

But all this is theory. In practice, Grazzini, like many other popular dramatists of his time, used stock classical situations and character types throughout his

*All translations from the original Italian, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

comedies. In addition, he also used the Italian novellistica tradition stemming from Boccaccio. The source of Il Frate, for example, is Boccaccio's tale of Ricciardo Minutolo's love for Catella, the wife of Filippello Sighinolfo, (Decameron, III,vi.); and of course the beffa which is perpetrated on Gerozzo in La Pinzochera is the same one used to fool Calandrino in Boccaccio's famous story of the heliotrope (Decameron, VIII,iii). In fact, one critic at least believes that with Il Lasca the only point at which theory and practice come together is in the writer's decision that comedy must be written in prose and not in verse.¹²

Contrary to his theoretical declarations against imitation of the ancients, Grazzini's comedies are full of ancient stereotypical situations and stock character types taken from classical comedy. As Marvin Herrick would have it, "Grazzini failed to practice all he preached, for he retained many of the ancient devices he condemned, such as long lost children, disguises, shopworn recognition scenes, and he drew much of his material from Plautus and Terence."¹³

Structurally his comedies have the traditional five acts of the Commedia Erudita and are preceded by one or more prologues. As we've seen, the prologues are often polemical in nature and serve to present the author's opinions on how modern comedy should be written. Unlike the prologues of Plautine tradition, Grazzini's seldom describe the action

previous to the play, a function reserved for the opening scenes of the first act.

Grazzini's characters are usually borrowed from classical comedy: old libertines and misers; overly strict fathers; mothers overly indulgent with their sons, or worried about their daughter's virtue; young lovers (usually more honest than their fathers); clever and meddling servants; and of course the old bawd or go-between who is different from the classical lena. She, as in other Renaissance treatments, has become an old hypocrite constantly professing poverty and religious devotion while practicing witchcraft or acting as a go-between for illicit lovers. Most critics point out that Grazzini's stereotypical characters fail to gain any dimension as personalities and always remain subordinate to the action of the play. Rodini says that Grazzini's characters "function to create the bourgeois milieu of the play but they lack the individuality which a great playwright such as Moliere managed to give to his characters even when borrowing from classical sources."¹⁴

But if this were all, Grazzini's comedies would not be worth studying or translating. In fact, however, they have a key role to play in our understanding of the Italian popular theater of the Renaissance. They reflect, as Rodini points out, a tendency in the Florentine theater of the Cinquecento to combine the classical elements of the erudite comedy (Commedia Erudita) with the farcical elements of the

popular theater; and by the addition of the customs and attitudes of contemporary bourgeois society, to created an art form which would capture the spirit of modern life.

Indeed, Grazzini's theater strives to be very "local" at all times. His actions inevitably take place in the shadow of the Cupola, and references to local shops, taverns, churches, streets, well known Florentine citizens, and even friends abound. These references and proper names place the action in specific neighborhoods of his city, while the names of acquaintances and personal friends give the comedies an autobiographical flavor which is also very characteristic of his poetry. All this local flavor naturally is tied in with Grazzini's participation in the artistic polemics of his time between the proponents of modern literature, and imitators of the classical models.

Grazzini's polemic against the latter not only makes itself felt in the prologues, it surfaces in the linguistic and scenic texture of his plays. The comedies are rooted in popular Florentine speech, idioms, local proverbs, verbal jokes, and popular expressions. For example, Taddeo Saliscendi, in La Strega - a descendant of the ancient Miles Gloriosus, who according to Marvin Herrick is "so well naturalized as an Italian that he is worthy of Ruzzante's pen,"¹⁵ - provides us with a long historical and contemporary compilation of every popular game, practical joke, and obscene gesture known to or perhaps forgotten by his Florentine contemporaries. All this to show that he is a

true "man of the people," and not just some spoiled son of the aristocracy.

Il Frate and more so La Pinzochera, contain numerous examples of popular jargon, local idioms, obscure proverbs, all calculated to render the comedies "more popular." The use of such language lends great comic impact to many scenes otherwise founded on stock situations. Indeed it can be said that except for rare occasions such as the episode of the little wax ball in La Pinzochera, it is the comic impact of language that Grazzini aims to mine. For the translator then, the task of rendering the comic effect in English is both challenging and stimulating.

Robert Rodini has pointed out that Grazzini's use of Florentine expressions served a dual purpose: "First it gave to his comedies the local color and flavor by which he strove to create a truly Florentine literature. And, second, and certainly not less important, it contributed to the efforts of many Florentine writers to prepare the terrain for a literary language and to raise the local idiom in the estimation of their contemporaries."¹⁶

Rodini thinks that of those writers who portrayed Florentine life in the Sixteenth Century, Grazzini is perhaps without equal. And he goes on to say that it is for this reason that D. H. Lawrence chose to translate one of

Grazzini's novelle (the story of Doctor Manente, in the Cene). In the introduction to the story, D. H. Lawrence is enthusiastic about Grazzini's world:

Here we are kept sharp to essentials, and yet we are given a complete and living atmosphere. Anyone who knows Florence today can picture the whole thing perfectly, the big complicated "palazzi" with far-off attics and hidden chambers, the inns of the country where men sit on benches outside, and drink and talk on into the night, the houses with the little courtyards at the back, where everybody looks out of the window and knows all about everybody's affairs.¹⁷

Here Lawrence's enthusiasm for things Italian - that of the gifted and cultured tourist - shines through.

Grazzini's comedies, however, seem to remain at that picturesque yet superficial level. Francesco DeSanctis, was probably the first to see the limits of Grazzini's art:

Cosa manca al Lasca? La mano che trema. Scioperato, spensierato, balzano, vispo e svelto, ci e' in lui la stoffa di un grande scrittore comico; ma gli manca il culto a la serietà dell'arte e abborracia e tira giu' come viene, e lascia a mezzo le cose e si arresta alla superficie: naturale e vivace sempre, spesso insipido grossolano e trascurato, massime nell'ordito e nel disegno. Questo basso comico plebeo e buffonesco, ne confini della semplice caricatura, perciò superficiale ed esteriore, ritratto di una borghesia colta, piena di spirito e d'immaginazione ed insieme spensierata e tranquilla ha la sua sorgente cola stesso onde uscì il Morgante e poi i capitoli del Berni . . .

[What's missing in Lasca? The hand that trembles. Idle, careless, capricious, nimble and lively, he has the makings of

a great comic writer. But he lacks the devotion and the seriousness for true art, and he botches and throws it down on the page as it comes, leaving things undone, and stopping at the surface. Always natural and vivacious, he is often insipid, gross, and careless, especially in his plots and constructions. This low, plebeian, and buffonish comedy, confined to simple caricature - therefore superficial and exterior - the portrait of a cultured bourgeoisie, full of spirit and imagination, at the same time carefree and tranquil, springs from the same source that gave us [Pulci's] Morgante and Berni's capitoli.]¹⁸

Yet, despite all the limitations, the great critic recognizes in Grazzini the same popular inspiration and source of genius that produced the works of such great comic writers as Pulci and Berni.

Popular, local, Florentine: by definition then, also provincial. One needs to remember that Grazzini lived his whole life in Florence, indeed rarely left the city, and never went far when he did. But if he was "provincial", we cannot forget that his "provincialism" was that of a citizen of Cinquecento Florence: in many ways the cultural center of the world. A panorama of daily life in Renaissance Florence, of the local citizenry, their daily lives, and their language: these are the very things that helped contribute to the liberation of the Italian theater from sterile imitations of the ancients and led the way towards the modern theatre.

Although I have used the term "popular" in reference to Grazzini's theater, something obvious, yet extremely impor-

tant should be remembered: any discussion of a "popular" theater in Renaissance Italy, must never neglect the fact that this was a theater almost exclusively intended for an elite, aristocratic audience.¹⁹ For example, during the Carneval days in Florence, the public, in addition to members of the wealthy merchant class would often include clerics and even popes. Such a public, according to Mario Apollonio, would see comedy as a game, a momentary respite (sollazzo) from the difficult and tumultuous contemporary political situation. Machiavelli is conscious of this, according to Apollonio, when in the prologue to La Mandragola, he tells his audience to excuse these "light" thoughts since they are written to make his sad times more pleasant (fare il suo tristo tempo piu' soave).²⁰

Although Grazzini's plays have not yet been available to English readers, there does exist a loose adaptation of La Spiritata (1560) called the The Buggbears, written in rhymed verse probably around 1565 - perhaps by John Jeffere. It may be useful to briefly compare the two works to see what kind of treatment an Italian popular prose comedy was getting in England in the same decade which produced the original.

In Grazzini's comedy, la Spiritata (the possessed) of the title, is young Maddalena, secretly betrothed to Giulio. He must visit her in secret since his miserly father (Giovanguualberto) will not allow his son to marry her without a dowry of 3000 scudi. Maddalena's father cannot pay

such a sum so he decides to give his daughter to someone else who will take her with whatever property she already has.

Giulio, with the help of her family doctor, devises a scheme by which the old man will be tricked into accepting the marriage. Maddalena pretends to be possessed by a spirit who, speaking through her, insists that she must marry Giulio. Her violent symptoms of course postpone the new betrothal. Meanwhile, with the help of servants and friends, Giulio makes his father believe that his house is haunted by evil spirits. Disguised as devils, they frighten the old man at night with hideous noises in the room above his chamber. A "necromancer" (another of Giulio's friends in disguise) is then called upon to exorcise the various spirits. The sorcerer declares that the spirit possessing Maddalena won't leave until she is allowed to marry Giulio, and that the devils inhabiting Giovanguualberto's house will take with them his dearest possession when they leave. This of course turns out to be three purses containing more than enough scudi for the dowry.

The "stolen" money is given to Maddalena's good-natured uncle who "loans" it to her father so that the dowry can be paid. Giulio's father is only too happy to get the dowry, and the lovers are allowed to celebrate their union.

The plot is obviously indebted to Plautus' Aulularia (The Pot of Gold) which also features an old miser who is tricked out of his dearest possession - a pot of gold - and

then unexpectedly receives it back, and thus gladly gives his daughter's hand to her lover. The plot also draws from Plautus' Mostellaria (The Haunted House) which also contains a fictitious spirit supposedly haunting the house of the hero's old father.

But the elements of magic, sorcery, possession, and necromancy in Grazzini's play stem not so much from Latin comedies (where, with the possible exception of the haunted house in the Mostellaria, the field of magic is wholly unrepresented), but from the Medieval and Renaissance fascination with the fields of magic and demonology. Grazzini drew much of his material from contemporary revivals of magic and superstition. In the Renaissance, astrology was everywhere cultivated, and its professors occupied chairs at chief universities. Witchcraft also seems to have flourished in spite of various papal bulls and inquisitors dispatched to stamp it out throughout Europe. The comparatively more innocent type of astrology which also flourished, seems to have spawned a vast traffic in the occult which, in Italy became a moneymaking profession at the service of all those who were interested in obtaining love, lust, money, or ambition by swift and extraordinary means. So that we get innumerable traffickers in the provision of philtres, love potions, other magical devices, and of course, poisons.²¹ In Renaissance comedy, it's usually love which brings sorcery into play, and of course the reaction of the gullible to these people, most of them imposters,

provides some of the best comic scenes in the Renaissance. Italian Renaissance comic writers generally looked down upon these popular superstitions and used magic and sorcery for comic effect, or as the tools of love and lovers. In addition to Grazzini, we can see this, for example, in Ariosto's Il Negromante, Cecchi's Gl'Incantesimi, and Lo Spirito, and of course, Machiavelli's La Mandragola.²²

Grazzini's play, as might be expected in Sixteenth Century England has been rendered in rhymed verse. The plot is followed pretty closely by the English adapter, who, however, although keeping the scene set in Florence, changed all the names, omitted some minor parts and introduced new material.

Instead of Giulio's young rival, barely mentioned by Grazzini, the new suitor takes the form of a rich old man who takes an active role in the action by offering his own daughter to the hero (Formosus) in order to remove him from his path. All this much to the distaste of his daughter who is already in love with, and engaged to someone else. Thus, a typically Terentian double plot situation much like that in the Andria occurs.²³ That is, two sets of unsatisfied lovers who are temporarily cross matched and around whose eventual proper union the plot revolves. In the Andria Pamphilus loves Glycerium, but is being forced to marry Philumena who is loved by Charinus. In The Buggbears, it is Formosus who loves Rosimunda, but is being offered Iphigenia who loves and is loved by Manuthus.²⁴

R. Warwick Bond, in his introduction to The Buggbears, points out that the English adapter also makes other additions, which he sees as evidence of a greater influence of Roman comedy on The Buggbears than is present in Grazzini's original. For example, he has added a pregnant daughter (rather than a "possessed" one) as in Plautus' Aularia and Terence's Andria. And of course the fact that the play is written in verse brings it much closer to Latin comedy.

The Buggbears also contains an enlargement of the burlesque hocus-pocus of the necromancy. The pregnancy is treated as a mysterious matter calling for magical as well as medical aid. There are large additions to the list of spirits appearing in the Italian play, more absurd rites, and there is a mock conjuration actually pronounced by the necromancer.²⁵ Grazzini, of course also expands on the magical hocus-pocus in La Pinzochera, where Carletto utters all sorts of silly gibberish in the form of imprecations to frighten Damiano away from his own house.

There are other structural changes in the English version (for example, the addition of songs) which do not concern us here. The English play in sum, as Bond has pointed out, is thus an adaptation rather than a translation.

I've mentioned that the central plot situations in both Il Frate and La Pinzochera derive from the Italian novellistica tradition. They are also influenced by other Renaissance comedies (ex.: Ariosto's Negromante, Machiavelli's La Mandragola, and Bibbiena's Calandria). These will be dealt

with at greater length below. First, I will attempt to show, however, how, many elements of Grazzini's plot and structure, and certain characters are founded on ancient, and mostly Plautine models. These classical influences are found mostly in the five-act comedy La Pinzochera (Il Frate being much more in the novella tradition, even in structure); and therefore my discussion will center around La Pinzochera.

II

To anyone with even a cursory acquaintance of Roman comedy, it will be obvious that in this play (as is the case in all of his other five-act comedies) Grazzini adopts most of the typical conventions of the Roman stage. These include addresses to the audience, asides, soliloquies and monologues, relation of action which occurs indoors, eavesdropping, entrance announcements, creaking of doors and knocking, calling indoors, hurrying, fretful and scheming servants, unity of time and place (reflected in action occurring completely outdoors), and of course frank sexual and even obscene language and gestures. It is not, however, the purpose of this introduction to treat in detail the occurrence of these stage conventions.²⁶

I will try, instead, to show how our author freely borrowed from the Roman comedies - especially those of Plautus - for his characters and plot situations. Again, I will be mostly concerned here with La Pinzochera.

True to his theoretical position in the prologues, Grazzini did not borrow the plot of this comedy from any one Roman play. He is, however, in some way indebted to at least five Plautine comedies - Mercator (The Merchant), Casina, Asinaria (The Comedy of Asses), Cistellaria (The Casket), and Mostellaria (The Haunted House) - for many plot situations and scenes, as well as for the two central characters of the comedy, Gerozzo (the old lover), and Monna Antonia (the old bawd).

Although the beffa or trick played on Gerozzo is undoubtedly based on Calandrino's misadventures in Boccaccio's story of the heliotrope, Grazzini has learned much from the tricks and deceptions so favored by Plautus. Comic deception, as the basis of the plot, is, of course, a typical Plautine device. Indeed, as George Duckworth has pointed out, in several Plautine comedies the love story provides merely the basis for the complications of the plot, and often trickery for the Roman playwright is an end in itself.²⁷ This is of course true in La Pinzochera, where clearly the plight of the young lovers, Federigo and Fiammetta, serves merely to initiate the activity of the servant Giannino, who with the help of Carletto, becomes the architect of the various tricks (played on Gerozzo) which are at the heart of the comedy. Giannino is, of course, completely modeled on the stock servus character of Roman comedy.

In Casina, for example, the comic deception of the lecherous senex Lysidamus is at the center of, and is the goal of the dramatic action. Lysidamus (the most lecherous old man in Roman comedy) is dying to spend the night with his wife's maid Casina. He thinks he'll accomplish this by having her marry his overseer who in turn will allow the old man to be the first to enjoy the "honeymoon." Lysidamus, however, becomes the victim of a scheme concocted by his wife Cleustrata who has their slave Chalinus, dressed up as the blushing bride, receive the old man in a darkened bedroom. The results are everything, and more, than can be expected. In La Pinzochera too the goal of the dramatic action is the complete discomfiture of the lecherous old senex. Gerozzo (like Lysidamus), is a faithless old husband involved in a scheme engineered by Giannino to enjoy the wife of his neighbor in her darkened bedroom. In both comedies of course the carefully planned trysts come apart and produce disastrous and hilarious results. Both old men are duped into sexual encounters with "false brides." Lysidamus' "bride" turns out to be a man, while Gerozzo's lover is impersonated by a prostitute.

Plautus' treatment of the central deception, however, descends to a much lower level than Grazzini's, but both are hilarious, in their own way. In Casina the impersonation of the bride takes on low burlesque, and quite vulgar and obscene characteristics. Olympio, the new husband who has been attempting to make love to Casina before the old man

gets his chance, rushes out of the bedroom and graphically relates what went on when he tried to consummate the marriage before his master.

Pardalisca: Speak boldly. After you went to bed, that's what I want to hear about. Tell us what happened.

Olympio: It's disgraceful.

Pardalisca: It will be a good warning to those who hear you.

Olympio: . . . a great thing.

Pardalisca: You're wasting time. Why don't you go on?

Olympio: When . . .

Pardalisca: What?

Olympio: Terrible!

Pardalisca: What?

Olympio: Horrible!

Pardalisca: . . . is it?

Olympio: Oh, it was huge! I was afraid that she had a sword; I began to look for it. While I am hunting for the sword, I seize the hilt. But when I think it over, she didn't have a sword, for it would have been cold.

Pardalisca: Keep on.

Olympio: Oh, I'm ashamed.

Pardalisca: It wasn't a radish was it?

Olympio: No.

Pardalisca: It wasn't a cucumber, was it?

Olympio: Damn it! It wasn't any vegetable at all. But, whatever it was, no blight

had ever touched it. It was enormous,
whatever it was.

Pardalisca: What happened then? Tell me.

Olympio: Then I speak to her; "Casina," say I,
"my darling little wife, tell me, why do
you scorn me in this fashion, your own
husband? I don't deserve to be treated
this way, just because I want you for
myself," She doesn't say a word and
with her clothes she covers that part -
which makes a woman of you. When I see
this road shut off, I ask to go another
way . . .

Myrrhina: . . .

Olympio: A kiss . . . she pricks my lips with a
beard, just like bristles . . . while I
am on my knees, at once she strikes my
chest with both feet. I tumble from the
bed headlong; she jumps on me and
smashes my jaw. Then without saying a
word I fled from the house dressed just
as you see me, so that the old man can
have a dose of the same medicine I
had.²⁸

Soon after, Lysidamus rushes out of the same bedroom followed by the "bride" and obviously having suffered the same fate as his overseer. Chalinus, still dressed as Casina, chases him out into the street beckoning him to continue the joust if he wants more of the same.

This hilarious burlesque scene is the most vulgar and obscene in Plautus. The situation is beautifully reversed by Grazzini who, in the funniest scene of his play, has Sandra (the prostitute disguised as Diamante) run out of the house chased by the "invisible" Gerozzo who wants her to come back inside and "taste the good part." (IV,ix). What went on inside is of course, given the conventions of the

stage, related to the audience by the characters outside. Sandra tells Carletto about the old man's putrid smell, recalling (in reverse) Olympio's description of "Casina's" physical attributes. In one play the girl is disgusted by the old man's smell, in the other the "husband" finds that he can't stomach his "bride's" physical attributes. Both situations are relished by their writers and probably thoroughly enjoyed by the audience.

As both old men run out of the house, their predicament is compounded by coming face to face with their wives. Cleustrata, an unusual matrona even for Plautus (she has concocted the whole scheme), confronts him sarcastically: "Greetings, my fine lover" (1.320), leaving Lysidamus as he says: "Between the stone and sacrifice and I don't know where to go." (1.322). Albiera, who unlike her Plautine counterpart, is surprised by Gerozzo's appearance "unbuttoned" in the street, greets him with the customary treatment afforded such lechers by their wives: pezzo di briccone . . . vecchiaccio . . . rimbambito . . . (IV,ix). This is the typical way Gerozzo is referred to throughout the play: Ex.: semplice, credulo; (IV,i) scimunito; (I,iii); semplice, sciocco (II,iii).

Gerozzo is clearly not only the classical senex but also the classical credulus. He reminds us not only of the way Cleustrata refers to Lysidamus: "silly old fool" (11.239ff), "decrepit old goat" (1.535), "worthless old man" (1.885), but of the way other such types are called in

Plautus' works. Demipho in Mercator is a "decrepit old man" (1.291), "worthless dotard" (1.305), "senile, decrepit old man" (1.314); Demaenetus in Asinaria, another faithless husband is a "hoary - bearded cuckoo (1.934), and "drunken reprobrate" (1.863).

Gerozzo of course can give it right back to his wife just as many Plautine husbands do. Thinking she can see him only because she's cuckolded him, he says: "Sta' Discosto, Diavolaccia, Lucifera, Traditora . . ." (IV,ix). He is thus also the classical iratus. Most Plautine husbands, as Duckworth points out, are quarrelsome, and often critical of their wives. Lysidamus, however, unlike Gerozzo, begs his wife for forgiveness and promises never to fall in love again, while Gerozzo threatens to have her locked up as a whore, and goes off with his "Diamante."

The confrontation between Albiera and Gerozzo is reminiscent of the situation in Mercator when Dorippa (another matrona with a fierce temper) upon her return from the country with her slave (Albiera is also returning home from the convent with her maid) confronts her husband, Lysimachus, and accuses him of keeping a harlot in their house.

Dorippa: (to herself) There was never a more wretched woman than I, to be married to such a man! Oh, dear me! Just look at the man! There is a fellow you can trust yourself and your possessions to, there is the fellow to whom I brought ten talents dowry! To think that I should see such a sight, to think that I should endure such an insult!

(Mercator, 11.700-704)

Albiera: Doh, pezzo di briccone, senza vergogna! che ribalda e' quella? egli stanno anche fermi, che si doverrebbon vergognare! o Gerozzo, che pazzia e' questa? Ubbriacaccio, egli non risponde; quell'altra svergognata, ella guarda, la vituperosa! non avete tanta casa, che voi venite a farvi scorgere nella via? Deh, vedi disonesta! Gerozzo, ah Gerozzo! a questo modo? in questa forma si fa? vituperar se' e altrui? (IV,ix).

[. . . Look at that old pervert - no shame! And who is that floozy with him; and they have the nerve to just stand there when they should be ashamed of themselves! (to Gerozzo) Gerozzo, what craziness is this? Look at that drunken lout, he won't even answer; . . . Gerozzo, ah Gerozzo! Is this anyway to behave? To shame yourself and everyone else? . . .]

Of course, Dorippa's husband, Lysimachus, is not guilty in this case. He is only keeping Pasicompsa in his house for Demipho, the real lecher. Demipho, is of course another character of which we're reminded as we listen to Gerozzo's lovesick complaints.

All of these old lechers, (Lysidamus, Lysimachus, Demipho, and Gerozzo) predictably, are afraid of their wives. The final scene in Casina shows a cowering Lysidamus making flimsy excuses to his wife, while promising never to do it again. Demipho and Lysimachus in Mercator are also afraid of their respective wives; and Gerozzo seems to know who the boss in his house really is. When Giannino tells him he's cheap, he protests by saying that his wife wears

the pants in his house and that when she gets her dander up she becomes a real beast:

che vuoi tu ch'io faccia se mogliama s'e'messo le brache e vuole portare ella? tu sai com'ella e' subita e bizzarra: ogni po' po' ch'ella si stuzzica, monta in bestia e quistionerebbe in su'n una cruna d'ago. (II,vi)

[What do you want me to do? You know my wife wears the pants in my house. You also know how peculiar, cranky, and hot-tempered she is. As soon as she gets her dander up she becomes a beast and starts questioning even the hairs on a dog.]

We've seen that Grazzini's Gerozzo is strongly derived from the stock character of the ancient senex, especially the senex as lover. He's also, however, the stock credulus, the gullible old fool who becomes the dupe of his cunning servant, just as certain Plautine old men are duped by their slaves. Examples are: Periphanes (Epidicus); Nicobolus (tricked twice in Bacchides); Theopropides (who was tricked into thinking his house was haunted in Mostellaria). Gerozzo, like his ancient predecessors, is willing to accept as truth the most amazing fictions concocted by Giannino. (Later we'll see how much he resembles Calandrino and Messer Nicia in this regard).

Grazzini follows the Plautine method of exaggerating the credulity of such characters. Gerozzo will believe anything! When Federigo frets that Giannino's plot to get Sandra to pose as Diamante may be too complicated, or that the old man will recognize her, Giannino says that "he's too stupid" for that. He adds that he could have concocted the

plot "a thousand other ways, because he's such a simpleton." (II, iii). And when Veronica, the fretful servant, also expresses apprehension and doubt, Giannino tells her, "lunacy's a way of life with him." (II,5). And in an aside: "Cimabue who was born blind saw more than this guy." (II,6). Federigo echoes all of this when he marvels to the audience that "I wouldn't have believed in a million years that you could find such a gullible simpleton as that man is." (IV,1).

Gerozzo's credulity provides Grazzini with the funniest visual scenes of the play, and the ones that most look forward to similar foolishness in the Commedia dell'Arte. I'm referring not only to the hilarity of watching the old goat trying to convince Sandra to put the wax ball in her mouth and become invisible right in front of his wife (IV,ix), but also to the scene in which he flits about the stage trying to touch Albiera and Veronica to make them "forget" having seen him (V,v). And, of course, no less hilarious, is the scene in the fourth act where the "invisible" Gerozzo, laughing and trying to hide from Giannino, practically chokes on the wax ball as his servant pretends not to be able to see him (IV,i). This scene reminds us of Calandrino in the Mugnone, in agony as he's pelted with rocks by Bruno and Buffalmacco, who pretend that he's disappeared.

Giannino, the "architectus doli" ²⁹ of this comedy is of course the Renaissance re-incarnation of the cunning slave of Roman comedy (Ex.: Chrysalus (Bacchides),

Palaestrio (Miles Gloriosus), Pseudolus, Tranio (Mostellaria), Davus (Andria), Syrus (Adelphoe). Giannino is probably most like Chrysalus who undaunted by difficulties and setbacks, carries his trickery of the old master to a glorious conclusion. Indeed both trick the old senex twice. Chrysalus must trick Nicobolus out of his money twice, while Giannino must convince Gerozzo that he's invisible twice. In both plays, the second deception must occur after the old men have been put on their guard so to speak; and yet the servants carry it off.

Giannino, like his Roman predecessors is trying to trick the old master to aid the young man's (Federigo's) love affair. He also typically engages one of his cronies to help him carry out his schemes. Carletto, his helper, disguised as the magician, in fact does a wonderful job of keeping Damiano away from his house, and in finally tricking the old bawd and the prostitute out of their money.

But in an unusual twist, Grazzini turns on its head the conventional comic motif of the servant extracting from the old master funds to aid the young man's love affair. Giannino not only wants and gets a handsome profit for himself, but he manages to get the money from the young lover to pay for the old man's love affair. It's another example of how Grazzini makes original use of his classical sources.

Gerozzo is not the only old man tricked in this comedy. In a scene which closely parallels the central trickery in Plautus' Mostellaria, Federigo's father is kept out of his

own house upon his return from the country by Carletto disguised as the magician. Like Theopropides, Damiano needs to be kept out of his house so he won't discover what's going on inside: Ambrogio and Bità's amorous rendezvous. But for Carletto's more active role, the scenes in the two comedies closely parallel each other. In both, we have the returning old man locked out of his own house, while the cunning slave Tranio in Plautus, and the cunning servant Giannino in Grazzini's comedy, engage the old man in conversation outside, attempting to offer explanations as to what's been going on. Both tricksters are of course helped by the voices within. Indeed Carletto, Grazzini's more than able assistant, carries the whole thing off himself. The scene is reminiscent of La Spiritata where the haunted house motif forms the central trick of the play. But here the influence of Plautus is seen mostly in the way the returning irate old man (the senex iratus) is kept out of his house, not to trick him out of his money, but to keep him from discovering what's been going on inside.

Arguably, the whole scene is somewhat superfluous since it contributes nothing to the development of the plot. Grazzini probably needed it to introduce the character of the magician, especially as imposter, and thus join other writers of his time (See, for example, Ariosto's Negromante) in making fun of the current vogue of these foreign sorcerers, and of the superstitions of much of the citizenry in this area. Moreover, the scene lends itself to Grazzini's

stated love for the more popular elements in comedy, including burlesque, slapstick, and vivid descriptions of contemporary types.

One such contemporary type is the title character of La Pinzochera: Monna Antonia. She is an interesting amalgam of the ancient laenae of Latin theater and a truly new character of popular origin with its roots in the novellistica tradition. The pinzochera (or bawd), a common character in Cinquecento comedies has been seen by many critics as a truly new literary "type" whose sources are in the tradition of the novella but who also reflects a common contemporary character. These women, usually portrayed as hypocritical and pious widows who go about professing poverty and reciting paternostri, can be found as far back as in the work of Boccaccio and Sacchetti.

They were usually named after Santa Verdiana who, according to ancient tradition, domesticated and nourished two snakes sent by God to tempt her. The type is also found throughout the comedies of the Renaissance (Ex.: Piccolomini's L'Amor Costante; L'Assiuolo; Gelli's La Sporta; Cecchi's I Rivali).³⁰

Such a character is very early on found in Boccaccio's story of the amorous encounters of Pietro di Vinciolo's wife (Decameron V,x). In that story Pietro's faithless wife is aided by her confidant and procuress: "una vecchia che pareva pur Santa Verdiana che da' beccare alle serpi." The old lady, while constantly reciting prayers and stories from

the lives of the fathers, procures for the fiery young woman a man who can satisfy her better than her husband Pietro.³¹ We will see further below that Grazzini draws on this story for the relationship between the servant Margherita and young Caterina in Il Frate, especially in Margherita's advice to her mistress to satisfy her desires while she's young and alive.

Grazzini's indebtedness to the story in the Decameron is evident since he describes Monna Antonia in almost the same exact language used by Boccaccio. Giannino also calls her "una vecchia . . . che par Santa Verdiana che dava beccare alle serpi." (II, iii). And Monna Antonia indeed does come on stage exactly as the typical Medieval and Renaissance pinzochera. In her opening monologue (III,1), she laments the "struggles and torments" of her life while talking about her faith in God, her fastings and prayers, and of course her constant worries about making ends meet in the here and now. Grazzini may also have been thinking of Fra Timoteo's soliloquy in La Mandragola (IV, 6) in which the good friar complains that his "offices" have been interrupted by that devil Ligurio who has caused him to put his finger, his arm, and his whole person into the unholy task that's before him.

But Monna Antonia also has much in common with two Plautine procuresses: Cleareta in Asinaria, and the procuress in Cistellaria. All three are, in one way or

another, mothers of courtesans and all three actively market their daughters' favors.

The procuress in Cistellaria says she made her daughter Gymnasium a prostitute "to keep from starving," and says that if her daughter didn't marry a man each day the household would die of hunger. (11.20-56) Cleareta, on the other hand, is every inch a procuress; not ashamed to use her daughter (Philaenium) as "bait" and her house as a "trap" for her lovers. (Asinaria 11.218ff).

Following her initial compulsory profession of piety, Antonia, as the play wears on, comes closer and closer to Cleareta in her real interest: money. Like Cleareta, she demands payment up front (III,2), or she'll reveal everything. Cleareta won't let her daughter's lovers get anywhere without prepayment. Money in advance or no favors is her policy: "No credit is our motto here" (Asinaria 11.159-179). Antonia isn't quite up to Cleareta's genius for the trade; in the end she is tricked by Giannino and Carletto not only out of the four scudi she and Sandra got paid, but even offers her own money into the bargain to "save" Gianinno (V,2). She's an amateur compared to her Plautine counterpart, although like Cleareta once she gets down to business, she unashamedly practices her trade.

But Grazzini ultimately invests her with a kind heart, and even generosity, when she volunteers to help out Giannino with her own funds. Monna Antonia's position in Grazzini's world seems to be much more precarious than that

of the Plautine procuresses. She can certainly ply her trade, but she'd better be careful, for in Italian Renaissance society, if she causes scandals in good households it could mean the pillory or the gallows (as Carletto is quick to point out).

Before leaving the ancient world, mention should be made of one other stock character who appears in Grazzini's play: the adulescens or young lover. Federigo is quite typical as the love-sick young man at odds with his father's wishes in his attempts to gain his sweetheart. The youthful lover, unable to procure his sweetheart or fearful that he will lose her, appears according to Duckworth in fourteen Plautine comedies, and in all six of Terence's plays.³²

I've already mentioned that in Plautine comedy especially, the young lover's plight serves merely to initiate the activities and tricks of the slave. And indeed, this is the case in our comedy. It must be mentioned, however, that Federigo displays more initiative than most ancient lovesick young men. He initially gets word to Fiammetta and exchanges love letters with her, and then personally arranges to meet her in her room - at the same time having gotten rid of her father by procuring for him Alberto Catalani's house for his planned tryst with Diamante.³³

Federigo's initial appearance is accompanied by the mandatory monologue describing the pains and tortures of love (I,5). His soliloquy resembles those of many of his stock predecessors: Alcesimarchus' who is tortured because

he has been prevented by his father from seeing his sweetheart (Cistellaria 203ff); Pamphilus' who fears that he'll have to give up Glycerium and marry the daughter of Chremes (Andria 236ff); Phaedria's (Phormio 509ff); Charinus' (Mercator 588ff).

But his love affair is thereafter certainly not presented in idealized tones. As such, the whole thing typically resembles Plautine love intrigues which are usually not very serious affairs. Federigo's ultimate aim is to marry Fiammetta, but his immediate destination is her bed. And he himself doesn't speak in very elevated tones about her. In Act II, Scene 3 he asks Giannino: "how's my heart, my soul, my life"? But his real concern is evident in his reply when he finds out that she was fine and happy when she went to bed last night. He says: "Egli e' pur danno grandissimo che cosi' delicata e bella giovine dorma sola." (It's a great shame that such a charming and beautiful girl has to sleep alone). And of course it's not long before she's not sleeping alone. Grazzini relishes his descent to Plautus' level in the description of the two lovers who have been surprised in bed together "addosso l'uno all'altro" (one on top of the other), and presumably tied up just in that position (V, viii). So, from the mandatory idealized pangs and sorrows of true love, we've descended by the end of the play to a frank sexual and indeed "beastly level."

As for Fiammetta, Renaissance social conventions (like those of ancient Rome) make it difficult for her, a young

middle class girl, to take part in the action. The rigidity of stage setting and conventions also makes it impossible for her to appear, given the necessary lack of interior scenes. Therefore, the encounter between the young lovers has to be narrated rather than presented on stage.

Fiammetta's role in this play resembles that of the young girl of classical comedy. In Roman comedy, the beloved had to somehow be discovered to be freeborn in order to marry the young man. In La Pinzochera the problem with Fiammetta is that she's not (in Damiano's opinion) of good family. Federigo and Ambrogio lament the fact that Fiammetta's family is not quite good enough for Federigo's father, and Ambrogio's comments certainly indicate that Grazzini did not approve of these contemporary prejudices.

Mi par sconvenevo cosa certamente por cura a tante cacherie, quanto si fa in questa citta': se la fanciulla e' buona e cara, non basta, senza cercare per insino al terzo parentado? (I,vi).

[I think it's disgraceful the way people in this city worry so much about such trifles; if the girl is good and dear isn't that enough, without looking at third relations"?)

Thus Grazzini, while bowing to the stereotypical character and situation dictates of the contemporary stage, nevertheless uses the opportunity, and finds a way, to make his plays reflect contemporary life more faithfully by injecting personal observations and judgments of his society.

III

Grazzini's indebtedness to the novellistica tradition as well as to the contemporary theater is evident in both Il Frate and La Pinzochera. Boccaccio in particular is mined extensively for both works, but other Renaissance comedies, especially La Mandragola and Bibbiena's Calandria, also provide Grazzini material for both his characters and plot situations.

The influence of the novella and particularly of Boccaccio's Decameron on Florentine comedy is fundamental, and indeed too great a subject to be tackled in any depth here. Many critics, among them Mario Apollonio, Vito Pandolfi, Nino Borsellino (to name a few contemporary ones) have written about the paternita' spirituale (spiritual paternity) of Boccaccio. Mario Apollonio, in his Storia del Teatro Italiano, sees the Decameron as the source of the world picture of Florentine comedy. He finds in it the whole human repertory constantly dipped into by the Cinquecento dramatists.³⁴ Pandolfi, in Il Teatro del Rinascimento e la Commedia dell'Arte sees in Boccaccio's great work the source of the minute observations of daily life, and its parody, to which the Florentine stage constantly returned.³⁵ Nino Borsellino says that the Decameron offered the commedia a vast storehouse of characters as well as all the heffe, tricks, love intrigues, etc. from which the dramatists were free to choose.³⁶

Apollonio goes so far as to extend Boccaccio's paternita' from the spiritual and thematic to the actual mechanics of the stage setting. He points out that Boccaccio goes well beyond the novellistic framework, reaching in fact the world of representation, when he introduces his actors-spectators: the happy brigade of ten story tellers who function as both. In his words: "Questa e' gia' rappresentazione in atto: ne manca a compierla l'edificio." [This is already representation in action: the only thing missing to complete it is the edifice.]³⁷ And finally, to prove his point, he goes on to describe the theater-like setting of the valley to which the company retires at the conclusion of the sixth day of the Decameron.³⁸

It is well beyond the scope of this essay to deal with the legacy of the Decameron on the Renaissance stage. But Apollonio and Pandolfi, among others, have cited the differences between Renaissance comedy and the novella. For Apollonio, the commedia is less immediate, less human than the novella; more "filtered," more intellectual, more removed from contemporary reality. He believes that in an age in which man thought himself capable of analyzing, categorizing, and understanding everything, the picture of everyday life on stage had to become an intellectual exercise.³⁹ Pandolfi, likewise, emphasizes the distancing from the great example offered by Boccaccio. That example, he says, was abandoned for the easy pleasures offered by the

their imitations. He believes it became easier to imitate the ancient models than to make the more difficult leap from the novella to the commedia.⁴⁰

Certainly Grazzini's comedies, as we've seen, do reflect this tendency to make extensive use of ancient models, and this in spite of the strident polemics of his prologues. His work thus offers a typical example of the dilemma faced by the Renaissance commedia in general. Yet, as we've seen, Grazzini finds ways to make original use of his classical sources; and as we'll see below he also manages to effectively interweave the novella tradition in his work.

Il Frate is particularly novellistic in nature since practically all of the action does not take place on stage but is narrated to the audience by the servant Margherita. Rodini points out that her monologue describing Alberigo's successful seduction of Caterina could well be a page from the Cene.⁴¹

Grazzini calls Il Frate a farce. But the play is really no more than a short comedy.⁴² The Italian farsa in the early Sixteenth Century was normally a short play in verse representing a squabble, a prank, a jest, or a sport. It was descended in large part from the village-square plays of medieval times, in particular from the contrasto (between lovers or between man and wife), or from the maggio (the play of spring). These early farces were written by those who studied the actions of peasants and rustics and recorded

their characteristic expressions, dialects, and mannerisms.⁴³ Herrick sums up the Sixteenth Century situation as follows:

The sixteenth-century writers of farce drew upon both medieval and Renaissance sources. They carried on the practices of the older writers of religious plays, contrasti and maggi, and they also drew upon the neoclassical learned comedy that was based on the practice of Plautus and Terence. The farce used not only medieval allegory, but also classical mythology. In fact, religious, allegorical, and mythological elements clung to the farce for many years, even to peasant farces that had no literary pretensions.

In the sixteenth century, then, farsa was a loose term that could be applied to almost any dramatic work that did not fit the conventional categories of tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, or pastoral. Although its origins lay in the simplest form of drama, the Italian farce was anything but simple; it appeared in a variety of forms, ranging from the briefest sketch to a full-length play comparable to a regular comedy or tragicomedy.⁴⁴

Grazzini recognizes the unconventional nature of the farce when he says in the prologue to Il Frate that the audience should excuse the liberties he takes with convention because this play is a farce and "it need not be a comedy."

In fact, the central plot situation of the play is lifted from Decameron III,vi, where Catella, the wife of Filippello Sighinolfo is tricked into making love with her husband's friend Ricciardo Minutolo. In Boccaccio's story, Ricciardo, after numerous unsuccessful attempts to obtain Catella's love, convinces the extremely jealous woman that her husband has arranged a rendezvous in a bagno with

Ricciardo's own wife. He convinces Catella to substitute herself for Ricciardo's wife in order to surprise and upbraid her husband. Ricciardo, of course, gets to the darkened bedroom first (a room he's rented from a prostitute) and there, under the covers, he greets Catella. After the lovemaking and on learning his identity, Catella feels outrage, bursts out crying, and swears to take vengeance, but Ricciardo with unrelenting entreaties convinces her of his love for her, and Catella is finally made to realize that the kisses of her lover are indeed better than those of her husband.

The similarities to Grazzini's central plot situation are obvious, the only difference being that in Il Frate it is Caterina who goes to the darkened bedroom and awaits her husband rather than the other way around. But Caterina is nothing like Catella. She is quite willing to give herself to Alberigo from the start, once her natural sexual urges are awakened by her servant. And she, unlike Catella, enjoys immediately the sexual pleasures with the friar.

When Catella discovers the truth her first instincts are to scream, fight, cry, leave, etc.

Il che Catella udendo, e conoscendolo alla voce, subitamente si volle gittare del letto, ma non pote'; ond'ella volle gridare, ma Ricciardo le chiuse con l'una delle mani la bocca . . . (and later) Catella, mentre che Ricciardo diceva queste parole, piangeva forte.

[On hearing his name, and recognizing him by his voice, she tried instantly to jump out of bed, but she could not; she tried to scream, but Ricciardo

with one of his hands closed her mouth and said .
. . . Catella, while Ricciardo was saying these
words, was weeping bitterly.]

Caterina on the other hand doesn't protest in the least. Indeed, as Margherita says, she never made a sound but seemed like a scratched pig and meowed like a cat in heat (III,i). It's all very consistent with the character Grazzini paints in the opening scenes of the play. Caterina is portrayed as a woman who is not about to deny herself a chance for more enjoyable sexual relations than her old husband can provide. When Margherita tells her that she has a young admirer, Caterina is bursting with joy: "Vienne, ch'io non so dove io mi sia per l'allegrezza." (I,iii). In all of this Caterina is much more reminiscent of another of Boccaccio's women: Pietro Di Vinciolo's young lusty wife in Decameron (V,x). We've already seen that in Boccaccio's story the young woman's old confidant is one of the sources for Monna Antonia in La Pinzochera. That Pietro's wife is a model for Caterina is quite evident not only in the way both wives are described (similar adjectives are used by both authors: bella, fresca, giovane), but also in the relationship between the elderly confidants and their young mistresses, and in the advice the latter receive.

Boccaccio's Santa Verdiana advises her mistress to do exactly what her homosexual husband does, and enjoy other men while she's young:

e per cio che a questo siam nate, da capo ti dico
che tu farai molto bene a rendere al marito tuo

pan per focaccia, si che l'anima tua non abbia in
vecchiezza che rimproverare alle carni.

[And so, since we were born for this, I'm telling
you you'd do well in giving your husband tit for
tat, so that when you're old your soul won't have
cause to reproach your flesh.]

Margherita echoes these words almost to the letter in
her advice to Caterina:

ora che voi sete fresca, giovane e bella, operate
di modo che non abbiate poi nella fine a dolervi
di voi, e che la carne non abbia che rimproverare
allo spirito. (I,iii).

[now that you're fresh, young and beautiful act in
such a way that you have nothing to grieve for
later, and so that your flesh won't have cause to
reproach your spirit].

The whole thing is also somewhat reminiscent of Frate
Timoteo's advice to Lucrezia in La Mandragola.

But to resume the parallel with the story of Catella
and Ricciardo Minutolo: we see in both stories young women
who go to bed with their lovers as victims of a ruse, but
wind up liking it. The women, especially Caterina, do not
deny themselves a chance for more enjoyable amorous rela-
tions. In this they both resemble Machiavelli's Lucrezia,
whose husband's stupidity has led her, according to
Callimaco, "to do what I would never have done on my own."
["mi hanno condotta a fare quello che mai per me medesima
arei fatto."] (La Mandragola V,iv).

The fact that Alberigo, Caterina's lover, is a friar
doesn't seem to mean too much to Grazzini, nor does he use
him as a means to satirize the clergy (the way for example,

Machiavelli does with Frate Timoteo). Grazzini prefers to follow the Plautine approach of derision and ridicule but not satire or moralizing. In fact, there is no real satire of the clergy in Il Frate, but simply the depiction of a tremendously immoral man who just happens to be a friar. Friars, indeed, as Margherita says, are men above all, and usually better than the rest. "Non si truova generazione piu' abile ai servigi delle donne!" (II,i) ["Friars eh!. You won't find more able men at rendering services to women."] The only hint we get of any satire of the clergy is Caterina's initial reaction on hearing that her admirer is a friar. She says "e dubito, s'io mi impaccio seco, di non perdere la divozione" (II,i). ["I worry that if I'm unfaithful with this one, I'll lose my faith."]

The influence of the novella tradition is also obvious and prevalent on the five act comedy La Pinzochera. It is seen most explicitly in the Gerozzo-Calandrino parallel. Like Calandrino, Gerozzo is a fool who thinks himself intelligent and worldly, and thus becomes the butt of outlandish practical jokes. The virtues of certain stones discussed by Bruno and Buffalmacco in the story of the heliotrope (as they hatch their plans to play the invisibility trick on Calandrino) is echoed in Giannino's descriptions of the virtue of the little wax balls which will make Gerozzo and his lover invisible. And we've already seen how the scenes with the "invisible" Gerozzo on stage are very reminiscent of Calandrino's antics.

Gerozzo's relationship with Albiera is also reminiscent of Calandrino's marriage to Tessa. In the story of the heliotrope, it is Tessa who "destroys" the enchantment just as Albiera destroys the magic of the wax balls for Gerozzo. Calandrino calls Tessa "questa femina maladetta" [this cursed woman], and says "le femine fanno perdera la virtu' a ogni cosa" [women make all things lose their virtue]. (Decameron VIII,iii). Gerozzo calls Albiera diavolaccia, lucifera, traditora [devil, lucifer, betrayer] (IV,ix).

But the parallels don't end with this story. The story of Calandrino and the "stolen" pig (VIII,vi) also deals with "enchanted" balls; the tools used to trick the gullible Calandrino. Bruno and Buffalmacco steal Calandrino's pig, and when accused by the latter of having done so, tell Calandrino that he's probably done it himself. In order for him to prove to them that he hasn't stolen his own pig, they ask him to eat a couple of special bread and cheese balls which will turn sour in his mouth if he's a liar. Of course, the two tricksters have made up a couple especially for Calandrino, made not from bread and cheese, but dog excrement. Predictably, Calandrino chokes on and spits out the disgusting ball. The "magic" works and Calandrino is not only convinced he stole his own pig, but forced to fork over a couple of capons to keep his friends from telling his wife about it. Grazzini was in all likelihood thinking about this story when he pictures Gerozzo choking and spitting out the wax ball.

Gerozzo's attempts at making love to a prostitute (who he thinks is his neighbor's wife) reminds us again of Calandrino, who, in another story falls for a prostitute thinking she's the wife of an acquaintance (Decameron IX,v). Again, in both situations the wives destroy the magic when they surprise our heroes in "flagrante delicto", and publicly upbraid them. With respect to this story, Gerozzo flitting about the stage trying to touch his wife and his maid to restore the magic is reminiscent of Calandrino trying to touch his "beloved" (the prostitute) with a magic formula so she'll fall for him.

These misadventures of Calandrino must have been quite vivid in Grazzini's mind as he was writing these scenes; and they would have been very familiar to the audience as they watched them; all of which of course would add to the richness and hilarity of these, the funniest scenes in the play.

But Grazzini's Gerozzo is a Calandrino filtered through Bibbiena's Calandro as well. Both characters appear on stage with stock lovesick inquiries about their sweethearts, and both are made fun of by servants who pretend not to understand their lover's metaphors.

Gerozzo: Che e' del mio cuore?

Giannino: Ne domanderei voi: che possio saperne?

. . .
Io mi credeva che voi aveste il cuore in corpo. (II,vi)*

*[Gerozzo: How is my heart?
Giannino: How should I know: you tell me . . . I thought your heart was in your body.]

Calandro: . . . che e' di Santilla mia?
 Fessenio: Di tu quel che e' di Santilla?
 Colandro: Si.
 Fessenio: Non lo so bene. Pur io credo che di Santilla sia quella veste, la camicia che l'ha indosso, el grembiule, i guanti e le piannelle ancora. (Calandria, I,iv)**

This type of word-play is, of course, a very old comic device, used since Roman comedy to ridicule such foolish types. Plautus' comedies would have been a rich source for this type of dialogue for both Grazzini and Bibbiena.

The similarity between the two characters continues throughout the play. Calandro is also tricked by servants into thinking he's going to be smuggled into an amorous encounter with his sweetheart in a darkened bedroom (Calandria II,vi); there is a substitution of a prostitute in the dark for the beloved (II,ix); and of course the standard surprise by the outraged wife (Fulvia) and the public upbraiding. (III,xii).

Although Bibbiena's indebtedness to Boccaccio is made more explicit by the play's title and the name of his hero, we've seen that Grazzini was undoubtedly thinking of

**[Calandro: What of my Santilla?
 Fessenio: What of Santilla you say?
 Calandro: Yes.
 Fessenio: Well I'm not sure. But I think her skirt is "of" Santilla, the blouse she's wearing, her apron, her gloves and even her slippers.]

Calandrino throughout his composition of La Pinzochera. But Machiavelli, as seen, is also an important influence.

Both Il Frate and La Mandragola end with the young heroines blissfully looking forward to a long term relationship with their newfound lovers, in whose arms they've each enjoyed the kind of sexual pleasure unknown with their old husbands. But the two old husbands also have much in common. Gerozzo bears a striking resemblance to Messer Nicia, and of course they both owe a lot to Calandrino. They're a couple of gullible fools, easily tricked, while believing themselves worldly and smart; and both of course are examples of stock character types whose ancestors go back at least as far as the Roman stage.

Grazzini's indebtedness to Machiavelli's Messer Nicia is evident as soon as Gerozzo comes on stage for the first time. Like Messer Nicia he claims to be worldly and well traveled. All readers of La Mandragola will remember how Nicia is beautifully and succinctly drawn by Machiavelli when he tells Ligurio that he's been all over the world: to Prato, to Pisa, even to Livorno (all towns in Tuscany and not too far from Nicia's Florence), and that he knows that the sea is six or seven times bigger than the Arno. (I,ii). Indeed, as Ligurio is forced to admit, Nicia "ha pisciato in tanta neve" [has pissed in a lot of snow]. That wonderful colloquial expression, so typically Machiavellian, in its economy and pictorial power, quickly brings Nicia down to his actual level. The old man's real and figurative impo-

tence is amplified by the image of him putting his member to the only use it can possibly have in the world of this comedy. The whole scene is one of the best in the play, with young Ligurio repeatedly making fun of the old fool by egging him further and further on in his outlandish claims.

Gerozzo, like Nicia, has also been places. He tells Giannino that as a teenager and until he was twenty, he lived in Rome. Then, to the expected question, "what did you do there?" he answers, "I was a waiter." (II,iv). It's not as funny as Machiavelli, but it gives us much insight into Gerozzo's character. He wasn't born rich, so his miserliness in later scenes is more understandable.

The fact that both of these old codgers think themselves so worldly makes it easier for the central trick in each play to be played on them. Both characters are extremely impressed by the "learned" imposters (the Parisian doctor, the Syrian wizard) whose magic is central to the development of the beffa perpetrated on them. And Grazzini, like Machiavelli, has a field day making fun of the superstitions and gullibility of these types who believe anything that has a Latin or foreign flavor.

In Sixteenth Century Italy practitioners of magic were no longer taken seriously in literary circles. Many authors either ridiculed magicians for claiming to perform outlandish feats, or poked fun at the stupidity of those who could be taken in by these imposters. That the necromancer or wizard was an established literary character well before

Ariosto wrote Il Negromante is pointed out by, among others, Radcliff-Umstead in The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy.⁴⁵ And the fact that Grazzini does not even bring such a character on stage - but has the servant Carletto masquerade as one, and uttering all sorts of foolish gibberish - brings him within that circle of authors for whom the field of magic was an object of ridicule.

The episode with the magician is one of the ways in which Grazzini tries to put into practice his often stated theoretical position that modern plays should reflect the attitudes and customs of contemporary society. Unless it is seen in that light, the whole scene with Carletto masquerading as the Syrian wizard really has no place in the play, since it contributes nothing to the development of the plot.

One final comment about Grazzini's concern with the attitudes of contemporary society may be made here. That concern is also reflected in a scene of some seriousness between Albiera and her son Riccardo at the very beginning of the play. (I,iii). I refer to the scene in which Madonna Albiera is openly defied by her son whom she has asked to stay home that day to watch over his sister who is home from the convent. If one realizes that, but for this scene, Riccardo has absolutely no role to play in the development of the plot of La Pinzochera, one is forced to admit that most likely Grazzini put this scene in the play to comment upon something else that he observed going on in the

society around him: the more and more open defiance of parental authority by the children of the middle class.

IV

It should be obvious from this admittedly limited discussion of only two of Grazzini's comedies that our playwright did not practice in his comedies what he preached in his prologues. While declaring himself free of the artificial devices, contrived scenes, and stock characters of the ancient stage, he in fact borrowed freely from Roman comedy and especially from the plays of Plautus. Although his settings are contemporary, his plot situations are lifted, as needed, from the ancient models; and his characters, like those of Plautus, never really become complete individuals, but remain types, and vehicles for the standard tricks and devices tied to the central love situation.

Grazzini does, however, make original use of his classical sources, and through the use of characters drawn from the novelle and from the contemporary theater and society he often succeeds, as Rodini would have it, in capturing the spirit of contemporary life.

And it is exactly because his plays embody all of these "literary" tendencies and problems, so typical of all Renaissance comedy, that Grazzini's theater deserves to be read and studied not only by Italianists, but by all "students" of the western comic tradition.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

These translations are based on the text of the plays in Giovanni Grazzini's definitive edition: Il Teatro del Lasca, (Bari: Laterza, 1953). Grazzini's anthology also contains an excellent discussion of the philological and bibliographical history of each comedy, and a very useful (but admittedly limited) glossary of some of the more obscure terms and expressions found in the plays.

Il Frate was first published in 1769 among the collected works of Machiavelli, with the title Commedia in Tre Atti Senza Titolo. Grazzini believes this attribution to be more the product of the editor's (G. P. Pasquali's) imagination than any philological or bibliographical research. It was first called Il Frate in the London edition of 1772, but it continued to be attributed to Machiavelli for more than a century. It is only in 1882 when Verzone added Il Lasca's Tavola delle Opere to his edition of the Rime Burlesche that the farce was attributed to its true author.

Two manuscripts of the play were found by Giovanni Grazzini, as he says by chance, in the Biblioteca di San Marco in Venice. Grazzini believes one of these two manuscripts to have been written between the third and fourth decade of the sixteenth century, and it is this one which he follows with certain corrections.

No manuscript of La Pinzochera has yet been found. The play was first published among the works of Grazzini in

Venice in 1582. That first edition specified that the comedy had never been staged. It was again published in 1750 in Florence, and it is this latter text which Grazzini follows with, as he says, corrections based on the comparison with the 1582 edition.

I have not subscribed to any particular theory in the translation of these plays, but I have attempted to remain faithful to the popular and colloquial tone of the original. In so doing I have always kept in mind the fact that plays are first and foremost meant to be performed. I have attempted therefore to provide a translation suitable for the stage. The language is, I hope, and as Il Lasca would have it, "modern" with commonly used expressions, exclamations, figures of speech, and proverbs. (Not too many "alases," "woe is me," and the like). This in many instances has meant choosing a word or phrase more suited to modern speech rather than a literal translation.

In most cases this has not prevented the translation from being quite faithful to the original. There are some instances however where I hope I may be forgiven for having taken liberties with the original all with the hope of remaining faithful to Grazzini's own theories and beliefs with respect to the kind of language his characters should speak.

Grazzini's works contain innumerable Tuscan proverbs whose meanings remain obscure, and others for which literal translations would completely dilute the original flavor.

For these, a modern equivalent has been provided more suited to the flow of the English dialogue and the context. Some examples of these are: "your worries are over," for ti rammarichi di gamba sana (I,vi); (rather than the literal "you're worrying about a healthy leg"). "I hatched a good plan," for ho fatto un bianco pane (II,ii); (rather than "I baked some white bread"). "Slowly but surely, as the saying goes" for a una a una, disse colui che ferrava l'ocche (v,v); (rather than "one at a time, said the guy who was shoeing the geese").

In other instances, however, since the original proverb is much more colorful and effective than a modern equivalent, it has been translated literally. A good example is: chi nasce gallina convien che razzoli (I,vi); translated literally as: "if you're born a hen you'll learn to scratch;" (rather than something more common like "a leopard can't change its spots").

The interested reader is invited to consult the Glossario in Giovanni Grazzini's edition for further examples of some of the more colorful (yet obscure) colloquial terms, expressions, and proverbs found in Il Lasca's comedies.

I can only hope that these two translations have not totally diluted the wonderful richness of Grazzini's language. Even if they have, however, perhaps they will begin to provide a wider audience for this important Renaissance

writer and stimulate more and better translations of his works.

NOTES

1. Giovanni Grazzini, ed. Il Teatro del Lasca, (Bari: Laterza, 1953), pp. 576-578.
2. Robert J. Rodini, Antonfrancesco Grazzini: Poet, Dramatist, and Novelliere, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp. 4-8.
3. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
4. Vittore Branca, ed., Dizionario Critico della Letteratura Italiana, 3 vol., "Questione della Lingua," v.2, pp.434-435. (Torino: Unione Tipografico Editrice Torinese, 1974).
5. Ibid., p.435.
6. Rodini, Antonfrancesco Grazzini, p.19.
7. Ibid., p.12.
8. Ibid., p.5.
9. Prologue to La Gelosia: "Prologo Agli Uomini," in Il Teatro del Lasca, ed. Giovanni Grazzini, (Bari: Laterza, 1953), pp. 9-11.
10. La Strega, in Il Teatro del Lasca, ed. Giovanni Grazzini, (Bari: Laterza, 1953).
11. Il Frate, (Prologo), Ibid.
12. Giorgio Pullini, "Teatralita' di alcune commedie del '500," Lettere Italiane, VII (1955), p.88.
13. Marvin T. Herrick, Italian Comedy in the Renaissance, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), p. 135.
14. Rodini, Antonfrancesco Grazzini, p. 107.
15. Herrick, Italian Comedy in the Renaissance, p. 138.
16. Rodini, Antonfrancesco Grazzini, pp. 69-70.
17. D. H. Lawrence, trans., The Story of Doctor Manente Being the Tenth and Last Story from the Suppers of A. F. Grazzini called Il Lasca, by Antonfrancesco Grazzini, (Florence, 1929), p.. x-xi.
18. Francesco De Sanctis, Storia della Letteratura Italiana, (Bari: Laterza, 1939), pp. 412-13.

19. Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p.17.
20. Mario Apollonio, Storia del Teatro Italiano, 2 vol., (Firenze: Sansoni, 1951), v.1, pt.1, p.47.
21. R. Warwick Bond, Early Plays from the Italian, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp.xxxi-xxxiv.
22. Bond, Early Plays from the Italian, pp. xxxi-xxxiv. (Bond's "Introductory Essay" contains an excellent discussion of the treatment of magic and necromancy in Renaissance Comedy.)
23. George E. Duckworth analyzes Terence's double plots in his seminal work The Nature of Roman Comedy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).
24. Bond, Early Plays from the Italian, p.lxxi.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.
26. For the definitive treatment of these matters see: George E. Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.)
27. Duckworth points out that at least eight plays of Plautus are plays of deception and trickery: Bacchides, Miles Gloriosus, Mostellaria, Casina, Mercator, Persa, Pseudolus, and Asinaria, (see pp.160-167).
28. Casina (11.900-932), in The Complete Roman Drama, V.1, ed. George E. Duckworth, (New York: Random House, 1942), pp. 314-315. (All quotations from Plautus' comedies, unless otherwise noted, are from Prof. Duckworth's edition).
29. Duckworth's phrase - See p. 173 in his The Nature of Roman Comedy.
30. Giovanni Gentile, "Delle Commedie di Anton Francesco Grazzini detto il Lasca," Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Filosofia e Filologia, XII (1897), pp. 107-109.

31. Boccaccio's story is of course derived from Book X of Apuleius' Metamorphoses, (The Golden Ass).
32. Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy, p. 237.
33. Duckworth is of the opinion that Terence's young lovers usually display more initiative than their Plautine counterparts. (See Ch. 9, pp. 237-242).
34. Apollonio, Storia del Teatro Italiano, p.45 ff.
35. Vito Pandolfi, Il Teatro del Rinascimento e la Commedia dell'Arte, (Roma: Lerici, 1969). p.11 ff.
36. Nino Borsellino, ed., Commedie del Cinquecento, 2 Vol., (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1962), Vol. 1, p.xv.
37. Apollonio, Storia del Teatro Italiano, p.46.
38. Ibid., p.46.
39. Ibid., p.47.
40. Pandolfi, Il Teatro del Rinascimento e la Commedia dell'Arte, p.26.
41. Rodini, Antonfrancesco Grazzini, p.143.
42. Herrick, Italian Comedy in the Renaissance, p.38; Ireneo Sanesi, La Commedia, (Milano: Vallardi, 1911), p.312.
43. Herrick, Italian Comedy in the Renaissance, p.38.
44. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
45. Radcliff-Umstead, The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy, p.91.

THE FRIAR

(IL FRATE)

Characters

Amerigo - the old master
Caterina - his young wife
Margherita - their servant
Alfonso - their compare (best friend)
Friar Alberigo - their friend

Scene

The scene is sixteenth century Florence. Most of the action takes place in front of Amerigo and Caterina's house.

Prologue

Most noble audience, prologues were originally added to comedies not so much for any need of them, as for the convenience of the author and those who, with no little effort and expense, staged them. Nor did they serve any other purpose but to excuse, with a few appropriate reasons, their author or the master of the feast. These were never more necessary or needed than they are now by our author and those who have invited you here, with the purpose of honoring you at the home of the no less graceful, and lovely than kind and generous Maria da Prato: they have considered it worthwhile to put as much care in providing you with excellent food and precious wines as in entertaining you with music and honorably pleasing games, so that the body having been fed the soul should not be left fasting. Therefore, chiefly for their honor, and for your satisfaction and pleasure, they have arranged to offer some further pastime in addition to supper, since in truth everyone knows how to eat and drink in his own house, particularly because this is the evening of the Befania or Epiphany (let not the purists and scholars turn up their snouts) in which it has always been the custom of young people to gather together with their friends for a merry supper. Therefore, as best they could, they have striven to entertain you with this trifle which we are about to perform. Should it not be suited to your tastes and preferences they beg you to excuse them, first

because of the brevity of the time, then for the inconvenience of the place, the difficulties not only of the author but also of the performers, and for a thousand other reasons.

We are now left with the excuses to be made for the author. But since he is the kind of man who neither greatly rejoices in praises nor is too saddened by censure, we will leave out the infinite reasons which might be produced to excuse him.

And if you find that we have not observed the comic style (since a friar is to be put on stage), do not marvel too much because this is not the great sin many make it out to be. Remember that in the Mandragola performed by the Cazzuola¹ there appeared a certain Friar Timoteo de Servi who piously helped to get Messer Nicia's wife pregnant, or in the Prestigiatore at the Antinoro² Friar Boninno who was seen out with his staff; and similarly, in the Aridosia³ not only did a priest charm the spirits but nuns could be heard chirping at the confessional. Not that our author wants these things, mind you, nor looks to these as legitimate excuses.

Therefore, all the comedies seen and performed these days in our Tuscan tongue, from those of Ariosto to the one

1. Machiavelli's great comedy was probably staged for the first time in Florence sometime around 1520 by the Compagnia della Cazzuola.

2. The author of this comedy is unknown. Antinoro refers to the Antinoro Palace in the piazza of the same name.

3. By Lorenzino de Medici, written and staged in 1536.

recently put on at the glorious wedding of the great Cosimo de' Medici, most Illustrious and Invincible Duke of Florence, serve as the bylaws and testimonies of faithless and ungovernable women. In excusing himself, he points out only that farces are not comedies. His being a farce it need not be a comedy; besides those are divided into five acts and these into three; therefore, all the properties of comedy don't belong to it, certainly not for this: that there be seen things impossible and completely outside of any resemblance to reality; but if you find some inaccurately observed detail do not mind too much, or take it too much into account. Perhaps in about six months you may see some of his comedies, if not performed, at least in print, where neither connections nor money are of any worth. There he will clearly show whether or not he understands how to observe the rules, even though he is not one of those types overworked and afflicted by study and worn out by literature.

In truth neither the rules nor philosophy with all seven liberal arts⁴ can teach you how to write comedies. Instead, good judgment, natural instinct, invention, sound knowledge of arrangement, appropriate dialogue, experience of different people, and familiarity with the poets, especially with the first and most honored writers of comedy,⁵

4. The arts of the "trivium" (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), and the quadrivium" (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music).

5. Plautus and Terence.

indicate to others the true and straight road to a praiseworthy and happy end. So that he will either overcome envy or remain a blunderer, since the judgment of the world is very rarely mistaken.

Let us, however, leave all this behind. All that remains to be said is that what you are about to see performed is not a fable but something which actually occurred at the time of the Siege.⁶ I strongly urge you not to trouble yourselves with trying to discover the real names of the characters, nor who the actual people might be, because the author, who has no desire to be called a wicked tongue, wouldn't tell you for all the world, even if they have been the source of his story.

Just as it is, it is our courteous gift to you. But I wish you to understand that if he had had one more week at his disposal, he would have, in order to honor you more highly, composed one anew and in a different guise.

6. The siege of Florence (1529-1530) by the army of Charles V.

Argument

You will observe very old Amerigo, husband of the young and beautiful Donna Caterina, in love with his best friend's wife.* Believing that with the help of his maidservant he is lying with her, he finds himself instead in bed with his own wife, who thereupon shames and upbraids him. While they are thus outside arguing, Friar Alberigo appears and makes peace between them. He, meanwhile, with deceit and the help of the same maid has just lain with Amerigo's wife whom he passionately desired. Now under the guise of sanctimony and charity he makes himself their intimate friend and house guest.

* The original here is comare, which usually means a woman who is the godmother to one's child. In popular language the word also refers to a close friend or near neighbor. It has other connotations as well, not the least of which, in certain Italian dialects is lover, mistress, or kept woman.

This translation will henceforth adopt the original comare so as not to lose any of these rich references.

ACT I

Scene I

(Margherita, alone)

There's never been a girl more unfortunate than me. One presses and goads me, the other squeezes and hurries me. This one makes a lot of promises, that one wants to give me presents. And what do I do? Since I can't say no, I keep them both hoping. My master is in love with his comare, and thinks he's using me as his go between. To befriend him as much as I can, I let him think how much she loves him and how she would do anything for him if she had the chance. Simpleton that he is, he believes me, while really I've never even spoken to her about it for fear of my mistress, his wife. Then there's the other problem with Friar Alberigo. He's in love with my mistress and thinks I'm promoting his cause, when in truth I've never said a word to her about him. So while I feed them with my stories and lies they both go hungry. But wait! Here comes the old man. He just went through a long rigamarole about this love of his in the house, now he's coming outside to start all over again.

Scene II

(*Amerigo, Margherita*)

Amerigo: (*enters looking about fretfully*) Where
has she gone off to now? Well, well!
Is that her I see? Hey there, can't you
hear, Margherita?

Margherita: Sir, what do you want?

Amerigo: Tell me, where are you going in such a
hurry?

Margherita: To the market to buy some cabbage and
onions for dinner.

Amerigo: Forget about dinner and the onions for a
while. I want you to do what I just
finished telling you. Look, I've con-
fided in you, and you tell me that she's
crazy about me; so why don't you help us
both; because I'm really miserable.

Margherita: Any pain?

Amerigo: No, no.

Margherita: You've got a fever?

Amerigo: Blockhead! You know very well what I mean.

Margherita: What?

Amerigo: I mean the one who has put me to death.

Margherita: Well, if you're dead, what more can help you?

Amerigo: I don't mean dead like those who no longer breathe, but like those who are truly in love and have lost their free will - who are no longer their own masters.

Margherita: Master, I don't understand you.

Amerigo: *(to the audience)* And I too must be a fool, letting myself fall into philosophical reflections with a servant without realizing it. *(to Margherita)* I'm telling you that I need your help.

Grant me once what you've promised a thousand times.

Margherita: Master, I'll put my wits to it. The beets and leeks can wait, I'll go right to her house on your account.

Amerigo: Yes, yes I beg you. Don't forget to tell her what I just told you at home: about my virtues and gentle ways; and also how for her I'm abandoning my wife - young and beautiful as she is. Offer her money, chains, clothes; and as to yourself, let me know if there's anything you desire. But above all, if you value my gratitude and your life, make sure my wife hears nothing about this.

Margherita: As far as that's concerned, let me worry about it.

Amerigo: All right, I'm going to the market-place to settle certain affairs. I'll return as soon as I can. In the meantime, go to her, tell her all that I've told you, and when you come back give me her answer.

Margherita: Just as you say. But first let me put my basket in the house, put on my other shoes and get my big shawl, so I won't get soaked in case of rain.

Amerigo: Go at once. And be quick about it.
(*leaving*) Meanwhile I'll walk towards the piazza (*starts to leave*).

Margherita: (*calling after him*) Take care. (*to herself*) God help me, what shall I do now? Ah! living with that man must be my penance.

Scene III

(*Caterina, Margherita*)

Caterina: (*from the threshold*) Margherita; can't you hear, Margherita?

Margherita: (*apart, to the audience*) Oh! Oh! I hear my mistress calling me.

Caterina: (*shouting*) Margherita, are you deaf?

Margherita: (*finally turns to answer*) Madam, what is your wish?

Caterina: Come here for a moment.

Margherita: Is there something you want?

Caterina: What's this I just heard. What were you discussing with my husband? What's this love he's wasting away for? Isn't that decrepit old man ashamed of being in love with his comare? And you, you little hussy. You promised to help him, and according to your own words, have already made every effort to do so. Is this how you repay all the good I've done you?

Margherita: Oh! I'm so ashamed! My dear mistress, please forgive me . . .

Caterina: You're all alike, you good-for-nothings.

Margherita: Madam, you should know that he's been prodding me with this for two months or more, and I've never spoken to her about it for love of you.

Caterina: Ah! Wretch. And didn't I understand what you were just saying to him in front of the house when you thought I couldn't hear?

Margherita: I only said those things to stay in his favor. But I assure you that none of that was true.

Caterina: What do you mean, not true?

Margherita: None of it.

Caterina: So then, you fed him these lies as if he were an imbecile? But what am I saying. He's worse than an old feather head. What a bad end I came to when my miserly uncles gave me to this old fool who has the nerve to fall in love with his comare. (to Margherita) But tell me: what have you promised him?

Margherita: To go and speak to her, and commend him to her.

Caterina: And if I hadn't interrupted you? What were you going to do?

Margherita: Nothing, I would have pretended to go there, and then given him something to believe.

Caterina: Poor man! No wonder he doesn't wake me up like he used to - almost every night - and doesn't come around with his little caresses any more. By the Cross of Jesus they should bury us women alive as soon as we're born. Well then, shall a young woman like me remain fasting while my husband looks to eat elsewhere? That will never be the case. Since that's how things stand, from now on I want to provide for myself too.

Margherita: Ah! Ah! There's my mistress. Now that you're fresh, young and beautiful act in such a way that you have nothing to grieve for later, and so that the flesh won't reproach the spirit.

Caterina: What do you suggest I do? I'm not the type to offer myself in the streets.

Margherita: Ah! If only, my dear mistress, you knew what I know.

Caterina: What is it? Tell me at once.

Margherita: Lord help me. Poor me. I'm afraid you'll take it badly. That's why I kept it a secret these past months.

Caterina: Come on, let's have it. At once. I'm dying to know right now. It's killing me. . .

Margherita: Well there's a young man; the handsomest one on the face of the earth who is madly in love with you.

Caterina: Great news! Are you sure?

Margherita: I'm positive I tell you.

Caterina: How long has this been going on?

Margherita: A long time.

Caterina: Why haven't you told me?

Margherita: I hesitated for fear of you. You're holier than Saint Elizabeth, our Savior's relative.

Caterina: Don't you know that nothing pleases women more than being told that someone is in love with them? Especially those like me. Even if at times, on the surface, we seem irritated and disdainful, nevertheless, in our hearts we hold such news very dear. But come, let's go inside right away - you never know who's listening - because I want to hear every detail at my leisure: who he is, what he told you and what answers you've given him.

Margherita: Yes, let's go then, dear mistress, and you shall be pleased and delighted. What's more, if you follow my advice things will go very well for you.

Caterina: Come along, for I'm ready to burst with joy. (*they go into the house*).

you're safe because they care about
keeping it secret more than you.

Caterina: Well, you're right about that. But my
stomach turns just thinking of their
gamy smell.

Margherita: Eh! Eh! Poor you. Friars eh? You
won't find more able men at rendering
services to women. And were you plan-
ning on enjoying him with your nose?
Alas, I sigh every time I remember a
certain friar friend of mine and his
vigorous parts. What a difference from
my husband.

Caterina: Where is he now?

Margherita: He died of the plague. But let's forget
that: try him once and then tell me
what you think.

Caterina: Now you've made me so eager that I ache,
I burn. Go, find him, and tell him that
if he makes my husband stop chasing his
comare he can do with me as he pleases.

Margherita: Now I recognize my mistress. As wise and prudent as I always thought she was.

Caterina: Understand: let it not seem totally my idea. But that I wish to compensate him for my receiving this favor.

Margherita: You think of everything. I don't believe that there is a wiser and more careful woman on earth.

Caterina: Go. Hurry; find him quickly and make sure you know what to say.

Margherita: Leave it to me dear mistress, and God bless you.

Caterina: Go ahead. I'm going inside to wait for you. Come back quickly and tell me how it went. (*goes in*)

Margherita: So be it (*to the audience*) Oh! Oh! Look at where I've led her without planning on it. I know that this big hunk of a monk is good for a nice sum. Just leave him to me. I know how to deal with him. (*spots someone approaching*)

But wait, he's coming this way - all alone, as luck would have it. (to the friar) Friar Alberigo, you look like you're about to burst. Where are you going in such a rage?

Scene II

(Friar Alberigo, Margherita)

Friar Alberigo: I come from the bed of a sick man. But tell me, how is your mistress; nay the mistress of my life.

Margherita: Oh dear. If you only knew. She's quite desperate.

Friar Alberigo: What's troubling her?

Margherita: Oh, a thousand problems.

Friar Alberigo: What problems. Tell me at once. Don't let me suffer.

Margherita: It's her husband. He's in love with his comare.

Friar Alberigo: What do you mean? What comare?

Margherita: Don't you know? Alfonso's wife.

Friar Alberigo: So that's it, eh? Imagine that. That crazy beast leaves the finest white bread to chase after millet. But she isn't worth her salt if she doesn't give him tit for tat. Go. Tell her that if she thinks there's anything I can do, I'm at her service.

Margherita: Dear me! She's put herself in your hands.

Friar Alberigo: May the Lord grant it. Can it be true?

Margherita: As true as I am her servant.

Friar Alberigo: What does she want me to do?

Margherita: Help her in some way.

Friar Alberigo: To do what?

Margherita: To think of some way to get rid of this nuisance, and to make her husband forget that woman.

Friar Alberigo: Say no more. But if I succeed what reward may I expect?

Margherita: She has instructed me to offer you, when the thing is done, all that you may ask and which is in her power to give.

Friar Alberigo: Leave it to me. Go to her; reassure her, and tell her that before the sun goes down, I shall do such deeds for her that she'll have reason to sing my praises forever.

Margherita: Just as you say.

Friar Alberigo: And may God go with you.

Margherita: Father, will you give me your blessings?
(*kneels*)

Friar Alberigo: (*makes the sign of the cross over her*)
Go in the name of the Lord. (*Margherita gets up and leaves*) If this one said what I think she said, before the day is out I'll be a lot closer to my goal. You see this Alfonso, the husband of

Amerigo's beloved, is a very close friend of mine. (*suddenly spotting someone off stage . . . aside*) By the devil, here he comes now. Alas! I haven't had a moments' grace to think about this affair. Yet I feel a certain little something forming in my fancy that I hope to put to good use. Let me go and greet him. (*to Alfonso*) May the Lord give you peace, dear Alfonso.

Scene III

(*Alfonso, Friar Alberigo*)

Alfonso: Oh. Friar Alberigo, How are you?

Friar Alberigo: Very well, at your service.

Alfonso: Where are you going all alone?

Friar Alberigo: I was looking for someone who was supposed to do me a favor. But I haven't found him.

Alfonso: If it's anything in my power, use me as you would a brother.

Friar Alberigo: You may be just the person. Tell me, is
 your wife at home by any chance?

Alfonso: No father. Just the other day she went
 to stay with her mother for a few days.

Friar Alberigo: And you?

Alfonso: I'm staying there with her.

Friar Alberigo: And your house?

Alfonso: It's empty.

Friar Alberigo: Oh good. It suits my needs perfectly.

Alfonso: It's at your disposal, as I am, if you
 should have need.

Friar Alberigo: What has happened is that one of my sis-
 ters has come from Figline with her
 mother-in-law, as she does almost every
 year, to spend some time with a relative
 of ours, a weaver. Unfortunately he
 moved, and is sharing a house with some-
 one to save money. So he's unable to
 accommodate them as he used to. Now

they've come to me, but you know the convent is not the proper place for women. And besides it's prohibited. Would it be possible for me to put them up at your house for a couple of days at most?

Alfonso: Gladly. I'm only sorry my family is not home. But if you wish I'll send our servant.

Friar Alberigo: That won't be necessary.

Alfonso: But what will you do? There's no bread in the house.

Friar Alberigo: We'll bring it ourselves.

Alfonso: As for oil, salt, wine, wood and the like, we have them in abundance.

Friar Alberigo: You're very kind, but the shelter is sufficient, since I'll send them everything they need from the convent.

Alfonso: I don't like to waste time with words. Here is the key.

Friar Alberigo: You shall be repaid as soon as I'm able.
I only need it for one or two days.

Alfonso: As you wish. You may use it for a week.
I have no reason to go home at all.
Make use of whatever is there. The beds
are made. You know what to do; make
yourselves at home.

Friar Alberigo: Say no more. Go about your business.

Alfonso: Good-bye. (*exits*)

Friar Alberigo: (*calling after him*) May God be with
you. (*to the audience*) Fortune is
beginning to smile on me, and I feel
sure that my design is about to succeed.
You see how this one's friendship may be
worth something? (*notices Margherita
offstage*) But wait! Here is the maid
coming back.

Scene IV

(*Margherita, Friar Alberigo*)

Margherita: Father, have you thought of a way to
help my mistress.

Friar Alberigo: Yes, provided she's willing to do as I say.

Margherita: Don't worry. She's ready to do whatever you wish.

Friar Alberigo: Go, call her out here to the doorstep, and I'll explain what she has to do.

Margherita: Right away. (*goes into the house*)

Friar Alberigo: Fortune, favor me now, for if I can bring off what I'm thinking, I'll be the luckiest and happiest man under the stars.

Scene V

(*Margherita, Friar Alberigo, Caterina*)

Margherita: (*calling "sotto voce" from the threshold*) Father? Hey there, Father.

Friar Alberigo: (*aroused from his reverie*) Who's calling me.

Margherita: It's me Father. Come closer here.
 She's come out.

Friar Alberigo: Oh, Madonna Caterina, I've heard about,
 and am pained greatly by your
 misfortune.

Caterina: Phoo! This world is full of tricks.

Friar Alberigo: Yes. But in these things one needs to
 have patience and look to the Lord; and
 then, above all, to have the courage to
 always flee from evil and follow the
 good. Fleeing evil means making your
 husband forget this comare of his. Fol-
 lowing the good means making sure that
 you are the one who from this derives
 every appropriate benefit; which will be
 easy if you trust in me, and act ac-
 cording to my judgment.

Caterina: Alas, Father! If only it were possible.
 You can be sure that I wish it more than
 you.

Friar Alberigo: Don't lose hope.

Caterina: ("sotto voce") Listen to me, Father.
We must go into the house so as not to
give anyone reason to gossip.

Margherita: My mistress is right.

Friar Alberigo: By all means, let's go in.

Margherita: This way Father, and let God do his
will. (*she ushers them into the house*)

Scene VI

(*Amerigo, alone*)

Oh! How lucky I'd be if I could meet
with my mistress today. I think there's
truth in the proverb that bad company
will lead you to the gallows. This
morning I did something I haven't done
for more than two years, and only
because my friends convinced me. The
only reason I'm back for dinner is that
I'm not the type to stay away all day.
Because ours was a very big breakfast,
and the Malmsey fills you up too; and I
must admit that for once I stuffed
myself. But I came back mainly because

I'm dying to know what my maid has accomplished. Now I shall find out. Let me knock: I've been gone so long that she must have returned by now (*knocks . . . no answer*) Now what! (*knocks again. . . still no answer*) Good Lord, are they dead?

Scene VII

(*Margherita, Amerigo*)

Margherita: (*finally opens the door*) Welcome back, master.

Amerigo: When did you come home?

Margherita: Just this minute.

Amerigo: Well, what was her answer?

Margherita: A good one.

Amerigo: Oh God, let it be so.

Margherita: An excellent one in fact. I sang your praises so well that she's willing to do everything you want.

Amerigo: Oh. I'm blessed. Tell me, tell me everything. Don't leave out a thing.

Margherita: Listen. Donna Caterina is upstairs getting ready to go out. Donna Viaggia sent for her and she wants me to take her there. She told me to tell you that she's staying for dinner, so don't wait for her.

Amerigo: Well? What are you trying to tell me?

Margherita: I wouldn't want you to call me back and ruin everything.

Amerigo: What are you planning?

Margherita: Go to Santa Croce and wait for me. I'll meet you there as soon as I've accompanied her.

Amerigo: That's a good idea. I'll get started right away and wait for you. Mind you, don't take too long.

Margherita: Don't worry. I'll be there in a flash.

Amerigo: Don't forget.

Margherita: Leave it to me. (*Amerigo leaves. . . as soon as he's out of sight Margherita puts her head in the door and calls inside*) Mistress, come out: he's disappeared. (*to the audience*) Thank Tobias's Archangel that he finally left.

Scene VIII

(*Caterina, Margherita, Friar Alberigo*)

Caterina: (*calling from within*) Margherita, come in the house.

Friar Alberigo: (*comes out of the house*) Go in, quickly.

Margherita: Coming! (*runs in*)

Caterina: (*comes out to the doorstep*) Oh Father,
don't forget about our affair.

Friar Alberigo: Don't worry. (*she closes the door . . .*
the Friar turns to the audience) It's
God's holy truth that women are witless,
gullible, changeable and even much more
than is said about them. Watch how I
cook this little simpleton's goose. Let
me go now quickly so that I get there
before them. (*starts to leave. . .*
stops, listens) Quickly, now, for I
think I hear them. (*starts again*)
Quickly, so they don't see me. (*hurries*
off)

Scene IX

(*Caterina, Margherita*)

Caterina: (*following Margherita out of the house*)
Let's get started. I can't wait to get
to this feast.

Margherita: Mistress, afterwards don't forget the
friar.

Caterina: I remember better than you. And I'm disappointed that he didn't mention it.

Margherita: For goodness' sake, he wants to help you first and then ask you.

Caterina: Well all in good time. Don't forget our little plan. (*they begin walking across the stage*)

Margherita: Don't worry about me, you just do your part.

Caterina: Say no more, lets turn here, its shorter.

Margherita: Yes, my mistress. (*exeunt*)

ACT III

Scene I

(*Margherita alone*)

(*to the audience*) So that's they way the game is played, eh? Who would ever have thought it, Friars. Ha! They're more corrupt than the devil himself.

Listen to this bit of dirty work; how he's managed to lead her to his pleasures. He told us, in the house, how he had found an excellent way to free my mistress and at the same time make the master forget his comare. It was this: we were supposed to go to Alfonso's house; he gave us the key and told us he had obtained it for other reasons. Once there, Madonna Caterina was to get into the bed where the comare usually slept. We left it that I was to tell Amerigo that the right moment had come, and that she wanted to make him happy, because her husband Alfonso had left town and wouldn't be back before nightfall. We were almost certain about the old man, because since he trusted me completely we were sure he wouldn't think twice about going there. The window to the room would be left barely open and there in almost total darkness, ready to receive him, would be his wife lying in the comare's bed. After the first round under the covers she was to show herself and chase him out into the street all the time hurling insults and cursing him

like a dog. The friar said to leave the rest to him. My mistress and I set off, reached the house, opened the door, and went in. We went upstairs, passed first into the hall then entered the bedroom without having spotted a soul. My mistress quickly undresses, and without another thought gets into bed, ordering me to leave the window barely open so that he should have just enough light to see the bed. Then she told me to leave the door ajar and go out and find her husband and send him there right away to finish the deed. I obeyed and left. But half way down the stairs, on the landing, who did I run into but our holy father, all bursting with joy. Seeing him like that all of a sudden in front of my eyes, without expecting him, I was about to scream; but he shoves a handful of money at me and quickly shuts my mouth, while he tells me that his so-longed for moment had finally come. Then he orders me to disappear and stay away at least an hour looking for my master, so as to give him enough time to gallop a few times around the course. I

pretended to leave, but I wasn't about to go without seeing what would happen, and what my mistress would say. When I thought the friar was in the bedroom, I quickly went back to the hall and drew near the door, and through a crack where the door didn't close tightly I spotted our "hunk of a monk" who had already removed his cloak and was heading straight for the bed. My good mistress never said a word, in fact she seemed like a scratched pig; except that after a while you could hear her mewling like one of those cats in heat in the middle of the night. That's when I left; since to be honest I was all on fire. After about a half hour I went out to find Amerigo who was waiting for me in Santa Croce. I told him what he had to do, and he took off like he was on cloud nine. You can be sure he's in the clinches right now. Oh dear! If he should find the friar mounted, and on his mare, how will it all end? (*long fretful pause . . . then with sudden bravado . . .*) Ha! I'm a fool to worry about that because these friars are the

masters of tricks like these. (to the audience) But let me go in now and get a bite to eat. I feel faint from hunger. (exit)

Scene II

(Friar Alberigo, alone)

(the friar bursts on stage all flushed and somewhat disheveled, trying to tidy himself up a bit. He stops, puts the finishing touches on his appearance and addresses the audience in a conspiratorial tone) I barely had enough time to put on my habit. If he had come in a minute earlier he would have caught me in the act. But thanks be to God. I came out of it in fine shape. I escaped through the door to the anteroom, came out on a balcony, then down some stairs to a courtyard, out through the ground floor, to the door and out. That blockhead of a maid didn't give us enough time, the wretch! (interrupted by someone coming on stage) But wait, look who's coming. What does he want? (to

the newcomer) Where are you going,
Alfonso?

Scene III

(Friar Alberigo, Alfonso)

Alfonso: Oh Father, I was coming to look for you
to show you where the key to the cellar
is, so you can get the wine. I forgot
all about it before.

Friar Alberigo: You did well, and I thank you; although
we haven't had the need.

Alfonso: What do you mean? Haven't they arrived
yet?

Friar Alberigo: Oh Lord yes. But they brought along a
small flask to have with supper, and it
was enough.

Alfonso: Well, if you should need some, the key
is on top of the sink in the hall behind
the quarter of the coat of arms with the
emblem of the balls.⁷

7. A Coat of Arms typically divided into four quarters,
the "balls" being the Medici family insignia.

Friar Alberigo: May the Lord be merciful to you. When
will I ever be able to repay you for so
many favors.

Alfonso: Father, this is a trifle compared to
what I would do for you. Let's not
speak of it any more. I must leave you
now for I haven't had dinner yet and I'm
keeping many people waiting.

Friar Alberigo: Go, go. It's very rude to keep people
waiting past dinner time.

Alfonso: You're right. Good-bye. (*starts to
leave*)

Friar Alberigo: God be with you. (*to the audience*) Can
you imagine what would have happened if
he had shown up earlier, or hadn't met
me now? A curse on keys and basements.
But, thank God up to now the affair
prosper.

Scene IV

(*Margherita, Friar Alberigo*)

Margherita: (*entering from the opposite side of the stage*) Look. I see the friar.

Friar Alberigo: (*hasn't noticed her . . . still addressing the audience*) And so I'm confident this business will be concluded very happily.

Margherita: Let me call him. Oh Father!

Friar Alberigo: Who's calling me. (*turns*) Oh Margherita!

Margherita: Come off it Father. I'm on to you.

Friar Alberigo: Well look who's the polite one. By God, a fair wench: one can confide in her! But I've put too much trust in you already.

Margherita: And what have I done? Didn't I do my part?

Friar Alberigo: Yes, but you sent him too soon. I had problems getting out. But then things went well.

Margherita: Nonsense. I even waited a while before going to get him at Santa Croce. And then I was halfway through my rosary before he saw me and called me. I told him everything, and then showed him the key. When he recognized it, well he trusted me more than truth itself.

Friar Alberigo: Oh! Now that you mentioned the key, you don't know what happened to me.

Margherita: What?

Friar Alberigo: The stupidest thing in the world. Remember I left you the key to the comare's house? Well my plan was to get in there before you arrived, but I never realized that I wouldn't be able to do it until I got to the door and found it locked.

Margherita: How did you get in?

Friar Alberigo: As luck would have it, in this bunch of keys I found one that worked.

Margherita: Yes, you certainly had luck. By the way the old man must have his hands full by now. We should hear the screams any minute. But tell me the details. How did it go? What do you think of my mistress?

Friar Alberigo: She's the best and wisest woman in Florence.

Margherita: I should think so; she must have satisfied you.

Friar Alberigo: I put certain ideas in her head, which if she follows, as I believe she will, she'll be well taken care of.

Margherita: Not to mention you.

Friar Alberigo: You can bet on it, because I wouldn't take care of her without thinking of me.

Margherita: Father, I haven't the words to tell you how happy I am about all of this.

Friar Alberigo: Well, it's all thanks to you.

Scene V

(Caterina, Amerigo, Margherita, Friar Alberigo)

Caterina: *(Caterina comes on stage and turns to her husband who is still out of view)*
So that's the way it is, eh, you old fool, chasing after other women?

Margherita: *(apart, to Friar Alberigo, "sotto voce")*
Listen: What's that I hear?

Friar Alberigo: *(likewise to Margherita)* Leave quickly, I don't want them to see us. *(they start for the opposite end of the stage)*

Caterina: *(the object of her fury is still in the wings)* And your comare no less! You should be ashamed of yourself.

Friar Alberigo: *(apart to Margherita, whispering)* You go inside. I'll turn back here and catch up to them. *(Margherita goes in, and the friar goes around the back so*

that he can catch up to the angry couple)

Caterina: *(practically pulls Amerigo on stage and begins to upbraid him in public)* Damn you. Get over here. You see, I finally caught you in the act.

Amerigo: Curse you, you witch.

Caterina: What? And did you think I was asleep?

Amerigo: You should fall asleep for good.

Caterina: *(turns to the audience)* And you should see how lusty he was. *(to Amerigo)* So that's why you couldn't stand me any more.

Amerigo: You always were, and you'll always be, annoying, spiteful, jealous, disagreeable, and an enemy of my good.

Caterina: Oh! I almost said a bad word. But by the Cross of Jesus, I should give you what you deserve.

Amerigo: (to the audience) Look at that! And she's angry too!

Caterina: Sure I'm angry. Don't you think I have good reason?

Amerigo: Why don't you let me tell you my side of the story. I thought this was going to be the happiest day of my life; and now it's the most miserable.

Caterina: He even has the nerve to admit it.

Amerigo: Sure I admit it.

Caterina: Oh! Brave man! You should see with what joy and determination our knight came to the joust. It's too bad he showed his worth only on the field of words. As for the other thing, the one that matters most, he needed some stroking - as usual. But he should be praised for wanting it twice.

Amerigo: Listen to that. The things she has the nerve to say to me - and what she's done.

Caterina: This is only a sweetner. Just wait till her husband finds out; and my uncles. Then we'll play another game.

Amerigo: Alas, wife: do you want to disgrace and ruin me for this?

Caterina: (*mocks him*) Alas, dear husband: do you want me to live in despair and deprivation? When you know there isn't a more faithful and ill-treated woman on earth.

Amerigo: How did you manage to entangle me in this net. Tell me if you please.

Caterina: (*to herself*) By God, that wretch Margherita will suffer the pains of hell for this.

Amerigo: I demand to know how you set this trap. Are you a witch or a sorceress?

Caterina: I just finished telling you what I am.

Scene VI

(*Friar Alberigo, Caterina, Amerigo*)

Friar Alberigo: (*apart, to the audience*) I'd better get
these two back together.

Amerigo: (*they haven't noticed him*) You couldn't
have found me out without witchcraft.

Caterina: Oh! You should die in torment! Is that
what you think of me?

Friar Alberigo: (*comes upon them*) What's this? Why all
this noise? Have you two gone crazy?

Amerigo: Oh Father, you see what a beast this
woman is?

Caterina: (*ignoring Friar Alberigo*) And you're
lucky I didn't tell you what you are.

Friar Alberigo: (*to the husband*) Come now Amerigo, we
need to show more understanding in these
matters; and those of us with more sense
should put it to better use.

Amerigo: My dear Friar Alberigo, she's so bothersome and spiteful that she would try the patience of an angel.

Caterina: Ha! (*to the friar*) If it weren't for the reverence I have for you Father, I would tell you all about the great honor he's done me.

Amerigo: (*to his wife*) You've done it to me, this great honor.

Friar Alberigo: (*to both of them*) What are you talking about?

Caterina: (*to the friar*) I'm tempted to tell you, and give him what he deserves.

Amerigo: (*to his wife*) And after you've told him, you witch, then what?

Caterina: (*to her husband*) That's enough. (*to the friar*) I'll let his relatives and mine know about it.

Friar Alberigo: (*to Caterina*) Now, now, let's not let ourselves be ruled by anger.

Caterina: (to the friar) I just can't hold this
in. Just think, he's in love with his
comare.

Friar Alberigo: How? You mean Alfonso's wife?

Caterina: Just listen to this Father.

Amerigo: Go ahead: what harm can you do me.

Caterina: This brave man had brought the affair so
far along that he thought today was his
lucky day. But with skill and means too
lengthy to talk about now, I found him
out, and led him to the place where
thinking he was in the arms of his
comare, he found himself in mine
instead. We're just now leaving the
lover's hideout.

Amerigo: Well, is that such a mortal sin? (to
the friar) Have you heard Father? Am I
the first man who's done this?

Friar Alberigo: (to *Caterina*) Oh dear! What are you saying? If this should be known you would be disgraced forever.

Caterina: I want my uncles to know.

Friar Alberigo: Don't say things you may regret later.

Amerigo: That's something she doesn't understand.

Friar Alberigo: And you Amerigo; from now on you should forget about these young man's pranks, little suited to your age. You too Donna Caterina, for the good of your home. Now don't go around talking of this affair again, unless you want to acquire a bad reputation. I want you two instead to remain together in greater harmony than ever before.

Caterina: As you wish, but on this condition: that I never hear another word about the comare.

Friar Alberigo: All in good time. (to *the husband*) Amerigo, listen to me. To sin is human; to amend one's ways is divine; but to

persevere is truly the work of the devil. And since this way of life would keep you always in mortal sin, I want you to promise, that for the love of God, for my sake, as well as your own honor and well being, you will abandon it, and attend to your own wife, who is truly good and honest, and who loves and honors you above all else.

Caterina: God only knows the love I bear for him, the ungrateful wretch, and how faithful I am to him.

Friar Alberigo: Don't cry, Donna Caterina. (*turns to him*) In truth Amerigo you can surely boast that yours is the wisest and most chaste young woman not only in Florence but in the whole world.

Amerigo: I thank God for it. But as you know, Father, we are all weak. I must confess that I've strayed and will be happy to do whatever penance you impose. I promise to forget the other one and from now on attend to my own house. But

please, first tell me how she found me out.

Friar Alberigo: That is not within our office, and contrary to our purpose. But I want both of you to grant me one favor.

Caterina: Whatever you wish.

Amerigo: Anything in my power.

Friar Alberigo: I would only ask you to resolve never to speak of this affair, forget that it ever happened, and go about your business in your usual way. Agreed?

Caterina: With pleasure.

Amerigo: Gladly. But on one condition: that she say nothing about it to Margherita.

Friar Alberigo: You're right. (to Caterina) Will you promise me that?

Caterina: Yes Father; anything to rid myself of this anguish.

Friar Alberigo: Now apologize to each other and make peace between you.

Amerigo: May you be a thousand times blessed. If it weren't for your holiness I would be in bad trouble.

Caterina: That goes for me too. May God bless you.

Amerigo: And from now on Father, since you've shown so much wisdom and goodness, I want you to feel as at home with us as you do at Alfonso's.

Caterina: In every way!

Amerigo: And I ask you to be my confessor.

Caterina: I too want to confess to him.

Amerigo: Why so quiet Father? Don't our words please you?

Friar Alberigo: Very much. And I am ever ready, first for love of our Lord, then because it is

my duty, to do all that is needed to
restore your souls to good health.

Caterina: God will reward you on our account.
Won't you come home with us even though
the dinner hour is over?

Amerigo: And would you invite him only to drink?

Caterina: It's so late that I thought that friars
at least would have had their dinner
already. (to the Friar) But if you
haven't Father, won't you do us the
honor of dining with us?

Friar Alberigo: Well, actually I've been so busy all
morning with some special chores outside
the convent that I haven't eaten yet.

Amerigo: Then please come.

Caterina: There isn't a house in all Florence
where you are more welcome.

Friar Alberigo: Since you ask so graciously I can do
nothing but accept. Let's go.

Amerigo: Come along Father.

Caterina: May the Lord be praised.

Friar Alberigo: And his Mother too. (*he lets Caterina and Amerigo go in and stops to address the audience*) Dear audience don't bother to wait for us, for you would surely be inconvenienced. You see I have a little after dinner sermon planned for these two. I'll show them with sound arguments, some examples, a little theology, and a few miracles, that nothing is more necessary for the health of the soul than charity. For as the Apostle Paul teaches us: he who has not charity, has nothing. Therefore, take my advice and be on your way, with the peace of our Lord. Farewell.

THE BAWD

(LA PINZOCHERA)

Characters

Gerozzo - an old man
Donna Albiera - his wife
Riccardo - their son
Giannino - their servant
Veronica - their maid
Damiano - an elderly man
Federigo - a young man, son of Damiano, in love with
Fiammetta, the
 daughter of Gerozzo
Carletto - their servant
Ambrogio - a friend of all these people
Bita }
Sandra } - "women of the world"
Donna Antonia - an old widow and bawd

(The scene is Florence)

The following houses serve as entrances and exits for
the actors:

The home of Gerozzo, an old man.

The home of the elderly Damiano and young Federigo.

The home of Alberto Catelani.

(The story begins at dawn and ends in the evening).

Prologue

Hey there, no more noise out there, quiet down if you please. We are here, esteemed spectators, to help you spend a couple of hours or so in merriment, by putting on a comedy which we think is very clever, pleasing, shrewd, and witty. We believe it will satisfy you, if not entirely, at least in part, for as we all know it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to please everyone, since tastes are as varied as faces, and each of us has his own opinion. We'll do our best to please you by staging it, just as we think the author has done his best to please you by writing it. We beg you however that you neither criticize nor praise it before it's finished; but when it's over you may do as you wish.

As for the argument, don't look for it now, but wait for the sixth scene of the first act, and pay attention to the young Federigo conversing with his friend Ambrogio, and you'll learn the contents of the whole story which is called The Bawd.

The scene you're looking at is Florence, where it is feigned this incident occurred; the name of the author is by now well known to everyone. Now I have nothing further except to ask you to keep your usual quiet. I leave you in peace since I see people coming this way. Give them your attention.

ACT I

SCENE I

(*Giannino, a servant; Veronica, a maid*)

- Giannino: So, I can be sure that she's going to the convent today and won't be back before the Ave Maria?
- Veronica: I'm telling you that's what she told me last night, and she also said she wanted me to bring her dinner there.
- Giannino: Quickly, go back upstairs, for I hear her getting up in the bedroom; and I think I heard her calling you.
- Veronica: Yes, yes; I'm going.
- Giannino: If she should ask about me tell her I've gone to the country house to make sure the work is getting done.
- Veronica: Leave that to me.
- Giannino: Don't forget what I told you, understand?
- Veronica: Don't worry. (*Goes indoors*)
- Giannino: (*to the audience*) Things never looked better; every minute seems like a thousand years until this day ends and this affair is happily concluded; since after it I plan on having the best time on earth. Twenty-five ducats for the likes of me are nothing to sneeze at; and that's without the sum I'll

extract from the old man, if my wits don't fail me. But now it's time to get things in order; let me go find Federigo and give him the good news. But wait! I hear the door opening. Oh good, it's Carletto; (to Carletto) Hey, Carletto, where are you going so early? What's your master up to?

SCENE II

(Carletto, Giannino, servants)

Carletto: My dear Giannino, I couldn't have had a luckier meeting so early this morning.

Giannino: Why? I'm not rich, or handsome, nor gullible, or a fool as far as I know.

Carletto: Let's just say you suit my wishes. Now, since my master often says that his health is in your hands, and I always desire his well being, I'm glad I met the one who can help and save him; and I commend him to you as greatly as I can.

Giannino: Oh with pleasure! What's he doing now?

Carletto: Probably sleeping.

Giannino: Where are you going?

Carletto: To the market to buy some meat; do you need anything?

Giannino: Is it too early to call him?

Carletto: By the devil, yes! It's at least an hour early.

Giannino: What do I do while I'm waiting?

Carletto: Come with me to the market, then we'll go have a drink.

Giannino: Where?

Carletto: To that blessed tavern there; come on, I'll buy you a jug and we'll warm ourselves by the fire a bit.

Giannino: With pleasure, and in the meantime he should be getting up.

SCENE III

(*Donna Albiera, Riccardo, her son*)

Albiera: Oh lord! That girl is so foolheaded. (*the door opens*) Oh oh! Riccardo.

Riccardo: May the lord grant you good-day.

Albiera: And where are we going so early?

Riccardo: As if you didn't know my habits by now!

Albiera: Why don't you try staying home one day! As a matter of fact today would be just the right one.

Riccardo: Why today?

Albiera: Because I have to be out all day.

Riccardo: Stay out all night, what's the difference?

Albiera: And leave your sister all alone?

Riccardo: So what?

Albiera: My heart won't be at peace; I'll never leave the house for an hour until she returns to the convent.

Riccardo: Be careful the wind doesn't carry her off.

Albiera: You've always been such an imbecile. Your father can be very sure that you're no bastard; you're so much like him that you seem two peas in a pod.

Riccardo: And shouldn't I be proud of it?

Albiera: (*Seeing her maid*) Oh good, here comes that blockhead. (*To Veronica*) Is she up?

SCENE IV

(*Veronica, Donna Albiera, Riccardo*)

Veronica: She was dressing.

Albiera: (*indicating her husband's window*) And what about him, when did he leave?

Veronica: About an hour ago.

Albiera: You'd think that dimwit would have the decency to ask if I needed anything.

Veronica: He probably didn't want to ruin your sleep.

Albiera: Oh, so you defend him too? Well lamebrain, where did you leave the chimney pot?

Veronica: Oh foolish me! I forgot to take it; it must still be on the landing.

Albiera: Well, get moving, go get it.

Veronica: Right away, I'm going. (*Starts to leave*)

Albiera: Come back here! Listen to me: you can bring it later; because as soon as you've walked me over there I want you to come back for those things I prepared, so you can bring everything at once.

Veronica: As you please.

Albiera: Riccardo, you'll do me the favor of staying home today.

Riccardo: God forbid! I already dread the time I spend there to eat and sleep.

Albiera: If only you weren't so worthless, you could at least become an apprentice.

Riccardo: (*to the audience*) I'd better go before she starts the same old story; (*To both women*) God be with you.

Albiera: Like father like son; old proverbs never lie. (*To Veronica*) Let's go, it's getting late, come along and close that door; hurry up.

Veronica: Ready, let's go.

Albiera: What's the fastest way there?

Veronica: Straight ahead.

Albiera: But no; this way's better.

Veronica: As you wish.

Albiera: Yes, yes, let's turn quickly around this corner. (*Exit*)

SCENE V

(Federigo . . . a young man in love)

(to the audience)

Let those who've experienced the joy, the happiness, and the sweet delight of possessing the things we love, speak of them, for a pitiful soul like me certainly cannot! Instead I can very well account for the troubles, dissatisfactions, and anguish; for certainly those who have not endured the pains and passions lovers bear do not know what grief is; therefore, moved by this, poets imagine that the gods, not being able to bear love's torments, often abandoned the heavens, and even Jupiter himself assumed the form at times of a bull, or an eagle, or golden rain . . .

SCENE VI

(Ambrogio, Federigo, young men)

Ambrogio: (apart) Why can't one of my plans ever work out.

Federigo: (continuing) . . . In order to demonstrate the supreme power of love.

Ambrogio: (sees Federigo) I must be in luck, there he is.

Federigo: Is it any wonder then, that I, not being able to resist it, have completely succumbed?

Ambrogio: He looks troubled.

Federigo: If only I were able to transform myself as they did, I wouldn't need to envy them.

Ambrogio: Let me not waste any more time and greet him. Federigo, God be with you.

Federigo: Oh, Ambrogio how are you, it's been ages.

Ambrogio: I'm fine and at your service; how are you doing?

Federigo: Not very well I'm afraid.

Ambrogio: You don't say. Has something bad happened since we last spoke?

Federigo: The worst misfortune anyone has ever heard of.

Ambrogio: Can you talk about it?

Federigo: Of course, it's not a state secret.

Ambrogio: I'm dying to hear about it; not, like many others, to know other people's business, but to be able to help you.

Federigo: I expect little help, since the smoothest road has been closed to me; nevertheless it's not completely hopeless.

Ambrogio: Except for death itself there's a remedy for everything, for sicknesses and cures are always born together; anyway by discussing important things with friends, if nothing else you can always obtain advice.

Federigo: Then listen to this.

Ambrogio: Go ahead I'm all ears.

Federigo: You know our neighbor Gerozzo?

Ambrogio: Very well.

Federigo: These past few days it's been said that he'd given his daughter's hand to Guido Alberighi.

Ambrogio: That's right.

Federigo: And then, since they couldn't agree on a dowry, they broke off the engagement.

Ambrogio: I heard about it.

Federigo: Well, Guido, having lost hope, went back to Lyon where he came from.

Ambrogio: Because of that?

Federigo: The girl has remained at home, where they want to keep her until the Carneval.

Ambrogio: So?

Federigo: Well, my balcony, as you know, faces their courtyard and her windows.

Ambrogio: I know.

Federigo: By chance, I don't know when, I caught sight of her, and she seemed to me so beautiful, so gracious, and virtuous, that I couldn't help but fall in love with her; so much so in fact, that now I can't live without her.

Ambrogio: Now I get it!

Federigo: At first I thought I was the happiest and luckiest lover on earth; in fact, since my father has often tried to marry me off, I

went to see him one day and told him how decided I was to take a wife; and furthermore, that I'd be miserable without one.

Ambrogio: What came of it?

Federigo: The old man couldn't have been happier, but when he heard whom I meant he was very upset and unhappy, and ordered me never to talk about it again under pain of punishment from him.

Ambrogio: For what reason?

Federigo: Because it seems that her mother, as a young woman, had a bad reputation.

Ambrogio: And what do they say about the girl?

Federigo: Only good things: she's a real prize. She's been raised in the convent of Annalena since she was a child.

Ambrogio: I think it's disgraceful the way people in this city worry so much about such trifles; if the girl is good and dear isn't that enough, without looking as far as third relations?

Federigo: You know the proverb: if you're born a hen you'll learn to scratch. That's what my father is afraid of, that she'll turn out like her mother.

Ambrogio: That rule may be true enough among the beasts, but I can assure you that among men

it often fails. I could tell you of many whose mothers were well bred and virtuous, who behave wickedly and dishonestly; while on the other hand, there are those brought into the world by infamous and shameful mothers who are as virtuous and polite as you could wish.

Federigo: No need to tell me. You see things like that every day. But when you have a father you're not your own man.

Ambrogio: Well then, how will you manage this affair?

Federigo: I'm not sure; probably very poorly.

Ambrogio: What about that little hope you said you had?

Federigo: It's this; with a few gifts and a little bribery, I've managed to befriend their servant, Giannino; and he, knowing everything, has so arranged things with the maid, that the girl has already received two letters from me.

Ambrogio: Has she answered?

Federigo: Both.

Ambrogio: What does she say?

Federigo: Ordinary things; but to make a long story short, she's given me to believe that she won't marry anyone but me, if I keep my faith and my promises.

Ambrogio: Well then, your worries are over.

Federigo: And she's also let me know that she wants to speak to me; but it has to be in secret.

Ambrogio: So, what are you going to do?

Federigo: To go to her, anyway I can.

Ambrogio: When?

Federigo: Now here's the catch. First the Carneval has to pass; then I'll wait until her mother's out of the house for a day, and then with Giannino's help, I hope to go to her personally.

Ambrogio: Then what do you plan to do?

Federigo: I'll marry her, and pluck with her the fruit of love's ultimate delights. But we'll keep the marriage secret until my father drops dead; since even though he's not too old he's barely got his soul by the teeth. After that we'll make known the marriage and have a public wedding.

Ambrogio: Are you sure she's willing?

Federigo: Of course; the only thing that's needed, as I said, is for her mother to leave the house for a day, so that I can have my chance.

Ambrogio: If I were in your shoes, I would do things differently.

Federigo: What do you mean?

Ambrogio: Let her speak about you to her mother and father; your stock is such that they'd be

glad a thousand times over to join the two families; and then, if it's not possible before, you can make it known when your father dies.

Federigo: It can't be done that way.

Ambrogio: Why not?

Federigo: Listen to me. Before I talked to my father about it I had it made known to them and they willingly agreed. But then when they found out my old man wanted no part of it - because of the mother - they were so offended, that now they want it even less than my father; that's why we're forced to do this by ourselves.

Ambrogio: Well then, I can do no more than pray that Heaven smile down upon you.

Federigo: I'm grateful, and if I can be of any service to you, think of me as a younger brother.

Ambrogio: It just so happens that I've never needed your help more.

Federigo: Just ask, whatever's in my power.

Ambrogio: Without beating around the bush: I'd like to use your house today; since you know very well how I've looked forward to this day to get together with Bitu, you know, the daughter of that old bawd; because today I have her promise that she'll come and have

dinner with me. The problem, as you know, is that my house isn't suitable, so I thought I'd take her to Pierfrancesco's place; unfortunately that idea didn't pan out, because just last night he left to visit his father who's saying his offices - as you know he's Vicar of Certaldo. Now, since you're alone, I beg you, let me use yours.

Federigo: Oh boy! In plain daylight? And such a girl! The neighbors will talk.

Ambrogio: Not at all; she's coming dressed as a maid so that no one will suspect a thing; and I'd be forever in your debt; believe me, if it could be done any other way I wouldn't bother you with this, but she refuses to come to an inn, or any other unsavory place.

Federigo: Tell me, how is it she's agreed to come? Have you made up with her mother?

Ambrogio: May God blast her, never. But you know Riccardo, Fiammetta's brother? Well, he's agreed with the girl to make her mother believe she's coming to see him, when in fact he's bringing her to me.

Federigo: That doesn't bother him?

Ambrogio: What, for a friend? I would do the same for him if he needed it.

Federigo: Listen to me; as you know my house is large and divided by a courtyard, so that it's almost two houses. I'll get everything ready on the far end where there's a very well appointed sitting room with all the niceties, and a bedroom also completely furnished. You can easily come and go as you need by the back door; the only problem is, there's no bread or wine.

Ambrogio: That doesn't matter; if I remember correctly the back faces the alley of the Fico.

Federigo: Exactly, the door is right across from their kitchen.

Ambrogio: If I'd ordered it myself, I couldn't have asked for anything better; I'll order everything from the cook, and they'll provide me with wine, firewood, and everything else I'll need.

Federigo: You'll be well served, since the Fico is one of the most regular inns in Florence.

Ambrogio: All the better.

Federigo: Let's go and I'll give you the key to the back door. I'd let you have the whole house, but unfortunately I may need it myself.

Ambrogio: Don't worry, the back part is perfect.

Federigo: Let's see if I have all my keys. This one is for our friend Alberto Catelani's house.

Ambrogio: Why do you need that?

Federigo: Listen to this: about a week ago he went to his country house with his whole household, to slaughter the pig and pass the Carneval. When he left I told Giannino to ask him for his key, with the excuse that I needed it for my health; and since he owes me a favor he let me have it willingly.

Ambrogio: I still can't imagine why you need it.

Federigo: You don't know yet?

Ambrogio: Is that something to laugh at?

Federigo: Then listen. Giannino's master, Gerozzo, is in love with Diamante, Alberto's wife; but he's afraid of his wife, so he keeps this love of his very secret; but he's told Giannino, who's been keeping his hopes alive with some scheme which he says will get him what he wants.

Ambrogio: What are you telling me?

Federigo: Nothing but the truth.

Ambrogio: I bet Cupid's working overtime and probably needs a few more arrows, since he's probably wearing them out wounding such a venerable old buffalo. Oh, but that rogue Giannino must be having a great time.

Federigo: You can say that again!

Ambrogio: Now all we need is luck to be on our side.

Federigo: That's my hope too; but come, let's go inside
and I'll give you the key, since I can tell
you're all excited.

Ambrogio: Let's go in quickly, I'm burning with desire.

ACT II

Scene I

(Giannino, Carletto . . . two servants)

Giannino: I say, they really know how to treat you in
there.

Carletto: You can say that again.

Giannino: And we didn't even spend a lot.

Carletto: Not at all.

Giannino: And after all, you can't get to heaven on an
empty stomach.

Carletto: Yeah, the way you ate you'll be sure to get
there.

Giannino: Oh, that trebbiano was so delicate.

Carletto: Just right.

Giannino: And those hot little chicken livers really
tickled the palate.

Carletto: They were removed this spring.

Giannino: I guess I filled your belly for a while.

Carletto: And I emptied your wallet.

Giannino: That's the way it goes; what delights the body makes the purse suffer. (*spotting Veronica*). But wait! There she is just in time. Veronica, where are you coming from. Tell me, what have you done with your mistress?

Scene II

(*Veronica, Giannino, Carletto*)

Veronica: I left her at the convent, that's where I'm coming from.

Giannino: Well thank the ladle's handle; and where are you going?

Veronica: Home, to get some things she wants me to bring there around dinnertime.

Giannino: Then go ahead like a good girl; but listen, tell the old man to wait for me at home - no matter what - for I have something very important to tell him.

Veronica: May God deliver us. (*exit*)

Giannino: (*to Carletto*) Let' leave too, I can't wait to see Federigo and tell him the good news.

Carletto: By now he should be up.

Giannino: Quick, go, knock and tell him I'm waiting for him.

Carletto: Don't you want to come in?

Giannino: What for? Let him know I'm here to talk to
 him.

Carletto: All right. But look he's coming out.

Scene III

(*Federigo, Carletto, Giannino*)

Federigo: Carletto, where are you coming from?

Carletto: The market.

Giannino: Oh Messer Federigo! Good day sir!

Federigo: Welcome dear Giannino; what are you up to?

Giannino: I was looking for you.

Federigo: Have you any news?

Giannino: All the good news you can handle.

Federigo: Carletto, go inside and do your chores.

Carletto: As you wish. (*exit*)

Federigo: Well then Giannino, what of Fiammetta, rather
 my heart, my soul, my life?

Giannino: Last night when I left her she was heading
 for bed all happy and smiling.

Federigo: It's a great shame that such a charming and
 beautiful girl has to sleep alone.

Giannino: It's not the first wrong fortune's ever done.

Federigo: All right, forget it; tell me, at what stage
 is our affair? Time is running out.

Giannino: I hope to end it today.

Federigo: My God! Giannino, can it be true? You make me live again, I'm reborn.

Giannino: That's why I came to talk to you; to let you know that my mistress is at the convent this very moment.

Federigo: Are you sure?

Giannino: Absolutely! Veronica just told me so; she'd just taken her there and was on her way back.

Federigo: Let's make sure today's the day.

Giannino: Yes, yes . . .

Federigo: What has to be done?

Giannino: I've planned it so that right after dinner everything is made ready for your arrival; but first, we have to get the old man out of the house. Riccardo doesn't even wait to swallow his last mouthful before he runs out, and he never comes home until well into the night. Now, to avoid any meddling, I've planned to tell Gerozzo that today's the day to meet his sweetheart; you'll give me the key and there I'll prepare everything.

Federigo: You're still looking to bring off that other affair too? I'm afraid you may just be throwing water in the river, and that he'll get wind of something.

Giannino: He's too stupid.

Federigo: By the devil even if he doesn't recognize the mother, he's sure to know it's not Diamante, especially since he's in love with her.

Giannino: Oh yeah, he's had a lot to do with that! It's like I told you, he's never seen them except from far away; at the most at their windows. Besides I found this wench who's perfect for our purpose, and an old widow, a real pious and charitable type, who resembles that Saint Verdiana who used to feed the snakes.

Federigo: He'll recognize her.

Giannino: Not the way I've planned things. The girl will be waiting for him in the bedroom, in the dark - and believe me she'll receive him so graciously, as . . . well . . . the lord only knows.

Federigo: I think you're roasting too much meat. Couldn't you do without the mother? Isn't there another way?

Giannino: I could have, but this way the thing will look more convincing to him. I could have done it a thousand other ways too, because he's such a simpleton. But since I promised to let him enjoy this love of his, I don't want to disappoint him; not so much to be of service to him, but for my own needs.

Federigo: All right then by God. Let come what may as long as I get what I want.

Giannino: Let's not waste anymore time, give me the key.

Federigo: Here it is.

Giannino: Go home now, and don't give it another thought.

Federigo: For God's sake do whatever you have to do very carefully, so that Alberto will have no reason to complain about me.

Giannino: Wait for me in the house and don't worry.

Federigo: I'm in your hands.

Giannino: Leave already.

Federigo: Ok! Don't forget to come back.

Giannino: Don't be so fretful. *(to the audience)*
These lovers are going to be the death of me before it's all over. I'd better hurry and go find that good woman, and that other one, and bring them both where my master is about to celebrate Easter before Lent. Oh what a great prank! I'm going to laugh about this one the rest of the year.

Scene IV

(*Ambrogio, Riccardo*)

- Ambrogio: You could say this is the best luck I've ever had. That part of the house couldn't be better suited to my needs. I've ordered quite a few nice giblets and a marvelous cold capon, which, with a couple of roasted ones should be just enough; then some nice cheeses, pears and other fruits of the season, some excellent white and red wine, and a good fire. But Riccardo said he would be waiting for me at the corner of the Diamante or right around here, but I didn't find or see him anywhere; maybe he's still at home. But wait here he is (*to Riccardo*) Good day Riccardo.
- Riccardo: Good day and a good year.
- Ambrogio: What are you saying?
- Riccardo: Whatever you want to hear.
- Ambrogio: Have you done what you needed to do?
- Riccardo: Everything's done to perfection; when I left she was just getting ready to dress up like a maid.
- Ambrogio: What did her mother say?
- Riccardo: Nothing else. She's pleased as punch; but tell me where are we supposed to stay?

Ambrogio: Not too far away.

Riccardo: Where?

Ambrogio: At Federigo's, who'se been kind enough to let me use half his house; that part on the other side, you know how nice and spacious it is; here's the key for the back door. Let me tell you I've prepared a dinner the likes of which you've never seen; but you'll let me know later what you think.

Riccardo: I don't doubt it, but I'm not so sure she won't change her mind if she thinks she's going into a tavern; since I know very well where that back door leads.

Ambrogio: By the devil, she sure is picky. We'll bring her in by the front door.

Riccardo: In God's name, how will we manage that?

Ambrogio: Let's do this: I'll go in now and stay in the house; you go get her - she should be dressed by now - and bring her back right away; you know the door, just knock.

Riccardo: All right I'm going, let's not waste any more time.

Ambrogio: Fine, I'm going too, I'll wait for you there.

Riccardo: We'll be there.

Scene V

(*Giannino, Veronica*)

Giannino: I had to curse like the devil to convince that old hag. And she had promised me! But you know even though it's more profitable for her than me, she played it like all women do. When you want something they make you beg for it forever before giving in, even though they want to give it a thousand times more than you want to get it. But I lucked out; when I left she was finally putting on her best dress. Then she was going to get that other pious soul, "Sandraccia", so that our bull can finally mount his heifer. But let me go find him and have a little fun when I give him the good news. (*sees Veronica*) Oh good here's Veronica coming out. Veronica where are you going?

Veronica: To find you.

Giannino: Why?

Veronica: Gerozzo sent me. When I gave him your message he got all excited and is dying to see you.

Giannino: Hurry, go back in right away and tell him I'm out here.

Veronica: Come in, come in if you want to.

Giannino: Just do what I said and bring him out.
Veronica: Have it your way, I hope some good comes out of all this. (*exit*).
Giannino: This is great! He'll probably do something crazy. But what am I saying: lunacy's such a way of life with him, that if he did something sane you'd have to wonder. Aha! there he is; doesn't he have the air of a fool?

Scene VI

(*Gerozzo, Giannino*)

Gerozzo: Oh Giannino, Giannino. Here I am. Were you looking for me?
Giannino: Good day sweet master, may God give you . . .
Gerozzo: Give me what?
Giannino: Whatever you deserve.
Gerozzo: What I deserve? Then he'd make me a king, or a pope, or an emperor; and wouldn't that be good for you!
Giannino: Sure; you'd probably act like all the others whom shameless fortune raises from the lowest depths to the highest heights.
Gerozzo: What do you mean?
Giannino: They quickly forget all their poor friends. When they see them they give them the cold

shoulder since they remind them of their own former vile and low condition. You'd act the same way, even if you are my lord and master and not my friend and companion.

Gerozzo: Never, Giannino mio; I'll be whatever you want me to be. And everything I've promised still goes.

Giannino: Your kind of promises don't buy my dinner . . . All I know is you've never given me anything worth more than the points on my shoelaces. I even have to beg for my salary.

Gerozzo: What do you want me to do? You know my wife wears the pants in my house. You also know how peculiar, cranky, and hot tempered she is. As soon as she gets her dander up she becomes a beast and starts questioning even the hairs on a dog.

Giannino: (*aside*) Talk about cliches. That's a familiar tune.

Gerozzo: What tune blockhead?

Giannino: What was it? An adverb?

Gerozzo: Aha! You mean proverb. (*to the audience*) The supply of fools never ends.

Giannino: (*aside*) That's about the wisest thing he's ever said. (*to Gerozzo*) You're laughing at me.

Gerozzo: Who wouldn't? I'm laughing at your empty-headedness. Ha! Ha! Ha! *(to the audience)* Understanding is a rare virtue.

Giannino: *(aside)* You said it!

Gerozzo: That's enough of that. Come on, I don't want to waste the whole morning in foolish talk; forget about that and tell me what you wanted to talk to me about; but first of all; how's my heart?

Giannino: How should I know; you tell me.

Gerozzo: Well, I thought you were coming from there, since you're so anxious to talk about it.

Giannino: You're right. It's about her that I wanted to talk to you.

Gerozzo: That's why you should know.

Giannino: Oh! I thought your heart was in your body.

Gerozzo: Ha! Ha! The Arno has less water than your brain, you dimwit. I'm speaking in parables; Diamante's who I mean.

Giannino: You don't say; I never would have guessed.

Gerozzo: *(to the audience)* See what I mean. Try and talk elegantly to his kind; you can't even use a little courtly language anymore.

Giannino: And have you been at court?

Gerozzo: Are you kidding? Didn't I live in Rome as a teenager?

Giannino: What service did you perform.

Gerozzo: I was a waiter.

Giannino: You don't say! That's an honest trade.

Gerozzo: All right, since I have to spell it out; what news of that enchantress, that temptress, that siren, that seductress, that heart-breaker. Oh curse you Petrarca! I can't help myself; tell me of Diamante, my mistress, my lady.

Giannino: It went very well. When I left her after supper last night she was all smiles and joy and off to bed with her mother.

Gerozzo: (*Smacks his lips*)

Giannino: Well, we're smacking our lips are we?

Gerozzo: Holy shit; don't you see what a morsel she is?

Giannino: She's saving herself for your tastebuds alone.

Gerozzo: When? In my lifetime I hope.

Giannino: Today's the day.

Gerozzo: You mean this day?

Giannino: You want me to spell it out? Before the sun sets you'll be with her. Alberto has left town. She'll be waiting between the sheets where she can give you your money's worth.

Gerozzo: In bed?

Giannino: Under the covers.

Gerozzo: And she got in it because she loves me?

Giannino: Right, and there she awaits you.

Gerozzo: Oh Venus! Oh Fortune! Oh Cupid! Oh thrice,
four times blest! What news you bring me!

Giannino: News worthy of reward.

Gerozzo: Yes, you're right. Come here Giannino; I
promise, I'll lavish such gifts on you that
you'll never be poor again.

Giannino: Sure, that's the story now, but after you've
gotten what you want, you won't remember me
at all. But that's when I take off, if you
haven't thrown me out.

Gerozzo: What do you mean: thrown you out?

Giannino: You heard me.

Gerozzo: But why?

Giannino: Because in this day and age a great favor is
rewarded with an even greater ingratitude.

Gerozzo: No, no, my dear Giannino, don't think I'm
like the fat horse who eats the oats and
leaves the fodder.

Giannino: If nothing else I'll feast on words.

Gerozzo: Don't worry, you'll feast on facts too; but
why wait, I want to go there right now.

Giannino: Where?

Gerozzo: To her house.

Giannino: To do what?

Gerozzo: Since you say her husband's not around, to make the . . . (*makes an obscene gesture for copulation*) . . . you know what I mean.

Giannino: Hold your horses. First we have to take care of her mother.

Gerozzo: What does she want?

Giannino: Money.

Gerozzo: What do you mean money?

Giannino: You heard me.

Gerozzo: How much?

Giannino: We haven't sealed the bargain yet.

Gerozzo: Well, what do you want me to do?

Giannino: I want you to go home; in the meantime I'll go find her and finish the deal. You just make sure that before the evening's out you've played the thirty-five at Tarot cards.

Gerozzo: What the devil are you talking about.

Giannino: Well, don't be so surprised that if I can't understand your Latin you don't get mine either.

Gerozzo: What are all these formulations?

Giannino: Calculations is a better way to put it; Maremma's sweetest secret is hidden there.

Gerozzo: I'd appreciate it if you would explain it to me.

Giannino: Well, you know, the thirty-five card, the one that shows two nude lovers embracing; that's what you and Diamante will be doing tonight.

Gerozzo: So that's it; well I'll be . . . Oh what a sweet, tasty, and powerful proverb. I'm going to write it down so I can carry it around all the time.

Giannino: Yes, dear master as you wish; now do what I said and I'll do the shopping.

Gerozzo: Listen, make sure you spend as little as possible; I'm going in to have lunch.

Giannino: (*aside*) Cimabue who was born blind saw more than this guy. (*to Gerozzo*) Yes, that's a good idea, better to eat now.

Gerozzo: You'll always do right by me.

Giannino: All right go get ready; where will I find you?

Gerozzo: I'll wait for you at home; don't take forever. I'll be on pins and needles.

Giannino: Let's go, each to his own chores.

Act III

Scene I

(*Madam Antonia, a bawd*)

Great are the struggles and torments of this life.
Lord God help us all, and especially the likes of me, a poor

widow, alone and abandoned by everyone. Shoot! Sometimes I wish I was never born; and yet my faith in the Lord, my fastings and prayers give me much hope, if not in this life, then for the other. But since I must and want to live while it pleases heaven, and not having my usual income - which in the past was quite sizeable - nor any other earnings, I'm forced, in order to eat, to accomodate now this person, now that one, with whatever they need. That's how I earn my living, and that's what I have to keep doing until I die. That's why I agreed to help Giannino, who's promised to pay me enough money to keep me well for a few days. But why is she taking so long to come out?

Scene II

(*Giannino, Antonia*)

Giannino: Come along already; you look as if you're going to the gallows.

Antonia: You're making me do, in my old age, what I never would have done when I was young.

Giannino: Well, didn't I pay you enough? That should take care of both your honor and your needs. What else do you want?

Antonia: Honor my eye! Don't you think I know the difference between a Paternoster and a beauty mark? If only I wasn't so poor.

Giannino: Have it your way, but let's hurry.

Antonia: Where's the money?

Giannino: Don't worry about that.

Antonia: I bet you don't have it.

Giannino: Oh what a headache dealing with you. I told you when you'd get paid.

Antonia: And I told you I wanted it in advance. You know very well that when the party's over everybody disappears.

Giannino: If you don't get the money before he goes in the house, you're free to go. But keep in mind what I told you.

Antonia: All right, since I'm all dressed, let's do your bidding; but look, if I don't get my money, I'll reveal everything.

Giannino: It's a deal.

Antonia: By God, I'm the fool if I get fooled.

Giannino: That's a nice rhyme; now come along. But where's that other one?

Antonia: There she is, she's coming.

Giannino: (to Sandra) What took you so long?

Scene III

(Sandra, "a woman of the world", Giannino, Antonia)

Sandra: I had to spruce up a little bit; did you want me to look like some wench?

Giannino: You smell like a barbershop.

Sandra: All right, let's get this over with. What do I do? Monna Antonia did you get the money?

Antonia: Not yet; he says we'll get it later.

Sandra: How much?

Antonia: Two ducats apiece.

Sandra: That's all?

Giannino: Why you filthy . . .! That's all this is worth.

Antonia: All right Giannino. Enough with this talk. Just get the money.

Giannino: We're all set. Look we've reached the door already, go in this way.

Antonia: Come on, hurry up, open it, quickly.

Giannino: (*opens the door*) Go inside.

Antonia: Sandra, come along.

Sandra: Go on, I'm coming.

Giannino: In God's name get inside. That's it; they're finally in, and good riddance. You can be sure I wouldn't massage those two so much if I didn't need their services so badly. On the other hand, this is the kind of evil that brings me good; I hope it comes more often. We agreed on four ducats; I'll ask the old man for twenty, and I keep the difference. Oh, here he is now. (*to Gerozzo*) Welcome my sweet master.

Scene IV

(Gerozzo, Giannino)

Gerozzo: Well, Giannino, have you concluded the deal?

Giannino: To your liking.

Gerozzo: How much?

Giannino: Twenty ducats.

Gerozzo: Hey! How much?

Giannino: Twenty ducats I said.

Gerozzo: Damn! Any more deals like this and I'll be in the poor house. Shoot! I thought we'd make do with a few pennies.

Giannino: Pennies? These types want to be paid well, especially from someone in your position.

Gerozzo: Paid well eh? I might just change my mind, and fall out of love with both of them.

Giannino: And what did you expect - free love?

Gerozzo: Sure, and that's just what she should do if she wants to do her part.

Giannino: (aside) That'll be the day.

Gerozzo: What did you say?

Giannino: I said we have to pay; you'll be cured soon enough.

Gerozzo: Twenty ducats. Shit blood!

Giannino: What happened to all the love and desire you felt before? What about your promises and your gifts.

Gerozzo: Nonsense! She wants to ruin me. At this rate she'll pluck me like a fat goose.

Giannino: You mean you're not willing to spend so little to taste so much pleasure, and to satisfy your love?

Gerozzo: Sure I'd spend but I don't want to do anything crazy.

Giannino: What's the most you're willing to pay?

Gerozzo: One florin, and that's a good price.

Giannino: (*aside*) I'm in trouble. (*to Gerozzo*) No more?

Gerozzo: How much should I give her. I'm already paying what a doctor gets for a consultation.

Giannino: So that's it! You mean to tell me that you're going to give up such sweet and savory delights on account of money?

Gerozzo; Oh, dear Giannino. You're making me horny. Don't you see I'm about to explode. Go, and offer her two florins.

Giannino: (*aside*) Be careful you don't hurt yourself.

Gerozzo: What did you say?

Giannino: I said she'll say it's not enough, she'll be insulted and think I'm trying to trick her. She'll want to leave.

Gerozzo: Then let her go, and good riddance. But try at least.

Giannino: Try what?

Gerozzo: Offer it and see what she says.

Giannino: Look if it were up to her she'd play the game without a prize; but her mother wants to get paid, and I can't blame her.

Gerozzo: Why not?

Giannino: Because nobody does evil without some benefit.

Gerozzo: For the love of Satan, make the offer and see what she says: two ducats.

Giannino: It's only fourteen lire, a song.

Gerozzo: A song eh? That's your opinion. With a little more I can buy a whore.

Giannino: What if I could get her down to twelve?

Gerozzo: Beans! I'm not spending a penny more. If she's willing I'll be home; I'll wait for you there, understand? Come back quickly with an answer. (*leaves*)

Giannino: (*whispering after him*) I hope you drop dead soon. (*to the audience*) And me, I deserve to be called a mule, sniveling fool that I am; even if he wanted to a thousand times over, he doesn't even have four florins to give her, never mind twenty. It's his wife who keeps the money in that house. And you

know I really hatched a good plan. If only he didn't go home. What's more, now he'll stay there all day waiting for me to bring him an answer. If that happens Federigo won't go near the place, and I'll wind up losing both commissions. As for Sandra and Monna Antonia, if they don't get their four ducats, they'll do their best anyway. I have to think of a way to do this without my master's money . . . That's it, I'll get Federigo to pick up the whole tab. If he's really in love, he won't think twice about ten florins . . . Then once that ship's underway, the dinghy will follow.

SCENE V

(Carletto, Giannino)

Carletto: *(comes on stage not seeing Giannino, who likewise doesn't see him)* It's certainly true that love and fear go hand in hand as the proverb goes.

Giannino: *(still referring to Federigo's florins)* Especially since he's got plenty of them.

Carletto: *(to the audience)* My master got some good news from Giannino. But since he's a little

late, he's starting to worry about a thousand different problems.

Giannino: Yes, that's the way I'll work it out.

Carletto: (*spots Giannino*) But there he is! Hey Giannino, my master wants to know what's going on; he's waiting for you more eagerly than singers and dancers wait for the Carneval.

Giannino: Don't worry, I'll console him. But his purse will suffer that's for sure.

Carletto; Pleasures never seem good unless you pay for them.

Giannino: Let's hurry up and find him.

Carletto: Let's go. Oh look, there, he's coming out.

Scene VI

(*Federigo, Giannino, Carletto*)

Federigo: Oh dear Giannino I'm burning up, I'm dying.

Giannino: Let's go inside and there I'll tell you what to do.

Federigo: Let's go. (*to Carletto*) You come too.

Carletto: Yes sir.

Scene VII

(*Bitá, dressed as a maid, Riccardo*)

Bitá: I should have known.

Riccardo: Bitá listen to me, Bitá.

Bitá: That's what I get.

Riccardo: Bitá, let me explain.

Bitá: Boy, they really played a dirty trick.

Riccardo: Bitá, please listen.

Bitá: I could understand if I hadn't told you in advance.

Riccardo: Look, if that's a tavern may I never get anything I want, ever again.

Bitá: Look me in the face and say that.

Riccardo: I'm telling you that's the home of honest people.

Bitá: What, in an alley? As if I didn't know where the good streets are.

Riccardo: Didn't I tell you that this is only the back door? Look over there, that's the main entrance.

Bitá: Well then why don't we go in that way?

Riccardo: Because Federigo got Ambrogio to lend him this part of the house, which as you'll see has a room nicely furnished and well suited for any lady.

Bitá: Something's fishy about that filthy door. I have a feeling it leads to some room in the tavern, being so close to it.

Riccardo: Do me a favor; promise that you'll wait here while I get Ambrogio who's waiting inside for me. We'll both come out and open the front door. That should clear up all your foolish doubts.

Bitá: Do that and I'll be happy.

Riccardo: And you'll see that I'm not a liar. (*starts to leave*)

Bitá: Riccardo, wait. Leave this to me. Hey Riccardo wait.

Riccardo: What is it now?

Bitá: Don't go away. I'll come in this way.

Riccardo: Thank heaven.

Bitá: I'll know soon enough whether we're in someone's house or in a tavern; and I swear I'll run out if that's the case.

Riccardo: You won't have to, don't worry.

Bitá: You know I'm the type to do it.

Riccardo: If things aren't just as I've said, you have my permission to take off as soon as you want.

Bitá: All right let's go in already.

Riccardo: This way, come in.

Bitá: You first. (*they go inside*)

Scene VIII

(*Federigo, Carletto, Giannino*)

Giannino: By the devil, I'm really going to fix his wagon this time.

Federigo: You couldn't get any more?

Giannino: Give me the money.

Federigo: Take this purse, there are ten ducats in it; keep the rest for yourself.

Giannino: For God's sake go back home now. Carletto, you come with me, let's get things ready.

Federigo: I'm going. But remember me, who burning freezes and freezing burns.

Giannino: Don't worry. (to Carletto) Let's go now, but first we'll make sure those two "good women" are ready.

Carletto: Yeah, we don't want things to come out backwards.

Giannino: Wait for me while I take care of that. I'll be right back.

Carletto: Take as long as you want, or need.

Giannino: (*knocks . . . no answer*) They must be deaf. Carletto, come closer anyway, don't worry.

Carletto: Here at your service.

Scene IX

(*Madonna Antonia, Giannino, Carletto*)

Antonia: (*from the window*) Who's knocking?

Giannino: It's me, merry widow. Come down, I want to talk to you.

Antonia: Be right there.

Giannino: (*to Carletto*) Carletto, I have a better idea.

Carletto: It looks that way.

Antonia: (*coming out*) Where's the money?

Giannino: Better late than never. It's in this purse.

Antonia: Let's have it.

Giannino: Not so fast. There are ten ducats in here
and you only get two.

Antonia: And two more for Sandra makes four.

Giannino: Where is she?

Antonia: She's all tucked in; no sooner had she filled
her tummy than she slid between the sheets.

Carletto: (*aside to Giannino*) They'll have to be
washed.

Giannino: I'll take care of it. (*to Antonia*) What the
devil did she eat?

Antonia: We did very well for ourselves.

Giannino: Let's have it, what did you do.

Antonia: As soon as we arrived Sandra got a fire
going. In the meantime, I found a little
flask in the cellar, tapped the first barrel
I came to and filled it with good wine.

Giannino: And then?

Antonia: I looked around, found some flour and oil,
and what would you say if I told you we made
at least twenty-five lovely little fritters.

Giannino: God bless you!

Carletto: Sure you had enough?

Antonia: And we drank so freely that I was forced to
make a couple of return trips to the cellar.

Carletto: The Arno should flow so well.

Giannino: All right godmother, now here take these;
one, two, three, four. Satisfied?

Antonia: And consoled; in truth nothing on earth gratifies the heart more than gold; I wish everyone such luck.

Giannino: Now you know what I want you to do?

Antonia: Just say the word..

Giannino: Carletto here will fill you in. Carletto, go on, take her upstairs and get a hold of Sandra too; then leave quickly by the back door and go home; when you get there use the back door too, and tell Ambrogio we don't need the thing anymore.

Carletto: Oh "that" thing.

Giannino: I've thought of another trick; do as I tell you; blacken your face, get dressed and wait for me.

Carletto: You got it.

Giannino: Monna Antonia, listen carefully to Carletto and do exactly what he tells you.

Carletto: Let's go, and luck be with us. (*exit*)

Giannino: (*to the audience*) I'm going now to look for my master who's no doubt waiting for me at home. I'll bamboozle him with some nonsense and . . . but what am I saying? Since he won't have to spend money, he'll believe anything, and do whatever I tell him. Oh, I'm here already, let me knock. (*at that moment*)

Gerozzo comes out of the house, they bump into each other) Oh master, it's you.

Scene X

(Gerozzo, Giannino)

Gerozzo: Oh, Giannino!

Giannino: I was just knocking to come and get you.

Gerozzo: And I was just opening the door to look for you. I finished lunch and I couldn't stand it any more. I put on my coat and was coming out, as I said, to look for you. Well what news have you brought me?

Giannino: Bad and good.

Gerozzo: Oh that's swell! How can the bad and the good be together? Lamebrain, maybe you're going crazy - when did fire ever mix with water?

Giannino: I'll tell you again, I bring you bad news and good news at the same time.

Gerozzo: How so, dimwit? Let's have it.

Giannino: The bad news is that her mother is tougher than an old oak tree on a windy day, and she's standing firm on the twenty ducats.

Gerozzo: Oh that's a nice allegory.

Giannino: The good news is that - with your interest always at heart - I've thought of an easy way to get all your wishes granted at no cost to you.

Gerozzo: Oh! My dear Giannino. You've revived me!
Why you have more notions and tricks in your
skull than the devil himself. Go on!

Giannino: A few days ago a great Syrian gentleman
passed through our city - a doctor of necro-
mancy - who was returning from Mecca, from a
visit to the tomb of Mohammed.

Gerozzo: I don't get it.

Giannino: Well, it just so happens that he fell ill,
and had to stop at the Pecora inn. There,
his learning and great powers have become
known to all.

Gerozzo: What's that to me?

Giannino: Let me finish. He has received many young
visitors, the most learned in Florence.

Gerozzo: Is this the good news you promised?

Giannino: By the devil! You're so easily annoyed.
Either let me finish or tell me to shut up.

Gerozzo: All right! Go on finish, finish.

Giannino: Well, when they observed his stupendous
virtues, they took him out of the inn and
brought him to their homes.

Gerozzo: What happened then?

Giannino: He finally regained his health, and being the
gentleman that he is, he has generously
rewarded each of them. Well, to make a long
story short, he's now staying at my friend

Federigo's house; where every night by some enchantment he transports his sweetheart; then at the break of day he miraculously returns her to her house.

Gerozzo: Why that's a true marvel.

Giannino: Well, the learned doctor is leaving town tomorrow morning - as a matter of fact he's going to simply vanish - but since Federigo is such a good friend - being that when he didn't have a servant I did a thousand favors for him - I went to him on your behalf and begged him to intercede with that great gentleman so as to make it possible for you to enjoy your beloved.

Gerozzo: By the devil, you've made a mistake.

Giannino: How?

Gerozzo: By telling Federigo my business.

Giannino: Don't you know it's always better to carry the worst in the palm of your hand, as it were. Anyway, who else would have convinced the sorcerer? Besides he's in love just like you; not only will he never reveal your secret, he's promised you help and advice.

Gerozzo: May the Lord reward him; now that I see he's so kind and courteous, I regret not having given him my daughter. But it was all his

father's fault - that brute - who didn't want to be associated with us.

Giannino: These things are common.

Gerozzo: You're right. But tell me your plans; how did you leave things?

Giannino: Well, since, as I said, there's an early departure tomorrow morning, we discussed doing certain things.

Gerozzo: Tell me some of them.

Giannino: I gave him all the details and told him that it's the mother, not the daughter, who's messing things up. He's going to have you changed into some little animal so that you can go to her regardless of her mother. He told me to consult with you to see which one you fancy most. So that's the way things stand: it's up to you.

Gerozzo: Give me some ideas.

Giannino: You want to become a cat?

Gerozzo: Then what?

Giannino: Then you scurry along to her house; climb in through a window and you'll find her waiting for you in the bedroom.

Gerozzo: Nah! These cats have the reputation of being witches; I wouldn't want to frighten her.

Giannino: Become a bird then.

Gerozzo: What kind.

Giannino: Whichever you want. An owl, a lark, a sparrow, a cuckoo, what's the difference?

Gerozzo: Then how will I become myself again?

Giannino: All you have to do is remember certain words; say those and you'll be yourself again.

Gerozzo: And without the words?

Giannino: You'll always be a bird.

Gerozzo: Shit! Not me, not I. What if I forget them. Holy whores! Do you want me to lose my manhood?

Giannino: For God's sake! It's only four words; you'd really have to be simple.

Gerozzo: Sometimes you're really cute! You want me to stake my life on an owl or a bat? Blockhead! The devil is crafty and weaves a large net. I'd really do a great deed. From a man turned into a booby or a jay! You'd better think of something else.

Giannino: Look, if you're afraid, we can just call the whole thing off.

Gerozzo: Well, I don't want to take myself apart to become me again. Find another way.

Giannino: All right, listen. If you don't like that idea we can say you're distracted.

Gerozzo: How?

Giannino: I want you to go invisible.

Gerozzo: What do you mean invisible?

Giannino: So that no one can see you but you can see everyone.

Gerozzo: And how will that happen?

Giannino: Very easily.

Gerozzo: Oh what a great feast that would be! To see the whole world and not be seen at all!

Giannino: You can say that again: Let's get going.

Gerozzo: Quickly I'm consumed with desire, let's go.

Giannino: Follow me.

Gerozzo: Go ahead I feel like a bridegroom.

Giannino: (*aside*) And you're going to your doom.

Gerozzo: What did you say?

Giannino: I said you'll enjoy it soon!

Gerozzo: I can't wait.

Giannino: I hope you'll know how to show your gratitude.

Gerozzo: I'll be grateful, don't worry.

Giannino: Go in, the door is open; this is a magnificent house.

Gerozzo: You're right; come in.

ACT IV

Scene I

(*Federigo, alone*)

It's true that when it rains it pours. I wouldn't have believed in a million years that you could find such a gullible simpleton as that man is. I don't know if it's

Gerozzo: *(taking the ball out)* There, I want you to see me.

Giannino: That's better.

Gerozzo: I can't wait for one of our friends or neighbors to come by, to test out this great marvel.

Giannino: Why, don't you trust me?

Gerozzo: Yes, but what if it works on you and not on others, then where would I be. But wait, why am I such a nincompoop.

Giannino: What are you talking about?

Gerozzo: I could have tried this out at home. But here it'll do as well; here put it in your mouth, and we'll see if I can see you.

Giannino: Nonsense; this one works only for you and that one only for your sweetheart; they're made especially for the two of you; and one more thing, this time tomorrow they'll have lost their power.

Gerozzo: Oh, they last so little? Gee, I thought I'd enjoy them forever.

Giannino: Forever? What do you think this is, a fable? Or maybe you think you're more important than the great Sultan, not to mention the Pope or the Emperor.

Gerozzo: Oh, go to heaven! You mean that if I hadn't gotten the idea to tell him to make one for

her, I couldn't have hidden her from her mother by giving her half of mine?

Giannino: Never! Now listen, I want to tell you something else, and this is even more stupendous and much more important.

Gerozzo: Well let's have it, I want to know everything about this.

Giannino: It's this: Only a woman could possibly see you; but that's only if that day or the night before she'd fitted her husband with the horns.

Gerozzo: Are you sure?

Giannino: Positive. You'll be invisible to everyone else for one day.

Gerozzo: By the Lord! But tell me before we waste anymore time: how should I get in and out?

Giannino: All right here it is; I'll make believe that I've returned to make the final deal with the mother and that she's going to get a little more. You'll be standing right here, invisible, enjoying the whole scene; then while we're talking, you go in through the open door - she won't see you. However, before you get to the bedroom, take the ball out of your mouth so you don't spook Diamante. And then, well, after you've humped her once or twice you can tell her all about this marvel.

Gerozzo: I like it, but there's one more thing I want to know. When Diamante puts the ball in her mouth, will she disappear from me?

Giannino: No sir. In fact you'll be able to see each other and still be invisible to everyone else.

Gerozzo: I love it; and since I feel so powerful today, I want to try something of my own.

Giannino: Just don't scandalize everybody. But look, there, now we can try it out.

Gerozzo: What, where, who's coming?

Giannino: I think that's Federigo down there. Yes that's him. Quick, put the ball in your mouth, quick before he sees you.

Gerozzo: There, it's done.

Giannino: Be careful, make sure we don't bump into you; and don't say a word until he's left.

Gerozzo: Leave it to me.

Giannino: Look, he's walking slowly. Let's walk that way and greet him. (to Federigo) Messer Federigo . . . Good day to you sir.

Scene III

(Federigo, Giannino, Gerozzo)

Federigo: Oh Giannino, what are you up to? Tell me, what happened to your master? Does he need the wizard?

Giannino: I don't think so. He's too fainthearted to get involved with enchantments.

Federigo: I hope he doesn't make a decision when it's too late: he's leaving tomorrow morning.

Giannino: All right. Money will have to make up for his fear.

Federigo: I feel sorry for him, and for all lovers. I would gladly sacrifice myself and what I own to console them.

Giannino: That's just like a kind and virtuous gentleman.

Federigo: I'm very glad I found you; now there's no need for me to go home.

Giannino: I'm glad too. I wouldn't want to inconvenience you.

Federigo: Do you want me to do anything?

Giannino: Not for now, but I'll remember your offer.

Federigo: Call on me if you need me. *(exit)*

Giannino: Oh master! Hey, where are you? Don't take it out yet, wait a second. All right, he's gone, make yourself visible: *(Gerozzo just stands there giggling)* Hey there, don't worry, have no fear. . .) What's going on? Well, what a chump I am; he's left me here to hold up the lampposts.

Gerozzo: Ha...ha...ha...ha... ha...

Giannino: But wait, I think I heard him laughing.

Gerozzo: Ha...ha...ha...ha... (almost chokes on the ball in his mouth, then spits it out)

Giannino: ("sees" him) You're really enjoying yourself aren't you?

Gerozzo: If this thing hadn't popped out from so much laughing, I would have made you lose your patience.

Giannino: There's no danger of that. You would only have hurt your chances more. But what was so funny?

Gerozzo: The way you were feeling your way around like the guy trying to pin the tail on the mule.

Giannino: You mean the donkey; but come on, let's get to where we're going.

Gerozzo: Let's go, I'm all aflame, and I can't wait to put the iron in the fire.

Giannino: Are you sure you're ready?

Gerozzo: And willing.

Giannino: Come along then.

Gerozzo: You go first.

Giannino: Make sure you keep quiet. If her mother says something you don't like, make like a deaf merchant.

Gerozzo: What do you mean a deaf merchant?

Giannino: They only hear what they want to hear.

Gerozzo: Right, I got that!

Giannino: There's the door: put the wax ball in your
 mouth and then I'll knock.

Gerozzo: There, it's in.

Giannino: Keep your wits about you and when she comes
 down, remember, don't say a word.

Gerozzo: Who do you think you're dealing with, an
 idiot? I know what to do. Knock and get her
 out here.

Giannino: *(knocks. . . no answer)* The devil take her
 ears! *(knocks again)*

Scene IV

(Antonia, Giannino, Gerozzo)

Antonia: *(opening the door)* What's all this
 commotion?

Giannino: May God keep you happy.

Antonia: Who do you think you are, the master of the
 place?

Giannino: Don't get your dander up.

Antonia: Try to be a little more discreet next time.

Giannino: Please forgive me.

Antonia: All right, all right. What are you trying to
 do? Break down the door?

Giannino: No ma'am; it's only that I'm so anxious to
 serve my master. You know how his affliction
 weighs on me.

Antonia: Ha! If he were really afflicted . . .

Giannino: What do you mean. He's practically on his death bed, and only you can save him.

Antonia: His wallet will save him.

Giannino: Well he's giving you two ducats.

Antonia: What two ducats? Does he think we're starving? Tightwad! Skinflint! If I wanted to make this my business I'd get more than sixty from many others; I was only doing it for less out of pity: so if you have nothing more to offer, you'd better get out of here.

Giannino: That's enough, that's good, he went in. Oh this is great! He thinks you didn't see him.

Antonia: You've got some boss. And what a lover! Well now what else is there to do.

Giannino: Don't you know? Go inside and take care of everything just as Carletto told you. And don't open the door for anybody until I come back.

Antonia: That's what I'll do. (exit)

Giannino: Gerozzo's probably got his hands full with that wench Sandra by now, thinking she's his Diamante. What caresses, what sweet discourses. If only I had an eye and an ear in that room. Now while the vulture feasts on that crowbait, I'd better find Federigo and take him to Fiammetta. Now he'll get his wish: the day he's so longed for is finally

here. But before he burns up completely and there's nothing left of him I'd better put out his fire, or at least cool him down a bit by letting him drink at that lovely little spring. (*knocks*)

Scene V

(*Federigo, Giannino*)

Federigo: Oh dear Giannino, how did everything go?

Giannino: Very well. Let's go inside where I'll show you what to do, and we can get your affair underway.

Federigo: Come on in.

Scene VI

(*Veronica*)

Oh, my life is a mess! I think I waited too long. It's all Giannino's fault - so much trouble to carry this off. But you know I wanted to see how it went with Federigo. Instead I had to leave that poor girl all alone: Lord, look out for her. If they don't do it today they'll have to scratch, you know where, and often too. Fiammetta's promised me that as soon as the marriage is revealed, she'll give me a nice tip. Oh dear, I'd better get moving. I have a long trot ahead of me. I hope they haven't eaten yet or I'll get yelled at by my mistress.

Scene VII

(Giannino, Carletto, Federigo)

Giannino: We should have eaten first.

Carletto: Especially since dinner was all ready.

Federigo: Well, this morning I drank a couple of glasses of malvasia and had a couple of biscuits, so I'm not hungry at all.

Giannino: I know what ails you; you're afraid to live too long.

Federigo: You know, I'm burning with love and desire, and yet I feel like something strange is about to happen.

Giannino: Well, let's go to your rendezvous.

Federigo: *(indicating Carletto)* Shouldn't he change clothes?

Giannino: What's the difference? Let him stay like that until tonight, I may need him again.

Federigo: As you wish. *(to Carletto)* Quick, go in the house.

Giannino: Carletto, wait for me inside; I'll be back for dinner here.

Federigo: Understand? Don't eat without him!

Carletto: Yes sir. *(leaves)*

Giannino: Here's the key that'll soon make you happy.

Federigo: Yes, here's the key in whose power are housed all my hopes, my comfort, my delight and my good.

Giannino: Let's go. I'll make sure it's as kind to you as you've been to me.

Federigo: Don't worry Giannino, you'll have good reason to always speak well of me.

Giannino: (*aside*) I hope so. (*to Federigo*) Here we are.

Federigo: We've reached the inn - the harbor of my well being.

Giannino: (*bowing*) Federigo, sir . . . enter.

Federigo: Now is the time for action, not words!

Giannino: Don't forget what to do first.

Federigo: Have no fear. (*enters*)

Giannino: Oh Lord. What happiness, what bliss they'll share. What sweet words, what fervent sighs will launch their amorous games. May their fortune prosper and give them happiness, who by age, beauty and courtesy are so worthy of each other's love. Well then, let them take their pleasure one way, while I take mine in another; for I don't believe mine will do me less good than theirs.

Scene VIII

(*Madonna Albiera, Veronica, Giannino*)

Albiera: Imbecile! You shouldn't have come so soon.

Veronica: But you told me to come at dinner time.

Giannino: *(aside)* Oh no, that looks like my mistress,
 and the other one's Veronica.

Albiera: Right! At dinner time; when these things
 were cooked.

Veronica: Forgive me, mistress. I misunderstood you.

Giannino: It's them for sure. Oh Lord! We're ruined.
 I'd better take off before they see me.
 (exit)

Albiera: Blockhead! Is there ever a time when you
 don't get things wrong. Well, maybe you did
 me a favor without wanting to, because about
 an hour ago the abbess started complaining of
 stomach pains and headaches. She can't seem
 to find any relief, and all the sisters are
 falling all over themselves trying to help. I
 didn't want to be in the way, so I left with
 Madonna Francesca's maid and came here where
 I found you. And it's a good thing I ran
 into you, otherwise all this food would have
 gone to waste; instead now we can put it to
 good use at home.

Scene IX

(Sandra, Gerozzo, Madonna Albiera, Veronica)

Sandra: *(opens the door . . . to Gerozzo)* I'm walk-
 ing right out if you don't stop it.

Gerozzo: Ah, double crosser! So you won't wait for the good part.

Albiera: (to Veronica) But tell me; what's going on at home?

Veronica: They were getting ready to eat.

Sandra: Oh my God! Wait, wait, stop. People are coming.

Gerozzo: Don't worry about that, here, put this in your mouth.

Albiera: What's all that commotion on our neighbor's doorstep?

Veronica: I don't know.

Sandra: How strange you look. Quick, let's go inside, hurry up.

Gerozzo: Quick, put this in your mouth.

Albiera: Isn't that Gerozzo? Go take a look, Veronica.

Veronica: I'm afraid.

Sandra: Go inside they're coming this way. Damn you, inside.

Gerozzo: Be still, don't move, keep it in your mouth and you'll see wonders.

Albiera: It's him I tell you, it's him for sure.

Veronica: Sir, what's going on.

Sandra: Oh no; let's get inside they're almost here.

Gerozzo: Shut your mouth and keep it closed, and you'll see miracles.

Albiera: (spots Gerozzo) So, look at that old pervert
- no shame! And who's that floozy with him;
and they have the nerve to just stand there
when they should be ashamed of themselves!
(to Gerozzo) Gerozzo, what craziness is
this? (Gerozzo's trying to be "invisible")
Look at that drunken lout, he won't even an-
swer; and her, that shameless hussy, she just
stands there, that slut. Didn't you have
enough room in the house that you had to come
outside where everybody could see you? Oh
see what trickery! Gerozzo, ah Gerozzo! Is
this any way to behave? To shame yourself
and everyone else? But I promise you, you
old fool, I'll tear your heart out. And you,
you miserable wretch, I'll gouge out your
eyes. So you won't answer, eh, you double
crossers.

Sandra: Dear lady it's all his doing, he kept me here
against my will.

Albiera: I wouldn't put it past him. (to Gerozzo)
Move you, speak up, filthy dog.

Gerozzo: Stay away from me you old bitch, two timer,
she-devil; go to hell.

Albiera: You old scoundrel. Just listen to that
nerve.

Gerozzo: Nerve? Me? Whore!

Albiera: And he wants to be right, too, the old degenerate.

Gerozzo: You dare talk to me this way?

Albiera: He's either possessed, or gone completely crazy.

Gerozzo: Now I finally see the light. That's why so many trips to the convent: betrayer! Oh you miraculous little ball! I've been had. Is this what I deserve?

Albiera: I've always treated you better than you deserved.

Gerozzo: And now you've fixed it so I'll never be able to show my face in public again.

Albiera: Why don't you shut up.

Veronica: Please go in the house.

Albiera: You're right, he's completely out of his mind.

Gerozzo: Shut up is it? Inside you say? Out of my mind? You old witch, you dare do this to me?

Albiera: Why you vicious old scoundrel. What have I done to you? Out with it, you lush.

Gerozzo: The horns, the horns, the horns! Now do you get it?

Albiera: If it weren't for the honor of our daughter, I'd fix you so you'd be an eternal example to all the other lunatics around here.

Veronica: Mistress, let's go, it scares me to look at him.

Gerozzo: Oh, so you're still threatening me? It's not enough that you've made me a cuckold?

Albiera: I feel like biting his nose off.

Gerozzo: Sure, kill me some more: but just you wait, you'll see: I'll cook your goose all right.

Albiera: And what do you think you're going to do?

Gerozzo: I'll have you locked up like all the other whores.

Albiera: Oh why don't you pull up your own britches you hypocrite.

Gerozzo: (to Sandra) Come on Diamante. Let's get out of here. She's disgraced me for life.

Sandra: Oh sure, we made a great spectacle. (exit)

Albiera: How's that for luck, eh? But I tell you, as soon as my brother gets here - and it shouldn't be long now - and before the children find out about it, I'll have him in a straitjacket and dragged around Florence like the lunatic he is. See, he said: "Let's go Diamante." He probably thinks that girl is Alberto Catelani's wife, who's been in the country for more than six days. I'm sure somebody's made him believe some strange tale, since he thought no one could see him. On the other hand he may have really cracked

up. I don't dare imagine where all this is going to take us. That one (*indicating Sandra offstage*) is surely some prostitute: Veronica, what do you think?

Veronica: Dear me, ma'am, I'm bewildered.

Albiera: May God and his mother both help us.

Veronica: Yes, it's best to put ourselves in their hands.

Albiera: Maybe it's not so bad. I don't think anyone saw or heard us, since at this hour everybody's having dinner. But Lord help us. I'm nearly out of my wits. Let me go find my uncle the doctor. (*aside parenthetically*) - And anyway I'm not too hungry, since we certainly had a big breakfast at the convent this morning - I want to get his advice about these new and strange goings on. (*to Veronica*) Meanwhile, you go in the house, and if Riccardo hasn't come home yet, and Fiammeta hasn't eaten yet, keep her company. Make sure you don't go out before I come home.

Veronica: Alas, dear mistress, I hope this turns out all right.

Albiera: Get moving, I'll pay a little visit to the doctor, who's always home these days, sick with the gout. (*leaves*)

Veronica: Go, and may God console you. (to the audience) What rotten luck, that just today the abbess had to go and get sick, and my mistress had to come home early and mess up all our plans. Poor me! Unhappy Giannino! Miserable Federigo! Unfortunate Fiammetta! What a terrible thing! Soon all our tricks will be discovered! What will become of us? Whoever would have thought this? And where in God's name is Federigo now? What the devil is Giannino doing? And who led the old man to that good for nothing woman?

Scene X

(Giannino, Veronica)

Giannino: Oh look there, Veronica is alone.
Veronica: And in that place.
Giannino: I'd better find out where our mistress is.
Veronica: Lord have mercy. This is too much for me.
Giannino: Hey, Veronica.
Veronica: Oh Giannino the mistress has . . .
Giannino: What does she have? But first tell me, where is she?
Veronica: She went to see her uncle, Maestro Pagolo.
Giannino: What does she need with him?
Veronica: His advice.
Giannino: About what?

Veronica: Goodness! The old man, he's . . .

Giannino: He's what? But wait, come with me, let's go inside, and in the house you can tell me everything that's happened.

Veronica: Go ahead, this is better than the Sicilian Vespers.

Scene XI

(Gerozzo)

Gerozzo: I can't find peace anymore. Between my passion and my rage I don't know where I am. Diamante's mad at me, and won't let me come anywhere near her, saying I've deceived and insulted her. That wife of mine - that good for nothing - not only has she turned me into a billygoat, but she broke the spell too, which is the main reason Diamante won't please me now. In fact, she's so peeved and aggravated, that as a wise and sensible man I left, otherwise her mother would have heard us, and pitched in with her own insults. That's why I can't wait to find Giannino and tell him all about this tragedy. But where do you think I could find him? At home, that's it, at home. But wait, that she-devil's probably there too. And what if she is, who cares? I'm the man around here, and

unless I'm deceived, the boss too. Oh look there, he's coming out. Hey Giannino!

Scene XII

(*Giannino, Gerozzo*)

Giannino: (to himself) May Heaven strike us down.

Gerozzo: Giannino, can't you hear? Hey there, Giannino!

Giannino: And the earth swallow us up.

Gerozzo: Hey Giannino, what the hell . . .

Giannino: Oh master!

Gerozzo: I thought you'd gone deaf.

Giannino: I was anxious to find you.

Gerozzo: It's I who wanted to find you. I have to tell you how that business with the spell went, and also what my wife has done to me.

Giannino: Don't trouble yourself, I'm already better informed than you.

Gerozzo: What do you mean? How did you find out?

Giannino: From the wizard himself. And believe me, you're the one to blame.

Gerozzo: Why?

Giannino: Because your wife is good and kind; it's you, not her, that made the mistake.

Gerozzo: And how did I do that?

Giannino: You changed balls.

Gerozzo: Oh! Does that matter?

Giannino: Of course! You gave Sandra the one meant for you, and took hers for yourself.

Gerozzo: Why of course! That's probably what happened.

Giannino: Without a doubt. That's what the wizard just told me.

Gerozzo: Oh dear! What am I to do? Oh my dear precious wife.

Giannino: You certainly shamed her.

Gerozzo: Where is she now?

Giannino: I don't know, maybe in her room crying.

Gerozzo: I'm ruined. I'm dead, Giannino, if you don't find some way to help me.

Giannino: Don't worry. The magician is at your disposal and he's taking care of everything.

Gerozzo: Really? May he be blessed a thousand times over. What does he want me to do?

Giannino: I'll tell you; but listen carefully and pay close attention, and make sure you do exactly as I say.

Gerozzo: Don't worry, I'm ready to do exactly what he wants.

Giannino: For now, go around the corner here, to Mastro Arrigo, the barber, and don't leave his shop until I come for you.

Gerozzo: All right, I'm going; don't forget about me.

Giannino: I won't master. (*to the audience*) Well, what do I do now? Is there a way out of this? I came out with one plan in mind, and right away I got myself in hot water. But even so, unexpectedly, I think I've found a nice way to fix everything. I think I'll take the plan along a whole new road; one that's better, easier, and more attainable.

Scene XIII

(*Damiano, Giannino, Carletto - still in disguise*)

Damiano: (*to himself*) It's true that whoever has children makes a lot of enemies.

Giannino: But who would ever figure that that wretch would follow the old man out into the street?

Damiano: There's never a time I come home that I don't find the house full of people.

Giannino: Who's that coming this way grumbling?

Damiano: I went to open the back door and found it locked from inside.

Giannino: Listen, he's complaining about something.

Damiano: I knocked, I'd swear someone came to the window, but shout as I might, no one would open up.

Giannino: That looks like Federigo's father.

Damiano: So I had to tie my mule to the door, and came all the way around with my spurs on, to see

if they'll open up from the front here. I'll have to knock, since I don't have the key to this door.

Giannino: Oh no, we're doomed! It's him for sure.

Damiano: Oh well, I guess that's the way it'll have to be.

Giannino: Damn it! He's heading for the door, they probably wouldn't let him in through the back; damn, he's knocking already.

Damiano: (*knocking on the door*)

Carletto: (*his face blackened and dressed like a wizard*) "Saalam, alacam, malakah."

Damiano: (*taken aback*) Hey this is my house; how did you get in?

Carletto: "Hasheesh, boozah, baklava', baccala'."

Damiano: Mercy! Where did this black dog come from?

Carletto: "Farajee, scimuni, imbeci."

Giannino: My God, he's doing all right! What a great idea! I'd better go help him.

Damiano: Talk, and speak English so I can understand you.

Giannino: (*to Damiano*) How can he do that if he's from Barbary? You'd better keep away my good man or he might harm you.

Damiano: Say aren't you Gerozzo's servant?

Giannino: Oh, Damiano, please forgive me.

Damiano: You know this person?

Giannino: By reputation and sight.

Damiano: Who is he?

Giannino: He's a sorcerer, the greatest one alive.

Damiano: What's he doing in my house?

Giannino: We wanted to help out your son.

Damiano: You say I should keep away? And am I to fear harm in my own house?

Carletto: "Haroot, ajeeb, azezeh."

Giannino: You'd better listen to me, I tell you only out of respect.

Damiano: I don't know what to do.

Giannino: I wouldn't go inside for anything in the world.

Damiano: Why not.

Giannino: Don't you hear how angry he is?

Carletto: "Kata`, kata`, baccala`."

Giannino: And since he doesn't know you, he might deal you a blow that would put you out of commission for good.

Damiano: Oh great, I'm caught between the frying pan and the fire.

Carletto: "Mesood, salud, cornut."

Damiano: As if that weren't enough, now he slams the door in my face.

Giannino: Please, be patient.

Damiano: By God, we'll see if anybody can lock me out of my own house.

Giannino: What are you going to do.

Damiano: I'll report this to the Eight of the Guard.
 But since they haven't convened yet I'll
 visit my cousin who's one of them, and then
 we'll see if they'll open up, and who'll keep
 me out.

Giannino: Wait don't be in such a hurry. Who knows?
 Your son . . .

Damiano: My son my eye; while I'm alive, I'm still the
 boss; let me just take off these spurs and
 hang them from my belt; my boots will have to
 do; it's winter anyway. *(exit)*

Giannino: See if fortune hasn't decided to roll up her
 sleeves and deal me her worst . . .
 (indicating Damiano offstage) If only he'd
 give me an hour's breathing room, because
 right about now Federigo should be very con-
 tent; as for everything else, let the chips
 fall where they may. Carletto couldn't have
 been wiser. But I have to find out where
 this cousin of his lives, so I'd better go
 knock; but wait, I think he's left the door
 ajar; Hey Carletto, open up, quickly.

Carletto: Well Giannino, so what do you think, heh.
 Wasn't I great?

Giannino: You were so good that he's gone off to find some relative or other who's supposed to be one of the Eight of the Guard.

Carletto: One of his cousins? Oh no! He wasn't lying.

Giannino: How far away does he live?

Carletto: Oh Jesus! In that new neighborhood, past the Nunziata.

Giannino: That's good. He's walking slowly, the roads are bad, and the house is far away; so I'm sure I'll have enough time to plan the greatest scheme you've ever seen.

Carletto: Whatever you're planning, it had better be fast.

Giannino: Oh it's going to be the greatest trick ever. I'll fix everything, and make everybody happy. Carletto, my buddy, I'll need your help.

Carletto: I'm all yours.

Giannino: First of all, you have to take off that costume, wash up and do everything I say.

Carletto: Shouldn't we have supper first.

Giannino: Don't be silly. We can do that later, because once we're inside and I've explained everything you have to do, I'm going right out again by the back door to get my mistress at her uncle's house.

Carletto: Don't you know they're in there? And your master too.

Giannino: Yes, I know that; they're all going to be part of the plan. Now once I get to the doctor's house, the first battle I'll wage will be with my mistress. If she believes me, everything else will easily fall into place. I just hope she stays there long enough. But what am I saying, she's dealing with her uncle; he's so old and gouty, and she has such a strange and outlandish story to tell him, that they'll be discussing it for quite a while, so I don't doubt I'll find her there. Then, once I talk to her, something good will come of it.

Carletto: Did you consider Riccardo?

Giannino: I'm not worried about him. He'll do whatever I say. Let's go inside now Carletto.

Carletto: Come on in and lock the door.

ACT V
Scene I

(Ambrogio, Carletto, Riccardo)

Ambrogio: I'm going to have to think about all this real well before I get involved.

Carletto: Weren't you listening to Giannino? Didn't we all agree that this way we'd be helping not

only Federigo and Fiammetta, but her brother, her father, and mother too? And not only will this prevent a scandal, but this new kinship will certainly create eternal friendship.

Ambrogio: I just hope it works.

Riccardo: I'm not sure if Giannino can convince my mother.

Ambrogio: Why is that?

Riccardo: This tale he's just made up is so long and tedious that God only knows if it'll have any effect.

Carletto: Don't worry it'll work; but let's get moving, otherwise Giannino will arrive and find us unprepared.

Riccardo: Let's go. Hey Ambrogio, what are you thinking about? Don't worry your Bita won't get lost.

Ambrogio: I know that; I don't doubt she can take care of herself. I'm just thinking about where Giannino's leading us.

Riccardo: Don't let that bother you.

Carletto: Please, let's get moving.

Ambrogio: And after all, I wouldn't want to ruin things for Federigo.

Carletto: What are you talking about? Didn't Giannino explain things to you? You'll be doing him a

very great favor. There's nothing else you could do that would please him more, and put him more in your debt.

Ambrogio: All right, tell me what I have to do.

Carletto: Come with me; here's the key Giannino gave me, and there's the door.

Ambrogio: Open and let's go in.

Carletto: (*opening*) There; now go inside right away.

Riccardo: Ambrogio, come in.

Carletto: There you go. (*to the audience*) Thank God! Now let me take care of that other business. Boy I've really cooked up a good one this time. Giannino, you'll love this. Oh what a bellyache I'll give them! They've eaten fish, now they'll shit the bones. As a matter of fact, I'm going to stick it to them right away, as soon as they come out. So why waste any more time, let me knock.

Scene II

(*Madonna Antonia, Carletto, Sandra*)

Antonia: Who's there?

Carletto: Madonna Antonia, come down and bring Sandra with you.

Antonia: Hold your horses, we're coming.

Carletto: (*aside*) What a party you'll witness now. If my wits don't fail me you'll (*indicating*

Antonia and Sandra) soon be singing a different tune.

Antonia: (opens the door) Here I am Carletto; and here's Sandra too.

Carletto: Sandra has caused your ruin, hers, and Giannino's too.

Antonia: Oh dear! What can this be?

Sandra: And what did I do?

Carletto: You have the nerve to ask what you did? Why did you come out in the street with the old man! Didn't you see his fly was open?

Sandra: I couldn't do anything else.

Carletto: What are you saying?

Sandra: I couldn't stomach him anymore.

Carletto: Why not?

Sandra: He had his mouth constantly in my face.

Carletto: And is that such a big deal?

Sandra: That wouldn't have bothered me so much; but his breath stinks worse than a butcher shop; and it made my stomach turn so, that I almost threw up six times. So I had to get away from him; but run here, run there, he was always on top of me. Finally, since there was nowhere else to hide, I was forced to run outside thinking he'd never follow me.

Antonia: Carletto, you see, she's not as much to blame as you think.

Carletto: Well, it's certainly true that he's got an ugly smell, so I've been told many times.

Antonia: Bad breath? Jesus! I've seen it break up families.

Carletto: I agree. But why come outside?

Sandra: Because I couldn't stand it anymore, I tell you I was about to vomit.

Carletto: Then why didn't you at least run back in the house when you saw his wife?

Sandra: If only I could have.

Carletto: What do you mean?

Sandra: He grabbed me and shoved that little ball in my mouth and made me stay put, all the time saying: "Stand still, don't worry, you're invisible."

Carletto: And didn't you know that? Didn't I tell you everything before?

Sandra: Sure, but I never imagined that was his wife.

Carletto: You should have figured it out.

Antonia: Well, how has it all ended up?

Carletto: Alberto, the real owner of the house, has been told by Gerozzo's wife about the shame and disgrace you've brought on his wife and mother-in-law. Now he's looking to have you two, and Giannino, arrested, and I'm sure the Chief of Police is already looking for you.

Sandra: What can they do to us?

Carletto: I'll tell you: one will get the pillary, the other the back of an ass, and Giannino the galleys for sure.

Sandra: For such a trifle?

Carletto: And does it seem a trifle to you to bring disgrace on an honest girl and a virtuous mother, and from a good family?

Antonia: What does she know about these things? Oh look where I've let myself be taken in my old age, and for what! Oh wretched me.

Sandra: Dear mother, goodness, are you crying?

Antonia: You little fool, don't you realize what we've done because of that miserable old man?

Sandra: And I didn't really want to come.

Antonia: Oh this is terrible!

Carletto: Come now, this is not the time to start crying, that won't do any good. We have to remedy the situation.

Antonia: Why, is there a remedy?

Carletto: Listen to me; Giannino's run away beyond the walls, where he's waiting for me. He sent me to you, begging that for both his sake and yours you help him out with some money; he didn't want to go back to the house for fear of his mistress and also so the cops wouldn't catch him.

Antonia: And what if he gets money, what will he do?

Carletto: He hopes to escape to Bologna or Rome; he can find a bed to sleep in anywhere.

Antonia: What's in it for us?

Carletto: He not being taken, and the old man not knowing who you are, who could possibly accuse you? That way, you two would avoid the pillary or the stake, and he the galley.

Antonia: And all this good depends on money?

Carletto: Nothing else!

Antonia: Dear me! Bring him these two ducats he gave me.

Sandra: Here, he can have mine too.

Antonia: Do you think they'll be enough?

Sandra: Take them; and get going.

Antonia: He's right; quickly take these. And I also want him to have this other six lire that I was planning to use to redeem something I pawned.

Sandra: And here, I want to give him this ring; take it and tell him to sell it and enjoy the money with my love.

Carletto: (*aside*) By God, these two are putting on some show (*to them*) All right let's get out of here right now, before the family gets here and has you thrown in prison.

Antonia: Yes, yes, Sandra, let's go.

Sandra: Goodbye Carletto, tell Giannino to take heart, for our sake.

Antonia: Hey come along quickly, I feel as if we just slipped out of the hands of the hangman.

Sandra: Me too, dear mother, me too. (exit)

Carletto: (aside) Yes, that's right, go ahead. You got it up the ass this time. See what a great prank! It went a thousand times better than I'd ever imagined; since besides getting back what they thought they'd earned, from one I got these six lire, and from the other this ring; it's just like penance. But let me go in the house now and find out from my master - if he's in there - how that business with the Eight of the Guard turned out. (exit)

Scene III

(Madonna Albiera, Giannino)

Albiera: So that's the way things stand.

Giannino: Just as I've told you; no more no less.

Albiera: You really made him think she was Diamante?

Giannino: Don't you believe me?

Albiera: Couldn't you at least have had some regard for the fact that he's my husband?

Giannino: I tried to do the best I could.

Albiera: Haven't you heard about the way we insulted each other?

Giannino: That doesn't matter, it will all be forgotten. I'll save your honor and his.

Albiera: So, now Federigo is in the house with Fiammetta?

Giannino: That's right! Like I said, I've sent Riccardo and a friend of his over there, to make believe they've tied him up, so we can tell his father, Damiano, that you've caught him in adultery.

Albiera: Is Federigo happy with that?

Giannino: He's delighted! Nothing on earth would have made him happier. This way the match will be made despite the father, and you can be proud to have married your daughter to such a fine young man.

Albiera: That's right, because he's rich - the most important thing - an only son, and young, handsome, and noble; but I hope his father goes along with it.

Giannino: He'll go along whether he likes it or not; don't you know the law? And as for the damage that's been done, it doesn't pay to cry about it. I'd better go set the old man's mind at ease before anything else.

Albiera: You're not coming up?

Giannino: You go inside, and do what I said. Mean-
while, I'll take care of what's left to be
done.

Albiera: All right, go ahead.

Giannino: Right, I'll go to the barber shop where he's
waiting for me. (*exit*)

Albiera: (*alone*) See what, without expecting it, may
come out of this whole predicament? But oh,
these scoundrels we have for servants! I
don't know why I didn't crack his face open.
And where do they get the nerve to make a
laughing stock of their own masters. But I'd
better remember my uncle Pagolo's advice:
this matter is much too important; that's why
I let him get away with it so easy. If I'd
made a big fuss about it, I would have
chopped wood on my own back, as they say.
And anyway this whole business certainly
wouldn't have turned out as well as it has if
he hadn't put his wits to it. It's Fiammetta
that really surprised me! How is it possible
that I never suspected anything? But after
all you can watch them all you want; the rest
is in God's hands. Now let the Lord be
praised! I'd better knock. But wait I have
the key. (*goes in*)

Scene IV

(Gerozzo, Giannino)

- Gerozzo: What are you talking about? What do I have to do?
- Giannino: You have to touch your wife and your maid just above the waistband; and they'll immediately forget everything they saw and heard.
- Gerozzo: You really think so?
- Giannino: Absolutely.
- Gerozzo: Should I touch the flesh or their clothes?
- Giannino: Either way; the important thing is that they come out today.
- Gerozzo: Let's go in the house, since you say the ball hasn't lost its power, and I have to be invisible when I do it.
- Giannino: That's right, otherwise it won't work. But wait, if we don't want to screw up we'd better see which is the right one.
- Gerozzo: Yes, yes that's a wise thing to do; I wouldn't want to be fooled again. Here's both of them.
- Giannino: Put this one in your mouth, let's see if it's the right one.
- Gerozzo: Can you see me?
- Giannino: Yes; here try this other one.
- Gerozzo: Where am I?

Giannino: In "Emaus"; that's the one, that's it; take it out, quick!

Gerozzo: Let me throw this other one away, so I won't make another mistake.

Giannino: Very wise! But oh, listen, I hear someone at the door. Quick, put it in your mouth and who cares who it is.

Gerozzo: It's in.

Giannino: Oh good, it's them. As soon you've done the deed, go to the barber's and wait for me there, understand? But remember as soon as you turn the corner, take the little ball out of your mouth.

Gerozzo: Yes, yes, don't worry.

Giannino: Now keep your mouth shut.

Scene V

(Madonna Albiera, Veronica, Giannino, Gerozzo)

(throughout much of this scene Gerozzo thinking himself invisible is flitting about trying to touch the two women)

Albiera: Well Veronica, what do you think of that husband of mine? You saw and heard how he "honored" me?

Veronica: Good Lord! I was flabbergasted.

Albiera: Isn't that Giannino over there?

Veronica: Yes ma'am.

Albiera: Call him.

Veronica: Oh Giannino!

Giannino: Who's calling me?

Veronica: I was. Come over here, our mistress wants to talk to you.

Albiera: (*pretending not to see her husband*) Have you seen Gerozzo?

Giannino: No ma'am.

Albiera: I can believe it, after the way he treated me.

Veronica: I never saw him so worked up.

Giannino: What caused it?

Albiera: Oh, you almost made me say a bad word.

Veronica: Come now madam, calm yourself. (*Gerozzo finally succeeds in touching his wife and maid and sneaks away*).

Giannino: That's enough now; didn't see? Your troubles are over.

Albiera: Poor man! You know, my brothers picked him out for me! But at least what he lacks in brains he makes up for in property.

Giannino: Both of you go inside now and don't talk about this business anymore. Madonna Albiera, I want you to send Veronica out right away to bring him home. (*to Veronica*) And you, make believe you haven't laid eyes on him all day. (*to Albiera*) Then, when he's in the house tell him everything I told

you, just the way we discussed. If Carletto's there send him out, because I'm going to need him. But above all don't let the old man out of the house until I come back myself or send for him.

Albiera: I'll do as you say. (to Veronica) Come along.

Veronica: I've been waiting for you!

Giannino: Slowly but surely, as the saying goes. Fortune, don't get in my way now, and I swear I'll be your slave forever. I'd better go to the barber shop now and find Gerozzo. But look he's coming this way. (to Gerozzo) Hey master!

Scene VI

(Gerozzo, Giannino, Veronica)

Gerozzo: Here I am Giannino; any news?

Giannino: The ship's in port.

Gerozzo: What did you think of my gallantries, eh? And so lightly they never felt a thing!

Giannino: I think you even outfoxed master Muccio.

Gerozzo: I only have to put my mind to something.

Giannino: Things come so easy to you.

Gerozzo: And you know they were starting to say bad things about me.

Giannino: Master wait, I see Veronica coming out; now we'll see if it worked.

Gerozzo: Where is she?

Giannino: See her? She's coming this way.

Gerozzo: Ask her what she wants.

Giannino: Veronica, what are you looking for?

Veronica: Oh, here's our master; Gerozzo, I'm so glad I found you.

Gerozzo: What do you want from me?

Veronica: Donna Albiera sent me to tell you to come home right away.

Giannino: What does she want now?

Veronica: She needs very much to talk to you, and she's been complaining that she hasn't seen you all day.

Gerozzo: Did anything happen?

Veronica: All I know is that she needs to see you about something very important.

Gerozzo: It's probably nothing.

Veronica: On the contrary, she says it'll make you very happy.

Gerozzo: And she says she hasn't seen me at all today?

Veronica: No sir.

Gerozzo: And neither have you?

Veronica: Me neither.

Gerozzo: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Look at this marvel! Giannino, did you hear that?

Giannino: I was sure it would work.

Gerozzo: See that, it doesn't pay to worry. I'm completely relieved and satisfied. Veronica, hurry, go in the house and tell her I'll be right in.

Veronica: Oh dear! My kind and dear master. (exit)

Gerozzo: Aren't these charms something else? I used to think they were a big joke; but now I'd put my hand in the fire if they asked me.

Giannino: Whew!

Gerozzo: Giannino listen. I almost forgot; what shall we do now with Diamante, she was really upset, and I think her mother heard all the commotion.

Giannino: I want you to leave all that up to me, but you must never speak about this to a living soul, nor about the spell. The magician is leaving tomorrow morning and I'd sooner feed my body to the fish than ever talk about this. They won't breathe a word of it for their honor's sake; and God forbid it should ever reach Alberto's ears he might just play a nasty trick on me, you, and them.

Gerozzo: Yes, yes; you talk smarter than the crab who's got two mouths; dangers should be avoided. But after all running away from me wasn't right either.

Giannino: Forget about that; go inside now and see what the good news is.

Gerozzo: And you?

Giannino: I'm going to make peace with Diamante. I'll tell her just what I told you, and if it's necessary, her mother too.

Gerozzo: That's good. Then later you'll let me know what they said. But I can't wait to find out what my wife wants, I'm going. (exit)

Giannino: Before I do anything else I want to go see if Carletto did what he was supposed to do with those two "good women," because now's the time, if they haven't left yet, to send them on their way, since I have no more need of their services. That Sandra is some piece of work! If I hadn't given her money . . . But look, there's Carletto.

Scene VII

(*Carletto, Giannino*)

Carletto: Ah, ah, ah, ah!

Giannino: What's so funny? And what's that ring on your finger?

Carletto: You'll soon find out, then we'll laugh about it together.

Giannino: What about those two?

Carletto: I got rid of them.

Giannino: Did Sandra say why she ran outside?
Carletto: Now's not the time, I'll tell you everything later.
Giannino: And Federigo? That's the most important thing; what did he say?
Carletto: He's very pleased with her; and he's so happy he's jumping out of his skin.
Giannino: Thank heaven!
Carletto: And he and Donna Alberia gave each other a wonderful reception; now they're both dying to see things work out according to our plans.
Giannino: Quick, go in the house, and if Damiano hasn't returned, wait for him.
Carletto: I was just there and he wasn't home yet.
Giannino: Get moving and wait for him, and put the rest of our plans in effect.
Carletto: You can count on me. (exit)
Giannino: Now I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to go home, just to see what Gerozzo has to say; let me get going.

Scene VIII

(*Madonna Albiera, Gerozzo, Giannino*)

Albiera: For the love of God don't go outside.
Gerozzo: Let me go. I want to find Giannino and see what he thinks.

Giannino: Oh look, there, by luck he's just coming out.
Let me go meet him. (to Gerozzo) May God
give you peace my good master.

Gerozzo: Oh Giannino, I have something to tell you, in
fact it's so marvelous you'll be amazed.

Giannino: What is it?

Albiera: You can tell him in the house.

Gerozzo: Let's go. You won't believe this. But wait,
Giannino, stay out here for a minute.
Albiera, you go upstairs, we'll be right
there.

Albiera: All right, in God's name. (exit)

Gerozzo: Now listen to me, and you'll hear something
unbelievable.

Giannino: Go on.

Gerozzo: That witch doctor pulled a fast one.

Giannino: How?

Gerozzo: Our Fiammetta is in love with Federigo; she's
the one who you've been saying goes to bed
with him every night.

Giannino: How do you know?

Gerozzo: I just found out from my wife. She came home
from the monastery unexpectedly and found
them on top of each other in the bedroom.

Giannino: You must be crazy.

Gerozzo: No, listen. She recognized Federigo very
well and started screaming. Well wouldn't

you know it, just then Riccardo had come back home with a friend of his who wanted to borrow the Furioso. When they heard the screams, they both ran upstairs, and, to make a long story short, they grabbed him and tied him up.

Giannino: I'm shocked; what do you plan to do?

Gerozzo: He's either got to marry her, or give her a dowry, and I won't settle for less than three thousand in gold.

Giannino: Are you sure you captured him?

Gerozzo: You can see for yourself.

Giannino: So he ate the cheese in the trap.

Gerozzo: Oo-la-la!

Giannino: What does he have to say?

Gerozzo: I haven't spoken to him yet; I was waiting for you; since being a friend of his you may be able to predispose him to this match without any more beating around the bush.

Giannino: So this was the business he had to take care of.

Gerozzo: That's right. His friend had him wait until we were all out of the house. I think they set a nice trap for him.

Giannino: I can't believe it.

Gerozzo: Let's go in and you can see for yourself.

Scene IX

(Damiano, Carletto)

Damiano: (alone) I'll tell you, I didn't accomplish a thing. I trekked all the way to the Porta Pinti and found out he wasn't having supper at home, so I never got to talk to him. But at least I drank a couple of glasses and I feel much better. God willing I'll go see him at his office this time tomorrow. Now since I've reached the house let me knock once more and see if by chance Carletto or Federigo will come to the window or answer the door. Maybe one of them can tell me what that Moor is doing in my house: (starts knocking) since my wife stayed in the country with the maids. (knocks again)

Carletto: (at the window) Who's there?

Damiano: Can't you see?

Carletto: (opens the door) Oh master, welcome home.

Damiano: Where's Federigo?

Carletto: That's hard to say.

Damiano: Don't play games with me. What do you mean "it's hard to say"? Where's that beastly Arab?

Carletto: May God blast him!

Damiano: And send him to hell! Let's have it, what were you all up to?

Carletto: He was here on account of . . .

Damiano: Of who?

Carletto: Of your son.

Damiano: Why did he need that guy?

Carletto: He's ruined him.

Damiano: What do you mean, ruined?

Carletto: Just what I said; ruined.

Damiano: Oh dear! Let's have it right now. What's happened to my son? What did he make him do?

Carletto: Well, somehow - don't ask me how - he transported him by some kind of spell to the house of this girl he's in love with; and to make a long story short, her brother, her father, and her mother caught them in the act.

Damiano: Oh no! What are you saying?

Carletto: So they grabbed him and tied him up. Now they want to force him to marry her; or else they want four thousand ducats so she can marry someone else.

Damiano: I'm ruined. I thought he'd done something stupid, but nothing this bad. What happened to that witch doctor?

Carletto: He took off as soon as he heard something had gone wrong.

Damiano: He must be a knave or a scoundrel.

Carletto: A thief and a swindler too.

Damiano: Who's the girl? Let's hope she's decent and
 from a good family.

Carletto: She's the daughter of our neighbor, Gerozzo.

Damiano: I'm not surprised. She's the one he's always
 asking to marry.

Scene X

(Giannino, Carletto and Damiano)

Giannino: You couldn't ask for better timing.

Carletto: *(to Damiano)* Oh look! There's their
 servant.

Giannino: *(aside)* Let me go meet them.

Carletto: See, he's surely coming to talk to you.

Damiano: Where is he?

Carletto: Right here. See him?

Giannino: May God keep you happy Damiano; my compli-
 ments.

Damiano: What's happened to my son?

Giannino: He's fine; if you consent to let him marry
 Gerozzo's daughter Fiammetta, whom he loves
 with all his heart. But you really have no
 choice, unless, to your everlasting shame,
 you'd rather give her a dowry, which will
 probably amount to quite a few thousand;
 that's what the law says.

Damiano: He knows very well that I would have
 consented very willingly if it wasn't for

the . . .

Giannino: What's more, he wants me to tell you that if you forbid it, he'll run away in despair and you'll never hear from him again.

Damiano: It looks like fortune has led me where I must either swallow or choke.

Giannino: So you'd better make up your mind quickly, because, if you say no, Gerozzo wants to offer proof, and file an accusation at the Palace of the Podesta'.

Damiano: Can't I at least have a day or two to think about it and discuss this with friends or relatives?

Giannino: What? Do you want to be the talk of the town? Your story will be on the lips of everyone in Florence.

Damiano: Well then, what should I do?

Giannino: Say yes, and quickly.

Damiano: I was hoping to make a different match.

Giannino: This one's better than good. Isn't it enough for you that you're making your son happy?

Damiano: How do Gerozzo and his wife feel about it?

Giannino: They're practically in heaven.

Damiano: Let's go over there, we'll manage something.

Giannino: You're right, let's go, with God's blessing.

Damiano: Carletto, go inside, and go out to the back door where the mule is hitched; untie her,

put her in the stall and make sure she's
cared for.

Carletto: It's as good as done master. (exit)

Damiano: Who would ever have imagined this!

Giannino: Think of it as something ordained in heaven,
and today accomplished on earth; you should
thank God for this blessing.

Damiano: Just the opposite.

Giannino: Do you think it's such a small matter to
marry off a son who's as happy about it as
Federigo is?

Damiano: And do you think it's such a small matter to
put a girl in our house against our will?

Giannino: In truth this girl is of such a nature, that
when you see her and talk to her, I have no
doubt that instead of miserable you'll con-
sider yourself the happiest man on earth.

Damiano: I doubt it; but you never know. It's in
God's hands.

Giannino: Let me knock now so that we can settle this
matter.

Scene XI (and last)

(Gerozzo, Giannino, Damiano, Madonna Albiera)

Gerozzo: Well, Giannino, what did Damiano say?

Giannino: Here he is and he's ready to do as you wish.

Gerozzo: Oh dear Damiano, welcome, welcome to my house.

Damiano: Where's my son?

Albiera: He's upstairs in the bedroom with his lady - if you please - and he's just fine.

Gerozzo: If it hadn't been for the regard I have for you, and myself, and for the great love he bears my daughter Fiammetta, I would have ripped out his heart with my bare hands because of this great dishonor he's done me.

Albiera: Come now, Gerozzo, he's young, and youth is love's complete slave.

Giannino: And love knows no laws.

Damiano: I'm grateful to you. But I can assure you that other men, of greater wisdom and maturity, have undertaken more vile and dangerous deeds, when driven by love's fiery passion.

Giannino: Let's not waste any more time; this wedding should take place right away!

Gerozzo: Damiano, what do you say?

Damiano: Since it seems to be God's will, as well as yours and my son's, let's do as you wish.

Albiera: Let's go in, and there at our leisure we'll make all the arrangements. I can't wait for Federigo to give her the ring. This way, Gerozzo; Damiano, come in; and you, Giannino, come, I want to give you money so you can

order a splendid supper for this evening;
quickly, move along. (exit)

Giannino: I'll be right there. (to the audience)
Thank heaven; everything's been concluded
very well. Gerozzo is delighted, Madonna
Albiera satisfied, Damiano consoled,
Riccardo and Ambrogio glad, Fiammetta very
happy, and Federigo ecstatic. As for
Veronica, Carletto, and myself, no need to
say more; in the midst of so much joy things
can't help but go well for us. But now,
since time has flown by, and supper still
needs to be ordered, before it gets any
later, dear spectators, I send you on your
way, and bid you good evening. In gay
conversation express your delight!

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