



# Beppo Pipetta

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Italian

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*Intermediate*  
*8 min read*

When his first joy at this good fortune was over, Beppo decided to visit his relations. There he met a man in the street who entered into conversation with him, and they chatted for a long time, until they finally went into an inn to refresh themselves with something to eat and drink. “How happens it,” asked his new friend, who was vastly entertained by Beppo’s conversation, “that you, a soldier, carry no knapsack?” “Hm!” said Beppo, “I don’t care to weigh myself down on a march with unnecessary things. I have no effects, and if I need anything, I have a good master who pays all my bills.” “Now,” said the stranger, “I will give you a knapsack, and a very valuable one too; for if you say to any one, ‘Jump in,’ he will jump into the sack.” With these words the stranger took his leave.

“Wait,” thought Beppo; “I will put this to the proof.” And, indeed, a favorable opportunity offered itself, for just then the landlord appeared to demand the payment of his bill. “What do you want?” asked Beppo. “My money; you might know that of yourself.” “Let me alone! I have no money.” “What? you ragged soldier—” “Jump in!” said Beppo; and the landlord went over his ears into the sack. Only after long entreaty, and on condition that he would never again present his bill, would Beppo let him out again. “Just wait, fellow! I’ll teach you how to insult soldiers,” said he to the landlord, as he went out.

Tired and hungry after a long walk, Beppo again turned into an inn. There he saw a man who was continually emptying a purse, but never finished, for it always became full again. He quickly snatched the purse out of the man’s hand, and ran out of the inn, but no less quickly did the owner run after him; and since he had not

walked as far as Beppo, who had been wandering about all day, he soon caught up with him. Then Beppo cried: "Jump in!" and the owner was in the sack. "Listen," said Beppo, after he had somewhat recovered his breath, "listen and be reasonable. You have had the purse long enough; give it to me now, or else you shall always stay in the sack." What could the man do? Willingly or unwillingly, he had to give up the purse in order to get out of the accursed sack.

For two years Beppo stayed at home, doing much good with the purse, and much mischief with the sack, until at last he began to long for the capital again, and returned there; but what was his astonishment at seeing everything hung with black, and everybody in mourning. "Do you not know what the trouble is?" he was asked, in reply to his questions as to the cause of this sorrow; "don't you know that to-morrow the Devil is going to carry away the king's daughter, on account of a foolish vow that her father once made?" Then he went directly to the king, in order to console him, but the latter would not put any faith in him. "Your Majesty," said he, "you do not know what Beppo Pipetta can do. Only let me have my own way."

Then he prepared, in a room of the palace, a large table, with paper, pen, and ink, while the princess, in the next room, awaited her sad fate in prayer. At midnight a fearful noise was heard, like the roaring of the tempest; and at the last stroke of the clock, the Devil came through the window into—the sack which Beppo held open for him, crying, "Jump in!" "What are you doing here?" asked Beppo of the raging Devil. "How does that concern you?" "I have my reasons," was the bold reply. "Wait a little, you rascal!" cried Beppo; "I'll teach you manners!" and he seized a stick and belabored the sack until the Devil in anguish called upon all the saints. "Are you going to carry off the princess, now?" "No, no; only let me out of this infamous sack!" "Do you promise never to molest her?" "I promise, only let me out!" "No," said Beppo; "you must repeat your promise before witnesses, and also give it in writing." Then he called some gentlemen of the court into the room, had the promise repeated, and permitted the Devil to stretch one hand out of the sack, in order to write as follows: "I, the very Devil, herewith promise that I will neither carry away H. R. H., the Princess, nor ever molest her in future. Satan, Spirit of Hell."

"Good!" said Beppo; "the affair of the princess is now ended. But now, on account of your previous impoliteness, allow me to give you a few blows that may serve as reminders of me on your journey." When he had done this, he opened the sack, and the Devil went out as he had come in, through the window.

Then the king gave a great feast, at which Beppo sat between him and the princess; and there was joy throughout the whole kingdom.

After a while Beppo took a pleasure trip and came to a place that pleased him so much that he decided to remain there; but the police must needs go through certain ceremonies and wanted to know who he was, whence he came, and a multitude of other things. Then he answered: "I am myself; let that suffice you. If you want to know anything more, write to the king." Accordingly they wrote to the king, but he commanded them to treat him with respect and not to disturb him.

When he had lived for many years in this place and had grown old, Death came and knocked at his door. Beppo opened it and asked: "Who are you?" "I am Death," was the answer. "Jump in!" cried Beppo, in great haste, and behold! Death was in the sack. "What!" he exclaimed, "shall I, who have so much to do, loiter my time away here?" "Just stay where you are, you old villain," replied Beppo, and did not let him out for a year and a half. Then there was universal satisfaction throughout the world, the physicians being especially jubilant, for none of them ever lost a patient. Then Death begged so humbly and represented so forcibly what would be the consequences of this disorder, that Beppo agreed to let him out, on condition that Death should not come back for him unless he was willing. Death departed and sought by means of a few wars and pestilences to make up for lost time.

At length Beppo grew so old that life became distasteful to him. Then he sent for Death, who, however, would not come, fearing that Beppo might change his mind. So the latter decided to go himself to Death. Death was not at home; but remembering his vacation in the sack, had prudently left the order that in case a certain Beppo Pipetta should come, he was to be beaten soundly; an order which was executed punctiliously. Beaten and cast out by Death, he went sadly to hell; but there the Devil had given the porter orders to show him the same attention that he had received at Death's abode, and that command also was conscientiously obeyed.

Smarting from the blows he had received, and vexed that neither Death nor the Devil wanted him, he went to paradise. Here he announced himself to St. Peter, but the saint thought that he had better first consult the Lord.

Meanwhile Beppo threw his cap over the wall into paradise. After he had waited a while, St. Peter reappeared and said: "I am very sorry, but our Lord doesn't want you here." "Very well," said Beppo, "but you will at least let me get my cap," and with that he slipped through the gate and sat down on the cap. When St. Peter

commanded him to get up and begone, he replied, composedly: "Gently, my dear sir! at present I am sitting on my own property, where I do not receive orders from any one!"

And so he remained in paradise.

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