



Godfather Misery

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Italian

Intermediate
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Godfather Misery was old,—God knows how old! One day Jesus and St. Peter, while wandering through the world to name the countries, came to Godfather Misery's, who offered his visitors some polenta, and gave them his own bed. Jesus, pleased with this reception, gave him some money, and granted him these three favors: that whoever sits on his bench near the fire cannot get up; that whoever climbs his fig-tree cannot descend; and finally, out of regard to St. Peter, the salvation of his soul. One day Death came to Godfather Misery, and wanted to carry him off. Godfather Misery said: "It is too cold to travel." Death pressed him; then he asked her to sit by the fire and warm herself a moment, and he would soon be ready. Meanwhile he piled wood on the fire. Death felt herself burning, and tried to move, but could not; so she had to grant Godfather Misery another hundred years of life. Death was released; the hundred years passed, and Death returned.

Godfather Misery was at the door, pretending to wait for her, and looking at his fig-tree in sorrow. He begged Death to pick him a few figs for their journey. So Death climbed up, but could not descend until she granted Godfather Misery another hundred years. Even these passed, and Death reappeared. This time there was no help, he must go. Death gave him time only to recite an Ave Maria, and a Paternoster. Godfather Misery, however, could not find this time, and said to Death, who was hurrying him: "You have given me time, and I am taking it." Then Death had recourse to a stratagem, and disguised herself like a Jesuit, and went where Godfather Misery lived, and preached. Godfather Misery at first did not attend these sermons, but his wife finally persuaded him to go to the church and hear a sermon. Just as he entered, the preacher cried out that whoever said an Ave Maria should save his soul. Godfather Misery, who recognized Death, answered from a

distance: "Go away! you will not get me." Then Death went away in despair, and never got hold of him again.
Godfather Misery still lives, since misery never ends.

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