



The Enchanted Doe

Stories From The Pentamerone

Italian

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Great is the power of friendship, which makes us willingly bear toils and perils to serve a friend. We value our wealth as a trifle and life as a straw, when we can give them for a friend's sake. Fables teach us this and history is full of instances of it; and I will give you an example which my grandmother used to relate to me. So open your ears and shut your mouths and hear what I shall tell you.

There was once a certain King of Long-Trellis named Giannone, who, desiring greatly to have children, continually made prayers to the gods that they would grant his wish; and, in order to incline them the more to his petition, he was so charitable to beggars and pilgrims that he shared with them all he possessed. But seeing, at last, that these things availed him nothing; and that there was no end to putting his hand into his pocket, he bolted fast his door, and shot with a cross-bow at all who came near.

Now it happened one day, that a long-bearded pilgrim was passing that way, and not knowing that the King had turned over a new leaf, or perhaps knowing it and wishing to make him change his mind again, he went to Giannone and begged for shelter in his house. But, with a fierce look and terrible growl, the King said to him, "If you have no other candle than this, you may go to bed in the dark. The kittens have their eyes open, and I am no longer a child." And when the old man asked what was the cause of this change, the King replied, "To further my desire for children, I have spent and lent to all who came and all who went, and have squandered all my treasure. At last, seeing the beard was gone, I stopped shaving and laid aside the razor."

“If that be all,” replied the pilgrim, “you may set your mind at rest, for I promise that your wish shall forthwith be fulfilled, on pain of losing my ears.”

“Be it so,” said the King, “I pledge my word that I will give you one half of my kingdom.” And the man answered, “Listen now to me—if you wish to hit the mark, you have only to get the heart of a sea-dragon, and have it cooked and eaten by the Queen, and you will see that what I say will speedily come to pass.”

“That hardly seems possible,” said the King, “but at the worst I lose nothing by the trial; so I must, this very moment, get the dragon’s heart.”

So he sent a hundred fishermen out; and they got ready all kinds of fishing-tackle, drag-nets, casting-nets, seine-nets, bow-nets, and fishing-lines; and they tacked and turned and cruised in all directions until at last they caught a dragon; then they took out its heart and brought it to the King, who gave it to the Queen to cook and eat. And when she had eaten it, there was great rejoicing, for the King’s desire was fulfilled and he became the father of two sons, so like the other that nobody but the Queen could tell which was which. And the boys grew up together in such love for one another that they could not be parted for a moment. Their attachment was so great that the Queen began to be jealous, at seeing that the son whom she destined to be heir to his father, and whose name was Fonzo, testified more affection for his brother Caneloro than he did for herself. And she knew not in what way to remove this thorn from her eyes.

Now one day Fonzo wished to go a-hunting with his brother; so he had a fire lighted in his chamber and began to melt lead to make bullets; and being in want of I know not what, he went himself to look for it. Meanwhile the Queen came in, and finding no one there but Caneloro, she thought to put him out of the world. So stooping down, she flung the hot bullet-mould at his face, which hit him over the brow and made an ugly wound. She was just going to repeat the blow when Fonzo came in; so, pretending that she was only come in to see how he was, she gave him some caresses and went away.

Caneloro, pulling his hat down on his forehead, said nothing of his wound to Fonzo, but stood quite quiet though he was burning with the pain. But as soon as they had done making the balls, he told his brother that he must leave him. Fonzo, all in amazement at this new resolution, asked him the reason: but he replied, “Enquire no more, my dear Fonzo, let it suffice that I am obliged to go away and part with you, who are my heart and my soul and the breath of my body. Since it cannot be otherwise, farewell, and keep me in remembrance.” Then after embracing one another and shedding many tears, Caneloro went to his own room. He put on a suit of

armour and a sword and armed himself from top to toe; and, having taken a horse out of the stable, he was just putting his foot into the stirrup when Fonzo came weeping and said, "Since you are resolved to abandon me, you should, at least, leave me some token of your love, to diminish my anguish for your absence." Thereupon Caneloro struck his dagger into the ground, and instantly a fine fountain rose up. Then said he to his twin-brother, "This is the best memorial I can leave you. By the flowing of this fountain you will follow the course of my life. If you see it run clear, know that my life is likewise clear and tranquil. If it is turbid, think that I am passing through troubles; and if it is dry, depend on it that the oil of my life is all consumed and that I have paid the toll which belongs to Nature!"

Then he drove his sword into the ground, and immediately a myrtle-tree grew up, when he said, "As long as this myrtle is green, know that I too am green as a leek. If you see it wither, think that my fortunes are not the best in this world; but if it becomes quite dried up, you may mourn for your Caneloro."

So saying, after embracing one another again, Caneloro set out on his travels; journeying on and on, with many adventures which it would be too long to recount—he at length arrived at the Kingdom of Clear-Water, just at the time when they were holding a most splendid tournament, the hand of the King's daughter being promised to the victor. Here Caneloro presented himself and bore him so bravely that he overthrew all the knights who were come from divers parts to gain a name for themselves. Whereupon he married the Princess Fenicia, and a great feast was made.

When Caneloro had been there some months in peace and quiet, an unhappy fancy came into his head for going to the chase. He told it to the King, who said to him, "Take care, my son-in-law; do not be deluded. Be wise and keep open your eyes, for in these woods is a most wicked ogre who changes his form every day, one time appearing like a wolf, at another like a lion, now like a stag, now like an ass, like one thing and now like another. By a thousand stratagems he decoys those who are so unfortunate as to meet him into a cave, where he devours them. So, my son, do not put your safety into peril, or you will leave your rags there."

Caneloro, who did not know what fear was, paid no heed to the advice of his father-in-law. As soon as the Sun with the broom of his rays had cleared away the soot of the Night he set out for the chase; and, on his way, he came to a wood where, beneath the awning of the leaves, the Shades has assembled to maintain their sway, and to make a conspiracy against the Sun. The ogre, seeing him coming, turned himself into a handsome doe; which, as soon as Caneloro perceived he began to give chase to her. Then the doe doubled and turned, and led him about hither and thither at such a rate, that at last she brought him into the very heart of the wood, where

she raised such a tremendous snow-storm that it looked as if the sky was going to fall. Canneloro, finding himself in front of a cave, went into it to seek for shelter; and being benumbed with the cold, he gathered some sticks which he found within it, and pulling his steel from his pocket, he kindled a large fire. As he was standing by the fire to dry his clothes, the doe came to the mouth of the cave, and said, "Sir Knight, pray give me leave to warm myself a little while, for I am shivering with the cold."

Canneloro, who was of a kindly disposition, said to her, "Draw near, and welcome."

"I would gladly," replied the doe, "but I am afraid you would kill me."

"Fear nothing," answered Canneloro, "trust to my word."

"If you wish me to enter," rejoined the doe, "tie up those dogs, that they may not hurt me, and tie up your horse that he may not kick me."

So Canneloro tied up his dogs and hobbled his horse, and the doe said, "I am now half assured, but unless you bind fast your sword, I dare not come in." Then Canneloro, who wished to become friends with the doe, bound his sword as a countryman does, when he carries it in the city for fear of the constables. As soon as the ogre saw Canneloro defenceless, he re-took his own form, and laying hold on him, flung him into a pit at the bottom of the cave, and covered it up with a stone—to keep him to eat.

But Fonzo, who, morning and evening visited the myrtle and the fountain, to learn news of the fate of Canneloro, finding the one withered and the other troubled, instantly thought that his brother was undergoing misfortunes. So, to help him, he mounted his horse without asking leave of his father or mother; and arming himself well and taking two enchanted dogs, he went rambling through the world. He roamed and rambled here, there, and everywhere until, at last, he came to Clear-Water, which he found all in mourning for the supposed death of Canneloro. And scarcely was he come to the court, when every one, thinking, from the likeness he bore him, that it was Canneloro, hastened to tell Fenicia the good news, who ran leaping down the stairs, and embracing Fonzo cried, "My husband! my heart! where have you been all this time?"

Fonzo immediately perceived that Caneloro had come to this country and had left it again; so he resolved to examine the matter adroitly, to learn from the Princess's discourse where his brother might be found. And, hearing her say that he had put himself in great danger by that accursed hunting, especially if the cruel ogre should meet him, he at once concluded that Caneloro must be there.

The next morning, as soon as the Sun had gone forth to give the gilded frills to the Sky, he jumped out of bed, and neither the prayers of Fenicia, nor the commands of the King could keep him back, but he would go to the chase. So, mounting his horse, he went with the enchanted dogs to the wood, where the same thing befell him that had befallen Caneloro; and, entering the cave, he saw his brother's arms and dogs and horse fast bound, by which he became assured of the nature of the snare. Then the doe told him in like manner to tie his arms, dogs, and horse, but he instantly set them upon her and they tore her to pieces. And as he was looking about for some traces of his brother, he heard his voice down in the pit; so, lifting up the stone, he drew out Caneloro, with all the others whom the ogre had buried alive to fatten. Then embracing each other with great joy, the twin-brothers went home, where Fenicia, seeing them so much alike, did not know which to choose for her husband, until Caneloro took off his cap and she saw the mark of the old wound and recognised him. Fonzo stayed there a month, taking his pleasure, and then wished to return to his own country, and Caneloro wrote by him to his mother, bidding her lay aside her enmity and come and visit him and partake of his greatness, which she did. But from that time forward, he never would hear of dogs or of hunting, recollecting the saying—

“Unhappy is he who corrects himself at his own cost.”

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