

Appendix 4: *Il Pecorone*

IL PECORONE is a collection of tales by Ser Giovanni. It was written in Italian at the end of the 14th Century and printed in Milan in 1558. This is the primary source used for *The Merchant of Venice*. Below is the first story of the fourth day.

There lived in Florence a merchant, called Bindo, of the Scali family, who had visited Tana and Alexandria several times and had been on all the long voyages which are made on business. This Bindo was very rich and had three fine, manly sons, and when he came close to death, he called the two eldest and made his will in their presence, bequeathing all he had in the world to these two heirs, and to the youngest he bequeathed nothing. When this will had been made, the youngest son, called Giannetto [Bassanio], heard of it and went to the bedside and said to him, "Father, I am amazed at what you have done—not mentioning me in the will." The father replied, "Giannetto, there is no creature living to whom I wish better fortune than to you, and therefore I do not wish you to stay here after my death, but I want you to go to Venice to your godfather, Ansaldo [Antonio], who has no child and has often written asking me to send you to him. Moreover, I may say that he is now the richest of the Christian merchants. Therefore, I want you to go, as soon as I am dead, and to take this letter to him—then, if you know how to behave, you will become a rich man." The son answered, "Father, I am ready to do whatever you command"; and thereupon he gave him his blessing and, in a few days, he died, and all the Sons mourned him greatly and paid all the proper honors to his body.

Then a few days afterwards the two brothers called for Giannetto, and told him, "Brother, it is true that our father made a will and left us his heirs and made no mention of you: nevertheless, you are still our brother and you shall not want until we are in want." Giannetto replied, "I thank you, my brothers, for your offer; but, for my part, I am resolved to seek my fortune elsewhere, and so do you stay and possess the blessed inheritance which is yours by right." The brothers, seeing that he had made up his mind, gave him a horse and money to spend. Giannetto took leave of them and went to Venice, and came to Ansaldo's counting house and presented the letter which his father had given him just before his death. As he read the letter, Ansaldo knew that this young man was the son of his dearest friend Bindo; and when he had read it, he embraced him at once, saying, "Welcome my dear godson, whom I have longed for so much": and immediately he asked after Bindo, and Giannetto replied that he was dead: so, with many tears, he embraced and kissed Giannetto and said, "The death of Bindo grieves me very much, for he helped me to get a great part of my possessions; but the joy I have from you is so great that it allays that grief." He led him to his house and ordered his factors, partners, grooms, servants, and everyone in his house that Giannetto should be obeyed and served better than himself. And at once he entrusted to him the keys of all his ready money, and said, "My son, spend this and clothe and shoe yourself to your own liking, and keep open house to the townspeople, and make yourself known: I leave it to you to do as you think best, and the more you get the goodwill of everyone, the dearer you will be to me."

Now Giannetto began to get acquainted with the gentlemen of Venice, to pay court, to entertain and give presents, to keep servants and buy good horses, and to attend jousts and revelry at which he excelled, being skilled, magnanimous, and courtly in all things; he knew how to act with honor and courtesy on all occasions, and always he paid more honor to Ansaldo than if he had been an hundred times his father. And he bore himself so wisely with all kinds of people, that almost the whole of Venice, seeing such discretion, together with such charm and infinite courtesy, wished him well, and men and women loved him greatly. Ansaldo could think only of him, he was so pleased

with his style and manner of living. There was hardly a single festivity in Venice to which Giannetto was not invited, he was so esteemed by all.

Now it happened that two of his close friends intended to go in two ships with merchandise to Alexandria as they were accustomed to do every year, and thereupon, they spoke to Giannetto, saying, "You would do well to amuse yourself at sea with us, to see the world and particularly Damascus and its neighbourhood." Giannetto replied, "Certainly, I would go willingly if my father Ansaldo will give me leave." They answered, "We will so arrange it with him, that he will be content." And they went to Ansaldo immediately, and said, "We want to ask if you would be content to allow Giannetto to come with us to Alexandria in the spring, and provide him with some kind of ship so that he may see a little of the world." Ansaldo said, "I am content, if it pleases him." "Sir," they replied, "it does please him." Then Ansaldo at once prepared a very fine ship, and loaded it with merchandise, dressed it with flags, and fitted it with as many arms as were needed. And after it was ready, Ansaldo ordered the captain and all the crew to do everything that Giannetto commanded, and to take care of him: "I do not send him," he said, "for the profit I wish him to make, but to see the world at his pleasure." And when Giannetto was about to embark, all Venice was gathered to see him because it was a long time since such a beautiful and well-furnished ship had sailed from that city. And everyone was sorry at his departure; and he took leave of Ansaldo and all his friends, and they put out to sea, hoisted sail, and made for Alexandria in the name of God and good fortune.

Sailing together for some days, the three friends in their three ships, it happened early one morning that Giannetto saw a bay with a fine harbor and asked the captain what it was called; he replied, "Sir, that place belongs to a widowed lady who has ruined many gentlemen." "In what way?" said Giannetto. "Sir," he replied, "she is a fine and beautiful lady, and she has made a law: whoever arrives here must sleep with her, and if he can enjoy her, he must take her for wife and be lord of the seaport and all the surrounding country. But if he cannot enjoy her, he loses everything he has." Giannetto thought for a moment, and said; "Do everything you can and make for that harbor." The captain said, "Sir, mind what you say, for many have gone there who have been robbed of everything." "Do not trouble yourself about that," said Giannetto, "do what I bid you." And so it was done and immediately they changed direction and slipped into the port so that the friends in the other ships knew nothing of it.

In the morning, news spread that this fine ship had come into port, so that everyone came to see it; and at once the lady was told, and she sent for Giannetto who waited on her forthwith, and greeted her with a low bow; and she took him by the hand and inquired who he was and from whence he came, and if he knew the custom of the country. Giannetto replied that he did and that he had come for no other reason. Then she said, "You are a hundred times welcome"; and that day she paid him very great honor, and ordered barons, counts, and many knights who were her subjects, to attend on him. The courtly behaviour of Giannetto pleased all the nobles, in that he was well bred, agreeable, and of good conversation; everyone was delighted with him and there was dancing, singing, and feasting at court the whole day in honour of Giannetto: and everyone would have been well pleased to have him for their lord.

Night coming on, the lady took him by the hand and led him to her chamber and said, "I think it is time to go to bed." "Lady, I am at your service," replied Giannetto; and at once two damsels entered, one with wine and the other with sweet-meats. The lady said, "I know you must be thirsty, so take a drink." Giannetto took some sweet-meats and drank some wine, which was prepared in such a way that it induced sleep; and he did not know this and took half a cup, since he found it to his taste; and at once he undressed and went to bed, and as soon as he reached it, he fell asleep. The

lady lay down by his side, and he did not wake at all until late in the morning and past nine o'clock. But the lady rose early and ordered the ship to be unloaded, which was found to be full of rich and good merchandise. After nine o'clock, the maid-servants came to Giannetto's bed and told him to rise and be gone, for he had lost the ship and everything in it; and then he was ashamed and saw that he had acted with great foolishness.

The lady gave him a horse and money to spend, and he departed sad and sorrowful, and went on his way towards Venice. When he arrived he dared not return home for shame, but went at night to the house of a friend, who was amazed to see him and said, "Alas Giannetto, what is the matter?" And he replied, "My ship struck a rock at night and was broken in pieces and everything destroyed and scattered; I held on to a piece of wood which cast me ashore and so I have come over land and am here." Giannetto stayed several days in this friend's house, who went one day to visit Ansaldo and found him very melancholy. Ansaldo said, "I am very much afraid that my son is dead or that the sea has brought him ill fortune, so that I have found no rest—so great is the love I bear him." The young man said, "I can tell you news of him; he has been shipwrecked and lost everything, but he himself is safe." "Praise be to God," said Ansaldo, "if he is saved, I am satisfied; the loss of the ship does not worry me. Where is he?" The young man replied, "He is at my house." And immediately, Ansaldo started out and ran to meet him, and when he saw him, he embraced him and said, "My son, there is no need for you to be ashamed because of me; it is quite common to lose ships at sea, and do not alarm yourself on that account, my son; since you have received no hurt, I am content." And he took him home, comforting him all the way.

The news spread throughout Venice, and every one was sorry for the loss Giannetto had sustained. Shortly afterwards his companions returned from Alexandria very rich, and when they arrived, they asked after Giannetto and were told everything. Then they ran at once to embrace him, asking, "How did you part from us and where did you go, that we could know nothing of you, and sailed to and fro all that day, and could not see you or understand where your ship had gone; we were so grieved that throughout the voyage we could not enjoy ourselves, believing that you were dead." Giannetto replied, "A contrary wind blew up from a certain bay, which drove my ship straight up against a rock close to the shore; I hardly saved myself and everything was wrecked." Giannetto made this excuse in order not to disclose his fault. And they made merry with him, thanking God that he was spared, and saying, "Next spring, God willing, we will make up for what you have lost this time; and therefore let us devote ourselves to enjoyment without melancholy." So they gave themselves to pleasure and happy days, as they used to do before. But still Giannetto thought of nothing but of how to return to the lady, thinking and saying, "I must marry her or die"; and so he could not be merry. Therefore Ansaldo often said to him, "Do not be down-hearted, we have enough to be able to live very comfortably." "Dear sir," replied Giannetto, "I shall not be satisfied until I make this voyage again." Ansaldo, seeing his desire, when the time came, provided another ship with more merchandise than the first and of greater value, putting the best part of his wealth into it. His companions, when they had prepared their ship with things necessary for their trade, put out to sea with Giannetto, hoisted sail, and went on their way. Sailing for several days, Giannetto was always on the look out for the lady's seaport, which was called the port of the lady of Belmonte. Coming one night to the entrance of this port, which was in a great bay, Giannetto recognized it at once, and shifting the sails and the helm, he entered so secretly that, once more, his friends in the other ships did not know he was missing.

Waking next morning and looking down on the harbor, the lady saw the ship's flags flying and recognized it at once; and she called her maid and said, "Do you know those flags?" "Madam,"

said the maid, "it's the ship of the young man who came last year and made us so rich with his cargo." "You are right," said the lady, "and certainly he must be in love with me, for no one has ever returned a second time." The maid said, "I have never seen a more courteous or agreeable man." The lady sent many pages and servants to him, who served him with great ceremony; and he treated them cheerfully and well, and came to the castle and presented himself to the lady. And when she saw him, she embraced him most joyfully and he very courteously returned the embrace: and the whole day was spent in feasting and revelry, for she had sent for many lords and ladies who came to the court to celebrate in honor of Giannetto: and because of his charm and courtesy all the noblemen regretted that he was not their lord; and all the ladies were enamored of his dancing; he appeared so comely that they all thought he was the son of some great man. And seeing that night was coming, the lady took Giannetto by the hand and asked him to go to bed; and when they were seated in the chamber, the two damsels came with wine and sweet-meats, and having eaten and drunk of them, they went to bed; and as he lay down, Giannetto fell asleep. The lady undressed and lay down at his side, and, to put it briefly, he did not wake the whole night. And when morning came, the lady got up and at once ordered his ship to be stripped. When it was passed nine o'clock, Giannetto awoke and looked in vain for the lady; he raised himself up and saw that it was late; he got up and felt ashamed of what had happened. He was given a horse and money to spend, and told to be gone; and shamefully he left directly, being sad and down-hearted, and for many days he did not stop until he arrived at Venice; and by night he went to his friend's house, who was astonished beyond measure when he saw him and asked what was the matter. Giannetto replied, "I am undone; cursed be my fortune which brought me to this place." "You may well curse your fortune," said his friend, "for you have ruined Ansaldo who was the greatest and richest of Christian merchants, and the shame of this is greater than the loss." Giannetto lived secretly for many days in his friend's house, not knowing what to do or say, and almost thought of returning to Florence without seeing Ansaldo; however he decided to go to him, and he did so. When Ansaldo saw him, he stood upright, and embraced him and said, "Welcome, my son." And with tears Giannetto embraced him. When he heard everything, Ansaldo said, "How is it, Giannetto? do not give yourself over to melancholy; since I have you again, I am satisfied. We still have enough to live quietly. The sea enriches some men, others it ruins."

The news spread throughout Venice and everyone was concerned for Ansaldo, and was grieved at the loss he had suffered; and he had to sell many of his possessions to pay the creditors who had provided the goods. Then Giannetto's friends returned from Alexandria very rich, and when they arrived at Venice, they were told that Giannetto was returned and had lost and wrecked everything, at which they were astonished, saying, "This is the strangest thing that could happen"; and they went to Ansaldo and Giannetto, and said very kindly, "Do not be dismayed, next year we will travel on your behalf; in a way, we are the cause of your loss, for at the beginning we advised Giannetto to come with us. Therefore do not fear, as long as we have possessions, use them as your own." Ansaldo gave them thanks and said that he had still enough to live on. But day and night Giannetto thought of this and he could not be joyful; when Ansaldo asked him what was the matter, he answered, "I shall not be satisfied until I have regained what I have lost." "My son," said Ansaldo, "I do not want you to go any more; it will be better to stay here, content with the little we have, than for you to venture forth again." Giannetto replied, "I am determined to do all in my power to go—for I am ashamed to live in this way."

When Ansaldo saw that he was resolved, he began to sell all that he had in the world and to equip another ship for him: and so he did, he sold all he had and provided a fine ship with merchandise: and, because he lacked ten thousand ducats, he went to a Jew of Mestri and borrowed

them on condition that if they were not repaid the next June on St. John's day, the Jew might take a pound of flesh from whatever part of his body he pleased. Ansaldo agreed, and the Jew had a bond drawn up and witnessed with all necessary form and ceremony; and then he counted him ten thousand golden ducats, with which Ansaldo provided what the ship lacked; and although the other two were fine, this third ship was finer and better equipped. So the friends equipped their two ships, with the intention that whatever they gained would be for Giannetto. And when the time came to depart, Ansaldo said to Giannetto, "My son, you are going and know the bond to which I agreed, I beseech you if misfortune comes to you, that you will be pleased to return so that I may see you before I die—then I will depart contented." Giannetto replied, "Ansaldo, I will do everything that I think will please you." Ansaldo gave him his blessing, and so they took their leave and set out on their voyage.

The two companions watched Giannetto's ship carefully all the time, and Giannetto was always thinking of how to slip into the port of Belmonte. He prevailed with one of the sailors to sail the ship by night into the port of the lady. When morning lightened, the friends in the other ships looked around and could see nothing of Giannetto's ship and said to themselves "Truly he has bad luck," and they decided to continue their course, wondering greatly.

When the ship came into the port, everyone ran from the castle to see it, hearing that Giannetto had returned and marveling greatly at it and saying, "He must be the son of some great man, since he comes here every year with so much merchandise and such fine ships; would to God he were our master"; and so he was visited by all the great ones, both nobles and the knights of that land, and the lady was told how Giannetto had come into the harbor: so she opened a window of the palace and saw the beautiful ship and recognized the flags and made the sign of the cross, saying, "Certainly, this is a great undertaking—this is the man who has left such wealth in this country": and she sent for him.

Giannetto went to her with great show of affection, and they greeted each other, and he bowed; and all the day was spent in joy and feasting; and a great tournament was held in honor of Giannetto and many lords and knights jostled that day, and Giannetto wished to joust also, and did miracles, so well did he with lance and horse; and his deportment so pleased all the noblemen, that they all wished to have him as their lord.

When the time came to go to rest, the lady took Giannetto by the hand and said, "Let us go to rest"; and when he was passing the door of the chamber, one of the lady's maids, who was sorry for Giannetto, put her mouth to his ear and whispered, "Pretend to drink, but do not drink tonight." Giannetto understood what she said, and having entered the chamber the lady said, "I know you are thirsty, and I want you to drink before you go to bed"; and immediately two damsels who looked like angels, came with wine and sweet-meats in the usual way, and offered him a drink. "Who can refuse to drink when the two damsels are so beautiful?" said Giannetto, whereupon the lady smiled. Giannetto took the cup, and seemed to drink, pouring the wine into his breast, and the lady believed that he had drunken and said to herself, "You must bring another ship, for you have lost this one."

Giannetto went to bed feeling clear-headed and in good spirits, and it seemed a thousand years before the lady came to bed; and he comforted himself by thinking that he had certainly caught her, that he had found a different way of doing things. And so the lady would come to bed sooner, he began to pretend to snore and be asleep. Therefore the lady said, "This will do," and at once undressed and came to bed to Giannetto; he lost no time, but as soon as the lady was in bed he turned towards her, and embraced her and said, "Now I have what I desired so much" and therewith he gave the satisfaction of wedlock, and all night long she lay in his arms; and the lady was highly pleased

with him, and rose early in the morning and sent for all the lords and knights, and many other citizens and told them, "Giannetto is your lord, and therefore celebrate." Immediately the news spread through the whole land, the people crying, "Long live our lord! Long live our lord!" and bells and music sounded in joy; and many barons and counts who were not at the castle, were sent for saying, "Come to see your lord"; and so a great and wonderful celebration was started. And when Giannetto came from the chamber he was knighted and placed in the chair of state, and the scepter was put in his hand and he was proclaimed sovereign with great pomp and glory. And when all the lords and ladies were come to the court, he married the lady with high ceremony and great joy that cannot be told or imagined, for all the nobles and gentlemen of the land came to the feast to be joyful, to joust, combat, dance, sing, and make music, with everything else that belongs to such an occasion.

Giannetto was magnanimous, and began by giving gifts of silk and other rich things which he had brought with him, and grew in manhood and made himself respected by administering justice to all kinds of people: and so he continued in this rejoicing and happiness and never gave a thought to poor Ansaldo who had given his bond to the Jew for ten thousand ducats. Then one day, when Giannetto was at the window of the palace with his wife, he saw a company of men pass through the square bearing burning torches in their hands as if they were going to present an offering. Giannetto asked what this meant. The lady replied, "It is a company of craftsmen going to make their offerings at the church of St. John, because it is his feast-day today." Giannetto instantly remembered Ansaldo and having left the window he sighed heavily and turned pale, and walked about the room for a long time, deep in thought. The lady asked him what had happened. Giannetto answered that it was nothing. But she began to question him, saying, "Certainly, something has happened to you and you do not wish to tell me"; and she so pressed him that Giannetto told her how Ansaldo was bound for ten thousand ducats and that the time for repayment was expired this very day, "Wherefore," he said, "I am distressed that my father, should die because of me, for if the debt is not repaid today, he must lose a pound of his flesh." "Sir," the lady said, "to horse immediately and journey there by land, it is quicker than by sea, and take what companions you wish and take a hundred thousand ducats, and do not stop until you are in Venice; and if he is living, bring your father here." Thereupon Giannetto at once had trumpets sounded, and mounted with twenty followers and, taking plenty of money, he set out for Venice.

When the limit of the bond was expired, the Jew caused Ansaldo to be seized and insisted on taking a pound of flesh; and Ansaldo besought him to delay his death a few days so that if his Giannetto returned, he could at least see him. The Jew said, "I am willing to grant what you ask about the respite, but if he comes a hundred times, I intend to take the pound of flesh according to the bond." Ansaldo answered that he was content.

The whole of Venice talked of this affair and all were distressed; and many merchants joined together to pay the money, but the Jew would have none of it, but rather he wished to commit this murder so that he could say that he had killed the greatest of the Christian merchants. Now it happened that while Giannetto was pressing forward to Venice, his lady quickly followed him dressed as a lawyer and with two attendants. Arriving in Venice, Giannetto went to the Jew's house and joyfully embraced Ansaldo, and then said to the Jew that he would give him the money and as much more as he cared to demand. The Jew replied that he did not want the money since it was not paid at the appointed time, but that he would take a pound of flesh: and this brought about a great controversy, and everyone blamed the Jew; but since Venice was a place where the law was enforced, and the Jew had his right fully and publicly, no one dared to speak against him, they could

only entreat. So all the merchants of Venice came to entreat the Jew, but still he was more determined than ever. Therefore Giannetto offered him twenty thousand and he would not have it; then he advanced his offer to thirty thousand, and then to forty, and then to fifty, and finally to a hundred thousand ducats; then the Jew said, "Understand this: if you were to offer more ducats than this city is worth, it would not satisfy me: I would rather have what my bond says is mine."

And as they were in this debate, the lady, dressed as a lawyer, arrived in Venice, and dismounted at an inn: and the innkeeper asked one of the servants who this gentleman was. The servant had been taught by the lady what he must answer to this question, and he replied, "This gentleman is a lawyer, returning home from his studies at Bologna." The innkeeper, hearing this, treated him respectfully, and the lawyer, when he was seated at table, asked the innkeeper how his city was governed. The host replied, "Sir, the law has become too strict!" "How is that?" said the lawyer. "I will tell you," continued the host: "a young man, called Giannetto, came here from Florence, to a relation called Ansaldo, and he behaved so well and pleasingly that the men and women of this place were devoted to him. Never before had such a pleasing youth come to this city. Now on three occasions this relation of his fitted out three ships for him, all of very great value and each time they met with disaster; and he did not have enough money for the last ship, so Ansaldo borrowed ten thousand ducats from a Jew, on condition that if he had not repaid the debt by St John's day the following June, the said Jew could take a pound of flesh from what part of his body he pleased. Now this fortunate young man has returned and has offered a hundred thousand ducats for the ten thousand, and the base Jew will not take them; and all the good people of this place have come to entreat him, but it is of no use." The lawyer replied, "This controversy is easily settled." "If you will take the trouble to settle it, so that this good man may not die," said the host, "you will win the gratitude and love of the most noble young man who was ever born, and that of every person in this place."

Then the lawyer had it proclaimed everywhere, that every one who had a dispute to settle should come to him: so Giannetto was told that a lawyer was come from Bologna who could decide all disputes. Therefore Giannetto said to the Jew, "Let us go to this lawyer." The Jew agreed but added that come what might, he would have what the bond said was his by right. And when they came before the lawyer and paid him due respect, the lawyer recognized Giannetto, but Giannetto did not know him, because his face was stained with certain herbs. Giannetto and the Jew each told their demand and duly set forth their difference before the judge. He took the bond and read it, and then said to the Jew, "I would have you take these hundred thousand ducats, and set free this good man, who will always be obliged to you." The Jew replied, "I will do no such thing." "It will be better for you," said the lawyer. But the Jew would not consent at all. And they agreed to go to the proper court for such cases and the lawyer spoke for Ansaldo and said, "Let the man be brought forth"; and he was fetched and the lawyer said, "Come now, take a pound of flesh where you will, and do your deed." Then the Jew ordered him to be stripped naked, and took a razor in his hand which he had got for the purpose. Then Giannetto turned to the lawyer, and said, "Sir, this is not what I asked of you." "Be calm," replied the lawyer, "he has not yet cut his pound of flesh." Yet the Jew was about to start. Then the lawyer said, "Take care what you do; for if you take more or less than a pound, I shall have your head struck off. Moreover, I tell you that if one drop of blood is spilt, I shall have you put to death, for your bond does not mention the shedding of blood, but expressly says that you may take a pound of flesh, neither more nor less. And if you are wise, you will take great care what you do." And he sent at once for the executioner, and the block and axe, and said, "As soon as I see one drop of blood spilt, I will have your head struck off." The Jew began to fear,

and Giannetto to take heart. And after much argument the Jew said, "Sir, you are wiser than I, so give me the hundred thousand ducats and I am satisfied." The lawyer said, "I will have you take a pound of flesh according to your bond, for I will not give you a farthing; why did you not take the money when I offered it?" The Jew came down to ninety thousand, and then to eighty, but the lawyer remained resolute. Giannetto told the lawyer to give him what he asked so that Ansaldo might be freed, but the lawyer said, "I advise you to leave it to me." Then the Jew said "Give me fifty thousand," and the lawyer replied that he would not give him the smallest coin that he had ever had. The Jew went on, "At least give me my ten thousand ducats, and a curse be on you all." "Do you not understand me?" said the lawyer, "I will give you nothing; if you will take what is yours, do so—if not, I will protest and have your bond annulled."

Everyone present rejoiced greatly at this, and jeered at the Jew, saying, "He who thought to ensnare others, is caught himself." Then the Jew, seeing he could not do what he had wished, took the bond and tore it in pieces in a fury, and so Ansaldo was released and Giannetto took him home in great joy; and straightway he took the hundred thousand ducats and went to the lawyer and found him in his room preparing to depart. Then Giannetto said to him, "Sir, you have done me the greatest service I have ever known, and so I wish you to take this money, since you have well earned it." The lawyer replied, "I thank you, Giannetto, but I have no need of it; keep it, so that your lady may not say that you have squandered it." "By my troth," said Giannetto, "she is so generous, kind, and good, that if I were to spend four times this amount, she would not mind; she wanted me to take away much more than this." The lawyer asked if he was happy with his lady and Giannetto replied, "There is no one in the world I hold as dear; she is so wise and beautiful that Nature could not make a better. If you would do me the favour of coming to visit her, you will be amazed at the honour she will show to you, and you will see whether I speak the truth." "I may not come with you," replied the lawyer, "for I have other things to do; but since you speak so well of her, pay her my respects when you meet." "It shall be done," said Giannetto, "but I wish you would accept some money." While he was speaking, the lawyer noticed a ring on his finger, and said to him, "I would have this ring, I do not want any money." "That will content me," Giannetto replied, "but I give it unwillingly, for my lady gave it to me, telling me to wear it always for her love: and if she sees me without the ring she will think that I have given it to some other woman and so be angry with me and think I love another—and yet I love her better than I love my self." "It seems certain that she loves you well enough to believe what you say;" rejoined the lawyer, "tell her that you have given it to me. But perhaps you wish to give it to some former mistress here in Venice." Giannetto replied, "So great is the love and trust I have for her that I would not exchange her for any woman in the world—she is so perfectly beautiful in every way."

So he drew the ring from his finger and gave it to the lawyer, and they embraced and saluted each other. The lawyer begged a favour and Giannetto agreeing, he said, "Do not linger here, but return at once to your lady." "It will seem a thousand years till I see her," replied Giannetto, and so they took leave of each other.

The lawyer took ship and went his way: and Giannetto gave banquets and gifts of horses and money to his friends, and the celebrations continued several days, and he kept open house; and then taking Ansaldo with him, he took leave of the Venetians, and many of his old friends accompanied him on his way; practically everyone wept for love at his departure, he had given such pleasure to everyone while he had been in Venice; and so he left and returned to Belmonte.

The lady had arrived some days previously and gave out that she had been at the baths, and having resumed her woman's dress she had great preparations made and the streets hung with tapes.

tries, and ordered many companies of armed men to prepare themselves. And when Giannetto and Ansaldo arrived, all the nobles and the whole court went out to meet them, crying, "Long live our lord! long live our lord!" And as they landed, the lady ran to embrace Ansaldo but she pretended to be cross with Giannetto, although she loved him better than she loved her self. Great celebrations were made by all the nobles and ladies who were there, with jousting, combat, dancing, and singing.

When Giannetto saw that his wife did not receive him with her accustomed kindness, he went apart and called her and asked what was the matter, and tried to embrace her. The lady said, "I have no need of these caresses, for I know, well enough, that you have found your former mistresses in Venice." Giannetto began to justify himself, when the lady said, "Where is the ring I gave you?" He answered, "What I expected has happened, for I said you would think badly of me. But I swear to you by the faith I have in God and in you, that I gave the ring to the lawyer who won the suit for me." The lady said, "I swear to you by the faith I have in God and in you, that you gave it to some woman—I know this to be so; are you not ashamed to swear as you have?" "I pray God to strike me dead if I do not speak the truth," Giannetto rejoined, "and if I spoke not to the lawyer as I have told you, when he asked for the ring." The lady said, "You should have stayed in Venice and sent Ansaldo to me, while you enjoyed yourself with your mistresses, for I hear that they all wept when you left." Giannetto burst into tears, and in great sorrow, cried, "You swear that which is not true, and cannot be true." Then the lady seeing his tears, which cut to the heart, ran at once to embrace him, laughing heartily: and she showed him the ring and told him everything—what he had said to the lawyer, how she herself was the lawyer, and in what manner he had given her the ring. Then Giannetto was greatly astonished; and finding it all true, he was full of joy. When he left the chamber he told the story to his nobles and friends, and this adventure increased the love between this pair. Afterwards Giannetto called the damsel who had advised him not to drink the wine that night, and gave her in marriage to Ansaldo; and so they lived in happiness and joy all the days of their life.