

Day 9, Story 3

Egged on by Bruno, Buffalmacco, and Nello, Master Simone makes Calandrino believe he is pregnant. Calandrino then gives them all capons and money in return for medicine, and he is cured without having to give birth.¹

When Elissa had finished, everyone thanked God for the young nun's happy escape from the fangs of her envious companions. At that point the Queen ordered Filostrato to continue, and he, without waiting to be asked again, began:

Loveliest of ladies, that boorish judge from The Marches about whom I spoke to you yesterday took a story about Calandrino that I was all prepared to tell you and snatched it right out of my mouth. We have, to be sure, heard quite a bit about him and his comrades, but since everything we say about him can only serve to increase the fun we are having, I am going to recount the story now that I intended to tell you then.

From what was previously said, you should have a very clear picture of Calandrino and of the others who are going to be the subject of this story. Consequently, I will get right to the point and tell you that one of Calandrino's aunts happened to die and leave him two hundred *lire* in small change, which prompted him to start talking about how he was going to buy himself a farm.² Acting as if he had ten thousand gold florins to spend, he entered into negotiations with all the brokers in Florence, although the deals always fell through as soon as they mentioned the asking price for the property. Bruno and Buffalmacco, who knew what had happened, had told him many times that it would be better for him to use the money in order to have a good time with them than to go and buy just enough land to make mud pies out of it.³ But

far from getting him to do what they proposed, they had never managed to persuade him to stand them to a single meal.

As they were griping about this one day, they were joined by a buddy of theirs, a painter named Nello, and the three of them decided they just had to find a way to stuff their snouts at Calandrino's expense.⁴ It did not take them very long to work out a plan of action among themselves, and the next morning they were lying in wait for Calandrino as he left his house. Before he had gone even a short distance, Nello came up to him and said, "Good-day, Calandrino."

Calandrino replied by saying that God should give him a good day, and a good year, too, after which Nello paused for a moment and began looking Calandrino hard in the face.

"What are you staring at?" asked Calandrino.

"Did anything happen to you last night?" replied Nello. "You don't seem like your usual self."

Calandrino immediately started worrying and said, "Oh no! How's that? What do you think I've got?"

"Well, I'm not saying that you've got something," said Nello. "It's just that you look very different to me. Maybe it's nothing at all."

Nello let him go, and as Calandrino continued on his way, he was terribly upset, although he did not sense that there was anything at all wrong with him. Buffalmacco, however, was not far off, and when he saw Calandrino leave Nello, he walked up to him, greeted him, and asked him if he was feeling all right.

"I don't know," said Calandrino, "but just now Nello was telling me that I looked all different to him. Is it possible I could have come down with something?"

"Yes, you could well have a little something or other," replied Buffalmacco. "You look half dead."

Calandrino had already started to feel feverish when lo and behold, Bruno appeared on the scene, and the first words out of his mouth were, "Calandrino, what a face! You look like death itself! How are you feeling?"

Having heard all of them say the same thing, Calandrino was now

absolutely convinced that he was sick, and completely dismayed by the prospect, he asked them, "What shall I do?"

"In my opinion," said Bruno, "you should go right home, get into your bed, and cover yourself up good and tight. Then you should send a specimen of your urine to Master Simone who, as you know, is a very good buddy of ours and will soon tell you what you have to do.⁵ Plus, we'll come with you, and if anything has to be done, we'll take care of it."

Nello soon joined them, and the three of them accompanied Calandrino back to his house where he made his way, utterly exhausted, to his bedroom. "Come and pile the covers over me," he said to his wife. "I'm feeling terribly ill."

After he got settled in his bed, he sent a serving girl with a specimen of his urine to Master Simone, who in those days had set up his practice in the Mercato Vecchio at the sign of the Melon.⁶ Bruno turned to his buddies and said: "You stay here with him, while I go and see what the doctor has to say. If it's necessary, I'll escort him back here with me."

"Ah, yes, my friend," said Calandrino, "do go there and bring me back word about how things stand, because I'm feeling I've got something, I don't know what, inside me."

Bruno set off for Master Simone's, getting there ahead of the serving girl who was carrying the specimen, and explained to the doctor what they were up to. Thus, when the girl arrived, Master Simone examined the urine and said to her: "Go back and tell Calandrino that he should keep himself good and warm. I'm coming to see him right away to let him know what's wrong with him and what he has to do about it."

After the girl delivered the message, it was not long before the doctor, accompanied by Bruno, showed up. Sitting down beside Calandrino, he began taking his pulse, and then, after a pause, in the presence of Calandrino's wife, he said to him: "Look here, Calandrino, speaking to you as a friend, I'd say there's nothing wrong with you except for the fact that you're pregnant."

When Calandrino heard this, he began wailing in despair. "Oh no, Tessa," he exclaimed, "you did this to me. You always want to be on top, and I've told you clearly all along what would come of it." When she

heard him say this, Calandrino's wife, who was a very modest woman, turned scarlet with shame, and lowering her gaze, left the room without saying a word.

Meanwhile, Calandrino went on with his lament. "Oh, poor me," he said, "what shall I do? How am I going to give birth to this child? Where will he come out? Now I see only too clearly that this wife of mine, what with that insatiable lust of hers, has been the death of me. May God make her as miserable as I wish to be happy. If I were well—which I'm not—I'd get up and give her such a beating I'd break every bone in her body. It does serve me right, though, because I should never have let her get up on top. Anyway, one thing's for certain: if I manage to get out of this alive, she can die of frustration before she ever gets to do it that way again."

As they listened to Calandrino, Bruno, Buffalmacco, and Nello had such a desire to laugh that they were ready to explode. They managed to contain themselves, however, but Master Simonkey guffawed, opening his mouth so wide that you could have pulled out every one of his teeth.⁷ After a long while, Calandrino finally threw himself on the doctor's mercy and begged him for his advice and assistance.

"Calandrino," Master Simone told him, "there's no reason for you to get upset. God be praised, we diagnosed the problem early enough for me to set you right quite easily in just a few days. However, you're going to have to spend a little money on it."

"Oh yes, doctor," said Calandrino, "do it, for the love of God. I've got two hundred *lire* here that I thought of using to buy a farm. If you need them, you can have them all, just so long as I don't have to give birth. I don't know how I'd manage it, because I hear women making so much noise when they're having a baby, despite the fact that they have such a great big thing to use for it to come through, that I'm afraid if I suffered so much pain, I'd die before I got it out."

"Don't give it another thought," said the doctor. "I'll have a certain potion made up for you, a distillation that's good for such cases and very pleasant to drink. It'll take care of everything by the third morning and make you as healthy as a horse.⁸ But see to it that you're wiser in the future and don't get into such foolish situations. Now, to prepare

this medicine, we'll need three pairs of good, fat capons, and you must give one of your buddies here five of those *lire* to buy all the other ingredients that are needed. Then make sure that everything is taken around to my shop, and tomorrow morning, in God's name, I'll send you that distilled potion, which you should start drinking, a nice, big glassful at a time."

When Calandrino heard what Master Simone had to say, he declared, "Doctor, it's in your hands," and he gave Bruno the five *lire* as well as enough money for three pairs of capons, asking him to purchase everything and thanking him profusely for going to so much trouble on his behalf.

The doctor went away and had a little bit of spiced wine prepared, which he sent around to Calandrino.⁹ As for Bruno, he went out and bought the capons as well as everything else necessary for a good meal, which he then proceeded to eat in the company of his two buddies and the doctor.

Calandrino drank the wine for three mornings in a row, after which the doctor came to see him, accompanied by his three comrades. Having taken Calandrino's pulse, he announced: "You're cured, Calandrino, no doubt about it. You may safely attend to your affairs today and don't have to stay home any longer."

The happy Calandrino got up and went about his business, and whenever he ran into anyone to talk to, he was full of praise for the wonderful way that Master Simone had cured him, because in just three days he had terminated his pregnancy with absolutely no pain at all. Bruno, Buffalmacco, and Nello were pleased to have found a clever plan to get around Calandrino's stinginess, but Monna Tessa had figured it out and did nothing but grumble to her husband about it.