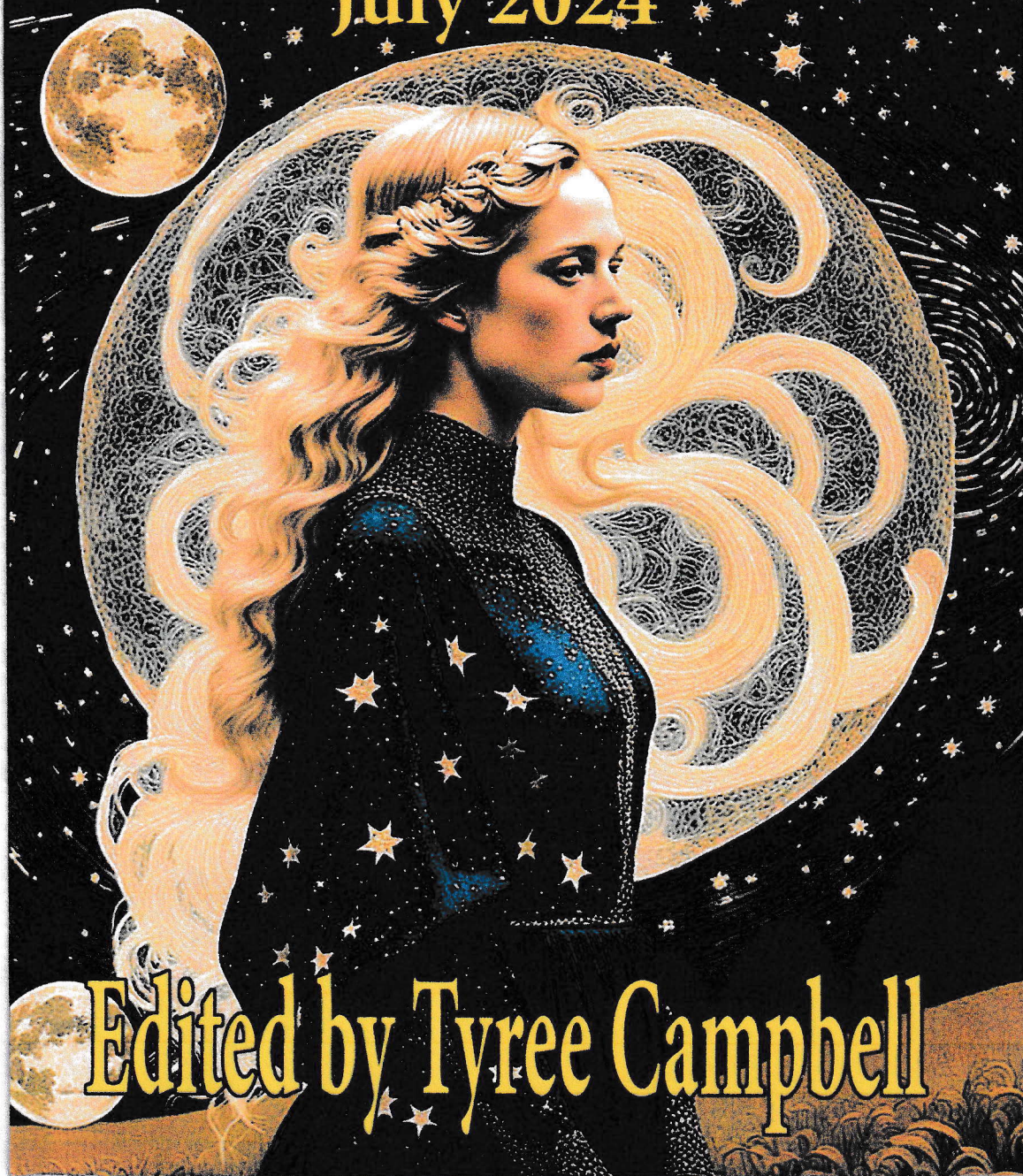


SHELTER OF DAYLIGHT

July 2024



Edited by Tyree Campbell

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Carnival in Venice

Matias Travieso-Diaz

*Won't you even give me this trivial thing,
so that after you leave,
it can accompany me in the loveless, pleasureless life
that is left to me?*

E.T.A. Hoffmann, A New Year's Eve Adventure

In the fall of 1685, young nobleman Ernst Katcher fought a duel with a rival over the favors of a notorious French courtesan. Katcher was grievously wounded and it was uncertain for several months whether he would give up the ghost or stay with the living. At the end he recovered, but remained impaired: one of his wounds, a knife thrust to the leg, refused to heal properly, leaving him with a pronounced limp. Also, a vicious kick to the neck from his opponent now caused his speech to become blurred and sometimes unrecognizable.

Katcher was vain and considered whether to take his life, renounce the world by joining a religious order, or try to make the best of his impaired condition. He was still debating what to do when he was visited by his friend Friedrich, the scion of a noble house in Bavaria, who had been Katcher's second at the duel and had helped dispose of the corpse of Ernst's adversary. He found Ernst in a morose mood and tried to cheer him up.

"Look, Eri, you should count your blessings. Kleinmann died of the wounds you inflicted on him. You are still alive, are still handsome, and own a perfume factory that is guaranteed to keep you wealthy. Instead of agonizing over your wounds, you should spend the time enjoying yourself and leading the sweet life to which you are entitled."

"That's easy for you to say, Freddy, because you are not a cripple," blurted Katcher.

"You are rich and good looking. You are bound to be valued."

"Where? Here in Eisenach the noblemen are a bunch of stuffed shirts, and the women are as cold as the snows of the Zugspitze!"

"Maybe not here, Eri. You may need to travel south. Come, my friend, let me take you on a holiday to my favorite city. Let's get on the next carriage and go to Venice!"

"But Venice is a den of iniquity. It is the most corrupt city in the world!"

"Man, set aside your prejudices. You'll be appreciated in Venice as long as you bring plenty of money, because everything can be bought or sold there."

The trip to Venice proved arduous, for it was early February and the steep roads going towards Italy were covered by snow and ice. They arrived in Venice one late afternoon just a few days before Ash Wednesday. That was the time in which, by tradition, the last and best festivities of Venice's long carnival season were held. Their guest house, an ancient *palazzo*, sat right on the Canal Grande near the Rialto Bridge, an ideal location – according to Friedrich – from which to get involved in the action.

"First, we need to get in costume" explained Friedrich after they had left their bags at the guest house and gone out into the crowded streets. He guided Ernst to one of the stands where carnival supplies were sold. "In Carnival, we must disguise ourselves."

"What do you mean by disguise?"

"The good thing about the *Carnevale di Venezia* is that everyone wears masks and costumes, so nobody knows who you are and if you are rich or poor, even in some cases man or woman. You can do things that the rest of the year are considered inappropriate or illegal. You can drink, gamble, cavort with strangers, go whoring, pass out on the street. Nobody will think less of you, because everyone is out doing the same thing."

Friedrich selected a costume for his friend. "Here, Eri, you should wear a *baùta*." He picked up an outfit and handed it to Katcher. The bundle included a white mask, a *volto* that would cover its wearer's entire face, including the mouth, and would distort his voice. Also part of the costume was a tricornered hat and a large black cape that

entirely hid a person anonymous. Nobody would hear your speech."

"What will you be?"

"I always like to be a plague doctor. It has been used as a sanitary precaution. My beak contains herbs that mask the stench of the victims of the city. I like it because I can be a carnival attendee. I wear a black coat, white gloves, and a white mask."

They donned their costumes and headed towards the Rialto Bridge. The streets were already dodging the plague doctor adorned with fake jewels and feathers everywhere making their way onto each other, as were the houses and private gondolas, flat-bottomed boats masked and costume occupants already disguised.

"What do we do?"

"First, we find a place to eat. I'll buy a meal and our first stop will be the streets. We will soon find a place and piazzas and markets, to all of which we will give a purse with coins to give us a cloak. This town is always a mystery."

For the next few days they went through an unbroken line of regattas, and public events included vast amounts of women of all ages and ages, amazed by the lice and sometimes would cast their bare breasts out of their costumes.

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anonymous. Nobody will notice your limp or be startled by
your speech."

"What will you be wearing?" replied Katcher, curious.

"I always like to dress like this: a *medico della peste*,
a plague doctor. It has a mask with a very long beak that is
used as a sanitary precaution by an actual doctor. The
beak contains herbs that filter the air and cover the horrible
stench of the victims of the plague, which is common in this
city. I like it because it hides the foul smell of many of the
carnival attendees. I will wear the mask with a long black
coat, white gloves, and a staff to complete the costume."

They donned their costumes and masks and walked
towards the Rialto bridge. The sun had not yet set, but they
were already dodging figures with paper mâché masks
adorned with fake jewels and feathers. There were children
everywhere making trouble and emptying sacks of flour
onto each other, as revelers walked in and out of drinking
houses and private *palazzi*. On the canal, dozens of
gondolas, flat-bottomed *sandolos*, and other vessels full of
masked and costumed people sailed by, many of their
occupants already drunk.

"What do we do now?" asked Katcher, bewildered.

"First, we find ourselves a café where we can get a
meal and our first drinks. Then we start walking the
streets. We will soon find impromptu parties on the streets
and piazzas and more formal masked balls in private
homes, to all of which we will invite ourselves. Bring a
purse with coins to give away, but hide it well inside your
cloak. This town is always full of pickpockets."

For the next few days, Ernst and Friedrich lived
through an unbroken succession of masked balls, parades,
regattas, and public and private parties. Their activities
included vast amounts of drinking and dalliances with
women of all ages and conditions. They were continuously
amazed by the licentiousness of Venice's women, who
sometimes would cast their costumes aside to display their
bare breasts out of the windows of *palazzi* to entice visitors.

They pleasantly lost track of time until one
afternoon, while the pair were having a very late breakfast
of strong Venetian coffee at the Caffé Florian, Friedrich

remarked with alarm: "today is *martedì grasso*, the last day of Carnevale. Tomorrow is Ash Wednesday and this town will close down."

"What do you mean?"

"You might as well be back in Eisenach. Venice in late February is cold and dreary. No more parties, no more easy women or even cross-dressing *gnagas*. Tonight will be our last chance to enjoy the wickedness of this city. Let's get going!"

"Truth be told, I am growing a little weary of all the partying, Freddy. Still, I'm good for one more wild night. *Vesti la baùta*, as someone would say."

Their progress through the streets and piazzas of the old city was slowed by encounters with partygoers they had met in previous days. By now, *I Tedeschi*, as the pair was commonly called, were a well-known sight among those enjoying the *Carnavale*.

They finally arrived, as night fell, to one of their favorite spots, the boat landing in front of the Ca d'Oro palazzo, a short distance north of the Rialto Bridge. There was a large street party in progress and they started their usual routine buying drinks for whoever they engaged in conversation. At some point, Friederich got entangled in an animated dialogue with a pretty brunette in maid's costume. Soon they disappeared into the shadows, leaving Ernst looking absently at the waters of the canal.

He was shaken out of his stupor by the arrival of an elegant *pupparin*, a fancy boat traditionally used as a *barca da casada* (family boat) by the wealthy families of the city. It was being propelled speedily by a pair of oarsmen, and carried two passengers sitting on wide benches at the stern of the vessel.

The woman was clearly quite wealthy. She was a strawberry blonde, with a mass of hair set in a complex pouf that utilized wire, cloth, gauze, and other materials to create a voluminous but exquisite coiffure. She was wearing an overflowing red gown and a jewel-encrusted velvet *moretta* mask that was held in place by a button in the mouth that prevented her from speaking. The bodice of the dress hung so low that her nipples showed, covered only by

an opulent necklace from her chest. She wore pearl earrings and a size of a quail's egg on her finger. Onboard, she sparkled.

By contrast, the man was of indeterminate age and dressed in a half-masque. He wore a half-masque over his eyes, and had thick, dark eyebrows, and was wearing patches. Though such was the tradition of the *dell'Arte* tradition, he was a pimp for the woman.

The *pupparin* was where Katcher stood. He could speak: her innocence and malice. Venus and the hard whore. In a rich alto voice he said, "signor Katcher."

Surprise at the instant awareness. "I know my name?"

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an opulent necklace of diamonds and pearls that protruded
from her chest. She was wearing matching diamond and
pearl earrings and a ring holding an almost black ruby the
size of a quail's egg. In the light of a myriad candles set
onboard, she sparkled like a living flame.

By contrast, sitting next to her was a man of
indeterminate age dressed in a modest *arlecchino* costume.
He wore a half-mask with a short nose and wide, arching
eyebrows, and was dressed in rags full of multicolored
patches. Though supposedly a servant in the *Commedia
dell'Arte* tradition, he appeared more like a bodyguard or a
pimp for the woman he accompanied.

The pupparin came to a stop right by the landing
where Katcher stood. The woman lifted the mask so she
could speak: her face was a fascinating mixture of
innocence and malice, the delicate beauty of a Botticelli
Venus and the hardened, calculating stare of a Carpaccio
whore. In a rich alto voice, she greeted him: "*Buona sera,
signor Katcher.*"

Surprise at the mention of his name shook Ernst to
instant awareness. "Good evening, madame. How do you
know my name?"

The woman issued a laugh that was melodious but
devoid of warmth. "I make it my business to learn all that
happens in *La Serenissima*. You and your companion have
become well known during this Carnavale."

"What do you know about me?"

"Nothing bad. *I Tedeschi* have built a reputation for
generosity and good humor that sits well with the memories
set by other Germans who have come to our feast over the
years. It is because of your fame that I have come seeking
you."

"You honor me, my lady..."

"Please call me *Giulietta*. And I am no lady. I am a
priestess of Venus, and it is my business to bestow
enjoyment upon those who seek my services."

Ernst was taken aback by *Giulietta's* frankness.
Recalling his near-death experience on account of his
dealings with another prostitute, he responded carefully:

"Yours is a noble calling indeed. Yet, I have suffered on account of a previous dalliance with another lady of pleasure ..."

"Oh, yes, Gabrielle. She is very skilled."

"Do you know her?"

"*Mon cher*, we are a closely knit circle. I am in touch with every high-class courtesan from London to Warsaw. I rule Venice, as Gabrielle owns Paris. She told me about your eventful encounter with her last year."

"I see. Then you may understand my reluctance to jump into your arms."

"And yet I am prepared to make you a once in a lifetime proposal."

"That's another thing. The money I brought with me from Eisenach is almost exhausted. I am afraid I could not afford the favors of even the lowliest street walker."

Giulietta laughed again; this time her laughter was tinged with irony. "You could not afford my fee with all the money you own. But do not fear. I trade in intangibles."

"What do you mean intangibles?"

"Things whose value is not measured in coins. You *Tedeschi* are often willing to pay me with intangibles. For example, one of your countrymen, Peter Schlemihl, traded his shadow for the opportunity of spending one night in my arms. More recently, Erasmus Spikher gave up his reflection so that I would grant him one night of pleasure during Carnavale. Those goods have no monetary value yet they are appreciated by my master, who finds much use for them." She nodded towards her companion.

Katcher became a bit concerned. "*Signora*, I am a Christian. I believe the Lord has granted us mortal bodies that will one final day be resurrected and saved or damned for all eternity, in their entirety. I could not trade my shadow or my reflection or my immortal soul for a few hours of pleasure, no matter how sublime."

"My dear Katcher, what I am going to ask for is rather trivial, much less important than your shadow. It is something that leaves you with each use, but whose absence will hardly be noticed by others. I will spend this last night of Carnavale with you in exchange for your smile."

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"My smile? How could that be of value to anyone else?"

The man in Harlequin costume spoke for the first time, in a wheedling tone that Katcher found annoying: "My dear sir, your smile is a manifestation of your joy. I have discovered a way to spread joy among the unhappy by injecting into their spirit the smiles of others more fortunate than them. For me, it is an act of charity that I perform gladly, for what is more generous than meting out the joy that this world needs?"

"Plus," added Giulietta, "there is no loss to you. You give one smile to me today and tomorrow you can give another to someone else, although your joy may be gone."

Ernst remained unconvinced. "This is either a fantasy or a lie. Why would you give me the pleasure of your company in exchange for a smile of joy? What is in it for you?"

"The details of my transaction with Doctor Dapertutto here are of no concern to you. Suffice it to say that in the deal I propose everyone ends up satisfied."

Ernst felt he had enough of this strange conversation and turned his back on the pupparin to go in search of Friedrich. Giulietta spoke again: "I'll give you a free sample."

"What do you mean?"

"Come aboard, sit with me, and I will give you a kiss that will make you want to accept my deal."

Fearing possible foul play, Ernst shook his head and started to leave. Giulietta, moving with surprising speed, got up and, assisted by Dapertutto and the oarsmen, descended onto the landing and stood by the astonished man. "Come, my dear, kiss me. What harm could there be in that?"

Ernst was more than half drunk and felt attracted to the mysterious woman. Turning to Giulietta, he asked dubiously: "Here in the street? In front of the Ca d'Oro?"

"Nobody is watching" she replied. "And we are only hours away from the start of Lent. Who is going to find fault?" Without more, she turned Ernst around, seized him by the waist, and reached up (he was over a full head taller than she) seeking his lips.

He obliged. Holding her by the shoulders, he bent his head and sought shelter in her luscious mouth.

For all he knew, their kiss may have lasted a few moments, or half a day, or an eternity. He lost himself in an ocean of pleasure, a joyous embrace that encompassed the whole universe and left him at the same time sated and desperately in need of more. When their mouths finally separated, he let out a long-contained breath and smiled broadly.

"See? You kissed me, you smiled, and you can do it again."

"So, what is the deal?"

"You sign your name to this paper, promising to give me your smile of joy in perpetuity in exchange for the services I will render, and then we retire to my room and you kiss me again, as many times as you wish, from now until dawn."

"Is that all? And I will wake up safe and sound in the morning?"

"What do you take me for? Do I look like a brigand? You will wake up after the best night of your life, though you probably will not have slept much."

"I still don't understand this deal, but I'm ready to have a good time. Lead the way."

Arm in arm, Giulietta guided Ernst Katcher into the night, Dapertutto following discreetly a few paces behind.

Ernst woke up with a start as the morning sun's rays bounced off the nearby lagoon waters. "I have to get up!" was his first thought. He was on the front steps of some palazzo, crouched against the front door. He rose painfully, trying to unlock his muscles. He was achy from the exertions of the previous night, but the fear of being arrested as a vagrant blotted out all other concerns, and he took off walking as fast as his stiff legs would carry him.

After a few minutes of aimless wandering, he came to realize where he was: the square known to the locals as Campo San Beneto, not far from his guest house. He made a couple of turns and reached the entrance to his home away from home as Friedrich was coming out, an anxious look on his face.

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"Where have you been?" asked his friend as they
almost ran into each other. "You were not in our room when
I returned last night, and still were not there when I woke
up!"

"I was ... away" replied Ernst, not knowing how to
respond.

"I hope you had a good time" smirked Friedrich.

For the first time since waking up, Ernst searched
through his memories. He only had a vague recollection of
doing something very pleasant that, however, left a bitter
taste in his mind. Indeed, he felt gloomy and increasingly
despondent. "I guess so," he muttered.

Friedrich's smile broadened. "It's fine if you won't
tell me. We all have our little secrets."

Those words elicited in Ernst the realization that he,
indeed, was carrying a secret, one that he dared not reveal
even to his closest friend. He sighed and said nothing.

"Well, let's settle our house bill and take off before we
get caught in the coming and going traffic" added Friedrich.
"You will have plenty of time to let the cat out of the bag, if
you wish, during our trip back home."

But Ernst, as he came to remember little by little his
encounter with Giulietta, could not bring himself to part
with his secret. He felt hopeless and dispirited, increasingly
saddened at the realization that all happiness might have
slipped away from him, never to return. As the day went on,
he became at times snappish or morose, grunting or giving
one word replies to Friedrich's attempts at making
conversation and refusing to explain the reason for his
moodiness. Friedrich eventually gave up and their trip
proceeded in uncomfortable silence.

By the time they reached Eisenach, Friedrich no
longer treated Ernst Katcher as a friend.

As time went by, many others deserted Ernst the way
Friedrich had. Fellow noblemen, trades people, servants,
the workers in his perfume factory, customers: all who
came in personal contact with him were put off by Katcher's
disagreeable personality, a state of affairs that he was
unable to overcome. His business began to founder and he
became increasingly isolated.

It was not as if he failed to notice the changes in his personality. To the contrary, he was aware that happiness had been stolen for him, and wondered whether he should look for Dapertutto or Giulietta and try to buy back his joy. Yet such a search might not yield good results; he now realized that they were demonic creatures of some sort and expected that the ransom they would demand for his smile would result in eternal damnation for his soul, a price he was unwilling to pay.

Early in December, Ernst decided he needed to make a quick trip to München to discuss with one of his suppliers the delays that were being experienced in the shipping of ingredients for his perfume making operations. After a day of contentious meetings, he left alone to have an early dinner at the Hofbrauhaus, a city landmark he had visited many times in the past.

He was sitting silently in a corner of the large tavern, nursing a tankard of the local beer and reflecting how his mood clashed with the joviality found in places such as this, when he felt a tap on his shoulder and heard a familiar voice:

"Ho, Eri, what are you doing here?"

Katcher's heart skipped a beat. Here was Friedrich, big as life, a man he had not seen in almost a year. How he missed his friend!

He felt guilt and a pang of pain. Trying to keep his emotions in check, he replied in as welcoming a voice as he could muster: "Oh, Freddy! Good to see you!"

Friedrich sat next to Ernst and ordered a beer. While waiting for the serving girl to bring the beverage, Friedrich stared hard at his once best friend, who had withdrawn into silence. "Say, Eri, we need to come clean with each other. What have I done to offend you? Why the long face when you see me?"

Ernst could not keep silent any longer. On the verge of tears, he replied: "No, Freddy, no. I'm not mad at you, there is nothing you have done. It is just that, since Venice, I have lost my spirit, and I'm always in a foul mood!"

The beginning of understanding lit Friedrich's face. "Did something happen in Venice? I had managed to get

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you in high spirits throughout our stay... except for the day when we got out of town..."

Ernst nodded, still silent.

"You were gone all night just before we left town. Did something bad happen to you then?"

Ernst did not respond.

"Come on, tell me. Did you commit a crime or did something awful? Did you lie with one of those filthy cross-dressing *gnagas*?"

At the end, Ernst could not keep his secret any longer, and in a halting voice told the story of his meeting with Giulietta and the bargain he had struck with the whore. Some parts of the story he could not recall clearly, but the bargain and the ineffable kiss that sealed it were as vivid as if they had occurred an hour before. "See, I'm damned" he concluded, disconsolate.

Friedrich then asked: "Are you sure you are no longer able to experience any joy?"

"I don't think so. I have been despondent since the last time we met, and nothing that I see or hear gets me in a better mood."

"We may be able to put that to the test. An Italian company is in town to perform during our carnival, the *Fasching*, and is doing shows every night at the opera house at Salvatorplatz. They do the types of comic routines we saw in Venice during the carnival. It is vulgar stuff only fit for the masses, but it should be good for a laugh or two. Do you want to come with me? If we hurry, we should be able to catch most of tonight's performance."

Ernst shrugged his shoulders. "Sure, I'll go, but I fear it will be a waste of time."

"We'll see" replied Friedrich, getting his coat on.

Although the theater at the Salvatorplatz was new, it was already becoming too small for the needs of the city. The place was packed with patrons, who laughed or shouted their approval of the slapstick performances going onstage. Ernst and Friedrich sat down and proceeded to watch in silence a series of short skits involving pratfalls, actors hitting each other with various objects, prattle in true and imagined languages. The audience hollered and guffawed.

Then, two actors went onstage wearing the garments of low-class servants ("Arlecchino" and "Pedrolino"). They started having an argument in barbaric German dashed with Italian and French-sounding nonsensical words. While the reasons for the dispute were unclear, the men were fully armed with wooden swords, knives, and pikes, and seemed ready to go at each other.

Their dispute was interrupted by the entrance of a burly man wearing the black cape and tight-fitting uniform of a Spanish soldier. He identified himself as "Il Capitano" and ordered the servants in a commanding voice to cease their argument. Arlecchino and Pedrolino did nothing of the sort, but continued to heap abuse on each other. Il Capitano sought to separate them, and then both servants turned on Il Capitano and pounded on him with their wooden swords.

The audience broke into raucous laughter, for the fierce-looking soldier cowered as a frightened girl and begged his tormentors to stop. At one point, however, Il Capitano wrestled one of the swords from the combatants and started pummeling Arlecchino vigorously, to the servant's loud outcries and protestations. Something strange happened then: Il Capitano's attacks became fiercer and his blows started drawing blood. Arlecchino's pleas for mercy rose in intensity as the comedian tried in vain to protect his face and limbs from the savage blows.

Other actors came onstage. Some tried to restrain Il Capitano, while others carried Arlecchino away. An astonished silence enveloped the hall, only to be broken by a single peal of laughter from the stands: Ernst had begun laughing uncontrollably.

Friedrich turned to his friend. "You are laughing!!" he declared in amazement.

Ernst was now laughing almost hysterically, releasing the pent-up emotions that had held him hostage for many months. He seemed to be going at it so forcefully that his entire body was convulsing, so Friedrich became a little concerned. "Enough, Eri, *basta!* Why are you screaming like this? What happened on the stage was only a *lasso*, a skit. And not a funny one at all!"

With some effort, Ernst's speech returned to that stupid farce. The other victims had given up and could only get by. Ernst thought it was going to be a prospect of joy in the end.

'But then I saw Dapertutto, being even if your joy had other emotions, a satisfaction of taking

"That may be an unbecoming of a man to take pleasure in another's

Ernst offered a remonstrance. He was right, but one avenue had been revealed,

Ernst went on, his action was now an

It was the usual, a placid celebration of the holy Market in the city of Wartburg Castle. It was the case most of Venice the previous festivities, ignoring strolling musician and hot foods, and ward against the

For it was dressed and used, rushed to his office, reached the Marl because of the in his breath and was

Sitting on the buildings that in rags, holding a

age wearing the garments of "Pedrolino"). They barbaric German dashed nonsensical words. While unclear, the men were fully armed, and pikes, and seemed

motivated by the entrance of a man in a neat and tight-fitting uniform who called himself "Il Capitano" in a commanding voice to cease the abuse on each other. Il Capitano did nothing of the kind, and then both servants landed on him with their

raucous laughter, for the first time as a frightened girl and a man. At one point, however, Il Capitano's words from the combatants landed on Arlecchino vigorously, to the protestations. Something about the man's attacks became fiercer and more blood. Arlecchino's pleas for mercy from the comedian tried in vain to escape the savage blows.

Some tried to restrain Il Capitano and Arlecchino away. Another man in the hall, only to be broken by the man's stands: Ernst had begun laughing. "You are laughing!!" he

was laughing almost hysterically, for the man that had held him hostage was now laughing so forcefully that he was singing, so Friedrich became a man in the hall, *basta!* Why are you laughing on the stage was only one at all!"

With some effort, Ernst Katcher calmed down. When his speech returned to him, he explained: "I wasn't laughing at that stupid farce. That whore Giulietta mentioned how her other victims had given up their shadow or their reflection and could only get them back at the cost of their souls. I thought it was going to happen to me also, for losing all prospects of joy in my life seemed unbearable.

"But then I saw this actor, who in my mind stood for Dapertutto, being severely punished, and realized that, even if your joy has been taken away, you can still laugh. Other emotions can prompt laughter; for example, the satisfaction of taking revenge on your enemies."

"That may be true" replied Friedrich. "But it is unbecoming of a Christian, and a gentleman to boot, to take pleasure in avenging himself on his enemies."

Ernst offered no response to Friedrich's remonstrations. He knew, in his heart, that his friend was right, but one avenue to recovery from the loss of his joy had been revealed, and he felt secretly satisfied.

Ernst went on laughing, even though the stage action was now an insipid romance.

It was the week before Christmas and Eisenach, usually a placid town, was ebullient with activity, as it celebrated the holiday season with its traditional Christmas Market in the city's main square and the courtyard of the Wartburg Castle. Ernst was in no mood for celebration, as was the case most of the time since his ill-fated holiday in Venice the previous year. Thus, he limped through the festivities, ignoring the array of traditional craft shops, strolling musicians, storytellers, vendors of baked goods and hot foods, and providers of mulled wine and brandy to ward against the cold.

For it was biting cold that week. Although warmly dressed and used to the cold, Ernst was shivering as he rushed to his offices near the center of town. When he reached the Marketplatz, which was relatively deserted because of the inclement weather, Ernst stopped to catch his breath and was intrigued by an unexpected sight.

Sitting on the frozen ground, leaning against one of the buildings that circled the square, was a tiny girl dressed in rags, holding a bucket in which passersby had dropped

coins and items of food. The girl had a dark complexion and was foreign, gypsy perhaps, and was shivering from the cold and maybe from some ingrained hunger, for she was thin and privation showed in every muscle of her drawn face.

All the same, while shivering, the girl was tearing small pieces off a loaf of bread she held in one hand and tossing them at a few birds that had gathered around her. She was sharing her meager supper with other beings, just as unfortunate.

Ernst's first impulse was to move on, but the strange scene was compelling. He approached the girl and dropped a coin in her bucket. As he did, he caught a momentary glimpse of happiness in her face, and his own opened into a smile, realizing he had brought joy into someone else's life.

That night he sent a note to his friend Friedrich in München:

"Dear Freddy: Today I learned that a smile is not like a person's shadow, that can be removed once and for all. Instead, it is like the flowers in the field. There are of many types of flowers and many sources of laughter. Some may be gone altogether, but others will return next season unless prevented. I have been preventing all expressions of satisfaction from harboring in my soul. No more. I can still get pleasure from the world without enjoying what it has to offer, and can smile without rejoicing in another's sorrow. My life has been constrained by fate, but I can still live within my bounds and be content, if not happy."

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