

NOVEL V

Guidotto da Cremona dies leaving a girl to Giacomino da Pavia. She has two lovers in Faenza, to wit, Giannole di Severino and Minghino di Mingole, who fight about her. She is discovered to be Giannole's sister, and is given to Minghino to wife.

All the ladies laughed so heartily over the story of the nightingale, that, even when Filostrato had finished, they could not control their merriment. However, when the laughter was somewhat abated, the queen said: "Verily if thou didst yesterday afflict us, to-day thou hast tickled us to such purpose that none of us may justly complain of thee." Then, as the turn had now come round to Neifile, she bade her give them a story. And thus, blithely, Neifile began:

As Filostrato went to Romagna for the matter of his discourse, I too am fain to make a short journey through the same country in what I am about to relate to you.

I say, then, that there dwelt of yore in the city of Fano two Lombards, the one ycleped Guidotto da Cremona and the other Giacomino da Pavia, men advanced in life, who, being soldiers, had spent the best part of their youth in feats of arms. Now Guidotto, being at the point of death, and having no son or any friend or kinsman in whom he placed more trust than in Giacomino, left him a girl of about ten years, and all that he had in the world, and so, having given him to know not a little of his affairs, he died. About the same time the city of Faenza, which had long been at war and in a most sorry plight, began to recover some measure of prosperity; and thereupon liberty to return thither on honourable terms was accorded to all that were so minded. Whither, accordingly, Giacomino, who had dwelt there aforetime, and liked the place, returned with all his goods and chattels, taking with him the girl left him by Guidotto, whom he loved and entreated as his daughter. The girl grew up as beautiful a maiden as was to be found in the city; and no less debonair and modest was she than fair. Wherefore she lacked not admirers; but above all two young men, both very gallant and of equal merit, the one Giannole di Severino, the other Minghino di Mingole, affected her with so ardent a passion, that, growing jealous, they came to hate one another with an inordinate hatred. Right gladly would each have espoused her, she being now fifteen years old, but that his kinsmen forbade it; wherefore seeing that neither might have her in an honourable way, each determined to compass his end as best he might.

Now Giacomino had in his house an ancient maid, and a man, by name Crivello, a very pleasant and friendly sort of fellow, with whom Giannole grew familiar, and in due time confided to him all his love, praying him to further the attainment of his desire, and promising to reward him handsomely, if he did so. Crivello made answer:

"Thou must know that there is but one way in which I might be of service to thee in this affair: I might contrive that thou shouldst be where she is when Giacomino is gone off to supper; but, were I to presume to say aught to her on thy behalf, she

would never listen to me. This, if it please thee, I promise to do for thee, and will be as good as my word; and then thou canst do whatever thou mayst deem most expedient." Giannole said that he asked no more; and so 'twas arranged.

Meanwhile Minghino on his part had made friends with the maid, on whom he had so wrought that she had carried several messages to the girl, and had gone far to kindle her to his love, and furthermore had promised to contrive that he should meet her when for any cause Giacomino should be from home in the evening. And so it befell that no long time after these parleys, Giacomino, by Crivello's management, was to go sup at the house of a friend, and by preconcert between Crivello and Giannole, upon signal given, Giannole was to come to Giacomino's house and find the door open. The maid, on her part, witting nought of the understanding between Crivello and Giannole, let Minghino know that Giacomino would not sup at home, and bade him be near the house, so that he might come and enter it on sight of a signal from her. The evening came; neither of the lovers knew aught of what the other was about; but, being suspicious of one another, they came to take possession, each with his own company of armed friends. Minghino, while awaiting the signal, rested with his company in the house of one of his friends hard by the girl's house: Giannole with his company was posted a little farther off. Crivello and the maid, when Giacomino was gone, did each their endeavour to get the other out of the way. Crivello said to the maid:

"How is it thou takest not thyself off to bed, but goest still hither and thither about the house?" And the maid said to Crivello:

"Nay, but why goest thou not after thy master? Thou hast supped; what awaitest thou here?" And so, neither being able to make the other quit the post, Crivello, the hour concerted with Giannole being come, said to himself:

What care I for her? If she will not keep quiet, 'tis like to be the worse for her. Whereupon he gave the signal, and hied him to the door, which he had no sooner opened, than Giannole entered with two of his companions, and finding the girl in the saloon, laid hands on her with intent to carry her off. The girl struggled, and shrieked amain, as did also the maid. Minghino, fearing the noise, hasted

to the spot with his companions; and, seeing that the girl was already being borne across the threshold, they drew their swords, and cried out in chorus:

“Ah! Traitors that ye are, ye are all dead men! ’twill go otherwise than ye think for. What means this force?” Which said, they fell upon them with their swords, while the neighbours, alarmed by the noise, came hurrying forth with lights and arms, and protested that ’twas an outrage, and took Minghino’s part. So, after a prolonged struggle, Minghino wrested the girl from Giannole, and set her again in Giacomino’s house. Nor were the combatants separated before the officers of the Governor of the city came up and arrested not a few of them; among them Minghino and Giannole and Crivello, whom they marched off to prison. However, peace being restored and Giacomino returned, ’twas with no little chagrin that he heard of the affair; but finding upon investigation that the girl was in no wise culpable, he was somewhat reassured; and determined, lest the like should again happen, to bestow the girl in marriage as soon as might be.

On the morrow the kinsfolk of the two lovers, having learned the truth of the matter, and knowing what evil might ensue to the captives, if Giacomino should be minded to take the course which he reasonably might, came and gave him good words, beseeching him to let the kindly feeling, the love, which they believed he bore to them, his suppliants, count for more with him than the wrong that the hare-brained gallants had done him, and on their part and their own offering to make any amend that he might require. Giacomino, who had seen many things in his time, and lacked not sound sense, made answer briefly:

“Gentlemen, were I in my own country, as I am in yours, I hold myself in such sort your friend that nought would I do in this matter, or in any other, save what might be agreeable to you: besides which, I have the more reason to consider your wishes, because ’tis against you yourselves that you have offended, inasmuch as this damsel, whatever many folk may suppose, is neither of Cremona nor of Pavia, but is of Faenza, albeit neither I nor she, nor he from whom I had her, did ever wot whose daughter she was: wherefore, touching that you ask of me, I will even do just as you bid me.” The worthy men found it passing strange that the girl should be of Faenza; and having thanked Giacomino for his handsome answer, they besought him that he would be pleased to tell them how she had come into his hands, and how he knew that she was of Faenza. To whom Giacomino replied on this wise:

“A comrade and friend I had, Guidotto da Cremona, who, being at the point of death, told me that, when this city of Faenza was taken by the Emperor Frederic, he and his comrades, entering one of the houses during the sack, found there good store of booty, and never a soul save this girl, who, being two years old or thereabouts, greeted him as father as he came up the stairs; wherefore he took

pity on her, and carried her with whatever else was in the house away with him to Fano; where on his deathbed he left her to me, charging me in due time to bestow her in marriage, and give her all his goods and chattels by way of dowry: but, albeit she is now of marriageable age, I have not been able to provide her with a husband to my mind; though right glad should I be to do so, that nought like the event of yesterday may again befall me.”

Now among the rest of those present was one Guglielmo da Medicina, who had been with Guidotto on that occasion, and knew well whose house it was that Guidotto had sacked; and seeing the owner there among the rest, he went up to him, and said:

“Dost hear, Bernabuccio, what Giacomino says?”

“Ay,” answered Bernabuccio, “and I gave the more heed thereto, for that I call to mind that during those disorders I lost a little daughter of just the age that Giacomino speaks of.”

“’Tis verily she then,” said Guglielmo, “for once when I was with Guidotto I heard him describe what house it was that he had sacked, and I wist that ’twas thine. Wherefore search thy memory if there be any sign by which thou thinkest to recognize her, and let her be examined that thou mayst be assured that she is thy daughter.” So Bernabuccio pondered a while, and then recollected that she ought to have a scar, shewing like a tiny cross, above her left ear, being where he had excised a tumour a little while before that affair: wherefore without delay he went up to Giacomino, who was still there, and besought him to let him go home with him and see the damsel. Giacomino gladly did so, and no sooner was the girl brought into Bernabuccio’s presence, than, as he beheld her, ’twas as if he saw the face of her mother, who was still a beautiful woman. However, he would not rest there, but besought Giacomino of his grace to permit him to lift a lock or two of hair above her left ear; whereto Giacomino consented. So Bernabuccio approached her where she stood somewhat shamefast, and with his right hand lifted her locks, and, seeing the cross, wist that in very truth she was his daughter, and tenderly wept and embraced her, albeit she withstood him; and then, turning to Giacomino, he said:

“My brother, the girl is my daughter; ’twas my house that Guidotto sacked, and so sudden was the assault that my wife, her mother, forgot her, and we have always hitherto supposed, that, my house being burned that same day, she perished in the flames.” Catching his words, and seeing that he was advanced in years, the girl inclined to believe him, and impelled by some occult instinct, suffered his embraces, and melting, mingled her tears with his. Bernabuccio forthwith sent for her mother and her sisters and other kinswomen and her brothers, and having shewn her to them all, and told the story, after they had done her great cheer and embraced her a thousand times, to Giacomino’s no small delight, he brought her home with him. Which coming to the ears of the Governor of the city, the

worthy man, knowing that Giannole, whom he had in ward, was Bernabuccio's son and the girl's brother, made up his mind to deal leniently with Giannole: wherefore he took upon himself the part of mediator in the affair, and having made peace between Bernabuccio and Giacomino and Giannole and Minghino, gave Agnesa – such was the damsel's name – to Minghino to wife, to the great delight of

all Minghino's kinsfolk, and set at liberty not only Giannole and Minghino but Crivello, and the others their confederates in the affair. Whereupon Minghino with the blithest of hearts wedded Agnesa with all due pomp and circumstance, and brought her home, where for many a year thereafter he lived with her in peace and prosperity.