



Next Sunday



Next Sunday

It was next Sunday morning, shortly after *Terce* (for, just like the Sunday before, she had been snoring clear through *Matins* and *Lauds*, and only woke up about *Prime*) that Bombònica put on her new (for her) silk dress the Bishop had given her on Thursday and went for a walk in the neighborhood. The dress was made of Almerian *tiraz*, which, in addition to its vividly colored stripes was also inscribed with stylized Arabic script spelling out the names of important characters—sultans and caliphs—as well as those of the manufacturing workshop.

That Thursday, as the two of them were seated on a bench in the Municipal Park by the Great Poet Lendvay's bust, the Bishop had carefully unfolded the dress and had handed it to Bombònica, saying:

“My dear Miss Bombònica, in my time ...”

“That would be the early fourteenth century ...”

“Obviously. I was about to say that in my time they had a ceremonial tent in the Notre Dame cathedral, serving as the oratory for the royal family: it was made of silk like this, embellished with letters embroidered in golden thread. I hope you'll wear it (not the tent, you understand; the dress) and remember me. Perhaps you'll have the goodness to remember Mother, too, for she was one hell of a snappy dresser; say a prayer for her soul, and ask that her bones be not dug up from her grave for the sake of the progress of science. I am also suggesting you try on this splendid head covering: it's embellished with peacock feathers and I had it made by a *chapelier de paon* (that's a peacock hatter) in Paris for a lady who I wrongly thought was not indifferent to my amorous advances. Alas, it turned out she wasn't too enthused, so I kept the hat. You may wear it, if you like, and remember me.”

“And your lovely mother.”

Following prolonged consultation with her wardrobe door, Bombònica was now wearing both and, thus adorned and feeling mighty royal she found herself at the corner of Red Creek and Holossy Simon streets, right across from the little Orthodox Church recently restored and repainted a depressing dark gray, when she heard a voice:

“Miss, you gotta hear this. I don't think it's ever happened before to anyone; at least not to anyone I know.”

Bombònica turned around and found herself facing neither St. Gabriel nor St. Michael (both patron saints of Little Orthodox Church on Red Creek Street), but a stranger, rather poorly dressed and displaying a large quantity of wrinkles on his forehead, around his mouth and nose, and generally speaking on just about any spot on his face which was not covered in hair. She smiled and said:

“You look very much like Mr. van Tcheluk, but you're not him.”

“No,” acknowledged the stranger. “I am his twin brother, Lionel. My full name, though, is Lionel Richard Coeur de Lion (that's Richard the Lionheart, you know) ...”

“Of course I know, don't be ridiculous ...”

“... van Tcheluk. Which (the name, I mean) was my mother's wish and desire, may her sweet soul find rest, peace, and eternal harmony as well as skillful counterpoint (I added the latter



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knowing you're a music historian, and hope you appreciate it). She was crazy about said Richard and wanted at least one of her twins to bear that illustrious character's name.

Mother was also a great admirer of Hippocrates and St. Augustine (among others) and was tremendously relieved my brother and I were not conjoined at birth. You see, she'd worried about that ever since reading that glorious saint's *De civitate dei*, especially the passage recounting the birth of a child with all parts doubled in the upper area of the body (for the boy had two heads, four eyes, two chests, four hands, but one stomach and two legs—as if of a single man); when we turned out normal, she decided to call us unusual names (she was a lady who liked paradoxes): so my brother is Hippo, and I am Richard Coeur de Lion.”

“I didn't know Mr. van Tcheluk's first name (pardon me, you are a van Tcheluk, too—yet at the time I didn't know he had a brother), but it makes sense: St. Augustine was Bishop of Hippo ...”

“I think Mother was rather thinking of Hippocrates when she named my brother. Anyway, Father was of a different opinion (he would have liked his sons to bear ordinary names, such as, for instance, Launcelot or Sagamore), and so were the kids in the neighborhood: honestly, my dear Miss, I am firmly convinced it was lack of education (especially historical) on their part that made it impossible for them to comprehend the great honor of playing with someone with a name so celebrated. Instead of taking advantage of the opportunity, they referred to me as ‘that weird Little Lion.’ I don't have an exact recollection of when and how that designation got changed to ‘Lionel,’ but ‘Lionel’ it is now, and ‘Lionel’ it shall stay forever.”

“I am sorry you had to go through such a traumatic experience as a child ...”

“Don't be. I'm OK with it. But Miss, I was saying there's something I want you to hear, and here it is: have you ever heard of anyone going to church to ask for a drink?”

“You mean a drink of holy water? I don't see how anyone could ...”

“No. I mean alcohol. More specifically, beer.”

“Honestly, Mr. Lionel, no.”

“Well, you're hearing it now. I got off work on Thursday at twelve noon, and from there me and the guys went to *Friar John's* for a beer or two. That, and to play cards (I suspect you may have heard about these new sets of playing cards they have there, designed by the Artist of the Sundial: Mrs. John is featured on one of the cards, and so is the Mayor—not on the same card, you understand: on a different one). Well, the quantities we ingurgitated were way above just a few, so I suspect I got a little inebriated. In fact, I was drunk as a lord. Next thing I know, I'm at St. Joseph's door, shouting in Father Philippe's general direction: ‘A beer, a beer, my kingdom for a beer’—as if I hadn't had enough of the stuff already, and as if Richard III hadn't already coined and used the phrase. You see, it doesn't make sense and, besides, it's inaccurate, historically speaking: I am a different Richard ...”

Lionel Richard Coeur de Lion van Tcheluk fell silent and frowned, deep in thought. Then he looked Bombònica straight in the eyes:

“I say, Miss, that's unheard of, isn't it?”

“Quite. Except Richard III was asking for a horse.”



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“Indeed. I’ve been sober ever since ...”

“Ever since he asked for a horse?”

“Of course not, don’t be ridiculous: ever since Thursday afternoon; and, looking back at what I did, I am overwhelmed with a sense of utter shame. You know, it was Father Philippe who baptized both of us, and in his kindness he never raised any objection to our objectionable names; any normal person should feel grateful for such kindheartedness. But no!—the two of us seem to be operating under a curse; we do dumb things: first, my brother steals Mrs. John’s bottle labels and the Bishop’s bike; then I get drunk and go to St. Joseph’s to beg for beer.”

He stopped abruptly, shuddered, and continued in a tremulous tone of voice:

“That’s irreverent; who knows, maybe even blasphemous, God forbid.”

“Excuse me, but from what we know your brother did not steal that bike: he took it for a joy ride. That’s pretty innocent.”

“Oh, no. He did steal the object in question, just like Mrs. Bonaventure said, and there are no two ways of thinking about it. And after he fell from the bike in front of *Friar John’s*, he got up, joined me at my table and the two of us wrote the letter signed Péronelle, which we subsequently placed in the Bishop’s bike basket, just for kicks.”

Lionel looked pretty despondent, as if carrying the world’s misfortunes on his shoulders—and not knowing what to do with them. “Put them down,” thought Bombònica, but she didn’t voice her thoughts.

The man’s back was bent, and the corners of his mouth were following a descendent trajectory, as did his moustache, eyebrows, and curly side whiskers.

“Honestly, Miss, we didn’t mean any harm. It was a little joke. Like when we wrote to Teddy MacRobius in America to warn him his father’s life might be in danger on account of the *liaison amoureuse* he had with that actress of ill repute (by the way, did you know she was cheating on the poor man with a viola player from the Hungarian Opera?). Or when we lifted Mrs. Bonaventure’s alms purse.”

“So the two of you did that? I wondered ...”

“Yes, Miss, and for a very good and noble reason—the noblest of all: retaliation. You see, a while ago my brother and I applied for membership in the Association for the Protection of the Middle Ages Amongst Us. We thought we were well qualified for it, for we both are quite skilled at singing isorhythmic motets (you know, the kind of motets Philippe de Vitry, Father Philippe’s ancestor used to compose); we are fluent in Old French; Middle English poetry holds no secrets for us; besides, we have planted numerous trees of note-shapes in the Municipal Park and elsewhere in the area. But Mrs. Bonaventure, who is the APMAAU Vice President (you’ll agree with me, I hope, that her election to that position is yet another case of blatant nepotism, for frankly she herself is an individual of no personal merit other than being a remote descendant of St. Bonaventure—well, that, and her preposterous moustache)—Mrs. Bonaventure, I was saying, didn’t think so.”

“And why, pray?”



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“Oh, simply because she thought our rendition of Vitry’s *Garrit gallus/In nova fert/Neuma* was not accurate enough. In addition, she objected to the quality of our *triplex longa* seeds, for, she said, the *modus* and *tempus* branches of the resulting trees were too imperfect, and the *prolatio minor* was, in fact, as major as they come. Compared to the same species of trees the city fathers planted in the fourteenth century, ours, she said, were a joke. Besides, her griffin got a stomach ache after chewing on some *minimae* and *breves* (that’s minims and breves for you and I, Miss) of the wrong color from one of our trees, and that caused Mrs. Bonaventure to be even more upset with us. That griffin is a nutcase, I swear.”

“Anyway, Mr. Lionel, what do you propose to do now?”

Lionel Richard Coeur de Lion unbent his back, combed back the hair from his forehead, caressed his side whiskers, twisted the ends of his moustache (the hairs of which returned to an almost vertical position), and smiled a sly smile:

“My brother and I have applied for membership in the celebrated APRAU (that’s the Association for the Protection of the Renaissance Amongst Us) and are now studying English madrigals of the sixteenth century and some of Shakespeare’s sonnets. That will show her.”

“I see. Well, Mr. Lionel, it’s been a pleasure meeting you. Say hello to your brother. Good bye now.”

“Bye,” he said and went away, walking with slow and deliberate steps in the direction of *Chez les Poor Claires*, where he hoped to be able to order a special tincture against ingrown toe nails and blisters. Truth is, he had been wearing a pair of Renaissance replica shoes which gave him hell.

Bombònica resumed walking on Hollosy Simon Street; it was a glorious early spring day and the sun was shining; it was doing so rather timidly, but you could tell it was there and that was all you could ask for in late February, especially since tropical climate, *barabombosaurians*, and *bara* palm trees have been for a long time things of an extremely distant past in these our parts; although for some reason one expects the sun to shine a little stronger on a Sunday.

In front of the pink house down the street two ladies and a little girl were sitting on the base of the cement fence turning their faces to the sun, the way sunflowers do in August; the dog nearby, wagging its tail looked as if it, too, belonged to the company. Bombònica knew one of the ladies well; the other one was the Sunday Lady, Mrs. Wilhelmina Machault, who got up, holding a slim printed volume in her hand.

In her sweet, melodious, almost magic flute-like voice Mrs. Machault addressed Bombònica:

“Hello, my dear. You look like a doll in that striped silk dress of yours; and that peacock-feathered hat is a wondrously modish creation; why some of its feathers even match the color of your right eye! (for I hope you realize your left eye is of a different color—but never mind that: none of us is perfect). Bombònica dear, may I be so bold as to ask whether you have a little spare time to look through my newest book of poems? It’s called *Being and Nothingness in Selected Works of Guillaume de Machaut: Roundels, Lais, and Virelais*, and I wrote most of the poetry while in a deep state of *omphaloskepsis*.”

“Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn” said Bombònica. “I have better things to do with my time. You may be seated now. *Adieu*.”



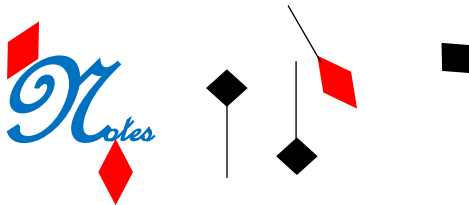
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She walked slowly down the street, then round the corner on Paris Street till she reached her house. She opened the gate and stepped into the garden, up the seven steps and onto the glass-walled front porch. She dragged the little wooden stool all the way to the bed; she subsequently stepped on the stool and climbed in the bed, and there she sat for a while, with her back propped against the pillow. The sun was still shining and the street was empty, with the exception of the orange neighborhood cat which was standing on its four legs on the sidewalk looking inquisitively at Bombònica.

“I wonder what happened to my umbrella,” she softly whispered to the creature.

“It got woven into the fabric of a story,” the cat whispered back.

By now it was the Hour of *Sext* on a Sunday afternoon. Bombònica sighed a sigh of relief and fell asleep, eyes wide open, for she was a doll that couldn’t close her eyes.



For *tiraz*, see Maurice Lombard, *Les textiles dans le monde musulman du VIIe au XIIe siècle* (Paris, 2002), 95; in time, *tiraz* came to refer to both this type of silk and the workshops manufacturing it (ibid., 220-22).

For the Notre Dame silk tent, see Craig Wright, *Music and Ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris, 500-1500* (Cambridge, 1989), 16.

For *chapeliers de paon*, see Etienne Boileau, *Le Livre des métiers*, ed. René de Lespinasse and François Bonnardot (Paris, 1879), lxxvii. *Le Livre des métiers* is a voluminous document containing the statutes of Parisian professional guilds, assembled c. 1265 by Etienne Boileau, the provost of that city. The peacock hatters had their own guild, separate from other classes of hatters. Their statutes are printed in ibid., 205: “Titre XCIII: Cis titres parole des Chapeliers de paon de Paris.” They worked for “churches, knights, and gentlemen of high rank (“leur mestier n’appartient fors que as eglises, aus chevaliers et aus haus hommes”).

For the conjoined twins, see St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16.8 (PL 41, col. 486): “Ante annos aliquot, nostra certe memoria, in Oriente duplex homo natus est superioribus membris, inferioribus simplex. Nam duo erant capita, duo pectora, quatuor manus, venter autem unus, et pedes duo, sicut uni homini.” Hippocrates, writing on the generation of monsters had noted that babies with superfluous and useless bodily parts could be born if superabundance of matter were present. Such superfluous parts could involve the presence of two heads, four arms, four legs, six fingers or six toes.



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Rivulus Dominarum, meaning Ladies' River is a small mining town in Northern Transylvania which got its name from the women who used to separate gold from sand in the local river, once gold was discovered in our mountains. That happened a long time ago, in the Middle Ages (before the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, to be more specific), but the story in this book is from the twenty-first century.

(From Bombonica Kopártean's Diary)



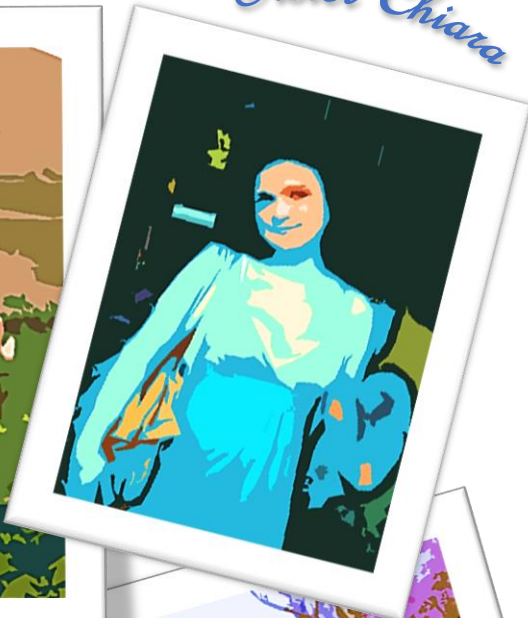
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The Bishop and
his bike, in conversation with
an unidentified
Old Towner

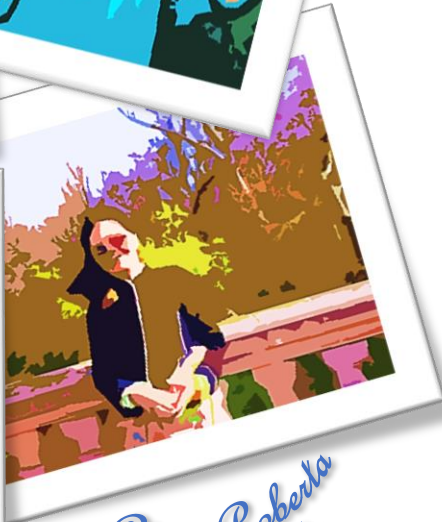
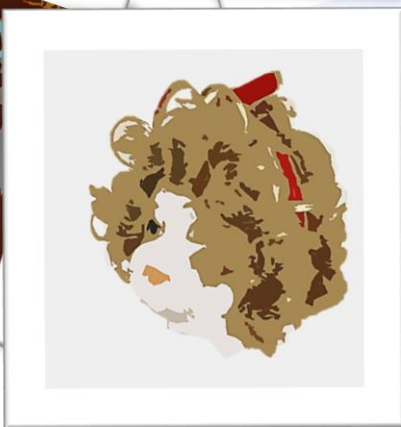
Mrs. Thomasina
Bonaventure



Sister Chiara



Mrs. Rogeria
Bacon



Mrs. Roberta
Grosseteste

Bombonica Kopartian