

# The Peasants' Bible

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by Dario Fo

*Liberated from  
capitalist control  
to educate the masses  
by  
Socialist Stories*

# Two Lovers Entwined Like Peas in a Pod

*In the popular gospels, the peasants' bible, it is always a great surprise to find that our progenitors are not Adam and Eve, but two other characters who take great joy in life and are full of passion. God had second thoughts after creating them. They are two people who were born inside a pea pod and so their story is called "Two lovers entwined like peas in a pod."*

On the sixth day, after having created the entire universe, God said: "I want to make two creatures in my own image, like two children."

So right away, without any effort, he fashioned two big eggs, big enough to have come from the ovaries of an elephant. Then he called an eagle to hatch them: "Come here, you big bird . . . sit on them!"

But the huge bird could not cover even the tips of the eggs. "What am I going to do now? Who will hatch my children? I'll have to take care of it myself!"

So the Heavenly Father lifted his robes up to his belly button, nestled himself gently on top of the eggs, and waited for them to hatch like a great big mother hen. Instinctively he started going: "Cluck, cluck, cluck . . ." And flapping his arms: "Cluck, cluck, cluck . . ."

Nearby there was a baboon who burst out laughing: "The Heavenly Father is hatching his eggs! Ha, ha!"

God flew into a rage and hurled an ass-burning thunderbolt at his rear end. “*Sciaaaa!*” And ever since then, all baboons have had hairless red buttocks.

So, I was saying, the Lord sat on the eggs . . . and generated so much heat that the eggs almost ended up soft-boiled.

All of a sudden, he jumped up: “They’re moving! The eggs are starting to hatch!” The Lord wiggled his sacred derriere . . . the eggs broke open and out of each one emerged a creature.

Overcome with emotion, the Lord . . . you have to understand, this was his first hatching . . . tripped while embracing them and fell on the two newborns, almost squashing them into an omelet. “Oh my God” . . . every so often he invoked himself. . . . “What a disaster! I have to fix it.”

God picked up the firstborn, a female, and, like a pastry chef, reshaped her form. “Oh, here there are two bumps on her chest. Well, they look good. I’ll leave them that way. Down there is a crack, but I don’t have time to sew it up . . . after all, she’s a female. No one will notice if she has a few flaws.”

Then he repaired the male . . . this time with more attention. “Now where can I put them . . . my poor newborn creatures?” He drew a rounded shape in the air and suddenly a big pea pod appeared. He opened the huge pod, removed the peas, and nestled the newborns comfortably inside, one in each valve.

“My little beauties! Sleep sweetly like that until tomorrow,” and off he went into the infinite reaches of creation.

Meanwhile the Devil, jealous to the point of nausea, had been watching this magnificent act of creation. As soon as God the Father was gone, he approached the shell pod, and to avoid being seen . . . because there were angel spies keeping an eye on things . . . he disguised himself as a sheep with two twisted ram’s horns on his head. And when he reached the two open valves he kicked the pod closed with violent thud.

Suddenly the male and the female found themselves pressed closely against one another. They were awakened immediately by the cuddling . . . they smelled each other . . . their hearts beat in the dark . . . their tongues tasted each other.

"That's good."

"Delicious."

"And who are you? Are you a pea?"

"Yes. I'm a pea with a peashooter."

"Are you my double . . . do you look like me?"

"No, we're not the same . . . I'm a man!"

"Are we prisoners?"

"Calm down, because as soon as we're ripe this enchanted covering will open on its own."

"I'm not worried at all . . . I like it in here. I feel a great sweetness pressed against me."

"Me too."

For fun they rocked back and forth. They rubbed against each other.

"You're tickling me all over. Hahahaha!"

They shouted and laughed and sighed and purred and panted. *Plaf!* The two valves opened.

"Oh, we're free."

"For pity's sake," said the female. "Close it up again. I'm cold."

And *plop!* It closed with a tug and they found themselves embracing again . . . and then it opened again, and then it closed . . . opened again, closed again. . . . Open, closed. . . .

"This is lots of fun! What do you call this game?"

And the female said with a languid sigh, "I think it's called love."

"*Baaaaaa!*" The Devil dressed as a sheep butted his head on the ground and cursed, "What a screw-up! Me, the Devil, I invented love! *Baaaaaaa!*"

A big goat nearby was attracted by his bleating and climbed up on his back to mount him.

“*Baaaahaaaa!*” The Devil ran off like a thunderbolt and smashed the horns on his head against a rock so violently that they lodged themselves solidly into his skull. So all in one day the Devil had invented love and horned himself for all eternity.

Meanwhile the pod dwellers continued to make love. . . . Open and closed. . . . Open and closed. . . .

Suddenly the Lord reappeared: “What’s this? What kind of creatures did I create?” he shouted indignantly. “What kind of lazy life are you living, embracing each other like that all day long . . . open and closed, open and closed! You should be out inventing the wheel . . . discovering fire! I created you as my own children. You are the children of the Lord! Can you stop making love for just a moment, at least while I’m talking!” God’s halo was spinning! “Do you know what I’m going to do? I’m going to split you up, separate you from one another. The woman here and the man over there. I’m going to put you on two different continents and you’ll never see each other again.”

“Don’t separate us, God! It would kill us!” they cried through tears of grief.

“What’s all that water on your face?” shouted the Lord.

The angels flew away in terror . . . leaving behind them a stream of tears that formed a rounded arc in the sky. . . . And that’s the way the first rainbow was born.

Thousands and thousands of years went by, and then I arrived: Eve.

When I was born I found myself all alone in the universe. . . . No one waiting to greet me . . . no one to introduce me to anybody. . . .

No. I have to say it wasn't very polite. What would it have cost him, God, to stick his head out of a cloud and shout: "Attention all animals! Behold, this one I've just created is Eve . . . the first woman in mankind!"

No, I might as well have been the daughter of some miserable whore! No one! Not even my man showed up to throw me a little party.

"There you are! Make the best of it!"

No one to exchange a few words with . . . nothing to do . . . I paced back and forth like a nincompoop. To pass the time I invented names for things. . . . And I thought to myself: Poor me . . . without a mother to tuck me in at night, without a father to wake me up in the morning . . . no memories . . . because I, you know, don't you. . . . I didn't come into the world as a small child, but fully grown, with all the round parts already fleshed out in the front and the back. . . . When I discovered them . . . touching them with my hands . . . I looked at myself . . . behind me I had two . . . buttocks? . . . Yes, buttocks! . . . I think that's a good name for them . . . that's fine. . . . But why did the Creator make me sprout two buttocks on my chest? He must be a real practical joker, this Creator!

The Creator?! It's hard to imagine that there must have been a sacred fabricator of all these things!

And this story for the gullible, that I was born from a rib pulled out of Adam's chest? Are we out of our minds? Because when I was pressed up against Adam . . . after I met him . . . and we got to know each other . . . I felt his stomach, his bones . . . and I counted them. . . . He had eight ribs here and eight ribs there . . . just like me!

Now, you want me to believe that the first man was created with a row of nine ribs on one side and eight on the other? A poor cripple . . . hunched over, all crooked like this?

Let's not be ridiculous!

(*Shouting to the sky*) "Creaaaaator?" I shouted. "I'm tired of being alone . . . all I see are lions, elephants, and frogs, who don't have much to say. . . . Where is my man?"

Immediately he was there in front of me. . . . It was like a bolt of lightning! It was him, my man! The one who had been designated for me!

What a beautiful animal!

He was a little surprised to see me . . . his eyes open wide. . . . He inspected me all over without saying a word. All of a sudden he stretched out his arms and with two hands squeezed both my tits. Like this: *Prot! Prot!*

"Hey, that's rude!" And I gave him a slap on his snout!

But then I thought that this tasting with both hands might be some kind of human ritual . . . who knows . . . a form of greeting . . . but he didn't have tits like mine on his chest . . . he just had two little round balls hanging down between his thighs.

I stretched out my hands . . . "Pleased to meet you!" and squeezed them: *Prot! Prot!*

"Ahhhhhhhh!" He let out a shout like a skewered lion . . . and ran away.

I didn't see him for quite some time after that!

A few days later I was startled by something frightening.

I saw blood flowing out of the crevice where he, the man, had his swinging balls.

It was like getting a bloody nose from a sneeze. . . . "God!" I said. "I have two noses. One here and one there." I was desperate! "All the blood is draining out of me!" I shouted.

"Don't worry . . . it's nothing . . . it's natural!"

"Whose voice is that?"

I look . . . from inside a cave there appears a female creature, a big fat human with two huge tits like this . . . a giant swollen belly . . . a sow!

“And who are you?”

“I am the Mother!”

“What Mother?”

“The Great Mother of all creation.”

“No! You’re lying. The only true Creator is the one who is always peeking out of the clouds with one eye . . . huge, framed in a triangle . . . like some kind of celestial voyeur.”

“Yes, it’s true . . . he is the only Holy Creator, but I am the one who gives milk to the earth that makes springtime blossom . . . trees flower . . . and fruit ripen.”

“Then why do you stay hidden in that hole?”

“Because he, God, doesn’t want it to get around . . . we are the divinities of another religion . . . we’ve been driven away. To me, he turns a blind eye, because he has no choice . . . he can’t give milk . . . he doesn’t have big tits like me . . . it’s an embarrassment . . . but I can’t let myself be seen by anyone.”

“And were other divinities driven away?”

“Yes . . . there’s my son, an unfortunate fool who goes around piercing creatures with arrows that make them fall in love.”

“Piercing? How?”

“With a gadget that shoots arrows. It’s called a bow. . . . *Zam!* He can shoot anyone . . . *zach!* And they fall in love with whoever is nearby. . . . But he is licentious and shoots his arrows randomly, so that whatever happens, happens. He once shot an angel who fell madly in love with a camel, and a donkey who fell in love with a lion and got her pregnant . . . and then there was the holy virgin who went crazy over a beetle. Be careful he doesn’t aim one at you.”



"Oh, what fairy tales you tell, Great Mother . . . you must be a wonderful weaver of silly stories! So tell me about my bleeding. What is that?"

"It is a sign of your temporary impurity."

"Impurity? What kind of nonsense is that?"

"I don't make the rules, but that's what your religion says."

"What rules?"

"The ones that say that a woman menstruating . . . that's what it's called . . . like you, should not crack an egg, not even for . . . for mayonnaise, because it will cause madness. During these days of punishment she should not touch flowers because they will wilt . . . or wine because it will turn to acid! She should not touch a woman who has recently given birth, because she will become anxious, or touch a child, because it will come down with an awful case of the mange, or a man, because he will be infected with scabies!"

"But is it true?"

"No, it's just a cock-and-bull story that they circulate to perpetuate ignorance, humiliate women, and keep us in the shit. And the same goes for the story about the apple and Pandora's box and the witches who are half fish and half bird. It's all a way of saying that we're nothing but a bunch of whores."

At that moment a flash of light appeared and the fat Mother crouched down: "It's him, your Lord! For pity's sake, don't tell him that I spoke to you . . . if he finds out, he'll burn me with lightning! Good-bye." And she disappeared.

Later I met Adam again . . . he watched me from a distance . . . and he put his hands here! (*She points to her genitals.*) We were always together. Inseparable . . . we laughed, we played. . . . Then one day . . . everything changed . . . I don't know what got into him . . . but he became obsessed with the idea of the

Devil. . . . I didn't know who this Devil was and he didn't understand it either.

In the sky . . . a flying creature with outstretched wings hovered over us like a big buzzard and shouted, "Fear the Demon-Devil who dwells inside every creature, disguised as beauty! Once you recognize it, throw it immediately back into its hell as punishment."

And *vroom, vroom, vroom* . . . it was gone . . . disappeared!

It made Adam nervous! "Hey . . . is that any way to deliver a message? Come back you big chicken . . . can't you stick around for a minute and give us some kind of explanation?"

All distraught, he shouted at me: "Eve! Eve . . . who is this Demon-Devil?"

"Adam, you don't have to shout, because we are the only ones in the world and I can hear you just fine! It must be someone who is opposed to the Lord."

"And where does it live, Eve?"

"He says that it dwells inside every creature . . . disguised as beauty. . . ."

"Eve, that means it might even be living inside me!" he said.

"Well," I said to calm him down a little. "It could just as easily be hiding somewhere inside of me!"

"Yes, Eve. It's more likely that he is inside of you, this Demon-Devil . . . disguised as beauty. . . ."

Me! I could be the Demon disguised as beauty! My skin became so blazing red that I almost fainted!

Beautiful! So he thinks I'm beautiful!

I could have hugged him. I could have jumped on his neck and shouted: "Yes, I am the Demon-Devil and I'm going to drag you to hell!"

Hell? That's right . . . what is hell?

A place.

But what kind of place?

Maybe it's a bottomless pit, a prison into which this Devil is thrown for punishment.

God, what a mess this big chicken made! This simpleton, my Adam, now sees the Devil everywhere, and worst of all, he takes it out on me. We're playing in our lair . . . like two little kids rolling around in each other's arms in the grass . . . when all of a sudden he lifts me up in his arms . . . and drops me just like that . . . he has thrown me out of the lair! He's kicked me out of the cave!

"Go away!" he shouts at me. "Get out of here! Get out! Go back to your hell!" And then he locks himself in the cave, blocking the entrance with logs.

"Have you gone crazy? Stop acting like a madman . . . I'm not the Devil, I swear it!"

I tried to get in . . . I begged him. Nothing! The entrance was barricaded.

"Adam, don't leave me alone . . . It's getting dark . . . I don't know how to sleep alone! I'm scared."

Nothing. He didn't say a word.

I huddled up close to the wall of our lair . . . I waited . . . meanwhile I felt something that slowly rose up from here . . . and choked my throat . . . what could it be . . . what is it?

"Sadness" . . .

It was the first time I had felt "sadness."

I tried to cry a little . . . hoping it would console me. But tears wouldn't come. . . . A dull depression was growing inside me, eating away at my heart.

The moon disappeared . . . the night got darker . . . you couldn't even see the stars anymore . . . suddenly a bolt of lightning lit the sky. . . . Thunder! It's raining . . . pouring . . . I was so desperate that I didn't even try to run for shelter.

Another lightning bolt. Bits of ice are coming down. What is that? I begin to shiver from the cold. I can't feel my hands . . . my legs. I moan . . . "Ohoohoo," I moan.

The barricade moves.

He's made a decision at last.

The man appears.

Oh, God, I feel awful. . . . He lifts me up . . . he carries me into the lair . . . he rubs me with dried leaves . . . he rubs me everywhere. He calls me. . . . "Eve . . ." I can't respond. Even my tongue is frozen.

He calls me, shouting, "Eve! Eve!" What a beautiful name I have in his mouth.

Overwhelmed, he embraces me. He squeezes me. He blows on my face . . . he licks my forehead. He cries.

The man cries!

Slowly his warmth begins to revive me. I succeed with great difficulty in moving my fingers and arms. I hug him back.

I feel something pressing against my stomach.

"Holy God, Adam, what's that? Is it alive?"

Adam pulls away a little. "I don't know," he answers, embarrassed. "It happened yesterday too . . . and just now . . . when I lifted you in my arms while we were playing . . . that's why I threw you out."

"But what do I have to do with that appendage of yours that pops out of you and comes to life?"

"Eve, it only pops out when you are around . . . especially when you laugh . . . and when I smell you."

"It's curious about laughter and odors. Maybe it's an infection, a sickness? I don't know, some kind of diseased growth with a sense of humor?"

"No, it doesn't hurt. On the contrary! . . . But it agitates me. . . . It generates a lot of heat, even on its head."

"Heat on its head? That's not a natural phenomenon. Adam, do you think it could be the Devil?"

"Yes, I think so, Eve . . . I think that this is the Devil himself . . . disguised as beauty!"

"Well, let's not get carried away. . . . It doesn't look so beautiful to me. It doesn't even have any eyes."

"That's because the Devil is blind!"

"Then how does he get all puffed up for me, if he can't see me?"

"It must mean that love is blind."

"Love? Where did you come up with that word, Adam? I never heard it before: *love!*"

"I don't know . . . it just came to me . . . all of a sudden it's there on my lips . . . *love* . . . when I'm struck by this desire to hug you . . . to roll around with you. I feel like shouting: *Love!*"

"Me too . . . it happened this morning. Should we try to hold each other again?"

And so we found new ways to embrace each other in an entanglement of playful caresses.

"That Devil is pressing against me again! Where do you think it's trying to get to?"

"Leave it alone, Eve . . . I want to see where it's heading. . . ."

"God! It wants to stick itself in down there! . . . It's squeezing in . . . I can't breathe. . . ."

"I don't mean to insult you, Eve," gasped Adam with difficulty, "but I could swear that . . . hidden inside you . . . is hell. . . ."

I went pale.

"I think, Adam, that I know exactly where that place is, because I feel that hellfire inside me!"

"We should obey God's angel, who told me, 'As soon as you recognize this Devil, throw him back into hell as punishment.' Let's punish this Devil. Let's punish him!"

Outside the sky lit up with lightning bolts . . . gusts of wind came down from all directions and twisted the trees into shapes that resembled the way we were embracing each other as we sighed. . . . Bubbling torrents of water rushed to the sea. The animals were hushed by the storm. . . . Only we two sighed to each other in moaning whispers.

God! God! If Adam's Devil can find as much rapturous pleasure inside my hell as I am feeling, then he must be going crazy with joy. I'm all flustered . . . I can't explain the topsy-turvy . . . flip-flopping . . . crisscrossing . . . delirium. . . . What an idea you had, Lord God, to bestow on him, Adam, the Devil, and on me the hellfire inside! What an extraordinary miracle you have created, my Lord. . . . You *are* a Heavenly Father! Oh, Hallelujah, Lord! Hallelujah! And also, amen!

# The Shepherds' Cantata

*The piece that I'll present for you now is one that I have never performed. It is part of the so-called Shepherds' Cantata, a historical genre of popular theater that was performed regularly in the region of Naples.*

*The language that I use is drawn not only from the dialect of Naples, but also from the mountains of Vesuvius and all over Campania. It is a language which, to tell the truth, is slightly invented. People who actually come from Naples try to follow the story and get completely lost. So the people sitting next to them, who don't know a word of the dialect from Naples, have to explain what's going on. . . . It is the triumph of ignorance!*

*Born during the sixteenth or seventeenth century, this type of theater was prohibited by the Church, which judged it to be obscene and even blasphemous. The church authorities were conservative and reactionary. They didn't appreciate the extraordinary poetry and love expressed in the religious feelings of these stories.*

*The two central characters, Razzullo and Sarchiapone, are classic characters like Harlequin and Brighella. They are super-Pulcinellas, two dimwits who get by however they can, pilfering and swindling. They don't do anything all day. They have no professions, so they try a little of everything. They are fun-lovers and sometimes cynics as well.*

*The key character in this "cantata" is the Madonna, who is identified as the Madonna of Carmine, to whom was dedicated*

*the famous sanctuary at the foot of Mount Vesuvius: a sacred and much-visited place of pilgrimage. The image of the Madonna is important: completely covered with necklaces, gold, and even, during the processions, garlanded with money . . . banknotes of a hundred thousand lira . . . a few checks . . . hopefully they won't bounce.*

Hundreds of years ago a tremendous earthquake ravaged the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Carmine in Naples, toppling its walls and shattering the sacred statue of the Madonna to dust.

The faithful, out of their minds with grief, were shouting: "We've lost our Madonna! How can we ever find another statue to perform miracles for us like she did?"

They beat their chests and scratched their eyes.

The Madonna, who being a phenomenon has very sharp ears, heard their lament and, because she was kindhearted, set out across the sea for a trip to Naples. . . . After two or three days she passed Vesuvius and arrived at the sanctuary of Carmine in the dead of night. The door had been ripped off its hinges by the earthquake, and no one was inside. The Madonna saw the crumbling walls and said, "It's probably best for me to take refuge inside that niche . . . it will be safer there." So she nestled in for the night, but as tired as she was, she slept standing, like a statue.

The next morning, a little before sunrise, the faithful arrived at the church. "It's a miracle! The Madonna has come back to us! Another statue has been born!"

"Don't make so much noise, for pity's sake. All the racket will shake up the walls and pillars, and everything will fall down on our heads."

So very slowly, while the Virgin was still sleeping on her feet, they covered her with all the necklaces and gold that had been saved. A vision of splendor!



Then, without making any noise they left the sanctuary to spread the news about the new statue and make preparations for a procession.

When the word got out, the fanatics showed up and *PIM! PARAPAM!* They set off fireworks, popping off all over the place: *PATAPON! PAM!*

"*Aaah!*" said the Madonna, awakened by all the racket. "What is it? Another earthquake?" She hurried out of the empty sacristy.

When she got outside the Lord appeared over Vesuvius in a rage. "Mary, what are you doing in this place? And what are you dressed up for . . . with all those necklaces?"

"I don't know, Lord . . . I think the faithful dressed me up this way: like the Madonna of Carmine!"

"But what are you doing here in Naples? Mary, you should be in Nazareth!"

"In Nazareth? What for, Lord?"

"Holy Mother! Any day now you're going to give birth to your son the Savior!"

"Oh, what a miserable scatterbrain I am! I forgot. Holy Father, forgive me!"

"You want to give birth to our Savior here in Naples? How can he preach the word of God around here? You want him to sing? (*He sings in Grammelot to the tune of "Volare" or some other popular Italian song*) 'Come with me . . . *wo-oh* . . . to heaven . . . *wo-oh-oh-oh*. . . If you repent all your sins . . . Saint Pete will let you all in. . . .' No! We can't let that happen!"

"You're right, Lord!"

"Well, what are you waiting for, my daughter. Get going!"

"Yes, Lord. Yes! I'm going right away!"

*VUUOHOOO!* The Lord disappears into the crater. The Madonna goes down to the seashore at Santa Lucia. On the

pier where the boats were docked sat two good-for-nothings: Sarchiapone and Razzullo, two hungry bums always looking for an opportunity to get something for nothing.

They saw the Madonna and said: "Look at how that one's decked out! Take a gander at those gold necklaces! Who does she think she is, the Madonna of Carmine?"

"She must be a gypsy . . . going around trying to cheat poor gullible people out of their money."

From a distance the Madonna said: "Good men, could you do me a favor?"

"Careful. That's how the swindle starts!"

"Greetings, ma'am. What can we do for you?"

"I have to make a crossing."

"A crossing to where?"

"To Palestine. Do you know how to get to Palestine?"

"Ha . . . ha . . . You're asking us if we know how to get to Palestrina! We were practically born in Palestrina!"

"Oh, I'm so glad! And could you take me there?"

"With pleasure!"

"And how much would you like for your trouble?"

"Don't worry," answered Razzullo. "We'll work something out later."

Sarchiapone gave his companion a slap: "What are you doing? Are you crazy?"

"Take it easy. Don't say a word. I'll take care of everything!"

The Madonna asked, "And which boat will we be going in?"

"Any one you want, ma'am. Take your pick. They're all ours!"

Sarchiapone shoved his companion: "Shame on you! If the fishermen find out, they'll drown you."

"Holy Mother of God, will you just let me take care of this?"

"What's that you said? . . . Were you talking to me?"

"Have a seat in this boat, ma'am. It's the best one. That's it. Give me your hand and I'll help you down. Sarchiapone, get in the prow and help the lady aboard!"

The Madonna stepped down into the boat. "I'm very fortunate to have run into you good Christians."

"Ma'am, you couldn't have met any better!"

"People are always looking for us . . . they hunt us down to the ends of the earth! Untie the boat, Sarchiapone!"

They took the oars and started paddling every which way . . . the boat wobbled . . . one oar flew up in the air. Razzullo got smacked on the head.

"Mother of God! What are you doing?"

"Me?" said the Virgin. "I haven't moved. I'm just sitting here quietly, not even breathing!"

The two of them stuck the oars into the water and started rowing in opposite directions: one forward and one backward. The boat spun around and around.

"Gentlemen, are you sure this is the right way to row?"

"Ma'am, we are sailors from Mergellina and in Mergellina that's the way they row. It's called the 'roundabout way of getting there.' You spin around and around. . . . And then you get there . . . a little dizzy . . . but you get there!"

"That's fine . . . it's just that my head is spinning round about as well . . . I think I'm going to throw up! You wouldn't by any chance happen to have a slice of lemon?"

"Lemon? Right away!"

Razzullo took a smelly piece of lemon out of his pocket. "Have some!"

"It's actually a little filthy!"

"That's the way they grow them . . . they're called 'filthy delicious.' Try it!"

"Thanks. I think I'm over it."

Finally the two scoundrels figured out how the oars worked. The boat pulled away from the port.

Rowing, Sarchiapone asks: "So how do you plan to get us paid for our pains?"

"Don't talk! She'll hear you! Sing!"

*(Singing)* "So how do you plan to get us paid for our pains?"

*(Razzullo, also singing)* "Don't worry. As soon as we get to the other side of the Gulf, we'll let the lady off: 'Yes, make yourself comfortable . . . we've arrived in Palestrina!' . . . And ZACH! We tear off all her necklaces and leave, escaping into the night like good little thieves."

"Ha . . . ha . . . . It's our lucky day!"

Suddenly a wild wind started blowing and the boat was thrust out into the open sea.

"Jesus! Where are we? I can't see the shore anymore. . . . Where have we ended up?"

The waves rose up like mountains. Each breaker hurled the boat into a tilt . . . it went up . . . it came down . . . it was taking in water . . . the oars fell overboard and sank into the sea. "Help! We're sinking! Oh, God, help us!" The two stinkers threw themselves onto their knees and looked to the sky. "Holy Mother of God, help! Save us from this tidal wave!"

And the Madonna, sitting in the stern, said, "Good children, I'll see what I can do!"

"Ma'am," the two hopeless wretches turned to her. "What are you saying? You should be quiet and think about praying yourself!"

"You're right. I will also pray to the Heavenly Father."

"Forget about the Heavenly Father. He's always too busy. Pray to the Madonna who is much nicer."

"Thank you for having so much faith in her."

Razzullo was indignant. "What kind of blasphemy is this? Why? Don't you have any faith? These foreigners are all anti-Christian!"

*VUOHV! VUUH! SCIACCH!* The waves were getting bigger. The two stinkers buried their faces in their hands and prayed. The Madonna took off her robe and, holding the two hems in her hand, threw it into the air. The wind lifted it up and it billowed like a big sail . . . and the boat rose up over the waves.

"Look! We're up in the air!" shouted Sarchiapone. "We're flying over the sea! It's a miracle!"

Down on their knees like sheep, they didn't even notice the sailing cloak that was holding them up.

"Oh, Blessed Mother, you've saved us!"

"No, don't thank me. Thank the child I have in my belly!"

The two of them turned and looked at the Madonna in astonishment: "What are you blathering about, ma'am?! What kind of blasphemy is that? The fear must have driven her out of her mind!"

Magically, the wind died down and the boat floated tranquilly on the sea. Then all of a sudden a ship full of Saracen pirates appeared.

"What's this? Well, maybe it's a coincidence, but ever since we met this gypsy we've been running into a lot of lousy luck."

Before they knew it, all three of them were taken prisoner by the infidel Turks. The captain took the two of them aside and asked, "Who is this woman you've got with you?"

"She's a gypsy we picked up in Piedigrotta. If you like her, we can make a deal . . . we'll give you a good price and throw in the rings and necklaces at no extra charge."

"Take these two dirty rats," ordered the commander, "and cut off their heads!"

"But why?"

“Because you’re heartless! Free that lady, who must surely be a queen . . . and as for them—*ZACH!* Chop! Chop! And be thankful I don’t crucify you!”

The two desperate seamen got down on their knees again. . . . Two blades hovered over their heads. “Holy Mother of God, help us! Save us!”

But the blades fell too quickly. Their two heads rolled onto the ground.

But then . . . a miracle! Sarchiapone and Razzullo, still decapitated . . . came back to life . . . and started chasing their rolling heads. Razzullo grabbed the first head that fell into his hands and stuck it onto his neck, and Sarchiapone did the same. But they got them mixed up . . . each had put on the head of the other. They looked at each other eye to eye. Sarchiapone shouted, “Mother of God! What is my face doing on your head?”

And Razzullo cried, “We scrambled our faces!”

In the face of this portentous miracle, the terrified Saracens threw them all into the sea. The sail took them to the port of Palestine. The Madonna got off, and so did the two miserable wretches with the scrambled heads.

“We have to leave each other now,” said the Madonna. “Good-bye! It’s been a pleasure.”

Razzullo and Sarchiapone were alone and a little depressed. They started walking without knowing where to go.

They came to an abandoned pigsty.

“Let’s stop here.”

Just at that moment some shepherds passed by, each carrying a pile of gifts: mozzarella, eggs, baby goats, focaccia . . .

“Where are you going with all these presents?”

“To the next farmhouse, to the manger where the baby Savior was born!”

They left and others arrived, a procession of people with gifts. Quick as lightning, Razzullo was struck by a brilliant idea, a masterpiece. "Why don't we make our own little manger scene?"

"Not bad. But how can we pull it off?"

"I already took a look inside that manger over there. There's a few pieces of women's clothing and even a cradle for the Savior."

"And where are we going to find a newborn child?"

"We'll steal a baby lamb . . . look, there's a little lost one over there in the field."

"Grab it! Meanwhile I'll dress myself as a female mother, and you can be the blessed Joseph."

No sooner said than done. In half an hour they had a manger scene all ready. Shepherds came. Some of them fell for it and got down on their knees in front of Razzullo dressed as the Madonna. The lamb was in diapers like a baby. Presents were left. Sarchiapone took them all.

Then all of a sudden, the cops showed up. There were shouts, curses. People were running in all directions. The soldiers grabbed the lamb in swaddling clothes and butchered it in a bath of blood. Then they stole all the shepherds' gifts and left.

Razzullo and Sarchiapone cried in desperation.

Just then the Madonna happened to pass riding a donkey with her baby and Saint Joseph. "Good men, why are you crying?"

"Oh, gypsy lady . . . the cops stole everything we had and killed our little baby lamb!"

The Madonna took a pile of gifts off the back of the donkey. "Take these. We have too many. We can't carry them all!"

"Oh, thank you, ma'am!" And the holy family continued walking, until they disappeared in the distance.

"What a nice lady!" said Razzullo. "She is the first gypsy I ever met who, instead of asking for a handout . . . gives you one!"

“No, she’s no gypsy, that one! We should have figured it out right away! Think about it. It’s Christmastime. Here we are in Palestrina. First the lady has all these necklaces. Then she comes back and they’re gone. But instead, she shows up on a donkey with a baby and an old man helping her to carry a whole bunch of presents! And just a little while ago the cops were here . . . looking for her! She’s no gypsy . . . she’s a smuggler!”



# The Presumptuous Pig

When the Heavenly Father created the pig he said, “All right, let’s hope I didn’t pull a porker.”

The pig was blessedly happy with his place in the world. The hog, swine, or pig, sometimes known as a boar, was satisfied and happy to have so many names. He spent all day with his mate, wallowing contentedly in manure, in shit, in the muck of his own excrement. He splashed around, grunting happily, making belly flops as he sang and laughed. Not only did he splash around in his own shit, but in the shit of the other animals as well, because, as he said, “The more it stinks, the better the quality!”

When they made love—bang-bang—it was a scandalous obscenity. Their squeals of pleasure sounded as if they were butchering each other!

Spurts and sprays of shit kept shooting up to the sky, as if the sound and stink of a sewer had burst open, until one day the Heavenly Father stuck his head out of a cloud. . . . Phew . . . he got hit with a spritz that nearly soaked him all over! (*Mimes the Heavenly Father appearing indignantly from out of the clouds*) “Yow! What’s going on?! Hey, pork belly! You know you really are a pig! Aren’t you embarrassed to be wallowing around like that? It’s so vulgar. Bang-bang—make love. You and your mate are the most disgusting lowlifes in all creation!”

“But, Heavenly Father,” stuttered the pig with a grunt, “you were the one who created me with this joyful obsession for

splashing around in the muck of the manure. We would never have thought of it on our own.”

“All right, but you’re getting carried away! It’s rude enough that you get so much pleasure from making love in excrement, but spritzing in the shit isn’t enough for you, is it? You have to go singing ‘Glory to God!’ Fine . . . in any case, if you are happy and content under these conditions, just enjoy yourselves.”

“No, actually, Lord, not to be ungrateful or offend you in any way, but I’m not so satisfied with my condition.”

“What do you want? Should I take the stink out of the shit?”

“No, that would be like removing the soul from a Christian!”

“So what do you want?”

“I want wings!”

“Wings?!”

“Yes, for flying!”

(Laughs) “Hahaha! You’re out of your mind! Think about it . . . you flying? A flying pig spreading stench and shit all over creation! With the animals below shouting, ‘What kind of natural disaster is this?!’”

“No, it wouldn’t be spreading manure. It would be spreading a wonderful fertilizer all over . . . spreading health and abundance, for the flowers, fruits, and grains.”

“Oh! You’ve got quite a head on your shoulders, porker. I wouldn’t have thought of that one . . . dung as fertilizer! Bravo! You’ve convinced me! I’ll give you wings.”

“Thank God!”

“But only to you, the boar . . . for the female, nothing! She walks!”

The female started crying uncontrollably. “There, I knew it . . . we women always get the worst of it! They told me all about you, God . . . that you were a little misogynist!”

"Be quiet, woman, and stay in your shit! That's enough! As for you, boar, if you really want to take your woman to the sky, you can do it: Just hold on to her tightly and fly her away."

"No, I can't, Lord. It's impossible. My arms are too short. . . . We're big. . . . We have bellies that never end. As soon as we grab each other in an embrace, with that shit all over us . . . instead of flying off with me, my sow will slide out of my hands and slip away. . . . *Puhamm* . . . she falls . . . she smashes into the ground, and I'm left without a woman!"

"*Eheee*, did you think I was going to give you wings before I came up with a solution for that?"

"What solution?"

"Take a look, I made your wanger all curly on purpose, like a corkscrew . . . you embrace your woman and thrust it deep inside her. Hooked together in love you can fly her away with no hands! You don't have to hold on!"

"Thank God! I didn't think of that!"

"Good, get down on your knees while I make this marvelous miracle!"

The Lord looked up at the sky, made a sign with his blessed hand, and . . . *sfrum, sfram* . . . the pig sprouted magnificent silver wings! The female hugged him and said, "Oh, the angel of pigs has been born!"

God said: "Stop! Not so fast. There's a condition. Be careful. The wings are attached with wax!"

"With wax?" said the pig. "Like Icarus?"

"Yes, you guessed it. But what do you know about Icarus?"

"Don't forget that we pigs were in all of Aesop's fables!"

"Oh, we have a classical pig! Who would have imagined it! So you know very well what happened to Icarus when he flew too close to the sun, that his wings melted and he plunged to

the ground in total destruction! That could happen to you too. So be careful.”

“Yes, okay!”

And God flew away.

The pig and his mate stood there a moment. The pig tried to fly (*mimes the tentative flight of the pig*), took one spin and then another: “I like it!”

“Stop, wait, embrace me, penetrate me!”

*Proock . . . Svirip, svop, svuom . . .* they flew into the clouds.

The female shouted: “How wonderful! I feel like I’m in heaven!”

“Heaven? You’re right. Let’s go to heaven, you and me.”

“No. We can’t. Don’t forget what God said . . . about the sun. . . .”

“But we don’t have to go near the sun! We can wait until sunset and go at night, when it’s dark.”

“You really do have a head on your shoulders! But how can we get a running start for the climb when we’re holding on to each other like this?”

“All we need is a little slide.”

“What do you mean, a slide?”

“First we give ourselves a rubdown . . . anointing our skin all over with dung and fat. Let’s do it. Like that. Here. Come on, come on, come on. Let’s go to the big slope on that mountain and slide down into the valley. Go, go, go. . . . Hold me. Come on. Careful while I spread my wings!” *Puhaa! “Iehee!”*

Up, up, up. A wonderful gust of wind comes down and lifts them from underneath. They pass the moon and arrive in heaven.

As soon as they get to heaven . . . oh, God . . . God of wonders! The female almost fainted . . . there were all kinds of fruits! There were peaches! There were cherries! Big ones, big ones . . .

ohhh, very big ones! Big enough, it seemed, for the two of them embracing each other to get inside and splash around in the pulp.

“Look at this. It’s like a cupola in a cathedral. How wonderful! Let’s go in.”

*Puhaa!* They go inside. They wallow around. They squeeze each other. They make love. They shout.

Meanwhile, at this very moment, nearby, all the saints and angels in heaven are singing praises to the Lord.

(*One of them executes a liturgical chant that goes off-key into falsetto.*) “Ohh! What a stink! (*Looks around, still singing*) What an awful stench!”

“Who’s singing out of key?”

The Heavenly Father arrives. “What a horrible stink. Who farted?”

They all turn around and look at one another, and then the Heavenly Father says: “Oh, I know very well who’s responsible for this sewer stench! It’s the stink of that hog porker who has come here to heaven and burrowed himself into our fruit! Sound the alarm! Saints and holy ones, catch me that pig and his mate! Whichever one of you saints manages to grab him, I’ll make you a halo as big as a cupola! Go!”

The angels sounded their trumpets: *tatatatatatatata!* They started running all over the place. It looked like a deer hunt!

And suddenly it was the female who shouted: “Let’s go. We’ve got to escape. Let’s throw ourselves down to earth.”

They embraced each other and with narrowed wings fell into a nosedive: “*Uuuuuahaaa!*”

“Open your wings now . . . we’ve passed the moon!” *Puuuhaaa!* The wings opened . . . a few feathers flew off . . . but they held. . . . They held. . . . They held!

“We’re saved. The sun’s not out anymore. It’s not out *anymooooooore!*”

*Praamm!* The sun wasn't out, but Heavenly Father popped out from a cloud. (*Snickering*) "*Abhaaaa*, you porker! Who do you think you are? Sun! Come out!"

"No, Father, that's not fair! It's not in the rules. It's unnatural. . . . It will throw all creation out of balance!"

"I am the balance of creation! I make the rules, and I can make the sun come out whenever I feel like it!"

*Wuuoommm!* The sun came out.

"Burn his wings!" ordered God.

*Bruuuhaaaa.* . . . A lightning bolt hit the pig's wings. They burned. They boiled. They were cooked! All the plumage was gone. Not a feather was left. The pig was left with nothing; like a plucked chicken . . . he fell. "*Uuuhaaaaa!* We're *craaaaaaaaaaashing!*"

Wonder of wonders! They splattered into a deep trough of mud, muck, and shit. . . . *Pruuuhaaa!* *Pruuummm!* A fountain of shit spurted high into the sky.

The Heavenly Father was peeking out to watch over the fall of the pig and had to get out of the way in a hurry to avoid a drenching.

*Pruuhammmm.* . . . *Prooooooofffff.* . . . *Puhaaa.* *Sciafffrrrrr.* . . . *Vuuuuuuu.* *Ploploplo.* . . . *Plo.* . . . *Glo.* . . . *Gloglogloff.*

The pig came out of the trough: *glogloglo.* . . . His nose was squashed flat with two holes, and that's the way they have stayed for all eternity. . . . Flattened as a punishment for that flight. . . .

The male pig cried and cried. "God, what an awful punishment you have given me! My wonderful wings! I'll never go to heaven again!"

His mate grabbed him and pulled him into the shit. "Come on, you beautiful pig! Come with me. Hug me and be happy, because everyone has his own heaven."

# Hats and Caps

The Heavenly Father, after all the troubles he endured in the course of creating the world, the animals, and mankind—not to mention the eviction from the Garden of Eden and a host of other problems—was dead tired. So he went off to take a rest.

The Lord was getting old . . . the years were passing for him too, even though he is eternal.

One afternoon, he was lying down tranquilly in a blessed state of sleep, when *TRABULA! BOAN! PAM!* An infernal racket of banging and crashing woke him up with a start. “Oh, God! What’s going on?”

There were curses, wild shouting, and all kinds of insults. A tremendous din shook the sky and all the clouds.

“Peter, Peeeeeeter!” roared the booming voice of the Lord. “What is this pandemonium? What are those angels and arch-angels doing? Who gave them permission to play with my thunderbolts and set off a storm? And didn’t I give orders that the archangels should stop playing cards and shooting craps with the saints because they always argue and end up in a cat-house brawl? What kind of heaven is this? Let me sleep, for God’s sake!”

“No, Blessed Father! It’s not the people in heaven making all this ruckus. It’s the inhabitants of the earth, still screwing things up.”

"The earth? What's the earth? Who are these screwballs?"

Well, you've probably guessed it by now. The Heavenly Father was getting pretty old and a little absentminded . . . almost senile.

With patience, Peter said, "Father, you created mankind, starting with Adam and Eve!"

"Oh, yes! Now I remember! Adam . . . with the mud . . . I shaped him out of a lump of clay. I put a round head on top like this . . . and then two holes for the eyes and two round balls inside them, and a bump for the nose . . . and two little holes for the nostrils, and two other holes for the ears . . . one for the mouth, like this. . . . (*As if speaking to Adam*) Don't bite off more than you can chew with these teeth. And here I'll make your neck and shoulders . . . down to the arms and elbows . . . and I'll make your fingers just like mine . . . (*counts on his fingers*) one, two, three, four, five . . . five for you, too. Then the belly, the belly button . . . and then the balls and the little birdie, the buttocks, the legs, then knees. . . . The feet . . . there you go, I'll give you five fingers on them, too.

"All right, we're done!

"Now, Adam, breathe: *FUOF*. I'll blow in to start you off. *FUOF*. . . breathe . . . move, walk . . . that's it, come alive, come alive, Adam . . . oh . . . *ooh* . . . *ooh* . . . *eh* . . . *eeh* . . . *aaah* . . . *aah*. LIFE!

"*Oooh* . . . Look!

"Climb into this tub . . . wait while I put in some grapes. . . .

"Look at this gorgeous bunch of grapes! Pound them—press them—squash them—out spurts the wine!

"Life is wine!

"Adam—Eve—vine—wine!

"You see how I remember everything now?"



"Yes, everything, Lord . . . It's just that the part about the wine comes later; that miracle hasn't arrived yet! It won't happen until Noah is born, in a few years!"

"So late? Damn it! So I made a mistake! Mother of God, what a mess I've made! In any case . . . tell me what's gotten into these men. What is this ruckus all about? Go take a look, Peter!"

"Excuse me, but I've already been there, and I discovered that mankind is divided, separated into two factions, so to speak, two groups. In one of the groups, everyone wears a hat."

"A hat? What kind of hat?"

"Particular kinds of hats: top hats, derbies, stiff hats, even helmets. The other group wears soft ones: berets, floppy caps, and beanies."

"And why all these headpieces?"

"To distinguish themselves from one another. The ones with the hats have chosen the professions of judges, lawyers, notaries, priests, merchants, generals, and cardinals."

"I see! Thinking professions. And the others with the caps and berets, what do they do?"

"What do you expect them to do?! Hard labor: peasants, farmers, bricklayers, carpenters, and fishermen. . . . Joined in their efforts by a few wayward priests and deranged monks."

"And what gave rise to the pandemonium?"

"The fact that the Hat-Wearers want to control the Cap-Wearers: 'You do this, you do that, and we'll make the laws.' But the Cap-Wearers refuse to accept their subjugation in silence! 'We've had enough!' they shout. 'If you want to eat, you have to work and sweat for it!'"

"'But we work too . . . in spirit, with thoughts and ideas.'"

"'Then you can eat your thoughts and ideas, with a dish of holy spirit on the side!'"

“Ha! So, those Cap-Wearers are blasphemers too,” the Heavenly Father declared indignantly. “I’ve had enough. I’ll take care of this myself. After all, I am God, for God’s sake! Let’s go down to earth!”

Peter showed him the way, along with four angels blowing on trumpets of gold. When they arrived he called a meeting of everyone. “Now get down on your knees and listen. Men, women, your Father is going to speak to you in person!

“Cap-Wearers and Hat-Wearers,” said the Lord, “enough of this violence, shouting, and killing. Look, I’m going to put everything into this sack. I’m going to put in all the power of the earth, which is pretty big. That includes the right to control everything and to make the rules governing religion, land, trade, war, and other things I’m sure I’ve forgotten to mention. There! Pay attention! I’m taking this sack and putting it onto the top of that mountain, and whoever gets there first, the Hats or the Caps, will possess its contents for all eternity with the grace of God . . . and there will be big trouble for anyone who complains. Oh, I almost forgot! The winners of the race will impose their language on the losers. The language of the winners will be the language that counts. The language of the losers will be known as *dialect*, which is to say . . . gutter talk! Remember! The race begins at dawn. Be ready. The signal will be a thunderbolt in the sky that deafens your ears.”

By the middle of the night people had already prepared themselves to start. In the first row were the Hat-Wearers, mounted on their horses. They were serious, triumphant . . . and they had feathers in their hats. Riding on the six-horsed carriages were the women, with their embroidered gowns and finely curled hair.

In contrast, the Cap-Wearers arrived riding donkeys and mules, with their women and children crowded into carts.

The Heavenly Father, stretched out on a cloud, was enjoy-

ing the show. "Look, Peter. The Hats have taken off like lightning! What's taking the Caps so long? And now that the road is uphill they're getting off their animals to keep from tiring them out. How will they ever get to the mountain that way?"

At midday, the Hats rested under some trees, drinking, eating, lounging around. A few of them made love. Eventually the Caps showed up, and passed them without stopping.

"Let them go ahead," said the Hats. "We can catch up to them again in no time."

Walking, plodding, the Caps came to a big river. The head of the caravan shouted, "Stop!" He waded into the rapids and stuck a pole into the water to measure its depth. "Get back onto your mounts," he ordered. "It's too deep here."

Very slowly, with great effort, the entire group made its way upstream and tied a rope from one side of the river to the other so that they could use it to pull across their baggage and their carts. Suddenly they heard the hoofbeats of horses, accompanied by the sounds of trumpets and sneering. The Hats had arrived.

"Look at the lazy cap-heads! What kind of contraption is that? Are you afraid to get your butts wet?"

And without stopping for even a breath, they plunged into the water with their carriages and horses to make their way across. When they reached the middle of the river the rapids got deeper and the carriages started falling apart.

"Help! We're sinking! Help! Help!" shouted the Hats. The horses snorted and neighed, stamping their hooves in terror, sinking into the rising waters that foamed around them.

"Help! Help!" gurgled the generals as they kicked the lawyers under the shattered carriages with their spurs.

A cardinal clutching a large prayer book shouted, "Help! Help!" in gurgles that came out sounding almost like a Gregorian chant.

The Caps watched this swirl of drowning from the other bank. "Look at the Hats! The riders! All their overinflated puffed-up arrogance isn't enough to keep them afloat. . . ."

"We have to give them a hand . . . the women and children, at least!" someone said.

"Help!" shouted the desperate Hats, filling up with water like bloated wineskin sacs.

"You're so clever, why don't you figure out a way to pull yourselves out on your own?"

"Help! Help! But what good will it do you Caps to win the race for power. . . . *Glug, glug.* . . . Once we've drowned, who will you have to give orders to? Save us, for the love of God. . . . We swear to you that once we are saved we'll go back where we came from . . . and you will be our masters."

"You give us your word? You swear it?!"

"Gentlemen's agreement!" the Hats shouted in unison, and right away the Caps threw them ropes and pulled out their baggage . . . and held out poles to them. . . . In short, all the Hats were saved, sprawled out on the riverbank vomiting the water they had swallowed.

Sitting up on his cloud, the Heavenly Father was overcome with emotion, and tears fell from his eyes. "Look at that! I have to say that those Caps are truly good Christians!"

"Good Christians," echoed the saved Hats, "while you're here, could you make a fire to dry us off and get some dry clothes, at least for our soaked women and children?"

No sooner said than done . . . The Caps arrived with the clothes, lit the fire, left them chests full of things to eat, and said, "Well, good night. We're going to sleep. We're exhausted. You sleep well, too."

The moon came out and the Heavenly Father also slept soundly.

When the sun came up the Caps lifted themselves to their feet. "Hey, where are the Hats? They're gone? I guess they went back home like they said they would."

"No . . . look . . . over there! They're already on the mountain!"

"They stole our mules and the oxen too!"

"Damn them! Those . . . traitors!"

The Hats, entrenched up on the mountain, waved a sack in the air. "What are you complaining about! The sack is yours! We'll just take what's inside! Well, well, cap-heads, cap-heads, you goats, you sheep! We pulled one over on you!"

And with that they let loose a cascade of raspberries as loud as fireworks at carnival time.

"Oh no! That doesn't count! God, Most Heavenly Lord!" cried the Caps in desperation. "You are our witness. It was a trick! The race must be invalidated!"

The Lord appeared from out of a cloud. "Silence! Cap-Wearers, listen to me. Do you have a contract stating that once they were saved they wouldn't go on?"

"No, it was a verbal agreement."

The Heavenly Father shook his big head. "Cap-Wearers, you are right. These Hat-Wearers are nothing but a bunch of lowlife, lying bums. But you are the true champion dimwits, birdbrains, and gullible saps . . . and cuckolds as well! How is it possible that just a tear and a moan are enough to send you reeling into a sudden fit of sentimentality? Well, this should teach you a lesson! You will learn once and for all that trusting the word of a Hat is the ultimate ballbuster!"

# The Dung Beetle

The piece I'm going to present for you now is called "The Dung Beetle" and is performed largely in Grammelot. This piece is "scatological," so to speak, because it deals with excrement, which is an important ingredient in the fertilization of the earth. It originated as a fable by Aesop but was later found in a medieval version that included an unexpected character: Jesus. Jesus actually talks to the dung beetle!

The dung beetle, you know, is a coleopteran, a type of beetle. Some beetles were worshipped by the Egyptians.

This dung beetle spends its life gathering enormous balls of excrement, much bigger than itself, pushing them across the desert, and burying them. It has a vital rapport with this material.

One day he was happily rolling a large ball that he had dug up during his research when he was startled by a desperate shout. It was the shout of a rabbit, distraught and out of breath, who threw itself down on its knees and begged, "Help me! Help me!"

"What's wrong?"

"There's a horrible shadow overhead . . . it's an eagle who wants to snatch me up, kill me, and eat me! I need someone to protect me! I've looked everywhere, but there is no one who can save me. You're the only one who can protect me."

"You've got to be kidding. I am the lowliest creature on the earth and you come asking me for protection?"

“Please! I choose you: You are my protector.”

“All right, I’ll agree to be your protector, but I really don’t know what I can do for you!”

Just then the eagle arrived . . . *gniak!* She sank her talons into the skull of the poor rabbit, who pleaded desperately to his protector, “Help me! Save me!”

The dung beetle ordered, “Eagle, stop! Stop it! I will not allow you to kill him! He is under my protection!”

The eagle fell over laughing, blew him a raspberry, and then . . . with one slash of her talons butchered the rabbit, swallowed a few pieces, and then, making scurrilous sounds and gestures, flew off with her prey.

The dung beetle was distraught and cried out in desperation, “You have humiliated me! That eagle has shamed me to death!”

And then he called Christ.

Jesus arrived. “What do you want?”

“Justice. Jesus, you who protect the miserable and helpless have to make sure that justice is served! I want satisfaction!”

This set Jesus’ halo spinning. “You should only turn to the saints and the Heavenly Father when you are truly in need! You are small, but you can take of this yourself. Are you lame? Have you lost your arms? Are you blind? Then what are you waiting for? Make your own justice. Do it yourself!”

The dung beetle said to himself, “Well, if that’s what Jesus says to do . . .” He looked up in the sky and saw the eagle flying to the top of the mountain before landing. He understood that that was where her nest was.

Serenely, day after day, with great effort, he used his little wings to fly to the top of the mountain and waited for the eagle to leave so that he could get to the nest. There were two eggs inside. He climbed inside, grabbed the two eggs, and, accus-

tomed as he was to rolling spherical objects, pushed them out so they fell down the mountainside.

The eagle saw. Desperate, she rushed back. She wanted to kill the dung beetle, but it crawled into a crevice in the rock. "Damn you! I saw you, you bastard dung beetle! Monster!"

Mad with rage, she decides to build a higher nest, all the way up on the mountain's icy peak. While sitting on the eggs, she thought: "That lousy roach will never be able to get up here!" Then she flew away . . . but always keeping an eye on the nest.

The dung beetle was getting cold and stamped its feet to warm itself, like this (*Slaps his hands together*). He makes it to the mountaintop, waits for the eagle to fly away and . . . another little egg rolled down the mountainside.

The eagle considered going to the Heavenly Father for protection but gave up when Jesus Christ sided with the dung beetle. So she went to the top of a tower to see the emperor and asked him to protect her eggs from the shameless dung beetle who was destroying her progeny. "I am your symbol, Emperor. I am the emblem that flies on your flag! If your symbol is erased from the earth, then your power is erased with it! You, who was chosen by God, blessed by God . . . anointed by the Lord, you must do something to save your dignity."

The emperor answered, "All right. Make your nest in my lap."

He seated himself at the top of this tower . . . and then something happened which you will understand without unnecessary explanations. I will perform this in a special Grammelot from the south, made up of phrases from Naples, Calabria, Sicily, etc. . . . And now to begin: "The Dung Beetle."

A roach—a dung beetle—was pushing his enormous round stinking pile of excrement, rolling it and singing happily:



"How round it is . . .

*I am the roller.*

Ahh! Ehh! Ahheeee!

*Who rolls this ball of excrement!*

Iheee! Ahhhaaa!

*I spin it arooooouuuund!*

*The earth, the sun, the planets, and the moon all spin arooooouuund!*

*The stars and the comets all spin arooooouuuund!*

*Oh, how they spin!*

*The world spins around, everything spins around, spins and rolls . . .*

*Only this turd stands still!*

*Run, run, run . . .*

*What a sweaty job. How exhausting . . .*

*Let's go! Ha ha ha!*

*Off we go, tra la la!"*

He heard a shout: "Help! Help! She's trying to kill me! What can I do? *Ah! Ahaaaa!*"

"Who's there?" And a rabbit appeared.

He came to a running stop: (*Breathing heavily*) "*Aha! Aha! Aha!*"

"What's wrong?"

(*Terrified, pointing to the sky*) "Look! Look! Look up there . . . the eagle!" Just then a long black shadow darkened the ground. "She's looking for me. She'll kill me if you don't save me! Help me! Save me! Be my protector!"

"Me? Me, a protector?! But I'm the lowliest creature on the earth! Are you shitting me?"

"No, I respect you, dung beetle! I kiss your hand. In front of God I name you as my protector! Is that enough for you?!"

"If you say so! All right. (*Raises his voice*) I am your protectoooooor! Pay attention, everyone! I am the protector chosen in front of God!"

The eagle circled overhead, launched into a nosedive, and grabbed the rabbit. “*Gniakke!*” The point of her beak pierced his head.

“Eagle! Take it easy! Slow down! Stop! Let him go! Stop it! I am his protector!”

“Who’s that? The dung beetle? Ha! *Haahaahaaa! Hahabh-haaaaaaaaaaaa!* That roach is a protector? The shit pusher! Hold on to your turd and get lost!”

With a slash of her talons she butchered the rabbit . . . opened it . . . sucked out the intestines . . . flew off . . . and then came back. Turning around . . . a pungent raspberry from her ass . . . *prach!* Splat on the face of the roach and off she went.

“Eagle! You have offended me. I was his protector. God! God! God! Jesus! I want satisfaction! Jesus, do you hear me? Heeeeeelp!”

From out of a cloud . . . *zac!* Jesus appeared on his cross. “Who is it?”

“Don’t you recognize me? I’m the dung beetle.”

“The dung beetle . . . ah, the roach! What happened?”

“The eagle swooped down onto the back of the rabbit . . . poor thing! He had named me his protector. Me, a protector? (*He recapitulates the story in Grammelot, a speeded-up, condensed version of everything that had happened up to that point.*) All right . . . the eagle shows up. . . . Get back! Ha, ha . . . a laugh . . . *sgnaff.* . . she butchered him into pieces! In front of me, his protector! You have to see that justice is done. Not for me. I’m used to taking shit. But for the rabbit, the miserable animal, skinned and gutted like that! You have to see that justice is done!”

“Roach, it is true that you are a defenseless and miserable animal, but do you have to call on us saints, Madonna, and God the Father for every little thing that needs to be set straight? I repeat, you are very small, but are your hands nailed down like mine?”

Are your feet nailed down? Are you blind? So what are you waiting for? He who seeks justice must make it! Me too! I wouldn't be nailed to this cross if I had done what I'm telling you to do! And remember that you have a brain! Use it! Don't forget that you are a roller. . . . Watch where the stinker flies!"

And he was gone, still nailed to the cross, flying like a bird—a wooden angel.

The roach started thinking, He says I'm a roller . . . and that I should watch where the stinker flies? I get it! It came to me in a flash! *Oieh!*

He watches the eagle flying in the sky as she circles a mountain and lands on a peak. That's her nest!

The dung beetle sets off toward the mountain. He walks . . . he flies with his little wings . . . and in two days he gets to the top . . . where the nest is.

In the nest the eagle is sitting on her eggs. The roach waits until the eagle flies away. He jumps into the nest. "What beautiful eggs! Two of them!" The roller had arrived! *Zak!* He pushes an egg, makes it roll . . . *pluk*, just like shit . . . *pluk!* Out . . . *plic* . . . it rolls down to the bottom!

From the sky the eagle cries, "My egg! My baby! He's killed it! Damned roach, I saw you!"

The roach started rolling the other egg . . . *Abiaaaii!* . . . *Pliak* . . . *Pliak* . . . an omelet for twelve!

The eagle throws herself into a nosedive: "Curse you! I'll catch you!"

*Plaff!* He slips into a fissure, a narrow crevice in the mountainside. "Here I am! Now you see me, now you don't! You see me. You don't! Here I am, eagle! Come in and get me!"

The eagle uses her nails to push in her claw and gets stuck. She pulls it out, scratches herself bloody, and sticks in her beak: "Curse you!"

"Here I am!"

Night falls. In the dark the roach gets out and returns to the desert. The eagle lets out a desperate scream. "I can't let my entire race be wiped out!" So she flies to another mountain that's much higher, where there's snow and ice. "I'd like to see that roach find his way up here!"

She makes her nest. She sits on her two eggs. It is bitter cold, so she leaves to go flying and warm herself up a bit. And the roach: *ptum, ptum, ptum* (*panting*), "*Aha, aha, aha!*" He beats his claws together to warm himself . . . again he jumps into the nest and rolls the eggs . . . *swooom, pu, tra, pua, tra!* It snowballs into a tremendous avalanche!

"Noooo! My eggs!" The eagle arrives and is squashed by the avalanche.

On the mountain the roach throws himself into the snow and rolls. He starts a miniature avalanche, then a slightly bigger avalanche, then a decent-sized avalanche, and then a humongous avalanche that takes him to the bottom . . . *bbllaaakk!* The roach crawls out of the shattered snowball, all white.

The eagle is flying: "Where are you? Damned dung beetle! Where are you hiding?"

But he was so white she couldn't see him. The eagle was desperate. "Who will save me now? Who will help me? I'm going to complain to the Heavenly Father! No, I can't go to God! I can't, because his Son's on the roach's side! I can't set the Father and Son against each other. I'm going to the emperor. He'll have to help me!"

The emperor was on top of a tower. He looked around contentedly and said, "What a beautiful kingdom I have. And it's mine . . . all mine!"

The eagle . . . *vooom* . . . landed on his shoulder. "What's that?"

“It’s me, Emperor, the eagle. Don’t you recognize me? I am your regal symbol, your emblem!”

“Oh, yes . . . the eagle! I always confuse you with the crow . . . no offense . . . you are my honor, my sign of glory. You are on my flags, even on the top of my helmet! What happened? What can I do for you?”

“I mauled a rabbit that was protected by a roach. . . .”

“A roach . . . you mean the shit pusher?”

“Yep, that’s the one!”

“I never knew he was a protector!”

“Neither did I . . . but the fact is . . . I killed his protégé, and he, day after day, keeps rolling my eggs out of their nest . . . and splattering my babies, once, twice . . . scrambled eggs! You have to give me your protection. Save the eggs so my babies can have a chance to hatch . . . otherwise, your emblem is finished! You can put a crow on your flag and paint your helmet with a big fat roach.”

“All right. Sit here, in the emperor’s lap, and lay your eggs. Give birth to them here. Push . . . that’s it . . . here comes one . . . two eggs! That’s beautiful. They’re still warm! Let me hold them. Are they fresh? Are they fertilized? If not, I’ll fertilize them myself! All right. You can fly away calmly now and I’ll hatch them.”

The eagle took off, circled overhead, and flew off.

The emperor sat down and caressed the eggs in his lap. “I’d like to see if that roach has the guts to come here and roll these eggs now!”

But the roach had no sense of reason, so he flew too, holding a very large ball of manure. He flew high into the sky, over the tower, and when he was just above the emperor, he let loose his round mound of manure . . . *Ahaaa* . . . which fell right into the lap of the emperor, in between the eggs.

“What’s that? Ahhh, shit!” the emperor said, immediately jumping to his feet. The two eggs rolled down from the tower all the way to the ground . . . *sgniak . . . spiaccicate!*

*(The roach sings)*

*“Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho  
The eggs go down.  
Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho  
Scrambled on the ground.  
Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho  
The emperor didn’t save them.  
Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho  
He scrambled them!  
Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho  
And the winner is, the roach!”*

The moral. As found at the end of all good stories: Remember, if you want to squash an animal under your foot, no matter how small it is, think again and be forewarned. It might be better to respect it, especially if it’s pushing shit.