

# Federigo Alberighi and Monna Giovanna

(adapted from Boccaccio's Decameron, day 5, story 9, told by Fiammetta)

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*Yes, the key signature is three flats plus one sharp. No, I don't know the name for that scale. – Howard*

Moderately (♩=100)

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of three flats and one sharp (B-flat major). The tempo is marked 'Moderately' with a quarter note equal to 100 beats per minute. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The score consists of six lines of music, each with a corresponding line of lyrics.

When Fe - de - ri - go was a young and foo - lish knight, his  
for - tune was not great. In Flo - rence he'd a hand - some,  
mo - dest house; out - side of town, a small es - tate.  
And with a hope - less love for Mon - na Gi - o - van - na,  
how fierce - ly did his young heart burn! Such love this chaste and  
vir - tu - ous wife would nei - ther ack - now - ledge nor re - turn.

When Federigo was a young and foolish knight, his fortune was not great.  
In Florence he'd a handsome, modest house; outside of town, a small estate.  
And with a hopeless love for Monna Giovanna, how fiercely did his young heart burn!  
Such love this chaste and virtuous wife would neither acknowledge nor return.

But in his futile striving to obtain her love, he jousting at the ring,  
Gave banquets entertaining three score guests, hired clever troubadours to sing,  
And, as a consequence of naive imitation of how a rich lord entertains,  
Found but indifference as his reward for all his expenditures and pains.

To honourably pay the debts he had incurred, he sold his house in town,  
Three chests of fine attire, two sharp swords, four silken pillows filled with down,  
All of the luxuries that ever gave him pleasure, save for his greatest joy in life:  
One precious falcon, of the best breeding, that he loved more than any wife.

A jousting and a dueller and a falconer, for long years he had trained;  
Now, Federigo learned to work his farm, learned skills he formerly disdained.  
Under the tutelage of one old tenant couple, sharing his cottage and his land,  
He ate the fruits of roots, seeds and vines set into the earth by his own hand.

Resigned to genteel poverty and honest work instead of courtly ways,  
He practised but one former, noble art, learned in his brave but foolish days.  
Three mornings every week he hunted with his falcon, lord of the currents of the air,  
Bringing home wild game caught by the raptor that he would with his tenants share.

And when the first wine Federigo'd ever pressed was aging in the oak,  
In Florence she who had declined his love walked in her widow's mourning cloak.  
None of the knowledge of the city's best physicians, licensed and trained to treat the ill,  
Could keep at bay the angel of death, and, dying, her husband made his will.

At that time, it was custom for rich Florentines to pass the city gates  
And spend the sunny, sultry, summer days outside of town on their estates.  
Thus, to the Tuscan hillsides Monna Giovanna took her one son. The lad would walk  
Hours each day and one day encountered both Federigo and his hawk.

The lad was fascinated with this novel sport. Oh, how the raptor soared!  
Rapt was the visitor who, with respect, tried to address this noble lord.  
Quick to protest that he was but a local farmer, modest of means except this sport,  
Poor Federigo welcomed the lad, as courteous as were he at court.

For two months of that summer and three of the next, each time the falcon flew,  
There was the lad to wonder and to watch. How his desire to own it grew!  
Being allowed to wear the leather glove, to feed it, fed his desire. How could he know  
How much his longing matched Federigo's, for his own mother, years ago?

But, at the end of August, the young lad took ill and seldom rose from bed.  
Under the orders of the learned men, his frail frame was purged and bled.  
None of the remedies that anyone could offer, poultices, herbs, or precious stones,  
Lessened his fever, increased his hunger, stopped flesh from thinning on his bones.

Six days his mother, keeping vigil, asked her son if there was any thing  
Which, if their fortune were to purchase it, from any merchant, prince, or king,  
Would bring about his cure. He never could give answer, neither by gesture nor by word.  
Then, on the seventh day of her vigil, he begged for Federigo's bird.

How could she take away a man's remaining love, although to save her own?  
Not just an ordinary falcon, but, surely, the finest ever flown?  
Would he relinquish it in love he still might bear her, love she had not let touch her mind?  
Thus did these questions trouble her heart, as throughout that night her son declined.

And, when the morning light revealed her son unchanged, she had no other hope.  
Donning a fine hat and a lightweight cloak, she trod the gentle downward slope.  
One hour's journey to the farm of Federigo, with one companion thus she went,  
As if this were a neighbourly visit, just a quotidian event.

The farmwife met the walking women at the gate and bade them enter, please,  
Then went to tell her landlord of his guests. Never had he had guests like these.  
Seeing his visitors not dressed in mourning colours, quickly was his own heart relieved:  
He had heard rumours of her son's illness he had reluctantly believed.

Avoiding any mention of her dying son, she said she long had known  
She been delinquent in acknowledging courtesies Federigo'd shown.  
Therefore, in partial recompense for her omissions, ones that had long weighed on her mind,  
She and her friend would like to take breakfast with him, if he would be so kind.

Astonished at this change of heart, he took his leave, a breakfast to prepare,  
But found the storeroom where he hung his game and kept his rounds of cheese was bare.  
Having no other means to do the lady honour, and being by her visit blessed,  
He wrung the neck of his treasured falcon, that he might serve it to his guest.

The farmwife dressed the precious bird like common fowl to roast upon a spit,  
Leaving her landlord to wash off his dirt, change to a cleaner shirt and sit,  
Treating his visitors to pleasant conversation. Patiently, he did not enquire  
Of the condition of the young lad. The spit turned the bird above the fire.

When Federigo fetched the roast that they might eat, they finally broke their fast,  
As, filled with pleasant talk of no import, three quarters of an hour passed.  
Then, her heart beating wildly, Monna Giovanna mentioned her one beloved's name,  
Spoke of his illness, said he was dying, and begged the bird for which she came.

On hearing this entreaty, Federigo stood. His tears were so profuse  
One might surmise he'd lost his own dear son. She who'd attempted to induce  
His yielding up the falcon, Monna Giovanna, seeing its loss would grieve him so,  
Quickly resolved to not take the bird, to bid him farewell, and then to go.

But Federigo had rushed from the room in tears before she could withdraw  
What she had asked of him to gain the bird. Then, in astonishment she saw,  
When Federigo had returned with one small basket, just how profound was his grief's cause:  
Next to the carcass, saying no word, he laid out the feathers, beak, and claws.

Two opposite reflections occupied her heart, and oh! how she was torn:  
Both, that she'd certainly now lose her son – no other had she ever borne --  
And, that the generosity of Federigo, whom she for years had so ignored,  
Greatly exceed that ever shown in all the fine gifts from any lord.

A rich, attractive widow with no living child, or so her brothers said,  
Might help two families both to benefit, if to the right man she were wed.  
Therefore, great merchants called on Monna Giovanna, after her year of grief had run:  
So soon reopened, now the same tomb contained both her husband and her son.

But she proclaimed no interest in any suit her brothers had arranged:  
No man but Federigo would she have. Oh, how her thoughts of him had changed!  
"Much better is the gentleman of noble spirit, one who is generous," she said,  
"Though he be poor, than any rich merchant." Only her poor love would she wed.

When Federigo was a young and foolish knight, his fortune went to waste,  
Spent seeking love that he could not obtain from one both virtuous and chaste.  
But, when he won the heart of Monna Giovanna, and they were blessed as bride and groom,  
Prudent and loving, they shared three decades and then forever shared one tomb.

Howard L. Kaplan 172 Howland Avenue Toronto, Ontario M5R 3B6, Canada  
howard@thrinberry-frog.com <http://www.thrinberry-frog.com>  
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