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Bellacuccia

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There was once a lawyer who spent his days writing at his desk whenever he wasn't in court. One afternoon a large monkey climbed in through his window and began whisking and leaping about the room. The lawyer was charmed rather than alarmed, and began calling it *scimmia bellacuccia* — his dear little pretty monkey — and feeding it scraps from his hand.

When he had to go out, he was a little worried about what it might get up to, but he had taken such a fancy to it that he couldn't bring himself to chase it away. He left it alone in his apartment.

When he came home, he found his rooms in beautiful order — everything swept, dusted, and put perfectly in its place — and an excellent dinner laid ready, cooked from the few odds and ends he had left in the cupboard.

"Bellacuccia, did you do all this?" he asked.

The monkey nodded.

After that, the lawyer dismissed his servant. The monkey kept house far better, more intelligently, and with greater attention to detail than any human employee. Things went splendidly.

Then one day the lawyer visited a friar he knew and couldn't help telling him about his remarkable monkey.

"Don't be deceived," said the friar at once. "No monkey does things like that. This is not a natural creature."

He came to see for himself, bringing his stole and a flask of holy water. The moment he arrived, he put on his stole and sprinkled the water around the room. The monkey saw him and panicked — scrambling up the walls, knocking over chairs, flinging itself into corners, and finally diving under the bed.

"You see!" said the friar.

But the lawyer called out, "Here, bellacuccia! Come here!" — and because the monkey was by nature obedient to him, it crept out at last, trembling, pressing itself against the lawyer's legs.

The friar put on his stole, sprinkled it again, and spoke the words of exorcism.



The monkey burst free, flung itself up to the window, smashed through the glass, and vanished — leaving behind a curl of smoke and a distinct smell of brimstone. But it was really a man who had been put under an enchantment by dark arts, and when the friar's exorcism released him he went, in gratitude, and became a monk. In a white-robed order, the story adds — the narrator couldn't quite remember which one.

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