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Doctor Grillo

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Doctor Grillo was a physician of wide renown, the kind of man who is sent for from far away and whose opinion is treated as final. He had a man-servant who took a different view of his master's abilities than the rest of the world did, and who had decided—through a long process of proximity and resentment—that he could do everything the Doctor did, and do it at least as well.

One day, while the Doctor was out, the servant packed up his master's gown and academic cap, a bundle of prescriptions, and a quantity of bottles, and slipped away to a distant country, where he gave himself out as the celebrated Doctor Grillo.

Fortune favoured the impostor in his first two encounters. The queen of that country was suffering from an ailment that no one had been able to cure, and the famous Doctor Grillo was put in charge of her case. Through luck alone—the Italian saying has it that an ounce of good fortune counts for more than a pound of knowledge—the servant's random prescriptions happened to work. His reputation was established in an hour. After that, it hardly mattered what he prescribed: not more of his patients died than died under other physicians, and the people were satisfied.

When news of this reached the real Doctor Grillo, he set out immediately.

"Beware, good people! This man knows nothing of medicine—he is no Doctor Grillo. I am Doctor Grillo!"

The people laughed at him. They knew their Doctor Grillo, and this ranting newcomer was plainly not him. One man of some pretension to discernment insisted that the newcomer be given a trial—and the case that fell to him was the fever-stricken daughter of the Chief Judge. It was at this moment that the true Doctor and the false arrived in the sick-room at the same instant, the Judge having summoned one and his wife having summoned the other.



The argument that followed—husband against wife, master against servant, each insisting he was the real physician—lasted long enough that by the time

the true Doctor finally gained access to the patient, the fever had taken irreversible hold, and the girl died.

It was in the real Doctor's hands that she died. His one trial had ended in catastrophe. The people concluded, without much difficulty, that this must be the impostor after all. When the funeral procession moved through the streets and reminded everyone of the circumstances, the feeling against him turned ugly, and he barely escaped with his life.

The false Doctor Grillo remained in undisturbed possession of his borrowed name and fortune.

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