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The Wooing of Sor Cassandro

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Have you ever heard of Sor Cassandro? He was a well-known figure around the Panico quarter — a trim little old gentleman with a powdered wig, gold-knobbed walking stick, and a way of carrying himself that made him look as though he'd stepped out of the previous century.

At the end of the Via di Panico there was a frying-shop run by an old man with a remarkably pretty daughter. Both were well known throughout the neighbourhood. One day Sor Cassandro walked in, cleared his throat, and announced with great dignity that he had been observing the daughter for some time and wished to make her his wife.

"It's a great honour, Sor Cassandro," said the old man carefully, "but you see — a frying-shop girl must marry a fryer."

"Then I shall become a fryer," said Sor Cassandro.

The old man thought this was the funniest thing he'd heard in years, and told the old gentleman to suit himself.

The next morning Sor Cassandro arrived at dawn. They kitted him out in a white jacket, white apron, and white cap with a carnation tucked into it — and the entire neighbourhood gathered round to watch. Half of Rome, it seemed, decided to buy fried food that day, just to see Sor Cassandro at the pan.

To everyone's astonishment, he was excellent at it. He fried, he served, he even learned to clip his speech and drop his overly refined expressions. After several weeks, no one could find a single fault with his work. So he renewed his suit.

The father scratched his head. "You've made yourself a fryer to please me," he said at last. "Now you might try to please the girl. Perhaps a few trinkets wouldn't go amiss."



"Anything for love!" cried Sor Cassandro. The next day he brought earrings. Then a necklace. Then a fine shawl. Then fifty scudi for wedding clothes.

At last he came to claim the girl herself.

She took one look at him. "Get away from me, you horrible old man!" she screamed, and would not let him come a step closer.

They tried the next day. Same result.

After a week of this, Sor Cassandro demanded his gifts back.

"You shall have them!" cried the girl — and she tore the clothes to rags and smashed the jewellery to pieces and threw it all at his head.

And from that day on, wherever Sor Cassandro went, the neighbourhood boys ran after him shouting, "Sor Cassandro! The frying-shop girl! Sor Cassandro! The frying-shop girl!" — and there was nothing in the world he could do about it.

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