

THE WOMAN WHO WAS FUCKED AND FUCKED OVER FOR A CRANE (13th century)

by Garin

trans. by Ned Dubin

However much I have been lax
since first I was set to this task,
I'll now compose a fabliau
about something I came to know
in Vézelay by the exchange.
It's not at all within the range
of my purpose to say who told it;
it's short enough and soon unfolded,
but listen, if you're curious.

Garin the story-teller says
that once there lived a castellan,
neither a fool nor uncouth man,
but courtly, and well-cultured too.
He had a worthy daughter, who
was beautiful beyond compare,
but the castellan didn't care
that any man have conversations
or see her, save on rare occasions.
He kept her shut up in a tower,
he loved her so, and would allow her
only her nurse for company—
no silly, foolish woman, she,
but worldly-wise and disciplined,
who saw to it her charge was penned
and oversaw her education.

Whilst engaged in the preparation
of the girl's breakfast, it occurs
on one fine morning to the nurse
that they could use another plate,
and off she hurries, doesn't wait,
back to their home, which was quite near,
to fetch the needed kitchen gear.
She didn't think to lock the tower.

A young man at that very hour
came walking by there, and he had
a crane he recently had bagged
clutched in his right hand.

Now, the girl,
who liked to look out at the world,
was sitting by the window-pane
and saw him pass by with the crane.
She called to him and said,
"My friend, what bird have you there in your
hand,
on your father's soul?" He explains,
"By Orléans and all her saints,
my lady, it's a large, fine crane."
The girl replies, "In God's own name,
it's fat and fair and just mature;
I've never seen its like, I'm sure.
I'd buy it from you, if I could."
"My lady," he says, "well and good.
If that would please you, I will sell."
~~"What are you asking for it, tell?"~~
"My lady, for a fuck it's yours."
"Saint Peter help me now, because
I haven't any fuck to trade!
God knows, if I had, we'd have made
a bargain quickly—I'm not cheap—
and the crane would be mine to keep."
"Lady," he says, "surely you jest.
I certainly would not suggest
a fuck unless you had a lot.
Be quick and pay me what you've got."
She swears to God that, just her luck,
she's never ever seen a fuck.
"Young man," she says, "come on up now
and look for yourself high and low,
'neath bed and benches, all around,
to see if a fuck can't be found."

The youth, who was well-bred and courtly,
came to her in the tower shortly,
pretending to search thoroughly.
"Lady," he said, "it seems to me
there may be one under your dress."
She'd not much sense and knew still less,
told him, "Come, fellow; have a look."
Without delay the young man took

her in his arms with might and main
who was enamored of his crane,
placed her in bed and grabbed her shift
and hiked it up, went on to lift
her legs way up and held them high,
and her cunt quickly caught his eye,
and roughly he thrust in his rod.
“Young man, you’re searching much too hard!”
the maiden says, sighing and gasping.
The young man couldn’t keep from laughing,
involved to the hilt in his game:
“It’s just I’m giving you my crane—
take full possession of the bird.”
“You never spoke a truer word,”
the girl says; “now be off with you!”

He left her sad and thoughtful, too,
went from the tower and traveled on,
and her nurse came back thereupon
and saw the damsel with the crane.
She trembled, and the blood did drain
out of her face, and she was short:
“Young lady, what’s this bird? Who brought
it here? Now tell the truth to me!”
“I bought it just now, honestly,
from a young man, who sold the bird
and brought it in here, you’ve my word.”
“What did you pay?” “One fuck, no more,
I gave him nothing else, be sure.”
“Wretch that I am! Woe’s me! A fuck?
How could I have such awful luck
as to have left you here alone?
I curse my mouth for what I’ve done
that ever it ate or drew breath!
I deserve to be put to death
and will be, too, I think, quite soon!”
You’d think the nurse about to swoon
and fall to the floor altogether,
but still she sets out to defeather
the crane and dress it for the pot:
a garlic sauce, she says, is not
what’s called for—pepper’s her intention.
(I often have heard people mention
in many places that I’ve been:
“Adversity that ends up in
the pot at least gives some small comfort.”)
Some it may please and some discomfit,
so what?—the nurse seasons the crane
and then has to go out again
to get a knife to open it,
and the young girl returns to sit
down by the window and look out.
She saw the young man, still about
and glad of what had taken place.
The maiden called him straightaways

and said, “Come back here, sir, and quick!
My nurse was angered to the quick
because you took my fuck away
when you sold me your crane today.
Do give it back, and be so kind
not to begrudge it me or mind.
Come here, and let us two make peace.”
“Missy, I’ll do just as you please,”
the young man said; then up he came
and stretched her out and did the same:
he went between her legs and pounded
the fuck right back where he had found it.

When he had done, he didn’t stay,
but took his crane and went away
instead of leaving it behind.
The nurse returned, thinking she’d find
the crane and put it up to roast.
“Don’t hurry; it’s all labor lost,”
the maiden told the woman, “for
the man who just went out that door
unfucked me and took back his bird.”
The nurse, no sooner had she heard,
made of her grief such a display
and called down curses on the day
she’d left the maiden in the tower
that day for some man to deflower:
“Why was I given you to watch?
So heedlessly have I kept watch
that here you have been fucked again
and I don’t get a bit of crane!
I gave the man his chance myself:
“The careless shepherd feeds the wolf!”