

## **The play of Susanna**

Translation of

**La festa di Susanna  
quando ella fue accusata d'avolterio,  
e poi fu condannata a morte  
e dipoi que' due vecchioni  
che condannarono Susanna a morte  
furono poi lapidati**

by

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**Characters**

BECO, *a farmer who is owed payment*

TANGOCCIO, *a farmer who owes payment*

THE NOTARY

THE FIRST JUDGE

THE SECOND JUDGE

MESSENGER

SUSANNA

SUSANNA'S MAIDS *who do not speak*

JOACHIM, *Susanna's husband*

SUSANNA'S MOTHER

SUSANNA'S FATHER

THE STEWARD

THE KNIGHT

SERVANTS, GUARDS, AND EXECUTIONERS

DANIEL

RUFALDONE, *the chief executioner*

THE ANGEL *who bids farewell to the audience.*

**The play of Susanna when she was accused of adultery and was then condemned to death and afterwards those two Elders who condemned Susanna to death were then stoned**

*First there is an argument between two farmers and then they go to settle it in court (that is before those two old men who condemned Susanna to death and then they were stoned), and they rule that the one who was owed money has to pay the one he was asking for it.*

THE ONE WHO IS OWED MONEY *asks*:

1. Good fellow, have you yet made up your mind that you will give me back my property?

TANGOCCIO *replies*:

What are you raving on about, you fool?  
Someone should really try to teach you sense.

BECO *replies*:

So you refuse, and want to make a case and steal from me and cause me grave offence.  
I'll find a way to make sure that I'm paid, and you, you evil scoundrel, will be hanged.

TANGOCCIO *says*:

2. I'll pay you with a beating, to be sure, if you don't get the hell away from me!

BECO *replies*:

It must have slipped your mind that just last week your friend, Beco del Mora, beat you up.

TANGOCCIO *replies*:

You're right, because your yowling could be heard down by the millstream from a mile away.

BECO *replies*:

Glare at me all you like, you gallows thief.

TANGOCCIO *says*:

You are the thief, and all your women sows.

BECO *says*:

3. Since it is clear that all your villainy is limitless, I hereby promise you that any minute now I'm on my way to have you charged in court to spite you back.

TANGOCCIO *says*:

Well, off you go, my pretty boy! I'll see  
you beaten for such great stupidity.

BECO *replies*:

Eat me, for all you like: for even if  
you were to burst, you'll pay me what I'm owed.

BECO *goes to the Court and says as follows*:

4. My greetings, good my lords, to all of you.  
The judges of this court are what I need.

THE NOTARY *replies*:

These are the judges here. Step right on up  
and tell them confidently what you want.

BECO *says to the Judges as follows*:

My lords, I am from Chianti, a poor chap  
who's too embarrassed to know what to say,  
and I'm not used to this. I beg you now  
to call Tangoccio here before the court.

THE FIRST JUDGE *replies*:

5. Notary, come and send out a request:  
tell the boy not to loiter on the way.

THE NOTARY *speaks*:

Messenger, go and fetch Tangoccio here,  
and bring him in before us in the court.

THE MESSENGER BOY *replies*:

I'll have to go by highroads and by lanes,  
I'd like coins in my hand before I go.

THE MESSENGER BOY *gets to Tangoccio's house*:

6. Tangoccio, here's a summons to appear  
before the court, so do not tarry here.  
Come on, Tangoccio, come on, hurry up!  
Come, Tangoccio, we have to go to them.

TANGOCCIO *replies*:

(What on earth is the meaning of all this?  
I'm summonsed and I have no idea why!)  
Look, here I come, but with this basket here.  
As thunder follows lightning, you've persued  
me here, as if I wanted to escape.  
But I will come to them, and willingly.

TANGOCCIO *gets to the court and says*:

7. God save you, my lord judges of this court.

I come to you because I have been summonsed  
most wickedly by your young messenger.  
I've come at once and now appear before you,  
and I have never borne you any malice,  
as one who's ever ready to obey,  
and I have brought you this basket of apples:  
take them, or else I'd give them to the swine.

*BECO says to the Judges:*

8. God save you, gentlemen of this fine court,  
I've come because I hope you'll hear me out.  
I've brought a case against this fellow here:  
and if I'm right, I hope you'll grant my due.

*TANGOCCIO replies:*

Of course, but don't disturb yourselves, I pray.  
Don't be amazed if he should start to shout:  
I've got to tell you, he's just a bit mad.

*BECO replies:*

Indeed I was, to give you what was mine.

9. The facts are these: I have, above my hut,  
a chestnut grove that's big and beautiful,  
that gives me chestnuts as big as my fist.  
The other day, I loaded up my ass  
with them, the way poor folk like us will do,  
to go to market. Off I went with him,  
because I had ten sacks of them to sell,  
and with the money I could buy a cow.

10. And then I met this fellow on the way,  
and he was going to the market too  
to buy a young, domesticated steer,  
as he recounted to me as we walked.  
He tagged along with me, and I don't know  
how I fought off the urge to beat him up.

*ONE OF THE JUDGES speaks:*

Tell us the reason why, and keep your hands  
quite to yourself, or you'll end up in gaol.

*BECO replies:*

11. O judges in pure ermine, I can't stop  
myself getting a little bit upset,  
because I treated him most generously  
and now he just denies he had my money,  
and so you have the necessary facts:  
I took my donkey to the market where  
I sold my chestnuts, but I didn't buy

the cow, but lent the money all to him.

12. It was ten pounds when it was counted out,  
a big fat pile of money, and now he  
denies with all his might I ever lent  
it to him, as you're now about to hear.  
But I suspect you know him all too well,  
and I believe you'll judge my claim is fair,  
and so I come before you, asking you  
to hand down punishment for his misdeeds.

THE FIRST JUDGE *speaks*:

13. For him whose job it is to prosecute  
the law, it's necessary to judge well  
in every case until all is quite clear.  
Therefore he must examine both the sides  
and then, when he's heard both, he must decide  
the case, and give his just and straight opinion.  
In order to be able to pass judgement,  
now that you've spoken, let us hear from him.

THE FIRST JUDGE *turns to the other farmer and says*:

14. Now it's your turn to answer. As a man  
of honour, waste no time, tell us the truth.

TANGOCCIO *replies*:

Your honour, I deny it all in truth,  
and I declare that I've no debt with him.  
I don't intend to give even a penny  
to him, and he can't prove it, I am sure.

ONE OF THE JUDGES *says*:

See? He denies it all. Now you must prove  
that he owes you this money. Or else, naught.

BECO *says to the Judge*:

15. I have no proof beyond all doubt: no one  
but me was there when I gave it to him.

ONE OF THE JUDGES *replies*:

Unless you have more evidence, you lose.  
My learned colleague here, do you agree?

THE OTHER JUDGE *says*:

Indeed I do, you have most shrewdly found  
the truth, and I would judge it the same way.  
And this should be the judgement you declare:  
that the claimant should be the one who pays.

THE FIRST JUDGE *says to the Notary*:

16. O prudent Notary, take careful heed  
of what I have to say, and take your pen.  
We hereby do determine in this case,  
having heard arguments from both the sides,  
and it is our opinion that the claimant  
should be the one to pay, so we require  
that he must give ten pounds to him, just as  
he previously demanded them from him.

THE FIRST FARMER, *who was the claimant, grows angry and speaks the following stanza:*

17. I swear to God, upon the Holy Books,  
I wish that I could go be unbaptized,  
since on account of one small tub of apples  
it's been determined that the creditor  
should be the one to pay. The winds have turned  
against me, and you all can go and rot,  
you insolent old men, truth's enemies,  
because your justice truly is unjust.

*End of the Farmers' Argument*

*Deo Gratias*

### **Now the play of Susanna begins**

THE JUDGES *talk together and say to each other:*

18. There's never been, dear brother, in this world  
and under these same stars a greater passion  
than the great love aroused by these fair ladies.  
It's there for all to see, as clear as day,  
and without question, this lady should be  
numbered with those who've conquered even gods,  
and I can clearly see that you are bound  
as I have told you, only by Susanna.

THE OTHER JUDGE *replies:*

19. If gods are conquered by effects like these,  
how can a mortal man like me resist?  
For even though it seems the highest bliss,  
I know that honest decency is harmed.  
So, if I love, I love to spite myself,  
and I would rather not go on at length.  
Like it or not, I love, and fear and hope  
in what you say: and that's surely the truth.

20. I've heard it said that carnal love like this  
cannot abide to be in company.  
Nonetheless, whatever will be will be.

This Susanna has stolen my heart.  
So let us keep it just between ourselves,  
and as good mates we'll make sure that it does  
not harm our friendship, rather we'll agree  
to find a way to get her for ourselves.

THE FIRST JUDGE *speaks*:

21. There is a way: she goes into the garden  
and by the fountain stops to bathe alone.  
Behind the jasmine we can hide ourselves  
and we can visit her when she's alone.  
If Heaven, Fate or Fortune will allow  
that she consent, then she'll be duly honoured.  
And if she doesn't, then she'll be condemned,  
a woman taken in adultery.

THE SECOND JUDGE *replies*:

22. You've given me new heart with this advice:  
I never would have thought it up myself.  
Within myself I had quite given up  
and now you have restored me to good cheer.  
Let's go, because it's hot and, if I'm right,  
the door into the garden isn't locked.

THE FIRST JUDGE *replies*:

A good idea, indeed, let's waste no time,  
and, if we can, we'll slip in straight away.

*The Judges go and hide in the garden. SUSANNA comes with  
her Maidservants and says:*

23. Go, find some perfumed oil and bring it here  
because I'm wilting in this summer heat,  
and do it quickly, and there's one last thing:  
make sure the garden gate is well secured,  
in order to remove all doubt and cause,  
and make sure that my modesty's preserved;  
and do not drag your feet but go in haste.  
Go quickly, in God's name, so I can wash.

*The Maidservants go away, that is they go back into the house  
from which they had come. And then the Judges go to Susanna  
who is at the fountain and THE FIRST says as follows:*

24. Love such as would enflame a heart of stone,  
my fair Susanna, has imprisoned me  
with bonds so tight that I can't move a step  
without being tortured for the love I bear.  
Take pity on me, please, for I am near  
to death on your account. I beg you, please  
have mercy on me, free me from this pain:  
if you agree, you'll reap a rich reward.



THE SECOND JUDGE *says*:

25. We beg you, dear Susanna, to consent  
to what we want, and do not be afraid.  
No one will know a thing, so do not fear.  
As you see, we're alone within these walls.  
We're judges, and we'll come to your defence  
whatever happens, so be reassured;  
if you are sensible, don't make us beg,  
just gladly say you'll do as we desire.

SUSANNA *speaks very angrily and says*:

26. What mental blindness and what sinful thought  
inspires you to request such foolishness?  
If I consent I give offence to God,  
if not, who knows what will become of me?  
But one of these two paths, fixed in my heart,  
tells me that I would sooner fall from grace  
with you than ever wish to fail my God:  
an honest woman I shall live and die.

THE FIRST JUDGE *speaks*:

27. Susanna, what's the use of all this noise?  
Are you puffed up with pride to see you're loved?  
Each one of us is now your servant here:  
ask what you will, we'll give it willingly.

SUSANNA *speaks*:

May God protect me from such grievous sin  
for I've no need to ask you anything.  
God put me in the world and made me rich  
and I've no need of things that you could give.

THE SECOND JUDGE *speaks*:

28. Alas, Susanna, grant me this one grace  
and know that no one else will ever know.  
I beg you, satisfy this one desire,  
for if you don't you'll die a sorry death.

SUSANNA *speaks*:

I'd sooner face misfortune of that kind!  
And may God's truth, most luminous and pure,  
defend and comfort me and give me strength,  
for it has power to set great wrongs to right.

SUSANNA *begins to cry out loudly and she says*:

29. Alas, dear God who can see everything,  
free me from these most treacherous of men,  
and grant me now, dear Father, all the aid  
that I require to save me from such sin.

THE FIRST JUDGE *speaks*:

Harlot, didn't we find you standing here  
with that youth at your feet? And now you scream!  
I would have caught him, but he ran away  
and you won't tell me now who he might be.

THE SECOND JUDGE *speaks and shouts loudly*:

30. Everyone, come at once and hurry here,  
gather round, men and women, great and small!  
There's room for everyone who wants to come!  
Women in gardens: trust them if you dare!  
for with Susanna, with our very eyes,  
we saw a young man on the very verge  
of carnally corrupting her good name,  
so we accuse her of adultery.

*Here all the people come running at this uproar, and also the  
people from her household, and her husband JOACHIM speaks  
to her and says:*

31. I did not think, Susanna, that alas!  
today would bring me news like this of you  
who never would have gone into the garden.  
Have you committed these most wicked acts?

SUSANNA *replies*:

As God knows, and as you will hear from me:  
just listen to the wretched words I say.  
They were the ones entreating me to sin;  
when I refused, they turned the blame on me.

SUSANNA'S MOTHER *speaks to Susanna*:

32. Alas, my dearest daughter, chaste and pure,  
I raised you to be dainty in all things  
from your first childhood, and with careful thought  
I married you with all the solemn rites.  
Alas, my daughter, now I am afraid  
of all those things I never would have thought,  
for shame cuts very close to every honour  
and chastity, once lost, never returns.

SUSANNA'S FATHER *speaks to Susanna*:

33. My daughter, if you're innocent of this  
accuse whoever you wish to accuse.  
Our God is strong and just and temperate  
and he will help you, don't abandon hope.

SUSANNA *speaks*:

Praise be to him and thanks for this great grace,  
it's wrong that one who's innocent be judged.  
So now may He, who can, be merciful

to me, because he sees everything I do.

*The Judges speak and they send the Steward for Susanna and*

THE FIRST JUDGE *says:*

34. Go quickly to the house of Joachim  
and fetch Susanna here for she's despoiled  
her wretched body in adultery,  
and thus we have resolved here in this court.

THE STEWARD *goes to fetch Susanna and says to her:*

Susanna, come! You must come out with us  
because your sin is clear and manifest;  
and even though we're sorry that you've erred,  
there's no alternative, you have to come.

SUSANNA'S MOTHER *speaks, weeping loudly:*

35. Oh woe is me, what reason can there be  
to make her go and for her to be called  
without her ever having strayed at all,  
when she has always lived in chastity?

SUSANNA'S FATHER *speaks:*

Come now, Susanna, and we'll go to court.  
I want to know on what injurious charge  
they want to see you brought before them there.  
All they will do to you is what they must.

*They go to the Court, and JOACHIM goes ahead and says to the Judges:*

36. If God in righteous judgement set you here  
that you must sit in judgement righteously,  
be sure that Prudence never leaves your side  
for you can scarcely function without her.  
If she has sinned I will seek no delay  
in public castigation of her sin;  
but if she's led a faithful married life,  
may God protect and be her witness here.

THE FIRST JUDGE *speaks:*

37. What you see here is not without good cause,  
nor are we, Joachim, quite so unwise  
that we would fail to tell you honestly  
what she has done, and why she gives you grief.

SUSANNA'S FATHER *says:*

Only a blind man could think she has sinned.  
I put my trust in God that he will loose  
these bonds and take his vengeance for her sake,  
for she is honourable, chaste and pure.

*The Judges turn to Susanna much vexed and the SECOND JUDGE says:*

38. Because your folly is made known to all,  
Susanna, and your error is revealed,  
with head uncovered listen to us well,  
and all you others, hear our words in fear:  
she, whom you all thought chaste, we found today,  
to the great infamy, shame, and dishonour  
of self and husband, in adultery  
with a young man, and that's the very truth.

39. We tried our very best to capture him  
but by his youthful vigour he escaped  
and we were impotent to follow him  
by reason of our age; but we caught her,  
as I declare before you clearly now,  
like an adulterous whore who holds the bonds  
of holy matrimony in contempt,  
and so we do condemn her now to death.

*They call the knight and the FIRST JUDGE says:*

40. Come here, good knight, and take that woman there.  
Make sure her hands are tied behind her back  
and then take her away, a woman who  
has trampled her good name beneath her feet.  
And listen well to what you have to do:  
give orders to your men that she be stoned,  
tied to the column there until she dies,  
to furnish an example to good wives.

*THE KNIGHT speaks and calls his servants, or rather his armed guards:*

41. Arise, my fearless company and take  
your lances, swords and spears, for we must go  
and set out speedily upon our way  
as nobly and as proudly as we can  
to give the orders that justice be done,  
that far surpasses every medicine,  
whose virtue must resound throughout the world,  
to slay the wicked and preserve the good.

*They bind Susanna with her hands behind her back. When she is bound, her MOTHER says to her:*

42. Alas, my daughter, be now of good cheer.  
Turn to God for the wrong that's done to you.  
O woe is me, it wrong that you're being killed  
by all these foolish and misguided men.  
Can reason suffer that such wrong be done  
when there's no cause whatever for it all.  
No one speaks up, and fury rages on:

you're taken from me by a thousand wrongs.

SUSANNA *speaks to all her family:*

43. Alas, sweet husband and my dearest lord,  
and you, O father and beloved mother,  
remain in peace, because my heart sets forth  
for martyrdom and not towards vendetta.  
The blameless person who's condemned can laugh  
for his reward awaits him up in heaven  
when he departs from this blind world and goes  
to be with saints and angels up on high.

SUSANNA *goes to the place of public execution and half way there she kneels and says:*

44. O sweetest God and my eternal King  
who knowest everything before the fact,  
you know what falsehood and what wickedness  
these men have spoken and you understood,  
but if my innocence will take me up  
to heaven, in our spotless lady's name  
I beg you, giver of all happiness,  
to free me from this justice so unjust.

DANIEL *appears and shouts loudly and says to everybody:*

45. O foolish people, blind and misinformed,  
who has driven you into this mad rage?  
I'm pure and innocent of every sin  
and nobody can lay the blame on me  
for killing her, and so I say to you:  
your verdict is devoid of all good sense,  
and more fragile than glass before a stone,  
so take my word, turn back each one of you!

THE KNIGHT *is much astonished and says:*

46. This is a matter unforeseen indeed!  
Am I to turn around on your account?  
What is your name?

DANIEL *replies:*

My name is Daniel.

THE KNIGHT *replies:*

Well hold your tongue, because I won't go back.  
I have to execute these orders here  
that I've been given. Go do something else.  
This woman has already been condemned  
and for her sin she's sentenced to be stoned.

DANIEL *says to the Knight:*

47. Observe, good Knight, the pureness of my youth

and think about how young a boy I am,  
yet speak with all the tools of rhetoric,  
and don't imagine that I'm ignorant.  
If you turn back, it is the work of God  
so do not take this matter at all lightly.  
Turn back, you and your men, and you will see  
things that will stir great wonderment in you.

THE KNIGHT *speaks*:

48. I willingly would far rather have been  
on this fine day in some far distant part  
than ever sent as executioner,  
even though I was trained in warlike ways.  
Before I had to go with fair Susanna,  
having heard the strange words this boy has said –  
but if they come from God then it must be –  
let's go, for some great good will come of it.

*The executioners turn back. THE JUDGES speak to the Knight and say:*

49. You wretched fool, what do you mean by this?  
Have you quite taken leave of your good sense?  
If we enjoined you to be on your way,  
you grievous wretch, why didn't you depart.

THE KNIGHT *says*:

My lord, as I was on my way I met  
this boy who caused me much embarrassment,  
for he reproached the judgements you have made  
and forced me retrace my steps back here.

THE SECOND JUDGE *says to Daniel*:

50. Explain to us just how we have misjudged  
this woman, when we know without a doubt  
we found her *in flagrante* in the garden  
with a young man in plain adultery.

DANIEL *speaks*:

O foolish people, unfeeling and cruel,  
come, separate these men, because I hope  
to make quite palpable their wickedness,  
their prejudice, and base ignobleness.

*When the Second Judge has been removed, DANIEL speaks to the First Judge who remains sitting there and says:*

51. O you who have grown old in wickedness,  
now we can see quite clearly all the sins  
that you've committed, gallows-faced poltroon,  
with the false judgements that you've handed down,  
condemning people wrongly, with contempt

for all the measured statutes of the law.  
So tell me, you old wretch, where did they sin?

THE JUDGE *says*:  
I saw with my own eyes: under the plum.

DANIEL *speaks*:  
52. Ah, villain! Everything has been revealed,  
now you can see how wrong your judgement is.  
Your lies have now returned on your own head,  
and this will surely be your last hurrah!  
Take him away, and read him all the rites.  
Where is that other most perfidious Jew?  
Bring him before me here, without a word,  
and I will show they're lying in their teeth.

*They remove the First Judge and bring the Second Judge, and*

DANIEL *says*:  
53. O you, made in the likeness of the devil  
and not of God or of his sweetest love,  
here do I see and clearly I discern  
how much Susanna's beauty misled you,  
so that you turned to ridicule and spite  
towards her and to others who despise  
their bodies. So, vile heretic, where was it?

THE JUDGE *says*:  
Out in the garden, right beneath the pine.

DANIEL *says*:  
54. You evil, grievous, villain, laden down  
with every vice and fraud imaginable,  
is this the judgement that you passed upon  
this sainted women before this great crowd?  
What devil taught you to commit such sins?  
And you, how could you suffer it to be?  
You know that sin will only make you sorry  
and soon you will be punished for your sin.

DANIEL *speaks to Susanna*:  
55. Tell me, Susanna, just what happened there,  
the purest truth, and don't hold back at all,  
and have no fear in telling all that passed.  
Give thanks to God that he's come to your aid.

SUSANNA *speaks*:  
Down by the fountain, as I took a rest,  
they came and tried to force themselves on me.  
Because I fled their unrestrained desire,  
they sentenced me to death on baseless grounds.

DANIEL *speaks*:

56. O people unaccustomed to good law,  
devoid of knowledge, naked and depraved  
if you fear God's eternal punishment,  
pay heed to what I say, a little child.  
Susanna never did this wicked act,  
wherefore this sentence do I now annul  
and so I state before you in your presence  
that I condemn them to the self same sentence.

DANIEL *speaks and calls the Knight*:

57. Come here, o Knight, and take these men away.  
Release Susanna, pure and innocent,  
and with those bonds of hers tie up these men  
then take them off at once to the same place  
to suffer the same punishment and pain;  
and make sure that you don't omit a thing:  
tie them to the column to be stoned  
as warning to all men and women here.

*The Judges go up to the place of public execution, and when they are on the mount, at the foot of the column* THE KNIGHT *says*:

58. I would not have imagined I would see  
you, my good Lords, brought here to meet your death.  
I see the devil's truly blinded you.

THE FIRST JUDGE *speaks*:

He's ruined every other sense as well.

THE KNIGHT *says*:

Prepare yourselves to die now, each of you.  
I ask forgiveness, for you're learned men.

THE SECOND JUDGE *speaks*:

Do what you have to do, o prudent Knight,  
so our example will be seen by all.

*Now the executioners seize the stones and throw them at the Judges, and when they are dead* THE KNIGHT *says to Rufaldone*:

59. Move yourself, Rufaldone, go at once  
and take your executioners with you  
and take the judges down at once, and see  
that they are thrown in the common pit,  
and make sure you don't omit a thing.

RUFALDONE *says*:

My lord, I will oblige in every way.



THE KNIGHT *says*:

Go, get your servant's on to this at once.

RUFALDINO *says*:

It will be done, Sir Knight, and willingly.

THE KNIGHT *says to Daniel when they have been executed*:

60. O you who have been sent by God, behold  
that I've done what you and these men asked.  
I'm sure I haven't missed a single thing  
though I've resolved to confess all my doubts.  
If I've not satisfied in every way  
your wishes, I do beg you to forgive  
because my sin derives from ignorance  
and not from any lack of will to serve.

AN ANGEL *speaks and bids farewell to the people*:

61. And you, most frank and noble citizens,  
remember the example of our play  
and bear in mind that God's eternal will  
has ordered what we see before us here  
that we might follow virtue up to Heaven,  
avoiding vices, which lead men astray  
and to infernal cloisters and to sin,  
like those who here just now were stoned to death.

62. And bear in mind that God sees every thing,  
and distributes rewards as he sees fit.  
And happy is the man who makes the best  
of what he has and keeps God's holy law.  
And know that in the end when all is done  
this life is only short and cannot last.  
Therefore do everything to go to Heaven,  
and if we've made mistakes we ask your pardon.