

Il Diavolo e il Contadino (The devil and the farmer)

Once upon a time there was a very poor contadino; one day he came across a field and started to plough it. At that moment the devil, the owner of the field, arrived and said:

“This land is mine, so take your tools and go!”

The contadino implored him:

“Please, I have a family that is dying of hunger, I have a wife and five children...”

The devil thought he would be cunning and responded:

“OK then, I will let you cultivate the field but under one condition: we will split the harvest into two parts: you will take that which comes out of the ground and I will take that which remains beneath”.

The contadino agreed and began to sow the seed.

Months passed and the devil, seeing the man was working, said:

“You work and work, fool, yet I will harvest the fruits of your labours!”

When the time for harvest arrived, the contadino collected the grain and threshed it, obtaining one hundred sacks-full, whilst the devil went to take that which remained - stubble and roots.

At the market the man’s grain made a good price, whilst the devil got a kick in the arse.

“I have been cheated!” he shouted.

“You have been cheated? The contract that you proposed to me was complied with in every respect!”

“Very well, say no more, but next time I will take what is above and you will take what is below”.

This time the contadino ploughed the field well, planting potatoes and tending them with care.

The devil watched him toiling and, as before, shouted:

“You work and work, fool, yet I will harvest the fruits of your labours!”

When the potatoes were ready for harvest, the devil began to collect up the leaves, whilst the contadino collected up the potatoes.

At the market the contadino shouted:

“Potatoes, lovely potatoes!” and the people crowded around him.

The devil in his turn shouted: “Leaves, lovely leaves!”

The people started to mock him; he got angry and created such an uproar that in the end he was beaten and chased away.

From that day the contadino remained master of the field and thenceforth lived happily ever after.

Source:

Autore: Caterina Rapetti Titolo: Storie e filastrocche della Lunigiana

Edizione: Muzzio, Roma, 2003 [1985], Isbn 88-7413-092-9

EAW/05.06.09