

A New Canterbury Tale

"The Old Nun"

(Conversation with Host and Old Nun)

Old woman, you have been silent since the start.
Do you have no tale you wish to impart?
Your eyes belie a mind that is keen
Please tell us some of what you have seen.

Dear host, my tale would not compare
To the lively tales we've had to bear.
I would not want to cause the troop to fall
From the boredom I would surely bring to all.

Old woman, I cannot believe you have no tale to tell
You have lived so long, though seems not too well.
You know the bet, you chose to join the ride
So begin your tale, no more to hide.

(Prologue of the Old Nun)

With robes of rags, she now dresses,
Gray strings of hair her lowly tresses.
A face of lines and scars, a mask she must wear
A curse of repentance she has to bear.

She once was a dame of some renown
But did not cherish what she had found.
Lust and greed led her down a path
Of ruin and loneliness with no way back.

Since she has no choice but to travel on
She will tell of how her life went wrong.
Maybe some will learn a lesson
When hearing of her true confession.

The Old Nun's Tale

I'll begin my tale of what used to be
And finish with what you all can see.
A life that was once so grand

To wandering about with this curious band.

Believe this tale, for it is true
The same could happen to any one of you.
Trust and cherish what God has given
Or from his grace you will be driven.

I had a love, a man so kind
And to my beauty he was so blind.
I used his trust to make me rich
He could not see I was a bitch.

He sang me ballads, this sweet music man.
He charmed the throngs as only angels can.
But his heart belonged to only me
And I used this well, as you will see.

We lived in bliss until the day
His children came with us to stay.
His love for them was very great
I knew at once, they had sealed my fate.

I had no wish to be a mother
Time and tenderness were such a bother.
I pretended joy at the prospect
To love, nurture, and protect.

The children, though, could not be fooled
They knew the truth, no matter how I drooled.
Their eyes could see right to my soul
How to control them was my only goal.

If their father ever was to discover
I really did not want to be their mother
His love and riches would soon depart
My hold would be gone from his heart.

I lied and plotted day by day
To devise a plan to send them away.
I drove a wedge so deep and wide
That from my sight they all would hide.

One by one they left the nest.
I won the game, I did my best.
He followed me wherever I chose.

His life before me I brought to close.

Once again I led and he followed
Every lie was so easily swallowed.
There was no fault he would not forgive
As long as I chose with him to live.

All was well, or so I thought
Until with a lover I was caught.
His pain was more than I could repair
He no longer listened, no more could care.

From that day on he cursed my being
His eyes now became all seeing.
He soon discovered all my plots
He never forgave, and never forgot.

His mournful song was heard on high
By the angels who proclaimed I should die.
But his kind soul would not condemn me
He just prayed to be rid of me.

The angels granted this, but added more
Upon my face they scribed these sores.
My riches all to be forsaken
And to a life of servitude I was taken.

So now I wander aimlessly
No love will there ever be for me
I am forever cursed to loneliness
My deeds and lies led me to this mess.

I cannot die from my own hand
I am forced to roam throughout the land.
I pray for the day someone will kill me
So I can finally rest completely.

My love has since died and gone to heaven
Perhaps someday I will be forgiven.
His hatred could not last through eternity
But the angels may never set me free.

I have learned, yes I have found
What goes by comes back around.
I was so evil and now must pay

So each day I wander and pray and pray.

This is my tale, one true and long
My life is hell for all my wrong.
So if you listened and if you heard
You will pay great heed to all my words.

Live well, love true, and do not deceive
Or you will have so much to grieve.
My story is sad but true.
So now I am done... May God bless you.

—*Tanya Grandillo*