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It seemed as if Enrique would never be able to stop the heaving sobs that shook his massive shoulders. Pascal growled something under his breath. Hervé leapt to his feet and clouted the top of Enrique's head with his coffee mug. Enrique roared like the wild beast he had just slain. From a seated position he lunged at Hervé who skipped aside and cuffed the big Spaniard once again. With whoops of laughter, Reynard scampered about like a puppy. I retreated a step or two with my coffee safely held in my left hand while my right was instinctively placed on the hilt of my sword. All the time Pascal remained seated and stared thoughtfully into the fire. He looked up at me.

'I want you to write a letter to Enrique's mother. For that you can have a portion of wild boar.'

He beckoned for me to pour some more coffee.

'After that,' he said, 'we shall see!'

By now Enrique was sitting quietly. He raised his dark moist eyes to mine. I fished about in my leather sack for ink, a plume and some paper. Reynard sat in front of me to offer his back, as good an *escritoire* as one could wish to have under the circumstances. And so I began,

'Querida Mama...'

Here followed from Enrique, a stream of words in a *melange* of French and Spanish such as I could scarcely follow. I was in a mad race to keep up, with my quill spattering ink as it caught on the uneven surface of the paper. My left hand, in which I held the blotting paper, mopped the ink that dribbled beneath my galloping right hand. No scribe was ever meant to work under such difficult conditions but my stomach heaved happily at the thought of roast wild pork.

It seems that Enrique was the youngest son of a large peasant family who lived in the most impoverished circumstances in La Mancha in rural Spain. His father had been promised riches and power as the governor of a small province in exchange for his services as a valet to a madman. The said gentleman lunatic had lost his rightful senses by reading the histories of the gallantries and exploits of the ancient knights errant. He thought himself to be such a knight and persuaded Enrique's father to serve him on his adventures. In the meantime, Enrique's poor desperate mother was left to fend for her nine children. The youngest son had learned from an early age to take whatever advantage he could. He was not so much suited to the robbing of the pocket as to the sharp tap in the right place on a dark night for he had neither the speed nor the brain for anything more subtle. To give him his credit, there was some skill involved in his noiseless approach and the melting of his giant frame back into the shadows.

In order not to be captured, he had drifted north into France. Thankfully, his trade, as some might call it, did not require that he be able to speak French. Just the same, after he crossed the border, he found that there were thin pickings. As Fortune would have it, as she so often does, one misadventure turned into good luck.

One afternoon, his boots, which had long worn thin at the soles, gave way to a nasty spike of metal that bore his entire weight as he lumbered about in the shadows of the alleyways of St Emilion. The wound turned septic and the poor fellow was hobbling about with the aid of a crude yet stout stick.

A few days later, although he was feeling ill and weak, Enrique chanced upon a skirmish between three men. Two were beating on the one, who, although he was making good account of himself, was gradually being overwhelmed. One of his adversaries whom he had just struck to the ground had come up behind him with a rather nasty piece of wood raised high. Enrique, although he had no more brains than his poor duped father, had a finely tuned sense of injustice. With a roar that caused the three men to stop as if caught in The Great Snap Freeze of 1590, he lurched forward and with a crushing blow felled the man who had been sneaking up with the piece of wood. The other turned and ran.

The rescued one treated the big man's wound by cauterizing it with a red-hot poker. Enrique's scream can still be heard in the region of Tierra del Fuego. From that time on Enrique considered that he now had a saviour—the father, of whom he had been deprived. The man that he had rescued was none other than Pascal. Enrique was to be the Lion to Pascal's Daniel.

However, there is more to tell of Enrique's family. His favourite sibling and the one closest to him in age was his sister, Mercedes. Her circumstances were indeed harsh and Enrique did his best to look after her. His mentor Pascal resolved to find the young woman and to somehow improve her lot or at least to secure her a position of some sort no matter how humble, for there is, as we have so often been told, great honour among thieves. Pascal was able to find her a place in a monastery and Mercedes became Sister Lucia of the Cross. Since then, they have had no word of her.

At this story, I felt a great shock. My skin blanched, my hands trembled and the quill fell from my fingers into the dust. To hide my feelings, I bent down to pick it up. For a moment I sheltered behind Reynard's back. What should I do? I ask you dear listener, what do you think I should do? I looked into Pascal's eyes. He knew, that I knew, Sister Lucia!

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Nola Farman.