



THE CHILD OF URBINO

by Louise de la Ramée

Long ago in the city of Urbino there lived a master potter named Benedetto. Benedetto had a daughter, Pacifica, whom he loved very much. But the dearest thing in the world to him—dearer even than Pacifica—was his pottery, and his greatest sorrow was that he had no son to carry on his art. The sorrow was the greater because across the mountains a younger man was gaining fame as a potter, and in time seemed likely to outdo Benedetto and the pottery of Urbino.

Benedetto had a neighbor, and this neighbor had a son, a little fair-haired, grave-eyed child of seven, named Raphael. Raphael's father was an artist, and very early the child began to learn from him to hold the brush and mix colors. He was often seen, too, in the workshop of Benedetto, for the potter loved the boy, both for himself, and for the love that he already showed for art. For hours at a time Raphael would stand quietly beside the old man as he worked, noting each detail of the potter's skill, and storing up in his little head the things he learned there.

He was a friend, too, of the tall, dark-eyed Pacifica, who was ever ready to stop her work to play with him. But best of all, he loved big, gentle Luca. Luca had come down from the hills to learn the potter's trade from Benedetto. He was tall and straight, and he loved Benedetto's daughter with all his heart.

But, alas, poor Luca, good and handsome though he was, would never be an artist! He knew it. He knew also that

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despaired: lost
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Benedetto would never look with favor upon any but a great artist as the husband of Pacifica, and he despaired of ever winning her. He often told his trouble to Raphael, who felt very sorry for the young man and comforted him as best he could.

One day Luca came to Raphael in deep trouble. An order had come from the duke for a great jar and platter. It was to be sent over the mountains as a gift to the duke's cousin. Everyone in the potter's workshop must strive to fill the order in a way that would be pleasing to the duke. Benedetto had let it be known that the man who was lucky enough to please the duke might become Benedetto's partner and likewise his son-in-law. Poor Luca was in despair. He knew very well that his chance of winning Pacifica was gone.

Raphael's tender heart was touched.

"How long do you have to complete this work, Luca?" he asked hopefully.

"Three months," answered Luca, "but it makes no difference. I could never do it in three years."

favor: approval
despaired: lost all hope
assented: agreed

Day after day Raphael climbed the stairs to Luca's workroom. Pacifica, watching him, thought he went to watch and cheer Luca, and was sad because she knew that his faithfulness would do nothing toward helping Luca win the prize.

But up in the bare garret the child was working hard. How thankful he was for the hours spent with Benedetto, and for the lessons of his father, the painter. How anxiously he toiled, painting and rubbing out, and painting again. Not a word did he breathe about his work, nor would he even allow Luca to look at what he did. Each night he covered it carefully so that no one might catch a glimpse of it. Meanwhile Luca was working away hopelessly, too sad to notice his little friend.

At last, the day before the end of the three months, Raphael called Luca to see his work. Trembling with eagerness, he uncovered his jar and platter and showed them to his friend.

One glance was enough. The astonished youth fell on his knees, crying out in wonder at the beauty of the child's work.

Raphael danced up and down with joy.

"But, Raphael," cried poor Luca, "it can do me no good. This is your work. It would be cheating for me to win Pacifica this way. I could not do it."

"Wait," said the child. "I have a plan."

On the next day, the duke was to come to choose his pottery. From all the country round the youth had gathered, bringing their work to be judged. The pottery was placed on benches in the great workroom, each piece being marked with a number instead of a name, in order that the judges

garret: an attic room

might not know whose work it was, and that the judgment should be quite fair.

In the outer room Benedetto and a few friends waited for the duke to come. Little Raphael was there, very pale, clinging to his father's hand.

When the duke appeared, Benedetto led the way to his workroom. The duke passed along the row of jars and platters, praising each. At last, he stopped.

"This is beyond all comparison," he said turning to the potter. "Master Benedetto, whose work is this?"

Benedetto stepped forward and looked at the pottery. "It can be none of my people," he said. "I have no one in my

workshop who could do work such as that. Number eleven he added, looking at the gathering of potters, "step forward. The duke has chosen your work."

In the hush that followed, the child Raphael stepped out. "I painted it," he said with a pleased smile. "I, Raphael."

Immediately the room was in confusion. The astonished potters gathered about the child, while Benedetto and Raphael's father looked on in amazement.

With tears in his eyes, the duke took a jewel that hung on a gold chain about his neck and placed it over Raphael's shoulders. "This is your first reward," he said. "You will have many, O wondrous child, who shall live when we are dust!"

Raphael kissed the duke's hand. Then he turned to his father. "Is it true," he asked, "that my jar and platter have been chosen?"

His father could only bow his head. "Then," said Raphael looking up bravely at Benedetto, "Master, I claim the prize." There was a little ripple of laughter.



BEETHOVEN

It happened a few days afterward upon Beethoven's return from a narrow street, he heard a sound is that? I asked him. "Hark! How wonderful!"

It was a little while and listened. The music in the finale there was so beautiful I cannot play any more with my power to do so at the concert at C...

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