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Carnival play to be enacted with 4
people: Of Joseph and Melisso, also King Salomon.

Joseph, the first burgher, enters talking to himself and
says:

Oh God, what shall I do,
I am a miserable¹ man,
Every single one of my days
I am punished² with my evil wife.
It would be more tolerable to have, and I also would
Much rather have a three- or four-day fever,³
That way, I would have at least one good day.
But I can't have or get
even one quiet hour,
her mouth is so violent, toxic,
Her head is so stubborn.⁴

Melisso enters and says:

Joseph, Joseph, where are you going,
That you are talking to yourself like that?

¹ Hardtseliger: different spelling of hartselig (miserable, unlucky), see Grimm Wörterbuch entry hartselig (<https://bit.ly/2VvGeNz>).

² Erschlagen: literally beaten, but also still informally used in the phrase "mit etwas geschlagen sein" meaning to be punished/burdened by something.

³ Drey- oder vierteglich fieber: fever used to be differentiated according to its length and other criteria, compare to Grimm Wörterbuch entry Fieber (<https://bit.ly/2WdP3zZ>).

⁴ Herdtmewlicher: different spelling of hartmäulig. Literally translates to a hardened mouth, was used to describe horses that couldn't be led easily anymore because of frequent biting their mouths had become insensitive thus a bridle wouldn't work. Often used to refer to stubborn women, see Grimm Wörterbuch entry hartmäulig (<https://bit.ly/2M3NQHB>).

You look so horrified, pale and yellow.

Joseph turns around and says:

Just for a bit, I wanted to go for a walk,
I am fantasizing by myself;
Because the sour smoke

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bit me, (driving me) out of my house.

Melisso says:

You are talking about your wife?

Joseph says:

I mean, she torments my body,
I can't have any rest from her,
Both, not night nor during the day,
Neither in bed nor at the table,
There is always fresh nagging⁵ for me,
This is how she proves to me her defiance,
(It's done) without sense, reason, need or use.
About things that anyone else would laugh off,
She will start a strife,
And then mix one thing with another;
And she starts such a strife (that it) demands
Often half a day.
Often, it's a small nuisance to me,
That goes straight to my heart.

Melisso says:

Ay dear, I would good-heartedly
tell her off with gentle words.

Joseph says:

Yes, she acts like she wants to rip it off,
If I sweet talk her,⁶
She acts like a furious⁷ nag⁸
And will just become violent from it,
She doesn't take any good advice,
She wants to be right in all matters,
No good deed will work on her,

⁵ Kifferbes: different spelling of kieferbse, was colloquially used to denote shrill, violent nagging of women, especially for wives treating their husbands in such a manner, compare to Grimm Wörterbuch entry Kieferbse, nr. 2 (<https://bit.ly/2Hs5xfR>).

⁶ Ob ich gleich nimb süßholtz ins maul: literally 'Even if I take liquorice into my mouth. Süßholz is still used as a metaphor for good words or sweet talk, compare Grimm Wörterbuch entry Süszholz, nr. 1b (<https://bit.ly/2Em9rF3>).

⁷ Schelliger: see Grimm Wörterbuch entry schellig, adj, nr. 2.b. (<https://bit.ly/2ElGqtb>).

⁸ Gaul: colloquial word for an inferior horse.

No matter how friendly I keep, (in) early and late (hours),
 And ask⁹ for her advice in all matters
 And act like an honest man
 Should do in his house.
 What I give her and buy
 In the shops, (with) work, riding and running,

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She doesn't let me enjoy any of it.

Melisso says:

When she has such manner,
 Well, I would threaten her with
 Scolding words, as well, at such places,
 In order for you to calm her anger.

Joseph says:

Very well, that advice is lost (on her).
 When I scold her with one word
 She will repay me with seven,
 With words, she is too quick for me,
 She finds an excuse for every word.
 She is otherwise not well spoken,
 But in (her) anger (she speaks like) the devil,¹⁰
 Then I get abused by her,
 A dog wouldn't take bread from me.
 Look, she does that in the morning and late at night,
 I can't think of any help or advice.
 Do you think, this is a bad punishment?¹¹

Melisso says:

Alas, dear, do you think, you are the only one
 That has a worm gnawing at the heart?
 I, myself, also have, in a different form,
 A challenge that afflicts me
 And destroys my joy daily,
 But I don't complain about it to anyone.

Joseph says:

⁹ Zeuch ... zu raht: literally to pull someone in to consult for advice. Still used today. 'Zeuch' is a conjugated form of 'ziehen,' compare to Grimm Wörterbuch entry zeugen, 2nd paragraph (<https://bit.ly/2Hsv7Bd>).

¹⁰ Der pock angeht: different spelling of "der Bock angeht." Grimm Wörterbuch states, it is not entirely clear what the saying means, however it seems to have a similar meaning to "die Not ist groß, der Teufel ist los" (The need is great, the devil is loose). The devil was frequently symbolized by a "bock" (goat). See Grimm Wörterbuch entry Bock, nr 7 (<https://bit.ly/2Crw9Ke>).

¹¹ Pein: for a discussion of the different meanings ranging from punishment over retribution to pain, see Grimm Wörterbuch entry Pein (<https://bit.ly/2K2QtHl>).

My dear Melisso, so tell
 Me, what cross do you carry.
 You are a young man,
 With a healthy body and rich in goods.

Melisso says:

So, know what afflicts me,
 Even though, I have great richness:

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Health, beauty and other gifts,
 I am peaceful, reclusive and quiet,
 But no one wants to consider me,
 Looks to find love and friendship with me
 Or takes their refuge in me.
 So then do I live here on earth,
 Hated, unconsidered and unvalued.
 They let me walk just the way I walk.
 Don't you think, that hurts me secretly,
 That everyone dreads me,
 flees my love, friendship and company,
 I have to be alone night and day.

Joseph says:

I don't know any help or advice for that,
 But to turn the people friendly
 through gifts and presents;
 Gifts and presents make friendly.

Melisso says:

I do it, my Joseph. But consider
 That love and friendship don't turn out well,
 If you have to buy it,
 It creates much hypocrisy,
 There isn't much love nor honesty in it.
 Therefore, your advice is not useful;
 I have to dread my time
 Here due to the planets' influence
 I think, I was born to
 Not have any friendship amongst all people.

Joseph says:

Melisso, I just remembered,
 Yesterday, from Jerusalem,
 Two men¹² came back from
 The very wise King Salomon,
 They both told me,

¹² Herren: refers to a more formal and valued men.

How he relieved them
From their misery, fear and pain

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Through short advice. If you like,
We shall both, now,
Seek advice from Salomon, as well.

Melisso says:

Yes, Joseph, we shall do that;
Who knows where luck lies hidden,
If Salomon will, with his wisdom,
relieve us from our pain.

Joseph says:

Let's go, we shall start right away;
Although, I think it would be best
To take some ducats with us,
To honour the council men with them,
So that they will let us in.

They both exit. King Salomon enters, sits down.
Marcolfe comes and says:

Greetings to you, King Salomon!

King Salomon says:

Go away, what do you want here?
Tell me, you peasant,¹³ who are you?

Marcolfe says:

Tell me, what family you are from,
Then I will tell you, as well,
My name and my family.

King Salomon says:

I come, remember me right,
From the family of the twelve patriarchs,
From the patriarch Abraham,
Who fathered (the one,) named Isaac,
Isaac fathered Jacob,
Jacob fathered Juda, praise him.
This is how my tribe grew,
Until it arrived at Obed;
The same Obed fathered Jesse,
Who was King David's father (understand!)

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¹³ Pauer: probably a different spelling of 'Bauer' (farmer, peasant), can be used as a derogative term to describe a more simple, rough, less educated person.

And David fathered Salomon:
That is me sitting on his throne.

Marcolfe says:

King Salomon, so remember me right,
I am from the family of Rusticarum,¹⁴
Rusticus gave birth¹⁵ to Rustinckus,
Rustinckus gave birth to Rustibaldus,
Rustibaldus gave birth to Roßfarzus,¹⁶
Roßfarzus gave birth to Roßschedus,¹⁷
Roßschedus gave birth to Marcolfe:
I am truly Marcolfe.¹⁸

King Salomon says:

I see, you are quite chatty;¹⁹
If you want to stay in this hall,
You need to be silent and not talk²⁰ at all.
I have to work with the greatest wisdom.

Marcolfe says:

King, I will keep silent beyond and above,
(While) you praise your wisdom here.
I think, you have bad neighbours.

King Salomon says:

Be quiet and shut your mouth, you lurker-on-all!²¹
God gave me such wisdom

¹⁴ Rusticarum: the following is probably a pun on the word 'rüstig'. It has a broad meaning from healthy to strong, overly adorned, armed, ready to fight, funny, and vivid. All attributes that can easily be associated with a jester. For an overview of the different meanings see Grimm Wörterbuch entry rüstig (<https://bit.ly/2EoXzCe>). In addition, the ending is derived from Latin grammar, so the 'family name' is supposed to sound more serious while possibly also ridiculing it since it is very clear that it is not a Latin name.

¹⁵ Gebar: means literally 'has given birth' in comparison with the previous 'zeugte' meaning 'fathered'.

¹⁶ Roßfarzum: probably literally made up of 'Roß' (Ross: horse) + Farz (fart) + -um (common ending of Latin words). Would probably translate to something like 'Horse fart/er'.

¹⁷ Roßschedum: probably literally made up of 'Roß' (Ross: horse) + 'Sched' (probably different spelling of schett: shit) + -um (common ending of Latin words). Would probably translate to something like 'Horse shitter'.

¹⁸ The endings of the names used in this paragraph are Latinized and are changed depending on their grammatical sentence position Roßfarzum (object) to Roßfarzus (subject).

¹⁹ Kleffig: different spelling of 'kläffig.' It describes a talkative, chatty person that also talks back, it is related to 'kläffen,' which is commonly used to describe the more aggressive barking of dogs. For an overview on Medieval meanings see Grimm Wörterbuch entry kleffig and the other forms (like klaffen) it links up with (<https://bit.ly/2wc9Cyn>).

²⁰ klaffen: see footnote 18 and Grimm Wörterbuch entry klaffen (<https://bit.ly/2CeDFso>).

²¹ Allers-lauern: 'allers' is a curse but also another form of 'all', see Grimm Wörterbuch entry allers (<https://bit.ly/2M2kIkC>) and 'lauern' means to lurk, to scout, to spy on.

For everyone on earth in my time,
 I have proclaimed three thousand sentences,
 I have composed five thousand songs
 About all stones and the power of herbs,
 The trees' fruits and root juice,
 About oceans, rivers and wells, the fresh ones,
 About human nature and manner
 And what was created on earth.
 That is why people come to me
 From all kingdoms
 To listen to this wisdom,

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If someone at this moment
 Would like to give me a riddle,²²
 Or ask me, apart from that,
 About the secrets of nature
 Or the form of the sky,²³
 About the planets, sun, moon and stars;
 But if there are any others
 That have serious requests,
 They shall come to me here,
 Explain their issues at these places,
 I will answer them in brief words.

Joseph enters and says:

Mr King, I have a deeply evil wife,
 That torments my body daily,
 I don't have any rest or quiet with her,
 And I don't give any cause for it,
 But she always argues with me,
 Neither good nor bad words
 Help with her; No matter how I go about it,
 I can't make peace with her.
 I ask you, give me advice and instruction
 So, my evil wife can be converted.

King Salom says:

So, go to the goose bridge,²⁴
 There you will learn the art in all its parts.

Joseph says:

Who is on it, to teach me that?

²² Retersche: see Grimm Wörterbuch entry retärsch (<https://bit.ly/2JyClpL>).

²³ Himel: there is no differentiation between sky and heaven in German. It is both named 'Himmel,' therefore, it is not possible to say which one is meant here. However, the verse continues with other sky related objects thus making sky more likely.

²⁴ Genßbrucken: most likely different spelling of gänsbrücke (goose bridge).

The King says:

Go there, I will not tell you another word.

Joseph exits. Marcolfe says:

Oh man, you took some wife,
Will have lasted for three years,
That's why, every of your days,
While you live, you have to be her servant,²⁵
And need to be her diaper washer.²⁶
Wish there was no bad woman,

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She was a mile away from earth,
This way, quite some men would be freed
From women's spite and malice.

The King says:

Their kindness is even greater.

Marcolfe says:

Perhaps you mean their deception?

The King says:

Marcolfe, you are not that smart;
Do you think, they are all full of trickery?

Marcolfe says:

Yes, and on top of that, full of flattery.

The King says:

You are lying, a woman is loyal and kind.

Marcolfe says:

Yes, like unsteady and fickle.

The King says:

They are also of the humble kind.

Marcolfe says:

Yes, exactly full of pride and vanity.

The King says:

²⁵ Ölgötzen tragen: proverb, literally to carry the anointed idol, it received a negative connotation after the reformation and lead to the proverb. It means to do dirty work for someone else while being obedient and submissive like a servant or slave, see Grimm Wörterbuch entry Ölgötze, nr. 2 (<https://bit.ly/30COcZ6>).

²⁶ Windel-Wascher: curse word with the meaning of serving women, being a wife's slave, compare to Grimm Wörterbuch entry Windelwascher (<https://bit.ly/30AhAPH>).

A pious woman is worthy of honour.

Marcolfe says:

But there are only few on this earth,
There are thrice more of the evil kind.

Salomon says:

One will find many more women of discipline and honour
Than one will find of the lesser kind.

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Leave me alone, you women-desecrator!
Were you not born by a woman?
Were you never worthy of an honourable woman?
A woman of honour carries a crown,²⁷
She can please her man
And keeps her house with diligence.
A woman is a comfort to the old
And a sweet for the young;
Who lives their time without women,
Lives like a dead man on this earth.
Therefore, don't scorn them,
Or you will hang from a tree.

Marcolfe says:

Well, then I will keep silent and not think
Of any woman, neither good nor bad.
If I had a good piece²⁸ of veal
And also a few fat blood sausages
And²⁹ twelve (pound) bread,
With that, I would joke around for a while,
The hunger comes up to my heart.

King Salomon says:

Is there no one left today,
That wants to ask me something,
That one shall come and bring me their request,
Before the door will be closed.

Melisso enters and says:

Mr King, I am rich in goods,

²⁷ Kran: with this spelling it could refer to a crane or horse reddish, but that seems unlikely, therefore, I suspect a different spelling of Krone (crown).

²⁸ Kelber-kröß: probably different spelling of Kälberkrössel or Kalbsgekröse or something along the lines. In general, it just refers to a piece of veal.

²⁹ Von Lauff: 'lauf' means run but doesn't make sense here. However, the word is capitalized and spelled with a double f, which Sachs usually doesn't do, so perhaps the play was written with a very local enactment in mind and Lauff (as a family name) is the name of a locally well-known baker.

But everybody dreads me,
 No one actually loves me or values me,
 Honours my company nor friendship,
 I walk around completely despised.
 That makes me miserable and sad.
 I ask you, to teach me
 How I will become loveable and pleasant.

The King says:

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Start and love first.

Melisso says:

Oh, give me clearer advice.

King Salomon says:

Go away, you had enough instruction,
 I see, you are smart in a different way.

Melisso exits. Marcolfe says:

That is quite a bug-scold,³⁰
 He can neither joke nor be good-willing,
 Kind like a fist on the eye,
 And a bad head, a sharp brine.
 He laughs alone, is happy
 When a ship with people sinks;
 Has a strong,³¹ stubborn sense.
 That's why no one likes to be around him,
 Instead cattle and people flee from him
 And avoid his home.
 King, did I judge right?

King Salomon says:

Marcolfe, don't scold him,
 The man has an honourable heart
 And keeps away from all vice,
 Is willing to be honourable and honest.
 But his unpleasant habit
 Can be reverted by my advice
 And he can become loving and valuable on earth.

Salomon says:

Who is knocking outside? Go and let them in.

Marcolfe says:

³⁰ Wenten-schimpf: perhaps wenten refers to Wanze (true bug), schimpf just means insult or scold thus the compound noun is an insult of some sort.

³¹ Muncketen: compare to Grimm Wörterbuch entry munkisch (<https://bit.ly/2HIyD9y>).

It will be the evil wife's husband.

Joseph enters again and says:

Most serene King, I came back,

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I have been to the goose bridge.
But I can judge neither much nor little
From the stories
That happened on the goose bridge.

King Salomon says:

What did you see on the goose bridge?

Joseph says:

A mule driver, who drove his mule,
That was stubborn, perplexed and lazy.
When he could not make it move,
Neither with good nor bad things,
There, he briefly took its bridles
And took out a good club,
Then he hit the mule, the helpless fool,
Across the loin and around the head,
That even I felt mercy;
And when I asked him,
He said: I know the mule's nature,
When it wants to be beaten.
Afterwards and (after) he had hit the mule long,
It went and carried its burden.
What do I learn from that? Let me understand it!

King Salomon says:

Do it like the mule driver did:
Because your wife doesn't care
About your words, neither the good nor bad ones,
And always acts against you,
Maybe then she is also of this kind,
That wants to be beaten.
Therefore, the only thing that will help is:
Take her quickly by her braid
And beat her around the head with fists.
Do that, as often as she protests,
With a furious anger,
Without any reason, need, boldly and unreasonably.
Do that until you made her good-hearted,

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kind,³² obedient and subservient,
 So, she stays wife and you stay man.
 But do this within reason
 Because the female sex
 Is the weakest tool, as Paul says.
 Leave, you have your answer now.

Joseph exits. Melisso enters and says:

Mighty King, I came back as well,
 I have followed your advice,
 That was that I should love first;
 I have thought about it.
 Whom shall I love? I would like to know very much.

King Salomon says:

Whom you want to be loved by.

Melisso says:

Yes, it is my heart's desire,
 That everyman would be kind to me,
 No one on earth excluded,
 Women, maidens and the like,
 noble, un-noble, poor and rich,
 As well as the young and the old.

The King says:

So be kind to them
 In words, actions and gestures,
 They will become kind to you in return;
 When a good word leads to another,
 A good deed will lead to another,
 A friendship will lead to another,
 One love creates another.
 Look, when you love kindly,
 You will become pleasant for everybody,
 Loved and valued by everyone.
 You did not do that until now,
 Instead you were arrogant

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Towards men and women, young and old,
 And despised them out of pride,
 You did not do yourself a favour there,
 You were despised in all places,
 You can turn it around with my advice.
 If you follow me in these instructions,
 You then will be successful,

³² Geschlecht: see Grimm Wörterbuch entry geschlecht adv. (<https://bit.ly/2YKuFnP>).

So that you will be, on earth, from now on,
 Pleasant for the people, lovable and honourable.
 I will go to the temple now,
 To offer the Lord a sacrifice by fire.

The King exits. Marcolfe says:

Yes, little master, let me be the altar boy,
 When bread rolls and wine are sacrificed,
 Flatbreads and bacon pies,
 I will serve it and try it;
 My stomach has started to rumble,
 The cook is taking too much time.

Marcolfe exits. Josph enters and says:

Melisso, do you also have your advice?

Melisso says:

Yes, plenty, by my oath,
 I have the right knowledge of the art,
 Through which I can achieve love, friendship and favour
 With anyone,
 Which I definitely did not do before.
 I was proud and vain,
 Arrogant, rough and very snappish,
 Stubborn, defiant against old and young,
 Like no one was good enough for me.
 And just according my unfriendly habit
 I was treated as well
 Like an unfriendly block,
 Like a rough, dumb stick.
 That was all my fault.
 From now on, I will be reformed

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Be mild and decent in word and action,
 Obliging, kind and sympathetic,
 Greetable and friendly towards everyone,
 The authorities and the subjects,
 In this way I will become lovable and pleasant.

Joseph says:

He taught you right in that matter.
 If you follow, you will become loved and valued by the city.

Melisso says:

Tell me, what did he teach you?
 How shall you put out your hell fire?

Joseph says:

He said, I had until now,³³
 And at the beginning,
 Let the bridle too long,
 That I did not bend it right,
 Not having taken away her own will;
 That's why she became stubborn with me,
 Can't calm her anger
 Neither with bad nor good words.
 So, then he taught me at these places,
 How I need to approach her,
 I shall put, on her head,
 the five-finger herb,³⁴ up to two pounds,
 That is the basis of the remedy,
 So that my wife will become obedient and kind.
 Blessed be, who thought of this remedy.
 Well, Melisso, now we shall go home,
 To tell the two arts secretly
 To all good men, of whom there are many,
 That lie sick in the hospital,
 So that Salomon's wisdom and teaching
 can spread and grow
 And keep away much hardship.
 That all wishes us Hans Sachs.

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The personae in this play:

1. King Salomon.
2. Marcolfe.
3. Jospeh, a burgher.
4. Melisso, a burgher.

In the year 1550, 29th day of November.

³³ fert und hewr: probably different spelling of fert und heuer and describing a period of time from the past until up to this year or point in time because fert means far and heuer means this year or the present period of time.

³⁴ fünffinger-kraut: literally meaning five fingered herb, metaphor for fist, see Grimm Wörterbuch entry Fünffingerkraut, nr. 2 (<https://bit.ly/30z3Kgq>).