

# III. How Lazaro Took up with a Squire and What Happened to Him Then

"The Life of Lazarillo of Tormes, His Fortunes and Misfortunes as Told by Himself" captures the life of a young man, Lazarillo, who traverses a series of misfortunes amidst 16th-century Spain. After being forced by his previous master to fend for himself, Lazarillo arrives in Toledo, only to struggle for survival due to his desperate conditions. Fortune briefly smiles on him when he encounters a well-dressed squire, who takes him under his wing, providing a glimmer of hope for better days. However, Lazarillo's new master proves to be as impoverished as he is proud, leading them into a cycle of hunger and pretense.

Navigating life with the squire, Lazarillo discovers the facade of respectability that conceals their dire poverty. The squire's determination to maintain his honor, despite their desperate circumstances, exposes Lazarillo to the complexities of social standing and pride. Their days are marked by scant meals, with Lazarillo often relying on the charity of neighbors and his ability to scavenge for food. This bleak existence continues until local authorities decree the expulsion of beggars from the city, threatening their fragile survival.

In a turn of events, the squire miraculously acquires a silver piece, momentarily uplifting their spirits with the promise of a hearty meal. However, Lazarillo's joy is short-lived as he mistakenly fears that a funeral procession for a man described as heading to "the dark and gloomy house, the poor, unhappy house, the house where they never eat or drink" is directed to their residence, a moment that highlights his deep-seated anxiety and the grim humor in their predicament.

The squire, harboring delusions of grandeur, reveals his disdain for common courtesies beneath his status, attributing his departure from his homeland to a squabble over respect with a higher-status neighbor. His ideals, rooted in the preservation of honor above all, including basic human needs, illuminate the absurdities of societal expectations. As the narrative unfolds, the squire's pretenses unravel, culminating in his abandonment of Lazarillo to evade debt collectors, leaving him in a precarious position yet again.

Lazarillo's journey with the squire ends with a stark realization of the hollowness behind social pretensions and the harsh realities of survival. Through Lazarillo's eyes, the reader witnesses the absurd lengths to which individuals will go to uphold their honor, often at the expense of their livelihood. This chapter of Lazarillo's life encapsulates the humor and tragedy of human dignity in the face of poverty, as he continues to navigate the societal labyrinths of 16th-century Spain.