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Viol da Gamba
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VIOL DA GAMBA

He recognized, without doubt, the pale visage of his dear friend Jean-Gaspard Debureau, the best clown in the Funambule Theater. As he stared at it, an expression of indescribable malice and amusement rose on his face.

—Theophile Gautier, *Onuphrius*

My good friend Pierrot Lend me
your quill So I can write a word or
two Under the light of the moon. My
candle's gone out. There's not a light
in the house. For the love of God,
Pierrot, Open your door.

—Popular Song

The choirmaster had just begun interrogating his viola, drawing his bow across its humming body, when it answered him with jeers and catcalls more often heard at a burlesque show. It seemed that a definite indigestion from too much exposure to slapstick had lodged in its belly.

First, Barbara, the chaperone, bawled out that idiot Pierrot, that stupendous klutz, for dropping the box containing Mr. Cassandre's wig. Powder was flying all over the place.

Mr. Cassandre picked up his wig with such a crushed look on his face. Harlequin gave the blockhead a swift kick in the ass. Colombine laughed so hard she had to wipe a tear from her eye. And Pierrot let loose a white-painted clown's grin that stretched from ear to ear.

But, not long after this, beneath a full moon, Harlequin begged his friend Pierrot to unlock his door so he could get something to relight his candle. The old man stood there, whining at the door even though the bastard had made off with his young lady, not to mention his money.

"The devil take Job Hans, that good-for-nothing lute-maker, who sold me this bowstring!" the choirmaster exclaimed as he placed the dusty viola back in its dusty case. The string had broken.

Translated from the French by **Gian Lombardo**