

IV. How They Took Lazaro through Spain

In Chapter IV of "The Life of Lazarillo of Tormes," the narrative takes a dramatic turn as Lazaro recounts the unforeseen chapter of his life in which fishermen, seizing an opportune moment, decided to exhibit him across Spain under the sanction of the Inquisition. This decision comes after Lazaro miraculously survives an encounter that he likens to the biblical story of Jonah and the whale, expressing profound gratitude towards divine intervention for his unexpected deliverance. Notably lacking in swimming skills and knowledge for self-rescue, Lazaro humorously acknowledges his sheer luck in surviving the ordeal.

The fishermen, resolved to recoup their losses, gain permission from the ministers of the Inquisition to parade Lazaro as a marine curiosity, presenting a novel spectacle to the Spanish populace. Dressing Lazaro in a manner that emphasizes his bizarre ordeal—he is adorned with a mossy wig and beard, making him resemble a living statue, wrapped in seaweed to further accentuate his supposed aquatic origin—Lazaro becomes a symbol of both wonder and misfortune. Distressed by his circumstances, Lazaro philosophically laments his fate, criticizing fortune for its cruel and fickle nature, elevating men to dizzying heights only to plunge them into the depths of despair.

His soliloquy on fate is abruptly interrupted by one of his captors, who threatens him with even worse treatment should he continue to protest or claim his humanity. The fishermen are instructed to take Lazaro through various villages and towns, presenting him as a "monster of nature" to the awe and curiosity of the people. Despite Lazaro's protests of his ordinary human nature and his insistence that his presence in the ocean was merely the result of an accident, the fishermen dismiss his pleas, firmly entrenched in their mission to exploit his misfortune for their own gain.

This chapter insightfully blends humor with a critique of human nature and society's fascination with the extraordinary, encapsulating Lazaro's ongoing struggle with adversity, misfortune, and the fickleness of fate. Through Lazaro's eyes, the reader witnesses the capriciousness of human destiny, underscored by the irony of his situation—a man turned into a spectacle, journeying through Spain not as a victor but as a victim of circumstance.