The Widow of Ephesus by Petronius: Summary of an Ancient Folktale Set in a Graveyard.

Once upon a time there was a faithful woman in Ephesus. Her fidelity was well-known all over the area. But one day her husband died and she went to the grave with the dead body of her husband. She insisted on taking care of the body herself until it was buried.

Her maid was also there with her. Nobody could persuade the lady to go home. She did not eat a grain for five days. Everybody said that she was the true example of conjugal fidelity and love.

In the meantime, a lot of thieves were hanged near that grave and a soldier was assigned to watch the dead bodies so that nobody could take them away for burial. When he saw the light and heard the groan, he went down into the underground grave. He was frightened, first to see the beautiful woman. When he was sure that she was a widow, he brought some food and wine. Then he requested her not to worry about the unavoidable thing. But she became more angry and began to beat her breast and root out her hair. But the maid had the food and tried to persuade her mistress pointing to the dead body, which seemed to be telling her to remain alive. At last she gave in and had food.

When her stomach was full, she was tempted to marry him. Soon she was ready, and the soldier enjoyed his life in the tomb. But taking advantage of his absence at night, one of the hanged bodies was taken and buried by the parents. The next morning, the soldier was horrified and was ready to kill himself with his sword instead of being punished. But the lady’s heart was more sympathetic than pure. She was not ready to lose this lover because she had already lost her husband. So she ordered him to hang the dead body of her husband on the empty cross. And the next morning all the people were surprised to see the dead man on the cross.

- See more at: http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/shortfiction/widow-of-ephesus-summary.html#.VjK6LberTDc

Gaius Petronius Arbiter, original name Titus Petronius Niger (died AD66), reputed author of the Satyricon, a literary portrait of Roman society of the 1st century AD.