

GUILLÉN DE CASTRO Y BELLVÍS

THE FORCE OF HABIT

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Pronunciation Key

Each vowel in Spanish has just one sound. They are pronounced as follows:

a - AH
e - EH
i - EE
o - OH
u - OO

The underlined syllable in each word is the accented one.

ñ - pronounced like the gn in lasagna

DOÑA COSTANZA: DOH-GNA COHS-TAHN-ZAH
DON PEDRO DE MONCADA: DOHN PEH-DROH DEH MOHN-CAH-DAH
FÉLIX: FEH-LEEX
HIPÓLITA: EE-POH-LEE-TAH
GALVÁN : GAHL-VAHN
LUIS : LOO-EES
INÉS : EE-NEHS
LEONOR: LEH-OH-NOHR
LUIS: LOO-EES
OTAVIO: OH-TAH-VEE-OH
MARCELO: MAHR-SEH-LOH

ZARAGOZA: SAHR-AH-GOH-SAH
VALENCIA: VAH-LEHN-SEE-AH
CID: SIHD
MARTÍN PELÁEZ: MAHR-TEEHN PEH-LAH-EHS
SANTA ENGRACIA: SAHN-TAH EHN-GRAH-SEE-AH
RIVER GUERVA: GOO-EHR-VAH

The Force of Habit

Characters

DOÑA COSTANZA, *mother of Félix and Hipólita*
DON PEDRO DE MONCADA, *father of Félix and Hipólita*
DOÑA HIPÓLITA, *daughter of Costanza and Pedro, sister to Félix*
DON FÉLIX, *son of Costanza and Pedro, brother to Hipólita*
DON LUIS, *brother to Leonor, in love with Hipólita*
DOÑA LEONOR, *sister to Luis, in love with Félix*
OTAVIO, *nobleman*
MARCELO, *nobleman*
TUTOR, *Félix's tutor*
GALVÁN, *lackey*
INÉS, *maidservant*
SERVANT
CAPTAIN
MASTER OF ARMS, *fencing teacher*
CONSTABLE
BAILIFF

ACT I

SCENE 1

Room in COSTANZA's home

Enter COSTANZA and FÉLIX wearing the long habit of a student

FÉLIX	What novelties are these, my lady? What changes? From a sackcloth robe, a nun's brown habit, long wimples, and a rosary,	5
	to curled hair, braids of gold, a full skirt, and a fine chain? From mourning to celebration? Yesterday, bare walls, sad and dull, and today, dressed and decorated in brocades and silks. Yesterday sorrows, today pleasures. In short, all that wept with sadness now sings with joy. What is this?	10 15
COSTANZA	Oh my son, Don Félix!	
FÉLIX	Even my name has changed! Yesterday I was just Félix, and today Don Félix?	20
COSTANZA	Hear my reasons: My father, don Juan de Urrea, whose nobility honored this famous city, had me and my brother with Doña Inés de Bolea. After three years of marriage, she settled that debt we most fear, and yet must all repay. With his protection and care we grew up in Zaragoza amid admiration and praise. My brother,	25 30 35

renowned as an honorable gentleman,
daring in love and in arms,
and I for my beauty—
how Fame must have lied!
It happened that a gentleman 40
of the house of Moncada,
on his way from Valencia to Italy,¹
decided to hear Mass
and visit that first great church
of our Patron Saint in Spain.² 45
In the church he found me,
and in him I found
good sense and arrogance
in equal measure.
He wore a cloth doublet, 50
grey garter and hose,
and on his black shoes
two buckles of mother-of-pearl,
breeches, jacket,
and a cape of fine cloth, 55
a pointed collar
and a chain for a sash,
his sword in its golden scabbard
was dashingly girded to one side,
while on the other, 60
his dagger hung from a chain.
His hat sported a broad brim,
with feathers of blue and white
cascading over the crown.
He approached as I left Mass, 65
and I, more well-dressed than devout,
and more curious than saintly,
observed him with rapt attention.
It seemed his whole heart
was in his mouth, 70
and his soul in his eyes.
Unnoticed he drew near,
and mumbled something
that wasn't clear,
swallowing half the words. 75
I did not want to answer
but couldn't help it,
for in church

¹ Hapsburg Spain held significant possessions on the Italian Peninsula.

² Spain's Patron Saint, Santiago (James), is said to have been in Zaragoza when the Virgin Mary appeared there.

one's eyes can never lie.

In any case, 80
 my answer was reason enough
 for him to abandon his journey.

He lingered in Zaragoza,
 and turned gracefully 85
 from military displays
 to courtly attentions.

He served and flattered me,
 obliging me
 with sighs and longings.

He venerated the corners of my street, 90
 the doors of my house,
 the railings of my balconies,
 the grates of my windows—
 all altars to the idol 95
 he adored.

I saw, at last, that my father
 had closed all doors
 to any discussion of marriage
 because he was a foreigner.

Forced to stay in my room, 100
 I opened through a narrow window
 a wide door for him
 to reach his hopes.

He entered through it many times,
 and, as he climbed, 105
 the darkness was his friend,
 and the dawn his enemy.

From those long-awaited hours,
 from those wishes fulfilled,
 from those desires attained, 110
 from that cherished darkness,
 a daughter was born,
 though she remained hidden.

God knows what care and
 caution it took! 115
 But listen now
 to the greatest tragedy
 the world has ever known:
 about six months later,
 my brother happened to pass by 120
 just as Don Pedro,
 for such is my husband's name,
 began climbing the ladder.
 He noticed something amiss,

	came closer	125
	and saw who it was.	
	They both drew	
	their shining swords,	
	and bravely thrust at each other.	
	Watching all this,	130
	I could hardly breathe,	
	so that even now	
	I can hardly tell it.	
	My husband stabbed my brother	
	in the chest—	135
	a wound so large	
	his soul poured from it.	
	“Jesus!” he cried, “they’ve killed me,	
	bring a priest, oh Jesus!”	
	I can see him now—	140
	leaning on his sword,	
	clutching the walls,	
	and falling to the ground.	
FÉLIX	What terrible misfortune!	
COSTANZA	His voice, when they recognized it,	145
	roused the street and the house.	
	Don Pedro left him there and ran,	
	and I was so upset,	
	so bewildered, so beside myself,	
	that I did not remove the ladder,	150
	which was leaning on my wall	
	and latched on to my windows.	
	The noise brought my father out,	
	and there, by the light of a candle	
	he saw his son lying in his own blood,	155
	and the delinquent ladder,	
	hanging there to my shame.	
FÉLIX	Dear God, what a disaster!	
COSTANZA	I did not see his reaction—	
	the servants took me away,	160
	half dead.	
	To escape my father’s threats,	
	I turned myself in to the Law,	
	and was placed	
	in a lady’s house,	165
	a cousin to my mother.	

Don Pedro went to Flanders.³
 They told me
 that he took the baby girl,
 barely more than a newborn, 170
 torn from my breast!
 But he left me another treasure,
 and that was you.
 From the moment you were born,
 you consoled me in my anguish, 175
 though I never spoke the cause.
 For twenty years,
 your father has served the king in Flanders.
 He commands a squadron of infantry with honor,
 and has great hope of preferment. 180
 Yet all those years, your grandfather,
 biding his time,
 dropped neither the quarrel
 nor his hope of revenge.
 But he died six months ago, 185
 and, although I was still in his bad graces,
 I became the sole heir
 to the home and estate.
 I notified my husband
 to come enjoy them, 190
 and I await him now.
 Already my heart tells me
 that noise in the hallway just now
 must announce his arrival
 and the end of my long troubles. 195
 Embrace me, my Félix.

COSTANZA *and* FÉLIX *embrace*

FÉLIX I am glad beyond words,
 Mother.
 Your happiness
 is even closer than you knew! 200

COSTANZA It may well kill me!

SCENE 2

³ Site of a longstanding Spanish occupation and frequent rebellions. Squadrons (*tercios*) like the one led by Don Pedro were comprised of professional volunteer soldiers from Spain.

	and in my drawing-room by day.	300
	To avoid any painful moments and the risk of losing him, my one consolation, I never encouraged him to put on a man's attire.	305
	That long habit is the shackles I placed on his feet, though he never resented staying put and not seeing the world. Such is <i>the force of habit!</i>	310
DON PEDRO	This is unheard of! You always were a fearful woman.	
COSTANZA	I am a mother, and I have learned.	315
DON PEDRO	Don Félix will learn to conquer with courage this horrid habit that vanquishes valor. That tether on a layman is so offensive that, before I even take off my spurs, he must take it off, and exchange it for proper dress. Quickly now, does he have any clothes?	320 325
COSTANZA	He does, but I do not allow him to wear them.	
DON PEDRO	And put Hipólita in a long dress, and do up her hair. She can be your consolation in your chambers and your parlor. I will keep Don Félix always at my side to teach him courage, and I know he'll learn, for, as soon as he buckles on a sword, he'll change his tune. The house of Moncada	330 335 340

does not allow for womanly men.
And so, to the world's amazement,
you'll make a woman of a man,
and I, a man of a woman.
It's cruel to keep a man 345
in a damsel's long skirts.
Go, now,
and put on her
what you take off him.
I hope their habits will change 350
along with their clothes.

HIPÓLITA I will not change!

COSTANZA I will do
as you say.

DON PEDRO May God keep you. 355

HIPÓLITA Some fate for the two of us!
Vile fortune, what have you done?

FÉLIX I cannot bear
to leave my mother.

Exeunt COSTANZA, HIPÓLITA, FÉLIX

SCENE 3

DON PEDRO Who helped you
raise Félix? 360

TUTOR I did.

DON PEDRO Listen,
you who raised him,
is my son's shrunken state 365
due to nature
or nurture?

Is this what his mother has made him,
or is this who he is?
Is there courage in his breast 370
that bursts forth when least expected?
What passion consumes him?
What fears unnerve him?

	What tastes inspire him? What schemes does he hatch? Tell me the truth.	375
TUTOR	Sir, I served your father-in-law until that wretched day, or night rather, that was the cause of such misfortune. I was the servant who saw my lady to her aunt's house, and alerted the law. Since then, she entrusts me with her most precious business, and I serve her with my soul and my life. Since his most tender boyhood I have served your son, too, about whom I shall speak the truth that you demand. As a child, he showed signs of a fiery character and chivalrous spirit to be envied by all. But his loving mother, in her womanly fear, foreseeing potential dangers, and fearing misfortunes, with pious diligence and misguided caution, corrected his actions, and vanquished his nature. When he leaned toward manly things, she distracted him with others, feminine and shameful. He would spend his days in the women's chambers, passing the time, watching the young ladies at work, and playing with the girls. When he found a pillow, he would fall on the couch and exhaust the pharmacy of tonics and cordials. His mother always hung around his neck	380 385 390 395 400 405 410 415

	with sweet caresses, spoiling him with gifts, and instilling fears in him.	420
	In winter the wind, in summer the sun he feared, and dew throughout the year.	
	He never felt the wind or the sun!	425
	He heard Mass at home, once in a while at church, if the weather was very mild.	
	When he walked in the corridor of his very own house they'd cover his head as if he were sailing abroad.	430
	At any sound of sword fighting she would cling tenderly to her son and yell: "Oh God! They're stabbing each other in the street!"	435
	She would close every door and open to him her fearful bosom.	440
	If muskets rang out, she'd wrap him up, face and body, in her headdress, her blouse, her skirt!	
	If thunder rumbled, or lightning flashed, they trembled together under the altar in the chapel.	445
DON PEDRO	At least that is an honorable fear: to fear God is a virtue, as we know his justice. To fear men is cowardice.	450
TUTOR	That is how he was raised, and when he had the chance to learn manly ways, she always stopped him.	455
	He was never allowed to carry even a practice sword, much less brandish pointed steel for combat.	
	And so, when he throws a stone, he throws like a girl,	460

	though he's strong enough to lodge it in an oak. She even takes table knives from him, for fear they'll cut him!	465
DON PEDRO	Good God, what a disgrace!	
TUTOR	And so these habits, so constant and prolonged, became second nature: he is very timid, he is shy, he is fearful . . .	470
DON PEDRO	In short, a chicken. And a Moncada, by God! This is unheard of. His nature must be restored. I will fire him up, as my blood boils in his veins and his breast! His honor will be restored, for his is good blood, or I shall shed it myself!	475 480

SCENE 4

Enter GALVÁN, a servant

GALVÁN	All your people are here.	
TUTOR	Here comes your son dressed as a gentleman.	485
DON PEDRO	I've missed you, Galván.	
GALVÁN	What I was missing was a mule to ride on!	

Enter FÉLIX, dressed in men's clothing, wearing the garments incorrectly, and very bashful

DON PEDRO	He looks good. He is of a good size, although timid and ungainly. You look well, my dear Félix,	490
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with no shackles now!
 Lengthen your stride a bit. 495

(FÉLIX lengthens his step awkwardly and ridiculously)

Step out with manly spirit.

FÉLIX I long to serve you in everything.

DON PEDRO Drape your cloak
 more gracefully on that side—
 it's not a long mantle. 500
 That's how they do it at court.

(FÉLIX places his thumbs in his waistband)

You look like a monk.
 Stop that, stop that!
 Your hands are in the way—
 stand like a man. 505

(FÉLIX puts his feet together)

You're not standing right!

GALVÁN He looks more like a teapot
 than a man.

DON PEDRO Keep the length of a crossbow
 between your feet, 510
 and never join them,
 for if it's bad for horses,
 it is no good for men.
 Don your hat, and always remember
 that knowing how to don it well 515
 is an art unto itself.
 That doesn't look right!
 Never mind your ruff!
 Place it firmly upon your head,
 not lightly on your hair. 520

GALVÁN Otherwise it looks more like
 a tiara than a hat.

FÉLIX I'm not ready for this,
 and I don't appreciate the jokes.

COSTANZA	My dear, stop it this minute! My lord, how bizarre!	555
DON PEDRO	Madam, our children are monsters both.	
GALVÁN	Her brother could give her his beard, and she could give him some courage in exchange. That would be a happy trade!	560
COSTANZA	His blood has rushed to his face. Is he upset?	
DON PEDRO	You raised him so poorly that he is constantly mortified.	565
<i>HIPÓLITA takes the sword from the SERVANT's hands</i>		
HIPÓLITA	My sword must return to my side. No more of this, which suits me so poorly!	
DON PEDRO	It's not to be— you are a woman. I want to place it at your brother's side.	570
HIPÓLITA	I cannot take this quietly— I must say a proper goodbye!	575
<i>(She draws the sword)</i>		
	Oh sword! I worship the cross of your hilt and the steel of your blade. I have no hope of buckling you on again, for it would be cruel, dishonorable, disloyal to take you up again after I've placed a knitting needle where you used to be.	580
	And yet, how much more honor is there, valiant sword,	585

a safeguard for his honor,
 protection for his life,
 and he must never yield it,
 even when that life
 is in danger. 635
 Even if it is inconvenient
 to one's own life,
 honor comes first!
 To serve his Christian king,
 and for his faith, 640
 he must brandish it,
 forever protesting among the heretics,
 and offering to die for his faith,
 never wavering nor insulting it.
 It falls on us to honor, 645
 profess, and use
 our sword to defend it.
 You must not draw your sword
 for light offenses,
 but, once drawn, 650
 it must not return unbloodied.
 Better bloody than naked
 in my estimation,
 because, unlike a body,
 it is shamed when naked, 655
 and red when it is not,
 even if it defeats the enemy.
 And if you must draw your sword
 against a common man
 because he arrogantly offends, 660
 hand to hand and man to man,
 then it's clear
 that a true gentleman
 must show valor equal
 to the nobility he sports. 665
 For when common men
 resist their betters,
 they must kill or be killed,
 or at least be set to flight.
 So if at all possible, 670
 the gentleman must avoid
 grappling with the common man.
 I could go on,
 but I will tell you
 all in good time. 675

(DON PEDRO *buckles the sword on FÉLIX*)

Now you buckle it on,
and when you go to Mass,
it shall be blessed,
as shall you.
Heaven will make you a man, 680
as I beg of it to do.
Come, my lady, give him your hand
and your blessing.

FÉLIX *kisses the hands of DON PEDRO and COSTANZA*

FÉLIX May heaven repay you
for this new self you have given me. 685

DON PEDRO That will be necessary
if you are to have honor.

HIPÓLITA How I envy you, brother!

FÉLIX And I you.
I'm jealous of whomever
will be with my mother, 690
and because I see you
with no ruffs and cuffs.
Terrible inventions both!

DON PEDRO You must get used to them. 695

FÉLIX I would like to tear them off.

GALVÁN By God he is right.
Cuffs are inhuman!
And those who care for them
look like their hands 700
are for sale.

DON PEDRO Only gallant lovers
worry too much about them, you'll see.
A careless elegance
is more befitting of men. 705
Your sword should hang at your side,
but toward the midpoint.
Yours is askew. It should go like this.

DON PEDRO *adjusts the sword*

That's how it goes.

FÉLIX I am ashamed to say 710
I have never worn one before.

DON PEDRO Wear it, and don't sulk.

COSTANZA Hipólita?

HIPÓLITA My lady!

COSTANZA It's my turn now 715
to teach you how to wear heels:
put them on again.

HIPÓLITA *tries to put the shoes on without success*

HIPÓLITA I will,
but I am trying to figure out how to do it.
If I don't use my hands . . . 720

HIPÓLITA *puts her leg out indecorously, takes the shoe in her hand and tries to put it on, as her mother takes it from her*

. . . I will never get them on.

COSTANZA What are you doing, child?

DON PEDRO Nice job!

GALVÁN Was that a shoe?

COSTANZA Have you no shame 725
to show your foot and even your leg?

HIPÓLITA If I never once covered them
in the twenty years since I was born,
why do you blame me now?

She returns to trying to put on the shoes and still can't do it

COSTANZA A pretty sight. 730

HIPÓLITA I can't!

COSTANZA	Don't you see . . .	
GALVÁN	Here she goes again.	
COSTANZA	. . . that feet are far more lewd beneath your skirt? You do it, Félix, be a gentleman. Help her here.	735
<i>FÉLIX slips the shoes on her</i>		
FÉLIX	Here we go.	
DON PEDRO	I am amazed by the pair of them.	740
FÉLIX	That looks nice!	
GALVÁN	If only he could draw his sword as well as he fits a shoe!	
DON PEDRO	If only he could draw, with his Urrea and Moncada blood!	745
COSTANZA	Come, we must receive visitors in my drawing-room now, and we'll get a petticoat on you!	
HIPÓLITA	Petticoat be damned, Jesus Chri—	750
COSTANZA	My goodness! I have never seen anything like this.	
GALVÁN	And she's two letters from taking the Lord's name in vain!	
DON PEDRO	What is that noise? (<i>To GALVÁN</i>) Go see.	755
<i>GALVÁN exits</i>		
SCENE 5		

COSTANZA	I cannot lose you again so soon after your return!	
DON PEDRO	Doesn't our daughter fight well?	805
COSTANZA	God keep her.	
DON PEDRO	She amazes me.	
LUIS	Stop, my lady—by God! Do not kill me, I will surrender. Although you strike me with your sword it is your eyes that wound me— you have the advantage over me.	810
HIPÓLITA	You defend yourself well without attacking at all, and in this you show that you are courageous and strong. And so, I have no wish to kill you, or embarrass myself.	815
LUIS	Your beauty has already done me in— I die the sweetest of deaths!	820
HIPÓLITA	Leave sweetness aside— I cannot bear it— and fight without these courtesies!	
DON PEDRO	Leave me, people are coming.	825
<i>Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO</i>		
OTAVIO	(<i>To COSTANZA</i>) My lady, what is this?	
<i>MARCELO separates the fighters</i>		
MARCELO	Restrain yourselves, my lords.	
HIPÓLITA	Courtesy can be brave, too.	
FÉLIX	The sun itself is not more beautiful!	830

LEONOR	You outshine it, surely, if it sets in your arms!	
FÉLIX	And it rises before my eyes.	
LUIS	If you will hear my apologies, you will see that it is only my ill luck that deserves your anger.	835
COSTANZA	My lord Don Luis, our own relative, who is well-known to this house, cannot be in the wrong. My lady Leonor?	840
LEONOR	Yes, my lady?	
FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> Oh, to gather her a thousand times over into my arms and my heart!	
LUIS	My sister and I were on our way here in a coach. The street was blocked by mules and men, so the driver asked them to move, as he usually does. They responded badly, as they usually do. I spoke to them politely and they, in turn, forced me to draw my sword. By God, if I had known that they were your servants, I would have shown this house the respect it deserves, by the crest that ennobles it and the presence of my lady, Doña Costanza, who commands me as she pleases. And I did not even know that my lord, Don Pedro de Moncada, whose very name is famous, was now here.	845 850 855 860 865 870

	I long to greet him, as my lord and my friend.	
DON PEDRO	I welcome your courteous words, Don Luis. I kiss your hands and welcome you to my arms.	875
LUIS	Your kindness is too much.	
DON PEDRO	I am fond of you already, for your gallantry and courage.	880
HIPÓLITA	All of which he has, by God.	
LUIS	You, my lady, have vanquished me entirely, and do yourself credit with your praise.	
HIPÓLITA	You flatter me with this surrender, and try with me what works with other women, who are proud of their beauty, and care nothing for being strong.	885
DON PEDRO	This is Hipólita, my daughter.	
LUIS	Her courage well shows that.	890
LEONOR	Give me your hands, my lady.	
HIPÓLITA	I must kiss yours.	
FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> What great beauty!	
OTAVIO	I am pleased to meet you. Give me your hands, my lord.	895
MARCELO	And to me, as well, for your fame and name deserve my respects.	
DON PEDRO	You do me too much honor with your courtesies.	900
COSTANZA	Why are we are in the street?	

	Come in the house, if you please. Leonor shall have at least some water for the fright that she had.	905
LEONOR	I will gladly take it.	
OTAVIO	We are all at your service.	
LUIS	<i>(Aside)</i> My soul is on fire, her honest spirit appeals to me.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> What do they search for, what do they want, those eyes that watch me so?	910
LEONOR	<i>(Aside)</i> Félix is looking at me again.	
FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> This must be love that so delights and disturbs me.	
COSTANZA	Look, my lord, your son just about melts when he looks at Leonor.	915
DON PEDRO	I pray to God it be so, for once in love, he will be truly brave.	920

MARCELO	That old saying was made for you: a lesson learned in blood is not easily forgotten!	
OTAVIO	Her gentle thrusts have made their mark.	945
LUIS	And had they not been well parried, they would have taken my life. But her divine eyes bloodied me more than that sword to which I surrendered my entire soul.	950
OTAVIO	Look who's getting out of that carriage.	
LUIS	Who?	
OTAVIO	Don Pedro and Doña Costanza.	955
LUIS	My wishes come true!	
MARCELO	And your lady, too. How she leaps down! She must be angry.	
OTAVIO	What did she say?	960
MARCELO	She cursed her shoes.	
LUIS	She doesn't know how to wear them yet.	

SCENE 2

Enter DON PEDRO, COSTANZA, FÉLIX, HIPÓLITA, and the TUTOR

DON PEDRO	Those were the days, my lady, when I would wait here for you to arrive.	965
COSTANZA	That may be, but I prefer these days, when I can freely take you by the hand as my husband.	970

	on a whim, wore a patch on one eye for just one month, and was blind in it afterwards. What can possibly resist such a strange power, if just the habit of not seeing can take away one's sight?	1000 1005
OTAVIO	Its force is beyond words: is there anything more impossible than to live without drink? And yet a man with dropsy, ⁸ was so determined to be cured, that he stopped drinking at all, and now lives without it.	1010
MARCELO	Habit is a spell, a charm!	1015
LUIS	In short, it leaps at any chance, and that's what makes it strong.	
MARCELO	What could be stranger than how these two exchanged such different natures? These are superhuman effects, far beyond our ken!	1020
OTAVIO	No one talks about anything but the two siblings in this place.	1025
MARCELO	I swear, I've heard amazing stories about them! They are legend here, and Don Luis comes into it, too.	1030
LUIS	For which I thank my lucky stars!	
MARCELO	They all talk about the time we saw you fight with her.	
LUIS	She is like a very sword!	

⁸ Old-fashioned term for edema, a condition which leads to bloating in the extremities.

MARCELO	She is so brawny, that to show you her favor, she'll cut you with her sword!	1035
LUIS	She knows how I thrust and will look kindly upon me.	
MARCELO	Are you so much in love?	1040
LUIS	Where to begin? I love and long for the good esteem of Don Pedro de Moncada, his noble line and his courage. And the good breeding, the quality, the fame, the reputation of Doña Costanza all cast their spell on my breast. And then, when I saw her bright as day, I fell for a woman who does not even know how to be one!	1045 1050
OTAVIO	That's true.	
MARCELO	What do you think of Don Félix?	
LUIS	Give him time— although he was badly raised and spoiled, he is of such fine metal that it will shine through when tempered.	1055
OTAVIO	No more to say?	1060
LUIS	No more for you to know. I'm off, goodbye.	
<i>Exit</i> LUIS		
OTAVIO	Goodbye. (<i>To</i> MARCELO) Clearly you feel something, to judge from how passionately you spoke. You must have liked the strong woman, too!	1065
MARCELO	I am as hot for her as you are for Doña Leonor.	

	and their daring can kill. They are sweet traps into which we fall, dead by our own eyes. They are a woman's worst enemies!	1100
HIPÓLITA	You want me to treat them as traitors— if that's what'll make you happy, I won't look at all.	1105
COSTANZA	I'm not saying you shouldn't look, just not quite so much— you've been staring at Don Luis!	1110
HIPÓLITA	He looked so brave, so courtly, and so honorable . . . I saw him break up the brawl so capably, with such courage and force . . . I saw him treat my father with such noble courtesy . . . I saw him hold off my sword, and yet not attack . . . And so I grew fond of him and wanted to see more of him . . . because courage is a magnet, at least for me— but not, by God, as a woman would want him!	1115 1120
COSTANZA	I believe you, yet desire always starts out claiming honor, and then makes bold.	1125
HIPÓLITA	Not in my case.	
COSTANZA	I pray God that it not be so.	1130
HIPÓLITA	How could it be, when it has never been so? I always act on the best of intentions.	
COSTANZA	But purity of heart is not enough in this world, which judges by what it sees,	1135

and that must be exemplary.
Sit here,
and get on with your embroidery.
(*To a SERVANT*) Please, bring me a cushion. 1140
(*To HIPÓLITA*) Sit right here.

A SERVANT brings a large cushion and HIPÓLITA sits, unable to sit as the other women, with her feet and legs uncovered until COSTANZA covers her up

HIPÓLITA I'll never do this properly.
Wouldn't a chair be better?

COSTANZA Pull back your feet.

HIPÓLITA I curse 1145
whoever made me a woman.

COSTANZA You will learn
to look around more discreetly.

HIPÓLITA This is unbearable!

She spreads out her legs

COSTANZA Good Lord! 1150

HIPÓLITA Why doesn't everyone
sit with a cushion?

COSTANZA That is our habit.

Enter FÉLIX and GALVÁN

GALVÁN Your father has ordered me to serve you,
and that I shall do. 1155

FÉLIX It gives me pleasure, good Galván,
to acquire such a good servant.
Dear Mother, give me your hand.

COSTANZA Dear son,
your sister has really taken to embroidery! 1160

HIPÓLITA Oh, brother, I can't do this—
I was not born for it!
It is driving me crazy—

I can't stand it!

FÉLIX It takes some skill. 1165

HIPÓLITA Dull, dull, dull!

FÉLIX You're pulling on the wrong thread.

HIPÓLITA This is killing me.

FÉLIX Would you like me to show you?
Give it to me. 1170
With your permission, my lady.

FÉLIX takes the embroidery from HIPÓLITA and begins to work as well as the other women

GALVÁN You embroider exquisitely.

HIPÓLITA What are you doing?
For God's sake!

GALVÁN *(To FÉLIX)* You sit so elegantly! 1175

HIPÓLITA Have you noticed?

GALVÁN Have you considered becoming a tailor?
You would make a fortune.

HIPÓLITA I can't believe it!
You make a better lady 1180
than a gentleman.
Get out!
Damn the man and his uselessness.

COSTANZA That was uncalled for.

HIPÓLITA Be strong. 1185

GALVÁN What a pair!

FÉLIX I had no idea
I was upsetting her.

HIPÓLITA If you had no idea,
turn then to serious things, 1190
and then you'll know

what I would do
 if I were in your shoes
 and not a woman.
 My God, give me his life,
 or give me death! 1195

COSTANZA Clearly I must try something else.

HIPÓLITA (*To FÉLIX*) I'm sorry.

FÉLIX And I'm grateful
 for your advice. 1200

SCENE 4

Enter the TUTOR and the MASTER OF ARMS

TUTOR The fencing master is here.

COSTANZA Sit down,
 and control yourself from now on.

HIPÓLITA This is killing me.
 What I would do for a sword! 1205

The MASTER OF ARMS pulls out fencing swords

MASTER OF ARMS Are you ready for a lesson,
 my lord?

FÉLIX Yes, master.
 I very much want to be skilled.

MASTER OF ARMS Then pay attention! 1210
 Hold the sword like this,
 draw it with nerve.
 Bring your foot out . . . not so much . . . hold it there.

FÉLIX puts his foot out too far and overextends his arm

Stretch out your arm,
 not all the way, like so. 1215
 There are many stances, but this one is best.

HIPÓLITA Oh, brother,

how limply you draw your sword!
There's no wind in your sails!
Give me the sword, 1220
and I swear I'll teach you to fight
with the same spirt as you embroider!

HIPÓLITA *takes the black practice sword and strikes a fencer's pose*

You must grab the sword like this,
and you must look ferocious.

MASTER OF ARMS That is correct, 1225
and the posture is excellent.

HIPÓLITA Let us fight.

MASTER OF ARMS So be it,
if that is your wish, my lady.

HIPÓLITA Let's leave it for later— 1230
my father is coming.

GALVÁN (*To the MASTER OF ARMS*) Lucky man!

MASTER OF ARMS What do you mean?

GALVÁN If she had fought with you, 1235
you'd be short an eye,
or a nose.

Enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO Hipólita, what is this?
You insist on trying to be a man
when you are woman?

HIPÓLITA I can't stand this, Father. 1240

DON PEDRO Give the sword to your brother.

HIPÓLITA If I could give my arm too,
then he might hold it properly.

DON PEDRO Show him how to be brave, Master. 1245
Teach him to fight,
which is not the same as fencing

or playing around.
 No hanging back!
 For God's sake,
 let him learn from his own wounds 1250
 how to parry and feint!
 Show him how to draw his sword with spirit,
 to keep the rhythm of his footwork,
 to thrust, then cut,
 backhand, and stab. 1255
 And tell him when to use each one—
 they'll come in handy
 once he has learned them.
 If he has a well-steeled spirit,
 these lessons will be enough 1260
 for any gentleman.
 Go on, Master, begin.
 But first,
 let's test his nature.
 Duel with him, fight. 1265
 Don Félix, give the master a good blow.

FÉLIX and the MASTER OF ARMS begin to fight, FÉLIX is handling the sword awkwardly

FÉLIX I cannot control the sword.

COSTANZA Oh, my Lord, he's so clumsy.

HIPÓLITA Don't hang back, brother.
 Jesus, what a weak thrust! 1270

DON PEDRO (*To the MASTER OF ARMS*) Hit him! Let's see if he gets angry.

The MASTER OF ARMS whacks FÉLIX, who cries out

FÉLIX Oh Jesus!

DON PEDRO You're a disgrace!
 You whine like a woman—
 take your vengeance! 1275

HIPÓLITA takes the sword from FÉLIX and gains on the MASTER OF ARMS

COSTANZA This is too much to bear!

HIPÓLITA With the sword returned to my hand,
 I'll show you what you have to do,

and we'll see if the Master
can get away from these blows. 1280

MASTER OF ARMS Stop, my lady!

HIPÓLITA Strike better,
since you are so skilled.

GALVÁN His skill is not the issue here.

DON PEDRO Daughter, that is enough! 1285

HIPÓLITA *halts her attacks*

GALVÁN The Master is looking lively now!

DON PEDRO And you, coward, are you not affronted?
Why do you shrink back?
Why are you so surprised?
Have you no guts? 1290
Don't you feel shame
to see a woman outdo you?
I am so . . .

COSTANZA Oh Lord, stop!

DON PEDRO Why so afraid? 1295
What cowardice has come over you?
You are a Moncada!
Do you do these vile things to affront me?
Do you not know
what blood runs through your veins? 1300
Do you not know
where and how
our great house was founded,
with its towering pillars
that compete with the sun: 1305
Hugos, Gastones,
Pedros, Guillenes, Ramones,
pride of Spain itself?
And you tear down with your shame
the house that I sustained! 1310
Read the annals of Aragon,⁹
my son, and learn there

⁹ One of the great kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, it formed a dynastic union with Castile at the end of the 15th century through the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon with Isabella of Castile.

	even if honor did not exist, cowardice would be a mistake.	1385
TUTOR	What more is there to say?	
GALVÁN	I disagree: running is not the same as fleeing.	1390
HIPÓLITA	Maybe for you, but for one who is noble, they are one and the same.	
DON PEDRO	My son, find your courage, or you threaten our honor.	1395
FÉLIX	Your words give me courage, my lord. I will do what I can, as soon as I can find my way.	1400
DON PEDRO	<i>(Aside)</i> I have an idea of how to make him lose his fear . . . <i>(To FÉLIX)</i> Son, would you join me as my sole companion? For in whom should I trust if not my own son?	1405
FÉLIX	I feel my courage rising to serve you loyally and with honor.	
DON PEDRO	Then put on armor, and take up a shield. <i>(Aside)</i> This will be a fine plan! We're off! Goodbye, Doña Costanza.	1410
COSTANZA	Goodbye.	
DON PEDRO	May you fulfill my hopes.	
FÉLIX	I will, on my mother's life!	1415
GALVÁN	Note the great extolling back and forth.	

	for such it must be, to make your soul ask what it knows instantly. Knowing what it knows, what could it possibly say? Oh, voice of my soul, cry by night, as you speak by day.	1445 1450
MARCELO	This is heavenly, by God.	
OTAVIO	The angels have stopped singing to listen to her.	1455
MARCELO	Are you the one of whom she sings?	
OTAVIO	Would that I were so lucky!	
MARCELO	Now they've closed the window.	1460
OTAVIO	My soul grieves!	
INÉS, LEONOR's <i>servant</i> , comes to the window		
INÉS	<i>(Aside)</i> Now my lady has gone— I must get rid of these fools. <i>(Aloud)</i> Goodbye, you silly suitors.	
OTAVIO	Wait, is that all you came for?	1465
INÉS	My lady calls. <i>(To someone offstage)</i> I'll be right in! <i>(Aloud)</i> My lady is waiting.	
MARCELO	How charming.	1470
OTAVIO	So witty. People are coming, let's go.	

Exeunt

SCENE 6

If hell is rocky,
then this may well be hell,
the cobbles pierce my very soles—
I am more used 1505
to walking on soft carpets.
I stumble into corners
like a blind man,
my eyes unused to the dark.
To me, blind and afraid, 1510
every man looks like he's carrying
a giant on each shoulder.
What is this now?

DON PEDRO *enters dressed in a different cape, with a handkerchief over his mouth and brandishing his sword*

DON PEDRO (Aside) If this teaches him,
it will be a good night's work. 1515

FÉLIX Oh, Jesus! Father! Father!

DON PEDRO (Aside) I'm ashamed to be your father.

Hearing the noise, LEONOR and INÉS appear at the window

LEONOR Swords! Is it my brother?
Oh heavens, have mercy!

FÉLIX How can I get out of here? 1520
My back is up against the wall.
Is he going to kill me?
Fighting is the only solution!

FÉLIX *begins to swing his sword*

DON PEDRO (Aside) My plan is working already.

DON PEDRO *retreats, running through a door*

FÉLIX I'm about to explode. 1525
Now you flee, you coward? Wait!

LEONOR Don't follow him.

FÉLIX Who is that?

LEONOR Listen to me, my lord, on my life!

FÉLIX I recognize your voice. 1530

LEONOR Are you Don Félix?

FÉLIX Yes, my lady.

LEONOR Are you hurt?

FÉLIX Only your eyes
have pierced me through, 1535
and I long for you to cure me.

LEONOR That is not a mortal wound.

Enter GALVÁN and a SERVANT

GALVÁN Let's get closer.

LEONOR People are coming, Don Félix.

FÉLIX I feel scared again. 1540

Enter DON PEDRO

GALVÁN What are you doing with an unsheathed sword, my lord?
We're all friends here.

DON PEDRO Have you crossed swords with someone?

FÉLIX Yes,
a man disrespected me, 1545
but he got his just desserts.

DON PEDRO It's good to see you so fired up.

FÉLIX I cut him again and again,
until he finally ran away.

GALVÁN Brave boy! 1550
He'd make a good ruffian,
bravest when he's cornered.

DON PEDRO Did you lose your hat or your scabbard?
You must get them back.

FÉLIX	Here they are.	1555
DON PEDRO	A brave man leaves nothing behind.	
LEONOR	(To INÉS) The father is a great gentleman. I admire his courage.	
INÉS	And the son?	1560
LEONOR	I am fond of him, too.	
DON PEDRO	Calm down.	
FÉLIX	Yes, my lord, I am just thrilled.	1565
DON PEDRO	How is that?	
FÉLIX	My lady has seen me in this dangerous moment.	
DON PEDRO	That is an honorable sentiment.	1570
FÉLIX	I am honored to express it.	
DON PEDRO	If I can cure cowardice, I will be famous among doctors.	

Exeunt

SCENE 7

Street outside LEONOR's window, a different day

Enter MARCELO and OTAVIO

OTAVIO	So now everyone knows that Don Félix is Leonor's suitor.	1575
MARCELO	The two siblings could exchange roles.	

OTAVIO	Love is not that simple.	
MARCELO	You're jealous.	1580
OTAVIO	Maybe— aren't you?	
MARCELO	No more than I was, because chance brought me jealousy and love at once. First, I was jealous, then, in love.	1585
OTAVIO	That's true.	
MARCELO	And so, though things look bad, it's nothing new, so I can't complain. It's different for you.	1590
OTAVIO	My lady won't love one who is a man in name only.	
MARCELO	She might love a man who is a woman, as I love a woman who is a man.	1595
OTAVIO	Ours is the most perfect gender, and thus, the most desirable.	
MARCELO	In truth, love makes anything possible.	1600
OTAVIO	I swear I see them up there!	
LEONOR <i>and</i> HIPÓLITA <i>come to the window</i>		
OTAVIO	Doña Costanza must be visiting Doña Leonor.	
MARCELO	Great, infinite beauty.	
OTAVIO	Her beauty makes me long for what cannot be!	1605
LEONOR	(<i>To</i> HIPÓLITA) There are suitors in the street.	

HIPÓLITA	That's exactly where I'd like to be.	
LEONOR	You cannot reconcile yourself to being a woman.	1610
HIPÓLITA	Even if I say nothing, my dress speaks volumes— it's torture!	
LEONOR	How you exaggerate! You're so full of jokes.	1615
MARCELO	Here comes the sun.	
OTAVIO	And what beautiful suns they are!	
HIPÓLITA	The dawn, the sun, the moon, the stars— don't they tire of such conceits, my lady?	1620
LEONOR	They are quite stale.	
MARCELO	Your voice rises to the heavens.	
LEONOR	And sinks not to your level— that's a new one.	1625
HIPÓLITA	It was well put. Dashing even.	
OTAVIO	If you speak tenderly, she'll never respond.	1630
MARCELO	What can I do other than challenge her?	
OTAVIO	Maybe she'll meet you out in the fields, since she's so brave.	
HIPÓLITA	And what if I do?	1635
MARCELO	I believe you would kill me.	

HIPÓLITA	If I look, it is only because his courage and honor have proven him worthy. I am grateful for your own courtesy in setting eyes on my brother.	1670
LUIS	So, gentlemen, what is going on here?	
MARCELO	Where there are ladies, one deals in love.	1675
FÉLIX	Well, if that's it, carry on.	
LUIS	You've got a good hand to play!	1680
OTAVIO	Our hand was fine without you two in the mix.	
FÉLIX	And do the ladies make a royal flush?	
LUIS	By God, we'd like such a hand. We stand to lose the most!	1685
LEONOR	And so you have us in hand?	
LUIS	It would be foolish to be so certain.	1690
HIPÓLITA	It's only because you're so brave.	
LUIS	You give me too much credit.	
FÉLIX	And I trusted my sister's courage.	1695
MARCELO	That may well be.	
OTAVIO	And if so, then what?	

FÉLIX	Well, if anyone is worthy, who better than me?	1700
OTAVIO	Anyone, really.	
LUIS	That's enough.	
HIPÓLITA	No one, not in lineage nor in valor.	
OTAVIO	If you say so.	1705
HIPÓLITA	I will back him up.	
MARCELO	No one's up to the challenge.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Fussing with her sleeves)</i> How is it I can handle a pike, but not these pins?	1710
LEONOR	It's just the braid on the cuff, it's stuck to your brooch.	
HIPÓLITA	I'm all tangled up in this dress.	
LEONOR	I'll undo the knot, just wait.	1715
HIPÓLITA	I can't wait. I'm like Alexander the Great, who cut through the knot rather than untie it! ¹⁰	
<i>The cuff falls out the window</i>		
LEONOR	There it goes.	1720
HIPÓLITA	Would that it had fallen into the deepest ocean!	
LUIS	Give it to me.	
MARCELO	I got it first.	

¹⁰ Alexander the Great's solution for the intractable Gordian knot was to slice through it with his sword.

HIPÓLITA I'm sorry already. 1725

LEONOR This isn't good.

LUIS Give me that cuff, Marcelo!

MARCELO Why should I?
The heavens gave it to me.

LUIS Because its owner is waiting for it. 1730

MARCELO And won't my feet take me to her?

LUIS Not on my stairs
they won't!

MARCELO If that's the case,
then all I need is your permission. 1735

LUIS I don't grant it!

MARCELO Well, I don't want to give the cuff to you.

LUIS Then I'll take it from you.

MARCELO Let's see you try.

HIPÓLITA If it's my cuff, what are you two doing? 1740

MARCELO My sword
will defend it!

MARCELO exits grasping his sword, while LUIS shakes off OTAVIO to follow MARCELO

LUIS Let me go,
and let me at him!
I'll cuff him for it. 1745

Exeunt LUIS and MARCELO

HIPÓLITA Brother, come here!

LEONOR Oh, there goes my glove.

The glove drops and FÉLIX takes it

for heaven gave me for a brother
a man who is a woman. 1775

HIPÓLITA *exits*

LEONOR Well, there we are.
At least my bare hand
is less shameful
than your sword in its scabbard. 1780
If you had drawn your sword
to defend my glove,
you would have deserved the pair,
but who needs gloves
when he has no use for his hands? 1785
There will be no more tokens
between us,
not mine, not yours, nor anyone else's,
by God!
What a great coward 1790
the one who ran from you last night
must have been!
If you had defended my glove,
you might have deserved my hand—
now, instead, 1795
I despise you for this cowardice.
Here is a small token—
you need feathers
to complete your act!

(She gives him a feather from her hairpiece)

Here, 1800
you can wear these.
Although what you really need
is a less elegant bird
that's tastier to eat . . .

LEONOR *exits*

FÉLIX I will give you satisfaction. 1805
Wait, my lady, please.

He goes to exit but DON PEDRO enters

DON PEDRO What should she wait for, you pansy?
Such shameful errors

cannot be undone!
I shall kill you myself. 1810

FÉLIX Listen, I must get out of here,
but I will return to restore your honor.

DON PEDRO By God, I should make you bleed
all the blood I've given you!

DON PEDRO *exits drawing a dagger on FÉLIX, who flees from his father*

SCENE 9

Room in COSTANZA's home

Enter COSTANZA, holding back HIPÓLITA, while GALVÁN and the TUTOR go to the balcony

COSTANZA Have you ever seen such impudence? 1815

HIPÓLITA It's actually courage.

COSTANZA Stop, daughter.

HIPÓLITA Let go, mother!

COSTANZA Come, hold her, you two.

HIPÓLITA Stand back, old man! 1820

TUTOR You're too strong!

GALVÁN All this for a cuff that fell off!

HIPÓLITA You want to take me,
you little devil?

HIPÓLITA *punches GALVÁN in the face*

GALVÁN By God,
I wish you had no cuffs left,
then you'd leave my nose be . . . 1825

HIPÓLITA I need a sword!
You're despicable!

If you don't give me a sword, 1830
I'll take one myself!

HIPÓLITA *takes a sword from a SERVANT*

COSTANZA Daughter, I warn you, this is killing me!

LEONOR *enters*

Stop her, Leonor.

LEONOR Stop, my lady.

HIPÓLITA Oh, my friend, 1835
my heart is bursting!
My soul cries out for revenge.

FÉLIX *enters, chased by DON PEDRO, who threatens him with a sword*

FÉLIX Sir, what are you doing? Sir!

DON PEDRO I'll kill you!

COSTANZA Oh, my son! And for what? 1840

DON PEDRO And where are you going, woman?

HIPÓLITA I'm going to avenge my brother.

DON PEDRO Why has heaven given me
two such children! 1845
One needs a bridle,
the other spurs.

I could take that revenge
you claim,
but it must be taken
by his own hand, 1850
or it's no use.

You should exchange clothes again,
and I'll set him to needlework,
to shame the pansy—
except that he doesn't 1855
have any shame, no,
and he stains the honor
of the best blood in the world!
I'm going to kill him.

for I'm losing mine.

FÉLIX	I will remember well what you have taught me.	
<i>Enter LUIS and the CAPTAIN</i>		
CAPTAIN	I am at your command.	2010
DON PEDRO	(<i>To the SERVANT</i>) You there, bring chairs. (<i>To the CAPTAIN and LUIS</i>) You've come to restore my honor!	
LUIS	I come, my lord, because this cause is mine as much as anyone's. Your son was at my side, and it was my sister's glove that was taken from him, and that I went to recover, when you led me to expect Don Félix would not seek revenge.	2015 2020
DON PEDRO	We must decide how he is to be avenged.	
LUIS	He could kill his enemy with a dagger by night, or a club by day.	2025
FÉLIX	And will this restore the reputation I have lost?	
LUIS	Surely one who is affronted can safely take revenge?	2030
CAPTAIN	Yes, but he was not affronted. Not getting that glove was his own failing, not an offense committed against him. And if you're shamed through your own fault, you must restore your reputation rather differently than if another has affronted you. Therefore, he must regain that glove honorably, with his own hands,	2035 2040

LUIS	Let him summon his opponent to a duel, and send a note to make him accept.	
DON PEDRO	I do not place much trust in notes.	2085
CAPTAIN	I will take the message to him, and by rights, I should make him bring a second, too. I will second Don Félix, to make up for his inexperience.	2090
DON PEDRO	No, Captain, I insist, if it comes to that, it must be me.	2095
LUIS	And if not you, it should be me.	
FÉLIX	You are all most kind, but you cannot be suggesting that I avenge my affront with borrowed courage.	2100
DON PEDRO	Well said.	
CAPTAIN	There is one thing you can do that will avoid the need for notes or messages— find that unavoidable moment when he must face his fate, whether good or bad.	2105
FÉLIX	I am at the ready.	
CAPTAIN	A brave and discreet fellow, when he finds his enemy, takes him out to the fields without letting on, so that no one can get in the way— then, in some remote place, where no one can stop you, you take the glove or his life.	2110 2115

HIPÓLITA	Where am I going? Where have they brought me?	
LUIS	And who brings me such happiness?	
HIPÓLITA	What worries, what fears ravage my heart? Where is my former courage? What has my heart done with it? Tenderness in my breast? I, afraid? I, anxious? Could any change be greater?	2145 2150
LUIS	Could any chance be sweeter?	
HIPÓLITA	Love must be like lightning, for it has struck in the strongest place. Oh, Lord, it scorches my soul! But, you? Here in this place? I want to scream— there are thieves in my house.	 2155
LUIS	This is no thief, but one who searches, sweetly and selfishly, for the thief that robbed him, in order to recover what he has lost. You are the thief, not me!	 2160
HIPÓLITA	I robbed you? By God! And what have you lost?	 2165
LUIS	You've taken my love and my life, and yet they're so much better off in your hands that it's no loss to me.	
HIPÓLITA	I thank you for the flattery.	2170
LUIS	I'm flattered that you know how to thank me.	
HIPÓLITA	Then you think me such a fool that I would accept a compliment and then fail	 2175

to show my gratitude?

LUIS I adore your soul for its divine reasoning.

HIPÓLITA If you ignore your obligations
you will never be obliged. 2180
And by this I mean
that I love you honorably.

LUIS I will be eternally
and happily yours.

HIPÓLITA I was raised on the battlefield, 2185
so you should know that,
although I'm a woman,
I have the resolve of a soldier.
I'm loving, I'm loyal,
but I'll warn you . . . 2190

LUIS What's this you say?

HIPÓLITA . . . that I would be very sorry
if you should repay me poorly.

LUIS The heavens shall go dark,
and the seas dry out 2195
before I cease to adore
your adorable extremes!

HIPÓLITA Who's there?
Stay there, don't move.

INÉS and GALVÁN *enter, the couples are having separate conversations*

GALVÁN Won't you hear me out? 2200

INÉS No.

HIPÓLITA Oh, Don Luis!
How is it possible
for me to be afraid?
I'm in your debt on account of my brother. 2205

LUIS I owe you far more than that.

GALVÁN *(Aside)* They've changed their tune.

As for me, I'll keep my eye on them.

LUIS Farewell, my lady.
My sword and I are at your disposal. 2210

LUIS *exits*

SCENE 3

GALVÁN Go and give your message.
The bird has fallen in the net,
maybe I'll find revenge for my nose,
which she split open
with one punch! 2215

HIPÓLITA What did you say,
Inés?

INÉS My lady, Doña Leonor,
has sent me
to give you this message 2220
from her brother.

(She gives HIPÓLITA a note)

But you have already spoken to him.

HIPÓLITA I'm infinitely in his debt.

GALVÁN Ah, better and better!

HIPÓLITA And how has Doña Leonor been 2225
since yesterday?

INÉS Still somewhat afraid,
because of the trouble we had.
Today she left the house early,
because of the truce 2230
between Marcelo and her brother,
which you must know all about.
My lady is so plainspoken
that she wanted to send assurances
to his mother and sister. 2235

HIPÓLITA Marcelo has a sister?

INÉS One so beautiful that her rosy glow
can make the very sun jealous
as it shines in the sky.
Don Luis has always 2240
shown great interest in her.
But now that he's in love with you,
he's changed his ways.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Dear Lord! What's this I feel?

GALVÁN (*Aside*) We're blushing now . . . 2245
it must be jealousy.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) What cowardly fear shames me now?
(*Aloud*) Is she really that beautiful?

INÉS And how.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) My insides are on fire. 2250

INÉS They were arranging a marriage,
but it came to nothing.
He must have dropped it because of you.

HIPÓLITA I mean that much to him?

INÉS He is desperate for your love. 2255
(*Aside*) She seems flustered.
(*Aloud*) So, my lady, what do you say?

HIPÓLITA You shall deliver my response.

GALVÁN (*Aside*) What an opportunity
to avenge my nose! 2260

HIPÓLITA Go, Inés, and tell your lady . . .
but I don't know what to say.
I'll tell you later.

INÉS I kiss your hands.

INÉS *exits*

HIPÓLITA Oh my! 2265
Why this anguish,

this pain, this fear?
 Why should I care
 what came before,
 if it had nothing to do with me? 2270
 Sometimes love returns between old lovers,
 but would a gentleman
 deceive me?

GALVÁN My lady,
 leave sadness aside,
 and prepare to dance! 2275

HIPÓLITA Dance? Is there a wedding?

GALVÁN Don't you know
 that Don Luis has wed?

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) This is poison
 to my ears! 2280

GALVÁN Didn't he tell you
 when he was with you?

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Oh, false friend!
 (*Aloud*) So, is he married? 2285

GALVÁN Indeed he is.

HIPÓLITA Who did he marry, Galván?
 (*Aside*) How could he dare?

GALVÁN He is marrying Lady . . . I don't know her name.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Despicable gentleman! Wicked man! 2290

GALVÁN (*Aside*) Let's call her Ana.
 (*Aloud*) He is marrying Doña Ana.

HIPÓLITA Which Doña Ana?

GALVÁN Doña Ana, sister to Marcelo,
 whom Luis wounded. 2295

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Oh heavens!

GALVÁN They arranged it

	so as to preserve their friendship. And you only find out now, when he is receiving a million congratulations?	2300
HIPÓLITA	Did you see him?	
GALVÁN	Yes, he is full of pleasure . . .	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Is this possible?	2305
GALVÁN	. . . at all the good wishes.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Oh, traitor!	
GALVÁN	His sister, Doña Leonor, went to visit his wife.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Then it's true.	2310
GALVÁN	She's happy, and as their friend, you should be happy, too.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Is such wickedness possible? How can I be so calm in the midst of this storm?	2315
GALVÁN	<i>(Aside)</i> She took the bait.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Is such betrayal possible? My heart is dead, my soul sticks in my throat.	2320
GALVÁN	That's it. Rage with jealousy. That'll teach you to punch such honest noses!	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Unjust fate, fair heavens, how can I withstand this affront?	2325
GALVÁN	Your pleasure, my lady?	
HIPÓLITA	Leave me alone.	

HIPÓLITA *exits*

SCENE 4

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO with one arm bandaged

MARCELO	I carried the cuff in this hand, and I did not gather my cape around my arm, and so my bad fortune led his pitiless sword. 2375 As he wounded me, I dropped mine. Then many people arrived at once, and gave him a chance to pick it up, lucky devil! 2380 I had to let him take it while they arrested me and took me to prison. Meanwhile, he escaped— so much greater is his good fortune. 2385 I signed a truce, which makes the affront that much worse, and yet it cannot be avoided, because he who refuses to make peace 2390 makes his grievance more public. But it was a forced truce, and so I will feign now and avenge myself in good time.
OTAVIO	How is your hand? 2395
MARCELO	Almost healed.
OTAVIO	That, at least, is lucky.
MARCELO	The hand will heal easily, yet I'm on the verge of death since Luis stole my life itself. 2400 But I must go now— there he comes, and my wound is fresh.

FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> I am ready to kill him. Jealousy admits no composure.	
LEONOR	What confidence!	
CAPTAIN	<i>(Aside)</i> What arrogance and patience!	2500
FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> Still, a little prudence will ensure my revenge. <i>(Aloud)</i> Otavio?	
OTAVIO	What do you want?	
<i>OTAVIO makes as if to put his hand on his sword</i>		
FÉLIX	Stay your hand, do not be afraid. I come in peace—listen.	2505
OTAVIO	I am not a man who frightens easily.	
LEONOR	Félix!	
FÉLIX	I am surprised at you— do I hold your name in such little regard that I would offend a man you favor so much?	2510
LEONOR	I am grateful to you.	
FÉLIX	And you, ungrateful woman, have lost me.	2515
LEONOR	<i>(Aside)</i> What if he pretends to be offended, but wants to avenge his honor?	
FÉLIX	Let us leave this place— I wish to speak to you alone.	
OTAVIO	Here or anywhere else, I will know how to respond.	2520
FÉLIX	It will be easier to draw my sword somewhere else, as I have already unsheathed my courage. Then I can demand the glove from you.	2525

Come, if you are as brave
as you are arrogant.

OTAVIO I'll show you over there
what kind of man I am! 2530

FÉLIX Come with me.

Exeunt FÉLIX and OTAVIO

CAPTAIN They must have reached an agreement.
I will follow them.

LEONOR He challenged him,
that's all there is to it. 2535
Well done! Heaven protect him!
If a man cannot be brave
when he is jealous,
then there is no hope.

Exeunt the CAPTAIN and LEONOR

SCENE 6

Enter LUIS

LUIS What's this I see? 2540
I cannot be sure.
Is this fear?
No, it's not fear, but surprise.

Enter HIPÓLITA in men's clothing, her face covered with a cape

A fine figure! What a gentleman!

HIPÓLITA *(Aside)* I am furious. 2545

LUIS What are you looking for?

HIPÓLITA I am in a rage.

LUIS What is it that you want?

HIPÓLITA I want to kill you.

LUIS	<p>What's this I hear? I might take you on myself, but I suspect treason in one who hides his face from me. Who are you? Did Marcelo send you?</p>	2550
HIPÓLITA	<p><i>(Aside)</i> I am both furious and afraid! <i>(Aloud)</i> I am a bolt of lightning.</p>	2555
HIPÓLITA <i>uncovers her face</i>		
LUIS	<p>You are no less than heaven itself. My lady, why do you berate me in such a rage?</p>	2560
HIPÓLITA	<p>Because you have broken faith, you have abused me at my love's expense. Vile, disgusting traitor, bad friend, ungrateful lover, false gentleman! I am wild with shame and anger. Take from my sword what my mouth cannot say!</p>	2565
LUIS	<p>Hold on, by God, what bad omen leads me on? I make you furious, though I pledged myself to you? How can I offend you, when I adore you so? I am a vile traitor, though I offer my loyalty and honor to you, my lady? I consent to mistreatment? I, despicable? A false friend? I, ungrateful, when I am gratitude itself in being with you? My lady, why do you reproach me and distress me so?</p>	2570
HIPÓLITA	<p>You anger me all over again with new lies. You're married, and yet you ask me all this</p>	2575
HIPÓLITA	<p>You anger me all over again with new lies. You're married, and yet you ask me all this</p>	2580
HIPÓLITA	<p>You anger me all over again with new lies. You're married, and yet you ask me all this</p>	2585

	after you've betrayed me? You're distressed, because I tell you what you truly are?	2590
LUIS	I, married?	
HIPÓLITA	You, married.	
LUIS	To whom?	
HIPÓLITA	To a certain Doña Ana, Marcelo's sister.	2595
LUIS	Someone has lied to you.	
HIPÓLITA	Lied to me? Everyone wished you well yesterday.	
LUIS	Wait!	
HIPÓLITA	Traitor!	2600
LUIS	Even if I were, that would not be possible.	
HIPÓLITA	How's that?	
LUIS	Listen— Marcelo's sister is named Elvira, not Ana. You see, you've been tricked!	2605
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> My haste to believe proves that I am a woman now.	2610
LUIS	And if that were not enough from a man who loves you, I will speak from the heart, where your name is written and your image engraved: to serve you, I would sacrifice myself to you— I give you my sword and my consent. I would rather die at your hand than see you so offended.	2615 2620

HIPÓLITA	(<i>Aside</i>) Oh heavens! As jealousy dies away, my love is at the ready! I will pretend I am still angry and offended, for now I am as embarrassed as I was jealous before. (<i>Aloud</i>) I am not satisfied, take up your sword.	2625
LUIS	(<i>Aside</i>) She's more embarrassed than angry, I can tell.	2630
HIPÓLITA	Defend yourself!	
LUIS	Now your eyes shine like rays of the sun, instead of lightning bolts. (<i>Aside</i>) But how can I be so distracted when my glory is at hand?	2635
HIPÓLITA	Defend yourself now, now!	
LUIS	Well, if you insist, and I am the one who is being challenged, it is up to me to choose the place and the weapons— the weapons can be those we carry.	2640
HIPÓLITA	(<i>Aside</i>) He is clever, but he speaks as a lover, too. (<i>Aloud</i>) It seems fair, I agree to those terms.	2645
LUIS	And so I will wait for you behind that grove of trees.	
HIPÓLITA	Move along, and there you will see that I am a woman in name only.	2650
LUIS	And there you will see that I am man enough for more than one woman. You'll get a taste of my strength, God willing!	2655

I should choose the spot, you can . . .

FÉLIX I certainly appreciate it,
but I'm looking
for a secluded and private place,
so that no one bursts in on us, 2690
and to keep my bashful maiden sword
from greater shame.

OTAVIO It must be bashful indeed . . .

FÉLIX I'm certain that in your heart
it will cease to be so. 2695

OTAVIO That's the spirit!
I'm happy to see you so fired up.

FÉLIX Its black habit
will be red
by the time I'm through with you. 2700

OTAVIO That's pretty presumptuous
for such a feeble enemy.

FÉLIX Enough.

OTAVIO What?

FÉLIX I said 2705
you're right.

They move offstage to fight, the CAPTAIN watches the fight from the door and describes what he sees

CAPTAIN They've jumped over the walls.
I'll stay here,
and look through these cracks.
I'd gladly switch places 2710
with Don Félix,
because I don't want him to be killed.
What fine form! What courage!
Honorable actions
fearlessly performed! 2715
Now they've bared their chests
and drawn their swords.
Otavio holds firm,

but Félix leaps upon him.
Good god! 2720
What a blow!

Enter OTAVIO, badly injured and falling over, and FÉLIX comes after him

OTAVIO Why kill a man who has surrendered?

CAPTAIN He's going to kill him.

FÉLIX I have pity,
and a well-born heart. 2725

Noise of people offstage Hurry! Stop them!

CAPTAIN Incredible!
People? Here? What could they want?
I don't know where they're coming from,
but it's definitely the law. 2730

Enter the CONSTABLE and the BAILIFF, who begin to fight with the CAPTAIN and FÉLIX

CONSTABLE Arrest him.

FÉLIX You're wasting your time!
If my hands are free,
you'll be needing your feet.

BAILIFF I'm dead! 2735

CAPTAIN What a blow!
Here I come!

FÉLIX I'm just in the way here.

CAPTAIN Félix, get away,
while I take care of them. 2740

Exeunt

SCENE 8

Enter COSTANZA

COSTANZA What bizarre confusion,

what cruel misfortune!
 Everyone knows about my son
 except for me. 2745
 My daughter is not at home,
 and I don't know
 what has happened to her.
 I'll never be able to straighten her out!
 But . . . there she is.
 What's going on? 2750
 Look at her drag her feet!

Enter HIPÓLITA, dressed as a woman

HIPÓLITA I came as fast as I could,
 but I think I'm still late.

COSTANZA Did you leave without my permission?
 Is that honorable? 2755
 Why are you covering your face?
 Are you ashamed?

HIPÓLITA Oh, Mother!

COSTANZA What has come over you?

HIPÓLITA I don't know. 2760

COSTANZA Are you crying?

HIPÓLITA Yes, Mother!
 I've had a taste of peace,
 and now as a woman,
 I forget, how to be brave in war. 2765
 Now muskets scare me,
 and I want nothing to do with swords,
 unless their blades have been blunted.
 Now I feel pain
 when pricked by a needle, 2770
 and I'm sure to faint if there's blood.
 My heart is pure tenderness,
 and my mouth sweet as honey.
 My voice is weak and my heart, too.
 I'm having palpitations, 2775
 I need medicine.

COSTANZA What's causing all this?

I thrust at him, he parried it,
 took a step back, I thrust at him again,
 he forced my sword down
 and took hold of my arm. 2820
 I could not resist his grasp
 and found myself locked
 in his embrace.
 We wrestled for a while, 2825
 both of us determined to win,
 but dew on grass
 is as slippery as soap . . .
 I slipped, stumbled,
 and fell down at my enemy's feet. 2830
 And that was nothing,
 but after I fell he—oh, Mother—
 he did what I could never have imagined.
 He shook my soul,
 transformed my entire being, 2835
 and he said:
 “So that you can see
 that you're a woman, for you are.”
 Well can I believe it!
 And now all I can do is cry, 2840
 because he's gone and I love him,
 and so I am indeed a woman.

SCENE 10

Enter LEONOR

COSTANZA Daughter, here comes Leonor.

LEONOR Heaven above,
 what sorrows my cares bring! 2845

COSTANZA A just vengeance, I imagine.

LEONOR Where is your son?

COSTANZA Heaven guard us.

LEONOR What? Is he not here?

COSTANZA Do you know anything, my lady? 2850

LEONOR I know something's not right.

COSTANZA The blood in my veins has turned to ice.

Enter DON PEDRO and GALVÁN

DON PEDRO Is the horse ready?

GALVÁN It is harnessed and at the door,
waiting for you. 2855

DON PEDRO I am his father, after all,
and I cannot shake this concern.
But if they kill my son,
I shall take revenge.
Oh my beloved son! 2860

LEONOR I am very upset.

HIPÓLITA I hope to see him soon.

COSTANZA Such misfortune!

Enter the CAPTAIN

DON PEDRO What news, Captain?

CAPTAIN Listen and be glad: 2865

Don Félix is not ashamed
to be your son anymore!
He took Otavio out to a field,
beyond where the river Guerva runs.

I followed them as best I could, 2870
to the remains of an old tower,
with ruined walls among the grass.

Honorable as I am,
I was determined not to help him,
even if he was killed,

except if there was foul play, 2875
so I just hid and watched.

Through an opening in the wall
I could see without being seen.

Proud and arrogant, 2880

Otavio wore the glove
like a feather in his cap.
Don Félix asked him for it,

and he answered, "I will defend it,
 and if you hope to take it from me, 2885
 you'll wear it in pieces,
 because if my arms lack for force,
 I'll break my head over it."
 Don Félix shouted, "Here I come!"
 and bared his chest to Otavio. 2890
 He replied, "I am waiting for you!"
 uncovering his chest,
 "My weapons are of the same mettle,
 for I am noble, and true to myself!"
 Then their swords came out, 2895
 quick as lightning.
 Otavio stood his ground,
 but Félix grabbed his sword,
 and then charged him so furiously and bravely
 that he pushed the blade away with his shoulder, 2900
 and with the pommel
 he smashed him in the face.
 He falls to the green grass,
 and his red blood
 turns emeralds into rubies! 2905
 He lost his hat and glove,
 and stunned,
 having lost his sword and everything,
 he called on Heaven,
 crying, "do not kill one who has surrendered," 2910
 with an altered voice in his bloody mouth.
 Don Félix left him alone,
 as merciful as he is well born.
 But he had barely recovered his spoils
 when a noise made me look up. 2915
 People were coming,
 and as I was waiting for the fight to end,
 and they were almost upon it,
 I feared some treason, I confess,
 and so, fired up as I was, 2920
 I took out my sword.
 It turns out to be the law,
 with a bunch of peasants ready to arrest Don Félix,
 but I jump in, in a fury, as is my way,
 and, with only six blows, 2925
 I killed half a dozen of them,
 and the rest fled like rockets.
 Meanwhile Don Félix got away,
 and I expect him any moment,

in good health and with his honor restored. 2930
I'm not surprised I got here before him,
for I am quicker and more daring.
But here he comes, and by heaven,
he will make a fine gentleman—
now he deserves his place 2935
in the House of Moncada.

HIPÓLITA Don Luis is coming too.

Enter LUIS, the TUTOR, and FÉLIX, carrying OTAVIO's glove, hat, and sword

LUIS I am happy to find you here.

FÉLIX I owe my victory 2940
to your courage.

DON PEDRO Come now into my heart.

COSTANZA I'm speechless,
but once again I have a reason to live.
Are you well?

FÉLIX I come with honor. 2945

TUTOR I must embrace you!

LEONOR This brings such great pleasure,
it's no wonder I'm so flustered.

FÉLIX Here, my lady, is your glove,
and even the hat where he kept it, 2950
and where my jealousy lit.

FÉLIX gives LEONOR the hat and the glove

This is Otavio's sword,
with which I have restored my reputation.

FÉLIX gives her the sword

Receive it from my hand,
if your disdain will suffer it, 2955
and forgive me if I lost it
in my clumsiness and confusion—
what slowed me down was

the force of habit!

LEONOR	I receive it with all my soul, and set it in the heavens. Forgive me for making you jealous— I needed to brace your heart, which was mine already.	2960
DON PEDRO	He who restores the glove also deserves the hand.	2965
LUIS	If my sister welcomes it, I am happy that it should be so.	
FÉLIX	Then my happiness is complete.	
COSTANZA	And Luis should give his to Hipólita, since, as I hear, he proved himself worthy of her in another challenge, and so should not avoid it.	2970
GALVÁN	I am to blame for that.	
HIPÓLITA	And I have forgiven you.	2975
FÉLIX	Great fortune . . . !	
LUIS	Great glory . . . !	
LEONOR	. . . is mine.	
HIPÓLITA	. . . as was mine.	
DON PEDRO	From their habits I restored my children to their very nature— a miracle, as one habit trumps another. And so ends our play, <i>The Force of Habit.</i>	2980 2985