

GUILLEN DE CASTRO Y BELLVÍS

THE FORCE OF HABIT

Translated by the UCLA Working Group on the *Comedia* in Translation and Performance:

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The *Comedia* in Context

The “Golden Age” of Spain offers one of the most vibrant theatrical repertoires ever produced. At the same time that England saw the flourishing of Shakespeare on the Elizabethan stage, Spain produced prodigious talents such as Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca. Although those names may not resonate with the force of the Bard in the Anglophone world, the hundreds of entertaining, complex plays they wrote, and the stage tradition they helped develop, deserve to be better known.

The *Diversifying the Classics* project at UCLA brings these plays to the public by offering English versions of Hispanic classical theater. Our translations are designed to make this rich tradition accessible to students, teachers, and theater professionals. This brief introduction to the *comedia* in its context suggests what we might discover and create when we begin to look beyond Shakespeare.

Comedia at a Glance

The Spanish *comedia* developed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Madrid grew into a sophisticated imperial capital, the theater provided a space to perform the customs, concerns, desires, and anxieties of its citizens. Though the form was influenced by the Italian troupes that brought *commedia dell'arte* to Spain in the sixteenth century, the expansive corpus of the Spanish *comedia* includes not only comic plays, but also histories, tragedies, and tragicomedies. The varied dramatic template of the *comedia* is as diverse as the contemporary social sphere it reflects.

While the plays offer a range of dramatic scenarios and theatrical effects, they share structural and linguistic similarities. Roughly three thousand lines, they are usually divided into three different *jornadas*, or acts. Plots move quickly across time and space, without much regard for the Aristotelian unities of action, time, and place. The plays are written in verse, and employ different forms for different characters and situations: a lover may deliver an ornate sonnet in honor of the beloved, while a servant offers a shaggy-dog story in rhymed couplets. The plays' language is designed for the ear rather than the eye, with the objective of pleasing an audience.

The *comedia* was performed in rectangular courtyard spaces known as *corrales*. Built between houses of two or three stories, the *corral* offered seating based on social position, including space for the nobles in the balconies, women in the *cazuela*, or stewpot, and *mosqueteros*, or groundlings, on patio benches. This cross-section of society enjoyed a truly popular art, which reflected onstage their varied social positions. A *comedia* performance would have included the play as well as songs, dances, and *entremeses*, or short comic interludes, before, after, and between the acts. As the first real commercial theater, the *corral* was the place where a diverse urban society found its dramatic entertainment.

What's at Stake on the *Comedia* Stage?

Comedias offer a range of possibilities for the twenty-first-century reader, actor, and audience. The plays often envision the social ambitions and conflicts of the rapidly-growing cities where they were performed, allowing a community to simultaneously witness and create a collective culture. In many *comedias*, the anonymity and wealth that the city affords allows the clever to transcend their social position, while wit, rather than force, frequently carries the day,

creating an urban theater that itself performs urbanity. An important subset of *comedias* deal with topics from national history, exploring violence, state power, the role of the nobility, and religious and racial difference.

The *comedia* often examines social hierarchies that may be less rigid than they first appear. Whether the dominant mode of the play is comic, tragic, historical, or a mixture, its dramatic progression often depends on a balancing act of order and liberty, authority and transgression, stasis and transformation. The title of Lope de Vega's recently rediscovered *Women and Servants*, in which two sisters scheme to marry the servant-men they love rather than the noblemen who woo them, makes explicit its concerns with gender and class and provides a view of what is at stake in many of the plays. Individuals disadvantaged by class or gender often challenge the social hierarchy and patriarchy by way of their own cleverness. The *gracioso* (comic sidekick), the *barba* (older male blocking figure), and the lovers appear repeatedly in these plays, and yet are often much more than stock types. At their most remarkable, they reflect larger cultural possibilities. The *comedia* stages the conflicting demands of desire and reputation, dramatizing the tension between our identities as they are and as we wish them to be.

Among the many forms of passion and aspiration present in the *comedia*, female desire and agency are central. In contrast to its English counterpart, the Spanish stage permitted actresses to play female roles, thus giving playwrights the opportunity to develop a variety of characters for them. While actresses became famous, the powerful roles they played onstage often portrayed the force of female desire. In Lope's *The Widow of Valencia*, for example, the beautiful young widow Leonarda brings a masked lover into her home so as not to reveal her identity and risk her reputation or independence.

The presence of actresses, however, did not diminish the appeal of the cross-dressing plot. One of Tirso's most famous plays, *Don Gil of the Green Breeches*, features Doña Juana assuming a false identity and dressing as a man in order to foil the plans of her former lover, who is also in disguise. Dizzying deceptions and the performance of identity are both dramatic techniques and thematic concerns in these plays. Gender, like class, becomes part of the structure the *comedia* examines and dismantles, offering a powerful reflection on how we come to be who we are.

Remaking Plays in Our Time

In Lope's witty manifesto, the *New Art of Making Plays in Our Time*, he advises playwrights to stick to what works onstage, including plots of honor and love, strong subplots, and—whenever possible—cross-dressing. For Lope, the delight of the audience drives the process of composition, and there is little sense in a craft that does not entertain the public. Lope's contemporaries followed this formula, developing dramas that simultaneously explore the dynamics of their society and produce spectacle. For this reason, early modern Hispanic drama remains an engaging, suspenseful, often comic—and new—art to audiences even four hundred years later.

The *Diversifying the Classics* project at UCLA, engaged in translation, adaptation, and outreach to promote the *comedia* tradition, aims to bring the entertaining spirit of Lope and his contemporaries to our work. Rather than strictly adhering to the verse forms of the plays, we seek to render the power of their language in a modern idiom; rather than limiting the drama as a historical or cultural artifact, we hope to bring out what remains vibrant for our contemporary

society. Given that these vital texts merit a place onstage, we have sought to facilitate production by carefully noting entrances, exits, and asides, and by adding locations for scenes whenever possible. Although we have translated every line, we assume directors will cut as appropriate for their own productions. We hope that actors, directors, and readers will translate our work further into new productions, bringing both the social inquiry and theatrical delight of the *comedia* to future generations of audiences.

A Note on the Playwright

Guillén de Castro y Bellvís (1569–1631) was a Valencian playwright whose theatrical oeuvre developed right alongside the *comedia* itself. He was highly involved with the literary world of Valencia, and at age 23 joined the *Academia de los Nocturnos* under the pseudonym *Secreto*. Castro submitted works of prose and poetry to the group, discovering his voice as part of one of the most renowned literary gatherings in Spain. The *Nocturnos* maintained Valencia's position as a highly influential city in the changing literary and intellectual landscape at the turn of the seventeenth century, and Castro's theater owes much to his years in the *Academia*. Like many of his contemporaries, Castro was a military man as well as a poet; in addition to serving as a captain in the Valencian coast guard in 1593, he also had a brief governorship of a district of Naples. Little is known about his time in Italy, although during his absence two of his plays, *El caballero bobo* and *El amor constante*, were published in a collection of *comedias* by Valencian dramatists. After failing to revive the literary circles of his youth with the short-lived *Academia de los montañeses del Parnaso*, Castro decided, like so many of his contemporaries, to try his luck in the capital city of Madrid. In preparation for his move, Castro published a collection of

his plays with the last of his money, pinning all his hopes on selling these volumes to get him out of debt. The gamble paid off, allowing him to enter a thriving community in which poets, playwrights, and novelists jostled for fame. The care he took to publish his own creations and adaptations of some of the most popular works of the period, including Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, present us with a playwright who was not only interested in developing his craft but also deeply invested in succeeding in the emerging commercial theatrical market. He published a second volume of plays in 1625, and remained active in literary circles in Madrid until his death in 1631.

Although only twenty-six of his plays were published in his lifetime, most scholars agree that the total number of works produced by Castro is closer to thirty-five. His plays vary in genre, from the mythological to the urban, and yet across Castro's works there are certain characteristics that signal the influences of a Valencian tradition existing alongside the developing *comedia* as well as dramatic techniques, themes, and characters that are unique to his theater. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Castro was not afraid to tackle subjects that were thought to be highly taboo in Spanish society on the stage, in particular regicide, bigamy, and sexuality. The major themes explored across Castro's works include the formation of identity, including gender; power and authority, especially between rulers and their subjects; the troubled domestic relationships of husbands and wives; and center and periphery, examining the social dynamics between Valencia and Castile, and Valencia and its Mediterranean neighbors.

Like many of his Valencian contemporaries, much of Castro's theater portrays the dramatic lives of the high-born, and often uses legendary figures from Iberian history and ballads, adapting them to the stage as in his best-known play, *Las mocedades del Cid*. Castro's

works also tend toward the tragic, and even his urban plays, like *Los mal casados de Valencia*, are full of dark humor. His works show a playwright fully engaged with his contemporaries across literary genres, and his skill in adapting popular stories, like the ballad of the Cid or Don Quijote's exploits, and unflinching presentation of urban life make him one of the most interesting playwrights of Spanish *comedia*.

Introduction

Laura Muñoz and Payton Phillips Quintanilla

Guillén de Castro's *The Force of Habit* (*La fuerza de la costumbre*, c. 1610) is singular among *comedias* in that it takes the popular device of cross-dressed characters a step further, daring to ask whether gender is something that can be learned and unlearned, or if it is a fact of nature. The protagonists, a brother and sister separated at birth and raised apart, become the center of a discussion about nature versus nurture: Félix, brought up by his mother to speak softly, fear thunder and stitch with the women of the house, and Hipólita, raised with her father in a war zone to wield a sword like a soldier, horrify their parents and amuse onlookers with their complete reversal of feminine and masculine attributes. When the family is reunited, the father insists on making the siblings conform to traditional gender roles. While Félix teaches his sister how to wear high heels and Hipólita shows him how to use a weapon, the question of gender roles is complicated by the tangles of love. Castro thus uses the siblings to explore essential questions about the nature of identity and the limitations of a system in which the correct performance of gender is key to being accepted by family and friends alike.

The Plot

The Force of Habit is a fast-paced play, structured around the siblings Hipólita and Félix as each undertakes a complete change of character based on traditional gender lines.

Act I opens with Félix's father, Pedro, finally returning home after a long separation from his family. Félix's mother, Costanza, explains how she and Don Pedro met, married, and had a daughter in secret—Félix's sister, Hipólita. When Costanza's brother and father discovered them, Pedro narrowly escaped with his life and the baby girl, leaving Costanza alone and pregnant with Félix. Following the recent death of Costanza's father, Pedro can finally return home to them after serving as a soldier in Flanders for the past twenty years.

Pedro arrives with Hipólita, who is dressed in men's clothing, and finds Félix dressed in less-than-masculine attire. The parents are chagrined to realize that they have each raised their children in the habits and customs of the opposite gender, and decide that they must immediately rectify both son and daughter by forcing them to perform socially acceptable gender roles. Félix is hesitant and unsure of himself when told he must change his ways, while Hipólita adamantly refuses, fighting the process every step of the way. After initial and unsuccessful lessons in appropriate dress and deportment, the family is interrupted by the sound of a sword fight. Félix hides with his mother, as Hipólita takes back the sword she had just been forced to give up and fights the offender, a handsome young man named Luis.

When things settle down, Luis and his sister, Leonor, explain that they ran into Pedro's men on the street, where a misunderstanding caused them to fight. The first act closes with the parents hoping that love will be the motivation to change their children. The pairings are already set in motion: Félix with Leonor, and Hipólita with Luis.

Act II introduces Otavio and Marcelo, gentlemen of good standing who will present a challenge to both Luis and Félix in their pursuits of love. These two, along with Luis, see the Moncada family leaving church and note how the siblings still seem very uncomfortable in their new roles. Still, Marcelo falls in love with Hipólita, and Otavio with Leonor.

Back at the family home, Hipólita continues to resist her training in ladylike behavior, and Félix begins his sword-fighting lessons with equally disastrous results. When Hipólita cannot resist demonstrating how to use a sword correctly, she is chastised and told to leave men's things to men. Félix, meanwhile, is humiliated by his father for not fulfilling the expectations of a male heir. Pedro and Galván, his servant, concoct a plan to cure Félix of his constant fear. Later, while Félix anxiously stands guard in the street, his father comes out in disguise and attacks him; Félix, scared at first, finally begins to fight back as his father runs away. Leonor, awakened by all the noise, calls out to Félix and the two exchange sweet words. Félix excitedly tells his father about the fight and how Leonor saw him in his moment of bravery.

The next day, Marcelo and Otavio come to the house to court Hipólita and Leonor, and are met by Luis and Félix. Leonor comments on Hipólita's growing interest in Luis, which Hipólita vehemently denies. The four suitors begin to fight over favors that Hipólita and Leonor drop from the balcony. Marcelo runs off with Hipólita's cuff and is followed by Luis, while Otavio wins Leonor's glove. Leonor expresses her disappointment in Félix's failure to retrieve the token and breaks off their courtship, calling Félix a coward. Pedro, apprised of the situation, swears he would rather kill Félix than let his son continue to dishonor the family name. Hipólita, feeling insulted, is ready to go after her cuff herself, but when Galván refuses to give her his sword, she punches him in the nose. Luis returns with the cuff, stained with Marcelo's blood.

Hipólita thanks him profusely and doubts herself for the first time in the play. Félix swears he will avenge himself and restore his honor.

In Act III, the siblings' training is put to the test. The men discuss the best way for Félix to restore his honor and decide that he must do it alone, out of sight of the local constables who might interfere. Pedro asks one of his captains to keep an eye on his son, and come to his rescue if necessary. Once again, Luis declares his love for Hipólita, and she finally admits that she loves him, too. Galván seizes an opportunity to get back at Hipólita for punching him in the nose and tells her that Luis is already married to Marcelo's sister. Hipólita, jealous, angry, and hurt, goes off to look for Luis and avenge herself. Otavio calls at Leonor's balcony. Disappointed that the wrong suitor has come, she decides to make Félix jealous to motivate him to fight Otavio. The two suitors argue, then go off to find a private place to settle their differences, with the Captain following closely behind. Hipólita, dressed as a man again, finds Luis and reveals herself, furiously challenging him to fight, but Luis explains that she has been tricked. Hipólita is embarrassed and tries to save face, and Luis uses this to his advantage, convincing her to meet him in a grove of trees to settle their argument. Hipólita is aware that Luis has no intention of fighting and every intention of wooing her, but follows his lead. In the meantime, the Captain has followed Félix and Otavio and hides behind a wall, the only witness to their fight. When Otavio appears, injured and defeated, Félix shows mercy and lets him run away. Alerted by the noise, some bailiffs appear and try to apprehend Félix, who fights them off successfully until the Captain can jump into the fray.

Costanza is worrying about her children when Hipólita comes in, clearly upset. Prompted by her mother's anxious questioning, Hipólita describes her encounter with Luis. She speaks of

the loss of her manly bravery and strength of character due to the ambiguous fight with Luis, during which some kind of physical sexual encounter has occurred, and ends her speech with a declaration of love that identifies her weakness as a womanly quality. Before Costanza can console her daughter, Leonor enters and inquires about Félix's whereabouts. Pedro, filled with worry, vows to avenge his son if he has been killed. The Captain walks in and describes the fight between Félix and Otavio. When Félix and Luis enter shortly thereafter, Félix has clearly been changed by his experience. He approaches Leonor with full confidence, and Pedro declares that he has earned Leonor's hand in marriage. Costanza takes the opportunity to subtly command Luis to do the same for Hipólita, since he has already defeated her in another "challenge."

The play ends with the two siblings having conformed to the expectations of their genders, and with the promise of marriage for both. Their father is happy to declare that his children have returned to their natures, seemingly unaware of the loss Hipólita has suffered, and proud of the violent actions of his son.

Performing Gender and Violence, Then and Now

Modern audiences may be surprised, even disappointed, by how Guillén de Castro ends his play: heterosexual love and marriage allegedly cure the siblings of their gender-bending ills by conquering habit and restoring nature. This tidy conclusion may feel forced, incomplete, or unsatisfactory after three acts that brazenly challenge traditional presentations of gender and genre, and that assert at nearly every turn the supremacy of habit (nurture) over biology (nature), despite the parents' hopes to the contrary. In the Spanish *comedia*, "happy" endings of this type—where all is made "right" and any unsettling or unsavory aspects of plot or character are swept

away—are conventional, almost a requirement. For this reason, *comedia* scholar Kathleen Jeffs asks readers and audiences to focus on the body of the text or performance to identify the “nuanced views lurking below the surface” (148).

Critics have noted how unconventional Félix and Hipólita are even within the tradition of *comedia* cross-dressing. Harry Vélez Quiñones wonders why the siblings “should find it so impossibly difficult to adopt a performance of gender that matches their biological sex” when “hundreds of similar characters in plays by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, Agustín Moreto, or Juana Inés de la Cruz accomplish much more challenging performances of gender with absolute ease?” (192). The successful cross-dressers in those plays normally do so for a short amount of time and with a specific goal in mind, such as gaining access to otherwise closed spaces in order to reach a lover or exact revenge, and then return to their normal clothing, names, and behavior once the job is done. In *The Force of Habit*, the siblings arrive onstage at ease in the expected dress and manners of the gender opposite their biological sex, and their struggle to conform to their parents’ gender-swapping demands is long, difficult, and painful.

This is especially true for Hipólita, whose gendered performance appears to be more internalized and complete than that of Félix—even her parents initially refer to her as a young man, as opposed to a woman with masculine qualities—and whose physical, psychological, and emotional suffering as a result of the switch is more severe; after all, dropping her sword and stepping onto platform shoes is a huge step down in her society, in terms of power, independence, and prestige. This is sure to make modern sensibilities (and one might imagine, some early modern sensibilities as well) question whether the social gain of marriageability really outweighs her personal loss of self. While Hipólita is transformed at the last into a

feminine figure acceptable to society's standards, one wonders why a suitor who fell in love with her when she acted like a man would threaten violence against her in order to make her a woman and his wife.

While Hipólita's performance of femininity is a step down on the social ladder, Félix takes a step up by taking on the masculinity that he previously lacked. Again, it is important to recognize that the personal and emotional trajectories of the siblings' stories are far from equivalent, and even represent reverse experiences. Félix's transformation is, in part, a reflection of his growth into a self-sufficient adult, though this growth is complicated by the path he must take to reach maturity and independence: performing to his father's expectations and standards, which include physical violence. Félix must commit an act of violence against a rival in order to claim his masculinity and recuperate his own honor, again in the name of love.

These acts of violence resemble each other in that they occur offstage and force audiences to rely on a secondary telling of what has occurred, all of which adds a layer of ambiguity that makes the play's ending less neat than it might appear at first glance. The audience's only view of Félix's transformative battle with his rival comes at the very end, when he mercifully allows the defeated Otavio to escape with his life. Of Hipólita's encounter with Luis we see nothing, and must determine from her words and distress the nature of her defeat. When Hipólita appears again onstage in the wake of the encounter, she is a woman who has lost her courage and strength of character in the shock of what has just occurred. She describes how she was overpowered by Luis, and how the encounter has made her realize that she is, indeed, a woman. This scene, occurring offstage and retold by a shocked Hipólita, is complicated by the ambiguous nature of the retelling: did Hipólita willingly allow herself to be overpowered, was

the sexual act entirely nonconsensual, or was it something in between? A generous reading of this encounter is that perhaps Hipólita's shock stems more from her "defeat" in this contest than from the sexual act itself. Yet even if we accept this account, in that moment sex itself becomes masculinized as violent conquest. For a person who has lived her entire life being treated as an equal, and even admired by men for her strength and skill, the battlefield of sexual experience is also the final lesson in female subjugation and the breaking point of Hipólita's masculine characteristics.

Jeffs, however, argues that today's directors can present a more nuanced reading and performance in which Hipólita does not lose her masculine power to heterosexual love or a submissive sexuality, but instead begins "negotiating a balance of power within herself, calling upon her resources of dominance and passivity when the situation requires one or the other, or a cunning mix of both" (170). Félix's situation can be similarly nuanced, she says, if the director carefully stages an ending that remains true to the text while still allowing for "open interpretation" and "ambiguity" (171). This will indeed be a challenge for the modern director as there is little in the closing of Act III to support such optimism—particularly in the case of Hipólita.

The positive ambiguity that Jeffs recommends does appear in the early modern adaptation of the play by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, entitled *Love's Cure, or The Martial Maid* (c. 1612-13). *Love's Cure* is more explicit in its references to physical and sexual violence, more exaggerated in relation to the moral and physical shortcomings of its male characters, and presents—in spite of a similarly conventional ending—an even stronger argument for gender as performance than Castro's original. Beaumont and Fletcher's Hipólita character, Clara, emerges

as the clear protagonist over her brother Lucio, as she pragmatically and effortlessly switches between exemplary feminine and masculine performances, using both to her advantage. Anne Duncan argues that Clara is “presented as the only ‘real man’ in the play” because she gives a superior performance of the male code of honor, and that her character therefore complicates contemporary English stage practice (in which she would have been played by a male actor) and anti-theatricalist debates (which reflected larger social concerns over gender performance) by positing that “a woman can perform a man best” (398).

The Félix character, Lucio, brings into full view the issue of gender as performance. In *Love’s Cure*, he is raised as a female, with a woman’s name, so that no one but the closest servants and his mother know that he is actually the male heir of the exiled Alvarez (Don Pedro). From the opening scene, the audience is aware that the only thing saving Lucio from death—vengeance for his father’s actions prior to the play’s beginning—is the fact that the would-be avenger, Vitelli, thinks he is a woman. It is clear that Lucio’s upbringing as a maiden is about more than learned manners: it is a disguise to protect him from notions of honor that would fault him for another’s actions, and from the accompanying revenge. As Lucio battles for a woman’s love and family honor, his newly gained masculine courage is tempered by restraint—a masculine honor code that other male characters appear to have discarded in favor of crude violence, and which Clara has displayed for the entirety of the play.

While *Love’s Cure* appears to shy away from an outright indictment of the possible sexual violence and female subjugation in Castro’s treatment of his female protagonist, it goes further in developing the latent interpretation of gender in *The Force of Habit* as a negotiation of different forms of power. Much like Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* in modern

productions, *The Force of Habit* should be a challenge welcomed by directors and actors alike because of the opportunities it presents for creative, nuanced performances and fruitful post-performance discussions. Playwrights, of course, have the luxury of adaptations, but instead of rewriting Castro's ending, they may wish to take another cue from Fletcher, who wrote a sequel to the *The Taming of the Shrew* called *The Woman's Prize*, the plot of which can be summed up in its alternate title: *The Tamer Tamed*.

The Force of Habit is an entertaining and engaging play that can foster important dialogues about gender, gender performance, and gender-based violence. We hope that our translation enables it to be recuperated and embraced.

Our Translation

Our translation of *The Force of Habit* is based on Eduardo Julia Martínez's 1927 edition of *La fuerza de la costumbre*. It was the first translation produced by UCLA's Working Group on the *Comedia* in Translation and Performance. Directed by Professor Barbara Fuchs and sponsored by UCLA's Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies, this working group includes UCLA graduate students, local theater practitioners, and Golden Age scholars.

As part of our goal of fostering new and expanded audiences for Spanish Golden Age plays, our translation is designed for maximum accessibility, readability, and adaptability. Directors, playwrights, actors, and dramaturgs as well as students, scholars, and casual readers will find Castro's complete text translated into clear prose (the movement from verse to prose is the only substantive textual manipulation), with brief but vital explanatory notes. This translation

complements the play's only other English version, by Kathleen Jeffs, an adaptation for the stage performed under her direction at Gonzaga University in 2013.

Our translation was performed by Chalk Repertory Theatre as a staged reading in May of 2014, and again in October 2017 as part of the annual Southern California Shakespeare Festival, where it was performed by an Actors' Equity Association company in residence at Cal Poly Pomona. The play is also the subject of two curriculum projects, developed as part of our "Classics in the Classroom" initiative, an effort to bring Spanish classical theater into K-12 classrooms by working with Los Angeles-based theater practitioners. Thanks to funding from the University of California Humanities Research Initiative (UCHRI), we were able to collaborate with teaching artists from 24th Street Theatre's "Enter Stage Right" program (Los Angeles, California) to develop lessons for elementary school students and workshopped them in several classrooms. A similar collaboration with About...Productions (Pasadena, California) yielded a robust curriculum designed for a 12-day teaching artist residency at the high-school level called "Embodying the Classics." This work was also supported by the UCHRI, as well as the Pine Tree Foundation (New York).

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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, 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?	5 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,	25 30

and yet must all repay.
 With his protection and care
 we grew up in Zaragoza
 amid admiration and praise.
 My brother, 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.

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.

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
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
from military displays 85
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
he adored. 95
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

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.

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

Enter DON PEDRO DE MONCADA with a greying beard, HIPÓLITA, in men's clothing, and an old man, who is TUTOR to FÉLIX

DON PEDRO My lady, do you not embrace me?
 Or is it that you do not know me?
 Why do you not speak?

DON PEDRO *and* COSTANZA *embrace*

 What is it? Why do you cry? 205
 Although you see me much changed,
 and time has had its way with me,
 my heart, which has always been yours,
 remains the same.

COSTANZA My Don Pedro, 210
 our happiness is such
 that joy ties
 a tender knot in my throat—
 were it not for these tears

	that spill from my eyes, I would be undone!	215
DON PEDRO	My love, hold me again in your tender embrace.	
DON PEDRO <i>and</i> COSTANZA <i>embrace again</i>		
COSTANZA	Are you really in my arms again?	
DON PEDRO	But how much older! I cannot hide these white hairs— how do they seem to you? Who could admire them, really?	220
COSTANZA	I will tell you what I think.	
DON PEDRO	And what is that?	225
COSTANZA	I saw them, my lord, and, with every impression, they make my love more tender. I contemplate them modestly, admire them respectfully, gaze on them piously, and weep for them tenderly.	230
DON PEDRO	Most witty, my lady. But now you must look calmly upon this fine young man and embrace him as you did me.	235
COSTANZA	Who is this? What is this I feel? Oh my!	240
DON PEDRO	A chip off the old block, with your name engraved upon it.	
COSTANZA	I see in him the very portrait	

a thousand years.

HIPÓLITA To serve you with them.

COSTANZA This treasure stayed with me
when I was left without you. 280

DON PEDRO Is that my Don Félix?

COSTANZA It is.

DON PEDRO I was about to ask you
where he was.

FÉLIX Let me kiss
your hand, if not your feet. 285

FÉLIX *kneels*

DON PEDRO I give you my hand and my arms!

FÉLIX *stands and DON PEDRO embraces his son*

My son, this is strange:
twenty years old now,
in such a long habit? 290
Why is this?
Is he devout?
Does he want to join the Church?

COSTANZA No,
it's because I never let him
wear a sword. 295
I kept him at my side,
for my own content,
in my chambers by night
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 does not allow for womanly men. And so, to the world's amazement, you'll make a woman of a man,	330 335 340

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 360
 raise Félix?

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.	380 385 390 395 400 405 410

When he found a pillow,
 he would fall on the couch 415
 and exhaust the pharmacy
 of tonics and cordials.
 His mother always hung around his neck
 with sweet caresses,
 spoiling him with gifts, 420
 and instilling fears in him.
 In winter the wind,
 in summer the sun he feared,
 and dew throughout the year.
 He never felt the wind 425
 or the sun!
 He heard Mass at home,
 once in a while at church,
 if the weather was very mild.
 When he walked in the corridor 430
 of his very own house
 they'd cover his head
 as if he were sailing abroad.
 At any sound of sword fighting
 she would cling tenderly to her son 435
 and yell: "Oh God!
 They're stabbing each other in the street!"
 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, 445
 or lightning flashed,
 they trembled together
 under the altar in the chapel.

DON PEDRO At least that is an honorable fear:
 to fear God is a virtue, 450
 as we know his justice.
 To fear men is cowardice.

TUTOR That is how he was raised,

and when he had the chance
to learn manly ways, 455
she always stopped him.
He was never allowed to carry
even a practice sword,
much less brandish pointed steel for combat.
And so, 460
when he throws a stone,
he throws like a girl,
though he's strong enough
to lodge it in an oak.
She even takes 465
table knives from him,
for fear they'll cut him!

DON PEDRO Good God, what a disgrace!

TUTOR And so these habits,
so constant and prolonged, 470
became second nature:
he is very timid,
he is shy, he is fearful . . .

DON PEDRO In short, a chicken.
And a Moncada, by God! 475
This is unheard of.
His nature must be restored.
I will fire him up,
as my blood boils
in his veins and his breast! 480
His honor will be restored,
for his is good blood,
or I shall shed it myself!

SCENE 4

Enter GALVÁN, a servant

GALVÁN All your people are here.

TUTOR Here comes your son dressed as a gentleman. 485

	between your feet, 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 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.	510 515 520
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.	
DON PEDRO	And now you're upset too?	525
FÉLIX	I feel insulted.	
DON PEDRO	Have you not figured out yet that a man who is easily offended seems a fool to all?	
FÉLIX	Forgive me for not tolerating such jibes.	530
TUTOR	This is what happens when noblemen are raised to sulk in corners.	
<i>Enter HIPÓLITA dressed as a woman and COSTANZA behind her, a SERVANT bringing her sword and dagger</i>		
HIPÓLITA	I swear I cannot manage a single step.	535

*She trips on her platform shoes and hurls them away*⁵

⁵ Spanish noblewomen wore elegant “platform shoes” of Hispano-Muslim origin called *chapines*.

COSTANZA	Listen, wait.	
HIPÓLITA	How can anyone be even-headed when teetering on something so flimsy? How can a woman, standing on this cork, on the verge of falling at every moment, keep herself from tumbling in the end? I refuse to wear these shoes this dress and this hairpiece— useless concerns and to such dubious ends.	540 545
DON PEDRO	What is it, Hipólita? What's wrong? You look very nice.	
HIPÓLITA	I appeal to you, sir. Rid me of this suffocating dress, and of this hairpiece which smothers my head. I swear the thinnest strand of it is a noose around my neck . . .	550
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
HIPÓLITA <i>takes the sword from the SERVANT's hands</i>		

heaven knows
 this hand never 605
 drew you to your shame!
 And if obedience did not now
 force my hand,
 no one could take you from it.
 I would guard you and defend you. 610
 Let him whom I obey
 bear witness that I leave you
 out of obedience and honor,
 to my great sorrow,
 but not for cowardice, no. 615

DON PEDRO *takes the sword*

DON PEDRO Enough, daughter,
 that will do!
 And now you, my son,
 receive this sword
 with the same spirit 620
 that your sister showed
 in granting it,
 and listen to what is required
 of a gentleman
 who wears this shining steel. 625
 He who does not wear it
 has fewer obligations,
 but flies closer to the ground.
 The sword, buckled at his side,
 is, for the brave man, 630
 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.

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

Hearing the sound of swords, COSTANZA shields FÉLIX

FÉLIX Those are swords.

COSTANZA Oh, my darling son!

HIPÓLITA Shall I go, too?

HIPÓLITA *wants to go, but DON PEDRO stops her*

DON PEDRO Stay here, woman. 760

HIPÓLITA He has insulted me
with that name.

GALVÁN returns and unsheathes his sword

GALVÁN Here, here, sir, here!
They're in your very house!
And they're fighting—oh the ruffians— 765
your servants, they're toast.
Between the dead and the wounded
there are more than seven hundred.

DON PEDRO Quiet. 770
What is the trouble, you fool?
If I am angry enough,
I can draw my sword
and kill seven thousand if need be.

DON PEDRO exits, putting his hand to his sword

HIPÓLITA What about you? 775
Aren't you going with our father, brother?

FÉLIX I'm flustered.

HIPÓLITA Get to it,

or is that a knitting needle you carry there?

HIPÓLITA *takes the sword from FÉLIX and leaves behind her shoes*

Give it to me, you pansy,⁶
and watch those platform shoes. 780

FÉLIX My lady, come back!

COSTANZA I'm so afraid.

Exeunt

SCENE 6

Enter LUIS and DON PEDRO with drawn swords, and LEONOR is holding DON PEDRO back

DON PEDRO You make bold in my house
and with my servants?

LEONOR Stop, please! 785

LUIS I will respect your white hairs.

DON PEDRO They aren't so snowy
as to freeze my hot blood!
And my sword must be reckoned with
in Italy, France, and Flanders. 790
Let me go,
my lady!

LEONOR Wait, my lord!

DON PEDRO I warn you:
I have respect for women—
do not make me lose it! 795

⁶ The word we translate as “pansy” is *maricón*, used as a highly derogatory term for a man who is deemed effeminate.

what works with other women,
 who are proud of their beauty,
 and care nothing for being strong.

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 (*Aside*) 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 (*Aside*) My soul is on fire,
 her honest spirit appeals to me.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) What do they search for, what do they want,
 those eyes that watch me so? 910

LEONOR (*Aside*) 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

LUIS	And by God I fell deeply! I am pierced to the soul by this youthful love.	940
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

	That sword doesn't really fit him, nor the mantle her.	990
LUIS	That's how strong habit becomes after a long time.	
OTAVIO	It is powerfully strong! More than popes or kings— beyond laws human or divine!	995
MARCELO	It's remarkable! They say that a man, 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?	1020

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

	These are superhuman effects, far beyond our ken!	
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!	
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.	

COSTANZA	<p>I believe it, and had not thought of that. But an honest woman must be less obvious in how she looks around. She can see what she wants to see with a casual glance.</p>	1080
HIPÓLITA	<p>I was raised in Flanders, where people are more frank, and you can trust the men. But I'll do as you say.</p>	1085
COSTANZA	<p>Flanders is a cold, cold land, Daughter.</p>	
HIPÓLITA	<p>And so shall I be, for that same reason.</p>	1090
COSTANZA	<p>Oh, Daughter, don't ever say "not me." For I have seen the remnants of much greater ice go up in flames. Don't trust your eyes— they are treacherous friends, they ruin your life, and wear out your soul. Their curiosity forces your hand, 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!</p>	1095 1100
HIPÓLITA	<p>You want me to treat them as traitors— if that's what'll make you happy, I won't look at all.</p>	1105
COSTANZA	<p>I'm not saying you shouldn't look, just not quite so much— you've been staring at Don Luis!</p>	1110
HIPÓLITA	<p>He looked so brave,</p>	

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 1115
 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 . . . 1120
 because courage is a magnet,
 at least for me—
 but not, by God,
 as a woman would want him!

COSTANZA I believe you, 1125
 yet desire always starts out
 claiming honor,
 and then makes bold.

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 1135
 is not enough in this world,
 which judges by what it sees,
 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 whoever made me a woman.	1145
COSTANZA	You will learn to look around more discreetly.	
HIPÓLITA	This is unbearable!	
<i>She spreads out her legs</i>		
COSTANZA	Good Lord!	1150
HIPÓLITA	Why doesn't everyone sit with a cushion?	
COSTANZA	That is our habit.	
<i>Enter FÉLIX and GALVÁN</i>		
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.	

or give me death!

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.

	take your vengeance!	1275
HIPÓLITA <i>takes the sword from FÉLIX and gains on the</i> 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 <i>halts her attacks</i>		
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? Don't you feel shame to see a woman outdo you? I am so . . .	1290
COSTANZA	Oh Lord, stop!	
DON PEDRO	Why so afraid? 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? Do you not know where and how	1295 1300

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
 who your ancestors were:
 the Moncadas and the Urreas.
 Raise your thoughts 1315
 to their giant deeds,
 and they will warm your blood.
 Or, if you hold back
 from a sense of Christian virtue,
 then find refuge 1320
 in a convent.
 To lose my heir
 will pain me less
 than to see you like this.
 What do you have to say for yourself? 1325

FÉLIX

I want
 to be as brave
 as my noble ancestors,
 and my soul is honorable,
 my lord. 1330
 Courage spurs me on—
 it strikes at my very heart,
 it makes my blood boil.
 I want to act on it,
 but my lack of experience 1335
 trips me up.

HIPÓLITA

That's better.
 It takes courage to want to be brave.

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.

DON PEDRO	That is some consolation.	
COSTANZA	Oh, my dear boy!	1340
DON PEDRO	Stand aside, my lady.	
COSTANZA	Why?	
DON PEDRO	Because this womanliness is contagious, and you've given it to him. (Referring to HIPÓLITA) Take that woman away . . .	1345
GALVÁN	That's not what I would call her, by God!	
DON PEDRO	. . . and teach her to be a coward.	
HIPÓLITA	That will be impossible.	
DON PEDRO	Neither of them should be one, by rights.	1350
TUTOR	If his father had raised him, he would have set a better example.	
DON PEDRO	In order to make you brave, leaving honor aside, I will show you there's no point in cowardice. I'll prove it to you, so that you'll never cower. What, after all, do cowards gain?	1355 1360
GALVÁN	Well, they live longer, or so the books say.	
DON PEDRO	They live less.	
FÉLIX	Less?	
DON PEDRO	I will prove it.	1365

DON PEDRO *pretends to attack*

Once you get
your sword this close,
I cannot even wound you
without dying in the attempt.
Even if it's dangerous to attack, 1370
not to attack
is even more so—
an opponent will kill you
all the quicker
if you hold back. 1375
And if a man flees—
which is shameful in a real man—
who's to say
his opponent won't run after him?
And what if he catches him 1380
and wounds him then?
Oh what shame
to die from a wound in your back!
And so,
even if honor did not exist, 1385
cowardice would be a mistake.

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, 1395
or you threaten our honor.

FÉLIX Your words give me courage,
my lord.
I will do what I can,
as soon as I can find my way. 1400

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,
and I long for you to cure me. 1535

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,
but he got his just desserts. 1545

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

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!	

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.

OTAVIO What happiness it would be
to be killed by such hands.

LEONOR (*To HIPÓLITA*) They show such desire
to honor you! 1640

MARCELO All in all, you have offended me,
and I must challenge you.

HIPÓLITA Fear won't stop me.
I will come out to the fields.

MARCELO If you are so brave, come down here. 1645
But leave your beauty behind,
so you can fight fair.

OTAVIO (*To LEONOR*) And since I'm at his side,
you can come too,
and, though your beauty is your sharpest weapon, 1650
I won't ask you to leave it behind,
since it is what I long for.

LEONOR And would you not try
to take advantage of my beauty?

OTAVIO You're already killing me— 1655
there are daggers in your eyes

that wound from afar.

SCENE 8

Enter FÉLIX and LUIS

LUIS	Let us woo each other's sisters awhile.	
FÉLIX	Let's go. <i>(Aside)</i> His sister drives me crazy— so beautiful yet different!	1660
LUIS	<i>(Aside)</i> I feel the spark of jealousy.	
LEONOR	You seem more womanly when you look at my brother so tenderly.	1665
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.	
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?	

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

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

FÉLIX This is my good fortune.

OTAVIO Had I come without my sword,
 it might have been! 1750

OTAVIO takes the glove from FÉLIX's hands

FÉLIX *(Trying to take out his sword)* I can't . . .

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

	the one who reigns in my heart.	
DON PEDRO	Oh, how this courage shines forth! Why can't you take this example? Why isn't your soul moved by such honor? Why does it not burst out from you? By God, my son, unworthy of that name, you must cut off that hand with which he took the glove, or my hands will tear you to pieces!	1890 1895
FÉLIX	Stop insulting me, Father, for I am in such a state that I will soon change your opinion of me. The insult I received, the jealousy, the pain of so many affronts at once have turned me into a lion. The shame that burns from deep inside has blown up this mine. I will be another Martín Peláez, ¹¹ who, ashamed of his cowardice when the Cid took his seat, later became a wonder. By our Maker, I will be a divine scourge, and cover the sun with crimson clouds of blood. A thousand vipers have stung me, and I am all venom. Goodbye, Father.	1900 1905 1910 1915 1920
TUTOR	Stay, my lord!	
DON PEDRO	Note his courage,	

¹¹ A cowardly cousin of the legendary Cid, his father forced him to go to war, where he became a hero.

and wait for my instructions.

COSTANZA

And you take courage, my lady.

LEONOR

I will not hold him in my heart again
until he returns in triumph.

1925

GALVÁN

You need not fear, and now he won't either!

LUIS

I will stand by him, for I am yours.

FÉLIX

No one follow me, leave me alone.

HIPÓLITA

That's more like it, by God—
show some spirit,
for I'm losing mine.

1930

CAPTAIN	<p>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, and with it, his reputation.</p>	<p>2035</p> <p>2040</p>
LUIS	<p>You're right of course.</p>	
DON PEDRO	<p>Right on target.</p>	<p>2045</p>
FÉLIX	<p>Well then, when and how shall this glove be recovered?</p>	
CAPTAIN	<p>The most gallant thing would be to reclaim it in the same place where you lost it, so that the lady to whom it belongs might witness the deed.</p>	<p>2050</p>
FÉLIX	<p>And if he's already lost it or given it away?</p>	
CAPTAIN	<p>Then you exact its price with your brave hands— it's worth a life.</p>	<p>2055</p>
DON PEDRO	<p>Take note, son: how honor makes things dear! It comes at a high price, and you must not squander it. Let us think this through: it is not a good idea to reclaim it</p>	<p>2060</p>

	on the street,	2065
	for there's always someone around trying to keep the peace who will intervene for good or ill.	
	The law does what it must, even when revenge is at stake.	2070
	If they get their way, matters will stand as they do now for Don Félix.	
	What is worse,	2075
	he shall be publicly shamed, rather than avenged.	
	No, if he is to reclaim the glove, he should do so where he can take it, triumph, kill, or die.	2080
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	2100

with borrowed courage.

DON PEDRO Well said.

CAPTAIN There is one thing you can do
that will avoid the need
for notes or messages— 2105
find that unavoidable moment
when he must face his fate,
whether good or bad.

FÉLIX I am at the ready.

CAPTAIN A brave and discreet fellow, 2110
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, 2115
you take the glove or his life.

DON PEDRO And so you will return with honor!
My well-born son, scion of a noble breast—
I'd rather find out they've killed you
than that you've been defeated. 2120
Come here,
with this embrace, I give you my blessing.

FÉLIX Your words
infuse courage in my heart.

CAPTAIN Can there be such a father? 2125

LUIS I am moved
by their words.

DON PEDRO Oh, sacred honor, worth so much,
but so dearly purchased!
Goodbye, my son. 2130

FÉLIX Goodbye, father.

	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 to show my gratitude?	2175
LUIS	I adore your soul for its divine reasoning.	
HIPÓLITA	If you ignore your obligations you will never be obliged. And by this I mean that I love you honorably.	2180
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 before I cease to adore your adorable extremes!	2195
HIPÓLITA	Who's there? Stay there, don't move.	
INÉS and GALVÁN <i>enter, the couples are having separate conversations</i>		
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	<i>(Aside)</i> 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 <i>exits</i>		

SCENE 3

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? Sometimes love returns between old lovers, but would a gentleman deceive me?	2270
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	<i>(Aside)</i> This is poison to my ears!	2280
GALVÁN	Didn't he tell you when he was with you?	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Oh, false friend! <i>(Aloud)</i> So, is he married?	2285
GALVÁN	Indeed he is.	
HIPÓLITA	Who did he marry, Galván? <i>(Aside)</i> How could he dare?	
GALVÁN	He is marrying Lady . . . I don't know her name.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Despicable gentleman! Wicked man!	2290
GALVÁN	<i>(Aside)</i> Let's call her Ana. <i>(Aloud)</i> He is marrying Doña Ana.	
HIPÓLITA	Which Doña Ana?	
GALVÁN	Doña Ana, sister to Marcelo, whom Luis wounded.	2295

HIPÓLITA	(<i>Aside</i>) 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.	
GALVÁN	That takes care of her. I've avenged my nose with my mouth.	
GALVÁN <i>exits</i>		
HIPÓLITA	Am I dreaming?	2330
	Why did he seek my love, ravishing my soul from my breast with such tender sorcery, if he had other intentions, other loves?	2335
	He's married?	
	By heaven, these are affronts, though they seem jealousy.	
	Was he not here just now, claiming to serve me forever?	2340
	Why did he trick me if he planned to affront me by abandoning me?	
	Honor and pleasure mocked with unjust deceit— and it all reflects on me!	2345
	Heavens, these are affronts, though they seem jealousy.	
	Had he not deceived me with that sly, unfaithful soul, I would still be in love and take no offense, and would love him all the more.	2350
	But when his deception so clearly insults me, what can I think?	
	Fair heavens, these are affronts, though they seem jealousy.	2355
	I must be insane. How else could a man dare to pierce my breast and glimpse my very soul only to reject me? Was it to boast that he had my favor?	

What is this, then? 2360
 Good heavens above, these are affronts,
 though they seem jealousy.
 Why wait? Why not kill him at once,
 and rescue my honor from these straits?
 I will tear out his soul with my very hands, 2365
 or with my teeth!
 I am a lioness, I burn with fever,
 I roar for revenge!
 Because these are affronts,
 though they seem jealousy. 2370

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

but if in the end I have to go,
what is the use of thinking? 2420
These things must be done
At once, without fear—
too much reflection
and they may not be done at all.

LUIS *exits*

SCENE 5

OTAVIO He's gone. 2425
It's too bad he handed over
that chain for the note.
Ah, but his sister's beauty
dispels my sadness,
oh beautiful sun before my eyes! 2430

LEONOR *enters at the window*

LEONOR (*Aside*) Isn't that Otavio? What is this?
He dares to come without fear?
Well, that girly-man
won't dare ask him for the glove.
What use is a lover 2435
of so little courage?

OTAVIO (*Aside*) I'll talk to her—
a little license can be attractive.
(*Aloud*) If my humility and respect
should make you listen to me now, 2440
my lady,
I would be obliged.

LEONOR Courtesy obliges me
to listen.

OTAVIO My lady, 2445
I hold this token in place of my soul,
since it brings,
if not laurels,

then the palm of your hand.
I defended it bravely, 2450
for the cause was yours,
though I was too bold in doing so
without your permission.
I hope that, with my apologies,
I will deserve more favor 2455
than before,
when only circumstances
excused my actions.
And so that I might be known
for such great fortune, 2460
please give me leave
to keep it in your name.

The CAPTAIN and FÉLIX enter through different doors

CAPTAIN This corner gives the best view.

LEONOR That's Don Félix.

FÉLIX Oh, heavens! 2465

OTAVIO No matter.

LEONOR *(Aside)* By making him jealous,
I might give him courage.
(To OTAVIO) Though lovesick,
you seem short of favors, 2470
since you come pleading
with just one glove.
And so, though you were bold
to take it without permission,
you deserve it 2475
for keeping it safe.
It's yours now!

OTAVIO How happy you make me!

FÉLIX *(Aside)* While I burn!

LEONOR *(Aside)* I will make him brave 2480

by making him jealous.

OTAVIO With your approval,
I would like to put this token
in a place of honor.

LEONOR Defend it in my name. 2485

OTAVIO Whoever wants to take it from here . . .

He puts it in his hat

. . . will first have to vanquish my sword,
and take my head with it.

LEONOR Perfect.

FÉLIX *(Aside)* I am beside myself, oh woman,
oh enemy! 2490

LEONOR *(Aside)* He is furious—
the jealousy works,
it will make him brave.

OTAVIO I am ready to fight the heavens themselves 2495
for your sake, my lady.

FÉLIX *(Aside)* I am ready to kill him.
Jealousy admits no composure.

LEONOR What confidence!

CAPTAIN *(Aside)* What arrogance and patience! 2500

FÉLIX *(Aside)* Still, a little prudence
will ensure my revenge.
(Aloud) Otavio?

OTAVIO What do you want?

OTAVIO *makes as if to put his hand on his sword*

FÉLIX Stay your hand, do not be afraid. 2505
I come in peace—listen.

OTAVIO I am not a man
who frightens easily.

LEONOR Félix!

FÉLIX I am surprised at you— 2510
do I hold your name in such little regard
that I would offend a man
you favor so much?

LEONOR I am grateful to you.

FÉLIX And you, ungrateful woman, have lost me. 2515

LEONOR (*Aside*) 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, 2520
I will know how to respond.

FÉLIX It will be easier to draw my sword
somewhere else,
as I have already unsheathed my courage. 2525
Then I can demand
the glove from you.
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.

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	<p><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.</p>	2625
LUIS	<p><i>(Aside)</i> She's more embarrassed than angry, I can tell.</p>	2630
HIPÓLITA	<p>Defend yourself!</p>	
LUIS	<p>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?</p>	2635
HIPÓLITA	<p>Defend yourself now, now!</p>	
LUIS	<p>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.</p>	2640
HIPÓLITA	<p><i>(Aside)</i> He is clever, but he speaks as a lover, too. <i>(Aloud)</i> It seems fair, I agree to those terms.</p>	2645
LUIS	<p>And so I will wait for you behind that grove of trees.</p>	
HIPÓLITA	<p>Move along, and there you will see that I am a woman in name only.</p>	2650

	I want to speak to you in private.	2680
FÉLIX	I can well believe it of your nobility and courage. Let's go behind those walls.	
OTAVIO.	I'll be right behind you, even though, by rights, I should choose the spot, you can . . .	2685
FÉLIX	I certainly appreciate it, but I'm looking for a secluded and private place, so that no one bursts in on us, and to keep my bashful maiden sword from greater shame.	2690
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 you're right.	2705

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

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, I need medicine.	2775
COSTANZA	What's causing all this?	
HIPÓLITA	I am afraid.	
COSTANZA	What's wrong with you?	
HIPÓLITA	I can't, I am so fearful and ashamed.	2780
COSTANZA	You're upsetting me.	
HIPÓLITA	Listen, then: how right you were, Mother, when you said that our eyes can betray us.	2785
	Mine betrayed me, even though I was warned! What shall I do? Mother, my eyes have killed me! Such cruel insolence!	2790
	I placed so much trust in them, as they fell for Don Luis,	

that he stole my soul through them. 2795
 Who would have thought it possible?
 And since where there's love,
 there's jealousy,
 today I challenged him
 out in the fields,
 full of jealousy, 2800
 so we could have it out.
 He had the choice of place,
 which he changed
 so as to change my intent.
 In a pleasant meadow, 2805
 in the shade of two poplars and a laurel,
 with flowers of so many colors
 that it rivaled the finest garden—
 it must have been in Cyprus,
 for Love was born there,¹³ 2810
 which makes miracles happen,
 and this was a miracle—
 two streams flowed,
 and murmured as they went,
 as though they knew what was to come. 2815
 There, Mother, bold in love,
 we drew our swords . . .
 I thrust at him, he parried it,
 took a step back, I thrust at him again,
 he forced my sword down 2820
 and took hold of my arm.
 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.

¹³ A cult site that claimed to be the birthplace of Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love.

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
in the House of Moncada. 2935

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
to your courage. 2940

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,
and where my jealousy lit. 2950

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,
and forgive me if I lost it
in my clumsiness and confusion—
what slowed me down was 2955

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