FÉLIX LOPE DE VEGA Y CARPIO

THE WIDOW OF VALENCIA

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**

Lope Félix de Vega Carpio (1562–1635) is the towering figure of the *comedia*. Born in Madrid to parents who had migrated to the capital from Spain’s northern regions, he saw in his youth the emergence of the *corral* theaters where he would go on to make his name. In his *New Art of Making Plays in Our Time*, Lope formalized the conventions of the *comedia*, outlining the elements of the vibrant new art of which he was the master. He composed hundreds of plays, in addition to poetry and prose, earning him the name *Fénix de los ingenios* ("Phoenix of Wits"), as the expression *es de Lope* ("it’s by Lope") became a shorthand for praising quality.

In his own time, Lope’s fame arose out of his prodigious literary talent as well as his colorful biography, for the playwright’s erotic life often left him on the wrong side of the law. After being rejected by the actress Elena Osorio in the 1580’s, Lope penned a series of satirical poems attacking her family, and was exiled from Madrid for the offense. Though Lope would go
on to take orders in 1614, affairs that defied early modern Spanish religious and legal codes continued to dominate his life. He was accused of a relationship with a widow, Antonia Trillo de Armenta, carried on a sixteen-year affair with the married Marta de Nevares, to whom he dedicated *The Widow of Valencia*, and left an unknown number of illegitimate children.

Despite the varied scandals of his life and his eventual position as secretary to the Duke of Sessa, Lope was a truly successful commercial playwright, who earned income as well as fame through his literary efforts. Today he is best remembered for the drama he came to define—the quick, witty *comedia* of the Spanish Golden Age. After Calderón’s *Life Is a Dream*, Lope’s *Fuenteovejuna* is perhaps the best-known *comedia* in the English-speaking world, and others such as *Peribañez* and *The Dog in the Manger* exemplify the well-constructed Lopean plot.

Miguel de Cervantes, his contemporary, may not have meant it as a compliment when he called Lope a “monster of nature” (*monstruo de la naturaleza*), as the two masters were not on friendly terms. Yet Lope’s prodigious output was fundamental to defining the theater of the age that spanned his life. The monster of nature left us many gifts.
Introduction
Robin Kello and Laura Muñoz

How might a young widow satisfy her sexual desire while preserving her independence?

In *The Widow of Valencia* (c. 1595–1600), Lope de Vega presents the audience with the wealthy and beautiful Leonarda, who defies the wishes of her uncle by refusing to remarry. Leonarda’s feelings change after a few glances shared with a young gallant in church. These reawaken the widow’s passion, and lead to a masked affair in which disguise offers the rewards of pleasure without risk. Lope offers a balancing act of visibility and invisibility, as Leonarda’s brilliant transgressions in the service of her desire play out against a carnivalesque backdrop. In this play, the line between lust and propriety, and liberty and constraint, is as thin as a veil.

The Plot

The play opens with Leonarda and her maid Julia discussing how she spends her life reading since her late husband Camilo’s death. Julia wonders aloud about her mistress becoming a nun, yet although Leonarda admits that she finds the life of a widow to be a hard denial of her natural desires, she neither plans to become a nun nor to remarry. This refusal exasperates her uncle Lucencio, who arrives on the scene and attempts to impress upon her, once again, how much damage she will do to her reputation if she continues to hide away in her house refusing suitors. Leonarda will not budge, and the conversation ends with her strong denunciation of marriage.
Out on the street, Lisandro, Otón, and Valerio, three of Leonarda’s most avid suitors, catch sight of each other, confessing that they are all courting the same woman. After comparing stories of “favors” Leonarda has granted them, the three suitors decide that each has an equal chance at winning her and agree not to get in each other’s way.

At church, Julia and Urbán, a young squire in Leonarda’s service, are shocked to find their mistress smitten with a young man she shared a look with during mass. The group moves to the street as Camilo, the young gentleman who caught Leonarda’s eye, and his servant Floro move onto the scene. As Floro watches his master tear up a letter from a former lover, Leonarda instructs Urbán to find out Camilo’s name and address. Camilo proclaims that his love affair with Celia is over just as Urbán comes up to him. The squire easily discovers Camilo’s name and residence. Leonarda now asks Urbán to dress for carnival and, thus masked, tell Camilo that a certain noblewoman wants to meet with him in secret. Urbán and Julia begin preparations to enact this scheme.

While Leonarda deals with her persistent suitors at home, Camilo speaks to the masked Urbán about the strange proposal the squire has made on behalf of his mistress. Although Camilo still has doubts, he agrees to wait for the masked Urbán at three in the morning in order to meet and enjoy the mysterious noblewoman.

The second act opens with an intrigued but nervous Camilo steeling himself for his first encounter with Leonarda. Though worried that it may be a trap, he is unable to resist the erotic possibility that awaits him. Surmounting his fear, he allows Urbán to lead him blindly through Valencia to Leonarda’s house, the servant reassuring Camilo that he has no cause for worry, but a world of pleasure to gain. On their way they meet Otón, who lets them pass, but begins to
suspect that Leonarda may not be as chaste as she claims. He decides that he will spy on the widow to determine what, or whom, she may be hiding.

Camilo arrives at the house and he and Leonarda take hands, while she insists that he not try to take off their masks. Though Camilo is uneasy, his hesitation finally gives way to desire. Urbán and Julia remain in the room, offering food and drink, while Leonarda and Camilo pledge their love. Continuing to maintain control over the situation, the lady promises the gallant wealth and jewels, while adamantly refusing to let herself be seen.

Outside the house, the suspicious suitors stand at attention by the door so as to snoop on Leonarda, each unaware of the presence of the others until the arrival of a sheriff convinces them that the lady must be hiding a relationship, perhaps with her servant Urbán. Otón, Lisandro, and Valerio make a pact to “see to her dishonor/ and the loss of her reputation,” and murder her servant (1775–1776). Meanwhile, Leonarda’s uncle Lucencio continues to look for a suitable partner for his niece to remarry, receiving an offer from the messenger Rosano for a match in Madrid.

Later, as Camilo is recounting his amorous encounters in the dark to his servant Floro, Leonarda and Julia arrive by chance in the same gardens. Camilo flatters the widow, whom he doesn’t recognize, while admitting to her that he is in love with a lady he may touch but never see. Leonarda tests Camilo’s devotion by asking if there is another woman for whom Camilo would leave his lover, but he remains steadfast, pledging his devotion to his unknown lady. Later that evening, the three rejected suitors set upon Urbán, but the servant is saved by Camilo’s intervention.
The third act opens with Camilo arguing with Celia, his jilted former lover. Leonarda witnesses the scene, and asks Camilo if the woman with whom he was arguing is the same lady he loves by night. He responds by flattering the widow and admitting that he has grown tired of his nightly arrangement. Leonarda, jealous of herself, complains to Julia, “As if insulting me were not enough,/ he also wanted to woo me” (2315–2316).

The widow finally concedes to her uncle’s wishes, agreeing to the marriage in Madrid. She informs Lucencio and Julia of her change of plan, yet this decision is not sufficient to protect her name. When Urbán tells Leonarda that Camilo has seen him, thus putting her honor at risk, she decides to send Urbán to serve her much older cousin so as to mislead Camilo. “Let this stain fall on my cousin,” she says, “as long as my reputation shines” (2581–2582). Out on the street, Leonarda’s three unwanted suitors have stumbled their way into a clumsy act of violence. While composing a song about the widow and her squire, Lisandro notices a man leaving the house. Doubly mistaken that the man is Urbán and that her servant is her lover, Lisandro stabs the messenger Rosano in rash and misdirected revenge.

The ruse involving Leonarda’s cousin is successful, and an irate Camilo writes an insulting letter to the cousin. While Camilo’s mysterious romance seems to be coming to an end, Floro confesses that he has agreed to a marriage with Celia. “What strange things blind love does!” Camilo notes: “It drives me crazy for an old woman/ while Floro marries my old flame” (2905–2907). Leonarda summons Camilo to her home, saying that she will reveal her identity. Camilo agrees, but brings a lantern with him in case she refuses to honor her promise.

When Camilo shines the light on her face, he is delighted to recognize his lover as the widow he sees by day. Leonarda is upset, however, and Lucencio, hearing her raised voice,
enters the room. Once discovered, Leonarda proposes marriage to Camilo. Lucencio calls for witnesses, and the servants and suitors, already in the house, bless the marriage. Urbán then follows by asking for Julia’s hand. The deception bends toward revelation, the erotic energies toward the union of marriage, as the widow is once again wife. With the power of desire and irrepressible wit, Leonarda has orchestrated the events of the comedy, but Camilo is given its final words: “And with that, I say/ ends The Widow of Valencia (3111–3112).

“A Woman in Love”: Female Agency and Desire

At the climax of the play, when it seems that the impending discovery of Leonarda’s identity will force her to obey her uncle and marry an unknown suitor in Madrid, she tells Julia, “A woman in love/ unmakes any law” (2787–2788). Leonarda’s willingness to transgress social norms in the service of her passion defines her and drives the plot of the drama. The schemes she sets in motion, born of wit and desire, at once enact and undermine the expected behavior for women in early modern Spain.

Seventeenth-century Spain allowed few opportunities for female autonomy. Parents and male siblings supervised girls and women until marriage, at which point wives effectively became the property of their husbands. A widow, however, was often both sexually experienced and financially self-sufficient—both Leonarda and Lucencio refer to her annual pension. This allowed at least potential freedom from the control of male relatives, and consequently widows were often considered dangerous or even transgressive.¹ Contemporary Catholic treatises, such

as Friar Luis de León’s 1583 *The Perfect Wife* tried to restrict widows, urging them to “take up a life of reflection and introspection” consisting of “solitude, prayer, penitence, and sobriety.”2 When Lope imagines Leonarda reading that very manual in the play’s first scene, or referencing moralists in her conversation with Lucencio, he is acknowledging their influence. Leonarda is not so easily contained, however: she defines home and church as zones of erotic chance, first becoming enamored of Camilo during mass, and then making her house the site of secret amorous encounters.

By orchestrating the conditions to satisfy her sexual needs without forfeiting her reputation and freedom, Leonarda manages to avoid the categories that her society imagined for women. As Urbán tells Camilo before his first visit to Leonarda’s house: “It depends,/ sometimes she is married,/ sometimes a maid,/ and other times a widow./ She is neither married nor a maid,/ nor a widow, nor dishonored and abandoned” (1143–1148). Leonarda’s deft navigation of these roles shows the force of female desire and the failure of social norms to fully regulate women. As neither unmarried virgin, nor widow, nor spurned woman, Leonarda may act according to her will rather than the dictates of her society.

Her liberty to act, however, is limited by the need to meet cultural expectations. By giving the audience a window into the domestic life of his protagonist, Lope shows the contrast between public and private, the social self and the demands of desire. In his dedication, he writes to his recently widowed lover Marta de Nevares, whom he calls Marcia Leonarda: “My Leonarda was discreet (as are you, who share her name) in finding a remedy for her solitude without harm to her reputation. Just as the trick when swimming is knowing how to keep one’s

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clothes dry, so it is with following desire while maintaining one’s good name” (p. 28). Lope’s fictional widow does not make her transgressions public, or extend such possibilities to other women; yet the clever paths she charts to elude the rules of her society reveal the weakness of social codes when faced with the creative, indomitable will. After all, as Leonarda says early in the play, “What won’t a determined woman do/ for the sake of her pleasure?” (812–813).

Faced with the need to ensure both pleasure and reputation, Leonarda finally decides to marry when Lucencio finds Camilo in her room. Though she must request her uncle’s blessing, Leonarda is the one who proposes, indirectly, to Camilo: “And if he is willing,/ I want to be his wife” (3062–3063). Rather than assenting to her uncle’s plan for her to move to Madrid, she remains in Valencia, though she will be a widow no longer. Camilo, who did not know her true identity until a moment before, agrees without hesitation. Just as Leonarda took charge of wooing Camilo, she manages their impending marriage.

Lope is working from the tradition of the mujer esquiva (elusive woman) play, in which a disdainful widow must submit to a man in marriage. Much as the strong-willed Katherine must eventually submit to Petruchio in Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew, such plays present the restriction of the woman to a domestic role. Yet though the resolution of The Widow of Valencia could be said to tame Leonarda, Gabriela Carrión astutely suggests that she “is defeated only insofar as the shroud of privacy surrounding her affair with Camilo has been torn asunder,”—the ending is nonetheless her triumph. The play neither entirely subverts nor entirely reinforces traditional gender roles; instead, it does both, and the resolution cannot erase what has been enacted and revealed on the path to it. The Widow of Valencia brings into relief the limitations of

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gender norms, the irrepressible nature of erotic desire, and the avenues for female agency in early modern Spain. By cleverly unmaking the laws, Leonarda reveals how flimsy and foolish they were in the first place.

“Let Us Affirm Our Friendship”: Male Bonding and Desire

Just as Leonarda’s actions throughout the play highlight female agency in a supposedly strict society, they also lead the men in the play to explore relationships with each other in ways that challenge gender norms. In fact, over the course of the play the widow’s three most eager suitors, Lisandro, Otón, and Valerio, develop closer ties to each other than they ever do to the object of their desire. When they first appear in Act I, their shared experiences of longing and rejection unite them not only as rivals but also as comrades in arms. While their pursuit of the same woman could easily have ended in the three men fighting for the chance to woo Leonarda, they quickly decide that their competition will be a friendly one as Otón pledges that though “Rivalry and good intentions/ seldom dine together [. . .]/ it shall be so/ for that best serves everyone” (424–427). Throughout the play, the three do their best to approach the disinterested widow, recognizing each other’s attempts and failures. By Act II, Leonarda’s continued rejection leads the men to forge an even stronger bond as allies “against the fierce cruelty/ of that cold ungrateful heart” (1773–1774). Acting as a kind of “Lovers of Leonarda” support group, Valerio, Otón, and Lisandro enjoy each other’s company as they stake out the widow’s house, compare strategies for wooing, compose songs together, and even plot to remove Urbán from the picture, having assumed that he is Leonarda’s lover. At the close of the play, the three suitors must be content to accept the ties of male friendship as the consolation prize for their marital aspirations:
as everyone else around them pairs up into couples, the three are left, happily it seems, with each other.

And yet the bonding which occurs between Leonarda’s suitors pales in comparison to that which develops between the two most important men in the widow’s life, her servant Urbán and her love interest Camilo. Throughout the play both men express a mutual, almost erotic, admiration for each other. When Urbán reports back to his mistress after discovering Camilo’s name and address he cannot help but describe the other young man in admiring detail:

**URBÁN**

I swear I’ve never seen a finer looking man since the day I was born. What a face, what elegance! What a neatly kept beard! Such generous hands! They looked like pure snow. What a figure, what a well-turned leg! What charm, what cleverness! (739–747)

Of course, while Urbán’s interest might be attributed to the money he has just received from the careless Camilo, the young servant’s description freely recognizes and appreciates the physical appeal of his mistress’s love interest. This odd relationship continues to develop at the request of Leonarda, who enlists Urbán as Camilo’s escort through Valencia for their nightly meetings. For his part, Camilo willingly goes with the masked Urbán; even his doubts about whether the proposition comes from “a man/ and not a woman” (1154–1155) do not stop him from following the promise of erotic fulfillment. The homoerotic tension which builds between these two as they journey to Leonarda’s house finds release in a flirtatious little moment that does not escape Julia, who notes wryly that “They’re amused” with each other (1508). Although Leonarda’s attentions quickly overtake Camilo’s desires, he still remains entranced by the young man who guides him
nightly to pleasurable encounters with the widow. He even repays Urbán’s earlier flattery with his own admiring portrait of the servant:

CAMILO [. . .] I stared at him without blinking, memorizing his visage. I laid awake, contemplating his features, etched in stone in my memory [. . .] (2692–2696)

Camilo’s obsession with the young servant’s features may stem from his obsession with seeing Leonarda’s face, with Urbán serving as a proxy for the lover’s frustrated desires, and yet this only serves to underscore the erotic tension between these two male characters. Just as with her suitors, Leonarda serves as the focal point between men who are brought together in order to please her and therefore exist within a “pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality . . . [where] no element of that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole.”4 While the play closes with both Camilo and Urbán finding their match of the opposite sex, their brief indulgence in male admiration highlights a continuum of male relationships that push the boundaries of gender norms.

The Mirror and the Portrait: Art, Reflection, and Sensory Experience

In Lope’s dedication to the widow Marta de Nevares, he advises her to take The Widow of Valencia as a mirror: reflected in the character of Leonarda, she can “adjust [her] mantle more clearly than in any Venetian glass” (p. 29). A mirror appears in the first act as well, when the ostensibly pious widow asks Julia for a religious portrait by Francisco de Ribalta, and the servant

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instead brings her lady a glass in which she can see her own youth and beauty. Though Leonarda initially reacts to Julia with impatience, apparently focused on spiritual meditation, De Armas suggests that this substitution of mirror for painting foreshadows Leonarda’s move “from Christian devotion to a more corporeal devotion,” and from spiritual reflection to the recognition of physical beauty. Yet even as the play privileges sexual desire over Catholic moral codes, it explores the power of art, particularly visual art, as both representation of and origin of human sentiment.

In the Spanish Golden Age, the notion that love entered through the eyes was commonplace, and on that basis, Leonarda’s intent to woo Camilo as an “invisible mistress” seems destined to fail. Before the first meeting, Camilo outlines the standard vision of love: “Pleasure comes through the eyes,/ the very act of seeing/ knowing, and conversing with a lady/ is what makes love desirable, . . ./ A blind man, on the contrary,/ such as I will be with this lady,/ takes his pleasure like a beast” (1121–1127). Just as Valerio attempts to awaken Leonarda’s passions by showing her Titian’s Adonis, Camilo reinforces the notion that art and romantic love both arise from sight. Leonarda, however, rejects this supposition as firmly as she rejects Valerio’s bumbling advances.

Her attempt to put touch over sight in affairs of the heart mirrors her creative carving of a space for womanhood outside of maid, wife, or widow. Leonarda is, if nothing else, a woman whose actions are dictated by her own desire over prescribed social norms. Yet Camilo is as eager to see her as Lucencio is to have her remarry, and persistently requests light: “So that I might see you,/ do as great painters do,/ who having painted the night,/ put in enough light to see

5 De Armas, “Portrait of a Pious Widow,” 137.
it by” (1333–1336). When Leonarda briefly takes off his mask, the gallant is impressed but ultimately unsatisfied by the rich furniture and fine tapestries of the house as long as he is not permitted to see the lady behind it, and her plan to remain unmarried collapses as soon as he brings out his lantern and illuminates her face.

Though Lope warns in his dedication to Marta de Nevares that he may, “like a bad painter, betray the original” with an “imperfect portrait” (p. 30), The Widow of Valencia is extraordinarily attentive to the powers of art and artifice, the vision of love, and the theatrical ruse. Leonarda is split between a public performance in which she appears to be a mourning widow and a private play in which she stage-manages and stars in a three-dimensional portrait of desire. Of course, this structure is not sturdy enough to last, and even the buffoonish trio of suitors imagine that Leonarda, “with all those pictures and books/ has one in particular that she adores” (1599–1600). Though their suspicion that Urbán is her lover is incorrect, they are unerring about the force of her desire. In The Widow of Valencia, art may represent and inspire the call of heart and body, but it is no substitute for the physical force of desire. A vision of love that marries sight to touch ultimately prevails. Both mirror and portrait are put away, the lovers see each other, and Lope’s play concludes with a triple wedding.

“Valencia, All a Riot”: Masks, Carnival, and the Urban Cityscape

The city of Valencia, capital of the kingdom of the same name on the eastern shores of the Iberian Peninsula, was well known to Lope de Vega. The writing, staging, and publication of The Widow of Valencia resulted from the poet's second visit to the city as part of the royal retinue that accompanied Philip III to Valencia in 1599. For three months, the city celebrated the double
royal weddings of King Philip III to Margaret of Austria, as well as the *infanta* Isabel Clara Eugenia’s marriage to Albert of Austria. The weddings drew all manner of poets and artists to the city, including Lope de Vega, who returned to the site of his previous exile as an official chronicler of events, writing poems and *comedias* amid the bustle and chaos of the celebrations. With local and international aristocracy in Valencia, multiple tournaments, poetic competitions, and street performances were held in honor of the monarch and the royal entourage. Lope participated in the celebrations, becoming Don Carnival for the festivities and reciting poetry written for the occasion:

> He was dressed all in red like an Italian clown, with a long black cloak and a velvet cap

[. . .] as the actors passed the royal palace, Lope addressed Philip and the Infanta Isabel, first in Italian, celebrating the double royal marriage and then reciting the beautiful ballad in Castilian, which lasted half an hour.6

Lope gives a nod to these poetic competitions and performances in the characters of Leonarda’s intrepid trio of suitors, Otón, Lisandro, and Valerio. While these bumbling-yet-ever-hopeful men may seem incongruous to the love plot, given how ineffectual they are as antagonists to Leonarda and Camilo’s love, they serve as a reminder of the more formal celebrations occurring in the background of the play. Nearly every time they appear on stage, each suitor delivers a sonnet based around themes of love, rejection, and longing. In addition to reminding the audience how delusional the three suitors are about their hopes for Leonarda’s love, these sonnets also recreate the poetic competitions which were often held during royal and religious celebrations. These competitions would establish a set of guidelines for the poets (rhyme, meter,

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thematic content) and a public performance of the poems would decide the winner, who often received an honorary title along with a monetary prize. The ongoing theme for Otón, Lisandro, and Valerio is unattainable love, and their poetic form is the sonnet. In these highly poetic moments, the suitors not only vie for the affections of the elusive widow but also for the approval of the spectators, hoping that the claps and jeers of the audience will crown a winner. In a similar vein, the three also exchange ridiculous stories of “favors” granted them by the widow, becoming the buffoons of a carnival parade, to be laughed at by a knowing audience.

The recreation of celebratory performances goes one step further in Act III, as the three suitors once again try to capture the spirit of the festivities. Fed up as they are with Leonarda’s refusals, and certain that she and Urbán are lovers behind closed doors, the three decide to pass the time waiting for Urbán by composing a song about the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALERIO</th>
<th>We’d better sing their praises instead and improvise a song for the lovers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LISANDRO</td>
<td>Do you have any rhymes for me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTÓN</td>
<td>Let’s work the refrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALERIO</td>
<td>Oh, aren’t you a song-book!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISANDRO</td>
<td>Let’s hear it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTÓN</td>
<td>How about this: the widow and her squire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALERIO</td>
<td>Oh, that’s good! (2427–2435)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each suitor composes a stanza replete with references to literary and mythological figures, “the widow and her squire” serving as the jaunty refrain to an odd little ditty which once again showcases the suitors’ poetic skills and reminds the audience of their collective romantic failures. The scene quickly shifts with the appearance of someone they believe to be Urbán, as the

7 Lope de Vega himself participated in many of these poetic competitions, both as a poet and as a judge. A similar dynamic between multiple suitors appears in Lope’s A Wild Night in Toledo (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 2018). See Paul Cella and Adrián Collado, “Introduction.”
carnivalesque performance turns to violence on the dark street. Valerio, Lisandro, and Otón’s scenes thus encompass Carnival in all its modes, from the high to the low, and remind the audience of the dangers lurking beneath the chaos and confusion of the festivities.

This atmosphere of uncontrolled celebration completely permeates *The Widow of Valencia*. The play is set during the Carnival festivities, with excesses of all kinds preceding the self-denial and introspection of Lent. Leonarda’s transgression and subversion of gender roles is made possible, in more ways than one, by the uninhibited revelry of a holiday season which temporarily suspends the strictures of society—as Leonarda herself observes “Valencia is all a riot at Carnival/ with masks and costumes” (778–779). Taking advantage of the Carnival traditions of disguises and public street parties, the widow enlists her servants in a game of masks in order to bring Camilo to her house:

LEONARDA  [I]f anything goes,
       then put on a costume and a mask,
       go find this gentleman
       and let on, Urbán,
       that a certain lady favors him,
       that she loves him dearly,
       and that he could have her
       if he waits for you tonight
       on the near side of the Palace Bridge. (781–789)

The plan she proposes could only be implemented during Carnival, when masked revelers are a common sight in the city and the search to satisfy carnal desires is at its peak. Aside from the physical masks that Leonarda and her servants don to obscure their faces, the astute widow also takes advantage of all the different guises available to a woman of her class and social standing to shield her true identity from Camilo. Before their first encounter, Camilo attempts to discover information about the mysterious woman propositioning him. Urbán’s playful answer—she is
neither this, nor that—makes it clear that the young widow is taking full advantage of the confusion of Carnival, taking up all manner of disguises to fulfill her desires and protect her reputation. For Camilo, this mysterious woman is hidden behind many masks: during their encounters, she is the hunting falcon; in the light of day she is the goddess Diana; and on the streets of Valencia she is the “little widow” who seems to have a strange interest in him (2256). The game of masks transforms him as well, as the typically male pursuer becomes instead the prey.

Valencia’s cityscape becomes an essential part of this pursuit, as the two lovers encounter each other first in church, then in the famous orchards and fields of Valencia’s Prado, and once again on the busy streets of the city’s mercantile district. Setting the play in Valencia allows Lope to explore a particular kind of cityscape with its own customs and reputation. Valencia opens up the narrative possibilities of the play in a way that would not have been possible in Madrid, where so many of his plays are set. Quite apart from incorporating the carnivalesque atmosphere of Valencia during the 1599 wedding celebrations, Lope’s play also turns its lens on the contemporary realities of the mercantile port city, and its reputation as the seat of debauchery in the Iberian Peninsula.

At the turn of the seventeenth century Valencia was defined by its mercantile spirit and its connection to the Mediterranean. The city’s industries, including the growing printing industry and silk trade, were at their peak during this time, and the city functioned as a hub for commerce from all over the Mediterranean and Europe. The mercantile fervor of the city is so vibrant, in fact, that it breaks through Leonarda’s careful seclusion in Act I. Unable to resist the temptation of a salesman at the door, Leonarda allows two of her suitors, disguised as peddlers, to gain entry
into her home and woo her as they pitch their ‘wares.’ The scene reminds the audience that Valencia is a city of commerce, as the wares are the very same for which it was famous at the turn of the seventeenth century: printing, both of books and images, silk production for tapestries, and perfumes. In this scene, Valerio and Otón turn the act of courtship into a business transaction, hawking their love for Leonarda along with books of poetry and reproductions of paintings—and they are not the only ones to sell their love.

Even before their first encounter, Leonarda and Camilo’s relationship is also focused on material goods. Because Camilo accidentally overpays Urbán for participating in a “religious procession” (a ruse to learn Camilo’s name), Leonarda and her servants believe that the man of her dreams is far wealthier than he really is, and this encourages Leonarda in her decision to pursue him. For their first meeting, Leonarda surrounds her would-be lover with the best brocades and decorations her household has to offer:

CAMILO
Stunning tapestries and brocades!
Stunning paintings and art!
Yet they hardly shine
when your eyes are covered. (1379–1382)

The fine quality of her household serves to make Camilo aware of her caliber, even as she hides her face in the shadows. Perhaps even more tellingly, the encounter ends abruptly with a less than romantic economic transaction, as Leonarda promises Camilo “jewels/ worth two thousand ducats” (1451–1452), seemingly in payment for the moment of erotic satisfaction he has afforded her and a promise of more to come. This exchange becomes a negotiation, with Camilo wavering between accepting the promised bounty and insisting on more physical enjoyment of Leonarda:

CAMILO
 Fine jewels?
LEONARDA You there! Bring me those chains
Leonarda, accustomed to handling her own substantial finances since her husband’s death, is a far better negotiator than Camilo and maintains complete control of the situation. She gets what she wants from him while also whetting his appetite for more; although Camilo would rather have seen the woman who has seduced him, the gifts he receives satisfy him for the time being.

Of course, Camilo is no stranger to courtship as a material transaction, as is clear from the confrontation he has with ex-lover Celia in Act III. In an argument which officially ends their relationship, their courtship is framed in terms of a business deal gone sour; when Celia reminds Camilo of the promises he made to her as a lover, he counters by telling her, “You cost me a pretty penny,/ not to speak of the clothes” (2219–2200). As far as Camilo is concerned he has paid his dues to Celia, and thus ends the courtship on his terms.

The emphasis on courtship as the exchange of material goods for romantic favors is no accident. Just as Lope evokes royal festivities and the mercantile spirit of Valencia to play up the contemporary vision of this city as one of sumptuous excesses—both carnal and material—he relies on the city’s reputation for prostitution and easy women to present an erotically charged vision of love. Valencia was home to one of the oldest and most prolific brothels in Spain, giving the city’s men a reputation for being easygoing and the women for being easy. Contemporary
chronicler Henrique Cock noted during his 1585 visit to the city, “[The] women are the most lusty and lascivious of all Spain.”

Leonarda’s pursuit to satisfy her physical desires and Camilo’s willingness to accommodate reflect this reputation.

“A House So Rare”: Reimagining Domestic Space

Lope’s play begins and ends in Leonarda’s Valencian home, the primary interior space in the drama. It is the site of her nightly meetings with Camilo and the object of her suitors’ suspicion. Despite Lucencio’s warning that even if she were to “let not an atom,/ nay not the sun itself,/ enter a house so rare,” she still could not avoid the gossiping tongues of her neighbors, Leonardoa envisions the domestic space as one she controls (209–211). At home, she may allow what and whom she pleases as long as she takes the proper care. While Golden Age treatises defined the home as the widow’s retreat from public life and the site for private mourning, Leonardoa brings the sun of erotic love inside the house, thus converting her seclusion into a secret liberty, and her intended prison into a fortress for the satisfaction of her desire.

Before Camilo arrives, Leonardoa and her servants design the house as a stage set for an act of love: Leonardoa asks Julia, “Are the hangings and velvets/ all in their proper places?” and, “Is that tapestry/ right for that sitting room?” (1236–1237, 1240–1241). While the intent is to keep Camilo mostly in the dark, allowing only partial glimpses of the ornate decoration of the house he visits, these details illustrate the reversal of Leonardoa’s prescribed social role. Rather than facilitating quiet devotion to her deceased husband, the house enables her to love another Camilo. Rather than becoming the target of a suitor, Leonardoa uses her house to help her trap the

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8 Henrique Cock, *Relación del viaje hecho por Felipe II, en 1585, á Zaragoza, Barcelona y Valencia* (Madrid: Esteriotipia y Galv. de Aribau y Ca., 1876), 247.
gallant she desires. As Camilo says, “in this house of veils,/ the partridge is hooded/ while the falcon can see” (1408–1410). In her domestic space, Leonarda, with the assistance of her servants, manages the veils.

The street scenes reinforce that the house is, temporarily, impenetrable. After the fiasco where the suitors, passing as merchants, had the door opened to them, they are forced to keep watch from the street. They finally get as close as possible without entering, each forming a column at the gate, unaware that the others are there. Unable to be with Leonarda herself, the suitors make her house into a metaphor for the body of the lady, as her door becomes the opening for the "treasure" inside. Lisandro, arriving last, claims a location closest to the entrance: “If they are your support,/ let us all buttress you up./ Leaving is out of the question:/ make room, I’ll get in the middle” (1680–1683). Immobilized by their own suspicion and only metaphorically granted access to Leonarda, the suitors meld comically with the architecture of her domestic stronghold, but they are ultimately left outside. Leonarda manages to let Camilo in while excluding her ridiculous trio of suitors from the home.

This set-up is only briefly tenable, as Leonarda cannot prop up her façades indefinitely. Lope’s contemporary, the philosopher Baltasar Gracián wrote, “There are people who are all façade, like unfinished houses . . . their front might be like a palace, but there is only a shack behind.”9 In The Widow of Valencia, Lope draws out the relationship between the exterior of a building and a personality, as Leonarda’s ability to keep up the appearances that mask her actions and desires and to keep people out of her house collapse simultaneously. Not only Camilo’s

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9 Baltasar Gracián, Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia, edited by Emilio Blanco (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995), 129. The original Spanish text reads: "Al sugetos de solo fachata, como casas por acabar . . . tienen la entrada de palacio, y de choza la habitación."
lantern but also Lucencio’s presence in the house topples Leonarda’s structure of private liaisons. When witnesses are finally called for her engagement, Leonarda tells Urbán, “You might as well have brought the whole city!” and he responds, “They were almost at the door” (3077–3079). The fortress was always surrounded, and the forces of patriarchy would eventually be impossible to ward off. While merging the personal façade of the pious widow and physical façade of the home allows her to satisfy her desire, domestic space becomes again the site of marital union as the play concludes. Yet Leonarda, with seductive wit, has already illustrated for the audience how a house of mourning may easily become an arena for love.

Production History

The play has enjoyed several productions in Spain since the 1960s, with one in the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid in 1960 and two separate television adaptations with Televisión Española in 1975 and 1983. In 2008, the Teatro Rialto in Valencia reopened with a production of the play, probably the first staging in Valencia since 1599. Most recently, an adaptation of the play was produced by the Spanish television program “Estudio 1” for Televisión Española, airing first in 2010 and again in 2012. With a runtime of 73 minutes, this version offers a fast-paced adaptation of the source material which heightens the eroticism of the original for a modern audience.

Pronunciation Key

Each vowel in Spanish has just one sound:

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

The underlined syllable in each word is the accented one.

LUCENCIO: LOO-SEHN-SEE-OH
LEONARDA: LEH-OH-NAHR-DAH
JULIA: HOO-LEE-AH
URBÁN: OOR-BAHN
CAMILO: CAH-MEE-LOH
FLORO: FLOH-ROH
CELIA: SEH-LEE-AH
OTON: OH-TOHN
VALERIO: VAH-LEH-REE-OH
LEANDRO: LEH-AHN-DROH
ROSANO: ROH-SAHN-NOH

VALENCIA: VAH-LEHN-SEE-AH
FRIAR LUIS: LOO-EES
SAN JUAN: SAHN HOO-AHN
REAL: REH-AHL
REALES: REH-AHL-EHS
DOBLON: DOH-BLOHN
SHEPHERD OF FILIDA: FEE-LEE-DAH
GÁLVEZ MONTALVO: GAHL-VEHS MOHN-TAHL-VOH
GALATEA: GAH-LAH-TEH-AH
MIGUEL DE CERVANTES: MEE-GEHL DEH SEHR-VAHN-TEHS
ESPINE: EHS-PEE-NEHL
JULIO: HOO-LEE-OH
GUZMÁN: GOOS-MAHN
CARRANZA: CAH-RAHN-SAH
ERCINO: EHR-SEE-NOH
ZAIDÍA: SAH-EE-DEE-AH
CLARA: CLAH-RAH
Dedicated to the Lady Marcia Leonarda

When I found out that your grace had become a widow at such a young age that, although your husband might well deserve to be mourned, your youth might excuse you from doing so—for, as the proverb has it, the wise will seek what they lack rather than what they have lost—I decided to dedicate this play, whose title is *The Widow of Valencia*, to you. I do not do so maliciously, for it would be a grave fault to offer your grace such an unworthy example. My Leonarda was discreet (as are you, who share her name) in finding a remedy for her solitude without harm to her reputation. Just as the trick when swimming is knowing how to keep one’s clothes dry, so it is with following desire while maintaining one’s good name. It is best not to surrender your honor, but since your youth, beauty, spirit, and cleverness may fall prey to some idle flatterer, it may not be a bad thing to have read this fable. For in fencing, one does not consider it a wound when another is pierced, nor do we deem the unskilled strummer a musician. Many will be against such a pretty sermon—and pardon me the use of this overused term, pretty, but Fernando de Herrera, pride of the Castilian language and its first Columbus, never scorned or failed to praise this word, as is clear in his *Comentos*. But since you do not care about him or his prologues or me or even this comedy, let us return to my advice. For those who are green should follow that of their ripe elders, or they’ll never give good advice themselves.

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11 Marcia Leonarda was one of Lope’s literary names for his lover Marta de Nevares, who was recently widowed when the play, written 1599–1600, was first published in 1620. This dedication emphasizes the similarities between the two widows in their common need to fulfill their desires without damaging their reputations.

12 *Linda* in the original Spanish.

13 Fernando de Herrera (1534–1597): 16th-century Spanish poet known for his commentaries on the first and most famous of the Spanish Petrarchan poets, Garcilaso de la Vega (1501–1536).
Noblemen are too high for secret pleasures, while equals are unseemly so soon, even for marriage. Confer with your intimates, unless you would eschew intimacy. This is where *The Widow of Valencia* comes in, a mirror in which you may adjust your mantle more clearly than in any Venetian glass, and then you will think of me, as I dedicate it to you. My play is not entirely made up; it may not have occurred in so many words, but I have just added some touches to the basic story to make it more convincing, like women putting on make-up.

I am writing you and wondering whether you can see yourself, with those green eyes, full, dark brows and lashes, thick, abundant curled locks, a mouth that stirs anyone who watches it laugh, white hands, a shapely figure, and liberty of conscience where restraint is concerned. For Lady Death, like in a friar of the Order of Mercy, rescued you from Constantinople and the *bagnio* of a man who was hairy from head to toe. I’ve heard it said that your late husband’s mother was from Osuna or that when she conceived, she could think only of money in a chest. And so her imaginings came true—let us not doubt the philosophers, who favor impressions on the spirit over common heritage—those were your husband’s graces, to which one might add the basest intellect of any jealous fool who was always in the way and yet never indulged you as he should. People sometimes say, when they pity the unfortunate, “So-and-so is haunted by an ill shadow.” Well, no wife has ever had a worse shadow than him, not since there’s been a sun in the sky, and it dismayed many to see you, beautiful as the sun, with such a shadow. Oh, welcome

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14 Death is compared to a Mercedarian friar. The order redeemed captives from Muslim territories, including North Africa and the Ottoman empire, of which Constantinople was the capital. A *bagnio* is a prison for captives.

5 Lope’s double joke here refers to the hairiness and miserliness of Nevares’s deceased husband. The Andalusian town of Osuna was ostensibly named for its bears (“osos”). Aristotle (“the philosophers”) believed in the theory of maternal impressions: a mother’s thoughts or experiences during pregnancy, especially at conception, would determine the nature of her child. Hence a mother who thought about money stowed away would give birth to a miser.
Death! What medicine could not fix, Death achieved in five days, with a belated purge, two premature bloodlettings, and a doctor more inclined to your freedom than to your husband’s life. Your husband surely took his revenge on us all by leaving just the slightest doubt of whether he would die or live on. So strong was the desire to see him go, not because he would then be lacking—he was always lacking—but because having once imagined him gone, it would have driven us to despair to see him again.

Your grace should know well how far I am from opposing your wishes, and you must believe I wish only for your benefit, untainted by self-interest. For who could not love such poise, such beauty, and such a celestial temperament? When you write verse, Laura Terracina, Ana Bins the German, Sappho the Greek, Valeria the Roman, and Argentaria the Spaniard all bow to you.\textsuperscript{15} When you play music, your divine voice and incomparable skill astonish Vicente Espinel.\textsuperscript{16} When you put pen to paper, you make the Spanish language the rival of any tongue; the purity of courtly language is infused with bravery, mere cleverness becomes gravity, and serious tones become sweet. When you dance, all eyes follow your every move; your skill takes the breath away, and everyone worships the ground your chopines\textsuperscript{17} tread upon. How could I then be so bold as to put a beauty mark on such a miracle and, like a bad painter, betray the original with my imperfect portrait? Consider my desires, which speak louder than words, and

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{15} Renowned female poets: Laura Terracina, 16\textsuperscript{th}-century poet from Naples; Ana Bins, 16\textsuperscript{th}-century poet from Antwerp; Sappho, Greek poet of antiquity; Valeria Proba, possibly a fourth-century Christian poet referred to by the Dutch Renaissance humanist Erasmus; and Argentaria, wife of the Classical Roman poet Lucan, who reportedly assisted with his \textit{Pharsalia}.

\textsuperscript{16} Spanish musician and poet of Lope’s era, renowned for supposedly being the one to add a fifth string to the guitar.

\textsuperscript{17} Elaborate platform shoes with cork soles, chopines or chapins were luxury footwear for women in the period.
which you can confirm in the looking-glass. Forgive my pen, for in my soul lies the most vivid portrait of your mind and heart. God be with your grace.

Your chaplain,¹⁸ and affectionate servant,

Lope de Vega Carpio

¹⁸ Lope had taken religious orders in 1614, making him a capellán, or chaplain.
The Widow of Valencia

Characters

LUCENCIO, old man
LEONARDA, young widow
JULIA, her servant
URBÁN, young squire
CAMILO, suitor
FLORO, his servant
CELIA, lady
OTÓN, suitor
VALERIO, suitor
LISANDRO, suitor
ROSANO, courtier
A SCRIBE
A SHERIFF
SERVANTS
ACT I

SCENE I

[A room in LEONARDA's house]

Enter the widow LEONARDA, with a book, and her servant JULIA

LEONARDA  Celia! Julia! Can you not hear me?

JULIA   My lady . . .

LEONARDA  You fool—what are you up to?

JULIA   I am at your service.

LEONARDA  Save me from that Friar Luis.19

JULIA   When I see the state you’re in,  
      I can tell you’ve never even come close  
      to becoming a nun.  
      When you spoke of that Friar Luis  
      as I came in,  
      I wondered where you’d put him.

LEONARDA  You fool, these matters are not  
      for your silly head.

JULIA   How poorly have I covered  
      the faults that nature gave me!  
      Ugly as I am,  
      and with no wit to boot!

LEONARDA  All women need is good sense,  
      and an honest demeanor, Julia,  
      for those who think they’re sharp,  
      routinely miss the mark  
      and risk falling, too.  
      As for me, ever since I lost my Camilo,  
      whom God now holds in his bosom,  
      and whom He now supplants in my soul,

19 Friar Luis de León (1523-1591) was a Spanish poet and theologian. His 1583 treatise, The
I have decided not to remarry.
I read for entertainment,
not to be a learned woman
or to get my degree in wit.
For one whose good reputation
does not need books
in such silence as this
can find no harm in books.
Any wise book offers
pleasant conversation:
when it becomes tiresome,
it conveniently falls quiet.
It’s a friend who secretly
advises and reproaches.
And when I read one
and consider proper piety
I discipline my wild imaginings.

JULIA And what were you reading?

LEONARDA Books of devotion.

JULIA Who would not delight in a lady
so lovely and so pious?
See how the whole city
speaks of your seclusion,
your good sense and intelligence,
your fame, honor, and honesty.
They say you’ve ushered in a Golden Age,
made Valencia into a new Rome,20
and the past into the present.
You embody all the goodness on this earth!
You’re an angel from heaven
in your beauty and behavior.
The young men are in such a state
they dare not even look upon you.
since you so elevate their thoughts.

LEONARDA Let God be served in all things, dear Julia.
Reputation is the spark,
and the tinder catches so readily—

20 Reference to the virtue of Roman matrons (widows, among them), now embodied by Leonarda.
I’d rather die than burn.21
I don’t want to be renowned, nor, like Artemisia,22
to feed on the cold ashes that death leaves underfoot,
nor, like that Roman matron, to die because I renounce
my desire to look upon a monster in the street,23
nor to paint a silhouette of the dearly departed,
and love it as though it were a man.24
I just want to be a woman who deserves the name of widow,
for I need no one at all.

JULIA So you will not wed again?

LEONARDA Jesus! Julia, don’t say that word.
Men disgust me.
Don’t ever mention them to me.
Bring me the image I bought for you from that painter.

JULIA For your devotions?
See, you are tempted already.

LEONARDA Hush, you fool.
I just want to see it.

21 Leonarda is referencing 1 Corinthians 7:9: “If they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” Instead of marrying, however, Leonarda would rather die.

22 According to myth, saddened by the death of her husband, Artemisia had a potion prepared of his ashes and minced bones.

23 The wife of the Roman consul, Fulvius Torquatus, who was so honorable that she never showed her face in public. When the Romans brought an Egyptian monster back to their city, Torquatus’s wife longed to see the beast. Yet she refused to look at it from her window, and died from her frustrated desire.

24 In his Natural History (79 A.D.), the Roman author Pliny the Elder held that paintings were first made by tracing the outline of a man’s shadow. He also includes the story of a young woman who traced the shadow of her lover’s face on a wall before his departure, and suggests the classical associations between shadows, death, and the human soul.
JULIA: Then why did you pay so much for it?

LEONARDA: For its marvelous strokes. The seller assured me it was painted at court, by a famous Catalan.

JULIA: I’m off, then.

JULIA exits

LEONARDA: There’s nothing to discuss, except how best to serve God. That is a good purpose in life, once you realize how short it is. It seems outrageous, in this day and age, for one so pursued to keep faith with a dead man, to hold love so true, that I should live that truth and a life of chastity. But glory lies in what is hard to do, and victory in resisting one’s desires. Leave me now, my thoughts. That’s quite enough. I shall not wed again.

SCENE 2

Enter JULIA

JULIA: I couldn’t find it.

LEONARDA (Aside): Resist, oh my chaste convictions.

JULIA: Ah, here it is.

LEONARDA (Aside): May the vanities I renounce be swiftly forgotten.

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25 Francisco de Ribalta (1565-1628), a Catalan Baroque painter who worked in Madrid and later in Valencia. He is among the first Spanish followers of Caravaggio.
Julia hands her a mirror

(Aloud) What is this, you fool?
A mirror, instead of the painting?
Take it away.

JULIA Just look at yourself.
Use it or lose it, they say.
You’ll weep for it some day
if you let it go to waste.

LEONARDA Just put it over there.

SCENE 3

Enter LUCENCIO, LEONARDA’s uncle

LUCENCIO Don’t put it away!
Thank God I got here in time
to find you looking at yourself,
you, who see no one.
What miracle is it, niece,
to find you like this?

LEONARDA (Aside to JULIA) I will get you for this . . .

JULIA (Aside to LEONARDA) Did I see him come in?

LEONARDA (Aside to JULIA) Get out.

LUCENCIO Surely you’ll defer
to the grey hairs of an old man.

LEONARDA You will think I’m flighty,
gazing here at a mirror,
one of those women
who runs here and there
to gaze upon herself
after she is already dressed—
an even greater sin
in the state I’m in.
LUCENCIO
The fuss you make over nothing at all!
Is it wrong for a woman,
in putting herself together,
to check whether mantle or pins
are where they should be?
Who better to tell her
if it looks good or not
than this bit of glass?

LEONARDA
How you excuse my faults!

LUCENCIO
I might, if you were one of those
who hang a mirror by their window
and when it seems they address
their poor gallant below,
it’s all just for show:
they’re really just looking
at themselves in the glass—
how they speak, how they move.
The poor fool below
thinks it’s all about him,
yet it’s all for the mirror,
and the image therein.
You’re not one of those
full of present devotion,
who brings a mirror to mass
for a quick glimpse in the glass,
every time that she stands.
Nor do you drink
with your lips in a bow,
so the color will stay
where you placed it just so.
I can’t tell you how wrong
it seems to an old man,
yet it’s practiced by all,
the dainty and the ugly both.
Look at yourself, and God keep you.
And since I am here to see you,
consider what you have seen there,
and let me speak to you alone.

LEONARDA
Uncle, if this is about marriage,
LUCENCIO  How can you be at once
so clever and so stubborn?
Do I not deserve your attention?
Who has ever heard of an old man,
and an honorable one at that,
who is not heeded by all?

LEONARDÁ  (Aside) This is where I lose my resolve.
(Aloud) When I know how much you love me,
how can I let you go on in vain?

LUCENCIO  Will you carry on
like all those other women?
Why so obstinate?
Do you think that with this
you'll secure your good repute?
You’ll destroy it instead.
Since you’re so very set,
do tell how you plan to keep yourself
in this fine state you’re in,
if you are not to wed?
It’s true you’ve three thousand a year,
but I don’t just mean
having enough to live well—
if you were lacking there,
thank God I have more than enough—
but to see you embark on a plan
that could never end well!
Where will you hide from envy
and the common tongues,
even if you never see the light of day?
Though you open your door to sunrise,
and close it by morning mass,
though you never let the lynxes
spy through an open window,
though you let not an atom,
nay, not the sun itself,
enter a house so rare,
both heaven and yawning hell,
discreet on its own, yet renowned for you,
though dragons and Argos himself
guard your precious spoils—what difference will it make?  
With a long tongue and eyes to match,  
envy is a sly one, just you watch.  
They will say you carry on  
with a common slave,  
whom you keep in your house,  
just like Princess Angelica, at once proud and low.  
And once your reputation’s on the line,  
those who pursue you will waste no time imagining you with Jupiter as a swan,  
or even a shower of gold. Wouldn’t it be better, all told,  
for you to wed and avoid it all?

LEONARDA

You can accuse me of nothing,  
and unless you’ve something to add,  
I’ve already heard you out.  
Tell me, Lucencio,  
should I risk sinfulness for your sake?  
Would you want that for me,  
when all the authorities agree in condemning remarriage?  
Isn’t prudent and chaste widowhood universally praised?  
Even jealous slander cannot last for long.  
The truth soon comes out,  
and a good name rises,  
like a phoenix from the flames,  
to welcome a new day.  
Who, I ask you, would want

26 Argos: a hundred-eyed giant from Greek mythology. Princess Angelica: in Ludovico Ariosto’s Orlando furioso, the elusive princess Angelica rejects famous knights to marry Medoro, a common Moorish soldier.

27 In Greek myth, the god Zeus assumes the form of a swan to seduce Leda, wife of the king of Sparta. Zeus also turns himself into a shower of gold to seduce Danaë, daughter of the king of Argos, who is locked up in a bronze chamber.

28 Mythological bird that was reborn from its own ashes.
one of those candy-coated dandies,
in a rakish hat,
short feathers, new sashes,
shirt open just so,
and Italian linen—
nice and clean on the outside,
old and grimy on the inside.
Boots so tight they won’t come off,
not for months at a time,
baggy stockings down below,
and a mustache out to here,
with toupees and pomade,
fake necklaces to impress with,
soft scented gloves—
a great one for sonnets and love letters.
With those immaculate hands
he’ll snatch at three thousand a year,
ready to take his ease
between sheets of the finest silk.
Before a week’s out,
he’ll be off to find other women,
or return to old loves,
and so forsake mine.
He will come home late,
I will be jealous.
He’ll throw my money around,
and then we will argue
about what he has and has not done.
I’ll hide it and he’ll give it away,
taking on debts in my name.
The police will come knocking,
there will be yelling and screaming.
Day and night, he’ll stir up the house.
“Give me that dowry letter!”
“Release those funds—they’re mine!”
“Sign this deed!” “I won’t!”
“Is that so? You won’t?
I’ll make you, you scoundrel,
if you keep this up!”
And the more I give in,
the more he’ll grant me
such fine and noble titles
as Countess Kicked-and-Slappedintheface.
I have said quite enough.

LUCENCIO  Ipse dixit!  She has spoken.

LEONARDA  The end may have been Latin, but the rest was in our common tongue. This is what I resolved the day he died, and were I manly enough, I would eat hot coals to consume my cold soul.

LUCENCIO  Niece, that’s it, then. From this day forth I’ll scatter to the winds all those marriages I’d sought, or were proposed to me, including three I’d brought today, for you to think upon. I’ll only ask, then, that we refrain from feeding all that gossip so vain about your tender age or mine. Watch yourself, since you remain all too free, and so very young. It’s a stretch to say you’ll live secure with so many years ahead of you. When in that mirror there you spy both your beauty and your youth, never forget that they lie— their advice is far from the truth. May God keep you at long last in your penance and your fast.

LEONARDA  (Aside) What an importunate old fool!

LUCENCIO  (Aside) What an arrogant woman!

Exeunt

---

29 Latin expression that refers to a dogmatic and unproven statement.

30 Reference to Portia Catonis, second wife of Marcus Junius Brutus, one of Caesar’s assassins, who committed suicide by swallowing hot coals. Here, Leonarda threatens to emulate Portia’s suicide.
SCENE 4

[On the street]

Enter LISANDRO, suitor

LISANDRO The river breaks the hardest rock at last, tumbling it down in a current full strong. Both haughty pine and wrinkled olive long to yield humbly before the peasant’s axe. The lofty palm to the African throng grants the orient fruit that they would win. The ox to the yoke, the snake to the song of the enchanter must at last give in. The sculptor soon makes a figure appear from hardest marble or frozen stone, thus giving shape to what before had none. Yet the harder that I try to come near that woman, delicate and appealing, the fiercer and harsher is her dealing.

SCENE 5

[On the street, where LISANDRO was]

Enter VALERIO, suitor

VALERIO Down the mountain swift water comes tumbling, splashing from rock to rock with curious mirth, its crystal laugh turned now to dark mumbling, as it sinks by and by into the earth. My pain grows all the more at any boon, consuming whatever had once been good, while hope entertains hope, as well hope should, foolishly glad to think that it might bloom. Love sees me die and is full satisfied. Time and works prove unequal to the task: like waves that break and rise again, they mask the ill until at last all good has died. It’s over just as soon as it is born: hope fades not long after the breaking morn.
SCENE 6

[On the street, where LISANDRO and VALERIO were]

Enter OTÓN, suitor

OTÓN  With tears and pleas the pilgrim secures the right to pass among barbarians rude—
a guide through mountains, fire to keep him warm, in Libya’s harsh deserts water most pure.
Savages offer him safe passage then:
Arabia yields him bread, and Persia wine, peace among Arabs in Africa he finds.
Tears and joy often vie with each other:
in his Moorish captor the captive at times finds pity among harsh chains and bars.
Yet this asp, born of the hardest stones,
will never once heed the echo, no,
of these my exhausted tears and moans.

VALERIO  Lisandro!

LISANDRO  Valerio!

VALERIO  Otón!

OTÓN  Gentlemen!

VALERIO  Love has conspired to bring us all here.

LISANDRO  It takes one to know one.
Put your hats back on!
You can speak of love with your heads covered—
it’s not like being in Mass.

OTÓN  I must warn you, this is the only fashion in which to hear this out.
For love’s whims are such
that when you begin
to deal with its vexations
you need a clear head,
sharp eyes, your wits about you.
Not because love seeks the truth—
it’d much rather avoid it—
but because you need
eyes wide open to take in
such an agreeable lie.

LISANDRO    I give you Otón,
clearly falling apart
with thoughts of that lovely widow.

OTÓN    And you? Who could deny
she burns you up, and wears you thin?
Why, otherwise, would you rend
the gauzy veils of heaven,
in which astrologers shroud it,
to see what the stars portend?

VALERIO    This is jealousy, let it be noted.
It is for me to intervene
and put an end to this unpleasantness,
cutting it short.

LISANDRO    You’re the one who will be cut short
if you seek remedy
in that flame that lies therein.
For oh, in Otón and me,
the soul in love
is a fluttering moth
that will surely die within.

VALERIO    I, for Leonarda?

LISANDRO    You, indeed.
Do you think something so obvious
could possibly be kept secret?

OTÓN    In short, all three of us
love the very same lady.
Given who she is,
I see no harm in confessing,
for it’s true I have indeed
given some thought to this marriage.

What a woman!

She has no equal.

My suit is Valerio’s.

And I seek the same.

If you attempt what I attempt,
either I must offend you in taking it from you,
or I must be offended if you take it from me.
What shall we do?

Rivalry and good intentions
seldom dine together.
Yet it shall be so
for that best serves everyone—
unless someone here
has been shown greater favor?

I will not say that it was me,
although I’m not afraid to tell
what favor she has shown me,
as long as you give me your word
you will also tell your part.

I agree.

So do I.

Listen,
and you can deduce how my love is rewarded
from the favor shown.

Tell us, Valerio. What favor was that?

Here goes.
LISANDRO  Go on.

VALERIO  Listen:
I saw this fine widow with her tigress soul
looking like an angel in her coach one afternoon.
As the sun was setting, her new sun was rising although the curtain insisted on making an eclipse.
I bowed and she, though she wouldn’t look at me, leaned out the side with her swan-like breasts.
Thinking I could seize this favor, I spent the night under her window, playing my guitar, until dawn surprised me there.
I was moved to poetry, though I would come to regret it. I started singing more gently than Pyramus sang to Thisbe: “Give water to this my flame” was the first thing I said . . . and also the last.
Be careful what you wish for. Whether the water was clean or murky—only Dioscorides31 would know.
Let’s just say I spent all night laughing and cleaning myself up.

LISANDRO  Here is mine, better than Valerio’s, since it was actually a favor, while his was a fiasco.

OTÓN   Go ahead then, tell us your story.

LISANDRO  I will begin, in the name of love:
on this happy street

31 Pyramus and Thisbe: legendary lovers, separated by a wall, whose story ends in tragedy. Dioscorides: Greek doctor and naturalist of the first century CE.
where unhappy lovers roam
on their long wake for a dead man’s spoils,
on a dark night, a couple of thieves,
were spiriting away
some fine wine in its skin.
As those low-lives passed by
the widow’s marble doors
—softer than the widow herself—
they used them as a hiding place.
The authorities, tipsy with excitement,
couldn’t see where they had gone.
Since I was watching from afar,
hidden in a corner,
I quickly moved closer,
swift as the wind.
Once I reached that beloved door,
I glimpsed a dark shape,
with its cape and its sword,
addressing someone inside.
I moved in,
pulled my hat down over my face,
and said: “You, gentleman!”,
throwing my cape over my shoulder.
Since he won’t answer
I quickly pull out my dagger,
and stab him to the hilt.
Blood spurts all over me,
so I race home,
and hold my sleeve up to the light,
but it smells to high heaven.
So I take the lantern,
and return to the scene,
only to find spilled wine,
and the wine-skin sprawled out on the ground.  

OTÓN  If those are your favors,
then I renounce all faith in love.

VALERIO  Come on, Otón. Tell us of yours.

OTÓN  Ah Cicero, where are you

32 Lisandro’s confuses the wine-skin hidden by the thieves with a rival for Leonarda’s affections.
when I require your eloquence?
As the roosters here first crowed,
with their coarse calls at dawn,
soon to be answered by their country brethren,
I paced up and down our widow’s street,
monitoring her window,
and measuring my steps like clockwork.
The sky was darker
than a Portuguese in a cloak,
so I mistook her window
by a good two floors—
a shoemaker lived in the one I chose.
I carefully peered up to the house
where, I thought, all my cares lay.
I saw a white figure on the balcony,
and believing it to be the widow,
wooed her with these words:
“Oh my Angel: your every garment
is sacred to me, a slave to your love.”
Gentlemen, no sooner had I spoken,
when the good shoemaker,
who was sitting outside in his shirt,
grabbed a brick and said:
“Are you flirting with my wife?
You rascal!
Come back by day,
if you dare!”
If I hadn’t ducked,
he would have splattered my brains
across the brick like porridge.

VALERIO  Truly, equal favors for all!
But in the end, to speak seriously,
and setting all jokes aside,
don’t you see that our fantasies
can lead to no good?

OTÓN   If I may give you some advice . . .

LISANDRO  Yes?

OTÓN   We must deal with this quarrel
by not dealing with each other.
VALERIO  Should we stop speaking to one another?  

OTÓN  I will not speak to either of you, wherever I might see you.

LISANDRO  I’m off, then.

OTÓN  Oh Leonarda, lovely and silent!

LISANDRO  Oh, most beautiful widow!

VALERIO  Oh, most fierce and lovely creature!

*Exeunt*

**SCENE 7**

[On the street, near a church]

*Enter LEONARDA and JULIA*

JULIA  The heavens have punished your foolishness.

LEONARDA  If only they had killed me!
More’s the pity.
And though I feel this way,
believe me when I say,
that clever old man must have cast a spell
to melt my icy resolve.
It makes no sense otherwise,
that I would be here now,
seeking my own disgrace.

JULIA  God forbid I should think that of him!
He is as unaware of what has happened to you.

*Leonarda is speaking about her uncle, Lucencio.*
as that cruel basilisk you looked upon.\textsuperscript{34}
Curse those eyes,
which blinded you at first sight!

LEONARDA Let them look, Julia.
No one such punish such eyes
for looking at me.

JULIA Oh, for goodness’ sake!
You’ve certainly got the itch now.
Curse him!

LEONARDA Don’t say such things.
May God keep him! What is it to you?

JULIA Ah, my lady!
Where have your judgment
and good sense gotten to now?
What happened to that dignity,
which you defended to the heavens,
a mirror of chastity
for your old uncle’s sake?
What of your coy refusal
to even look at yourself in the glass?

LEONARDA You’re quite the preacher.

JULIA Hush now, don’t get upset.
Will this be a passing fever,
or a permanent condition?

LEONARDA My understanding
is no match for my will.

JULIA You’re forgetting memory.\textsuperscript{35}
Purge him out, and good riddance.

LEONARDA See what you do to me, Love!

\textsuperscript{34} Mythical snake-like creature that could kill by looking at its victims.

\textsuperscript{35} A learned joke: Saint Augustine identified three faculties in the human soul: memory, understanding, and will. Since Leonarda has named two, Julia provides the third.
JULIA  Who in Valencia do you love so?
     What happened to that cold,
     cloistered, saintly woman?

LEONARDA  Don’t ever speak to me again,
       you fool. Say no more!
     None of this will matter
      if I’m fated to fall.

JULIA  And what shall I do
     with your books and your chapel.
     What would Friar Luis say?
      What of those lofty ideals?

LEONARDA  Oh women, how weak you are when tested!
     My icy resolve was unmatched,
     fair youth, before I set eyes on you!
     Yet I am not scared of death.
     I will not marry,
     no matter what the world thinks.

JULIA  I have a solution for you, my lady.

LEONARDA  Have I not told you to keep quiet?
     Had I not raised you,
     I would slap you silly.
     You see me burning, you beast,
     and yet you mock my pain!
     I will find satisfaction
     without losing my honor and good name,
      and so put out this cruel flame.

JULIA  Anything’s possible.

SCENE 8

[On the street]

Enter URBÁN, young squire
URBÁN Oh, thank God I found you!
How much longer were you going to pray?
Were you planning to stay
for Midnight Mass?
I would not want to serve you
during the holidays.

LEONARDA Must we leave so quickly
on such a sunny day?

URBÁN You don’t usually say that—
you hate the heat.

LEONARDA Now I want some sun.

URBÁN So go get it, then.

JULIA (Aside to URBÁN) Leave her, she is not herself.

URBÁN (Aside to JULIA) Why? Oh God!

LEONARDA Go see if the coach is ready.

URBÁN Yes, my lady, I’ll see to it.

LEONARDA Come back, you fool. Where are you going?

URBÁN I was going to find the chariot of the sun,
so we can get you some.

SCENE 9

[On the street]

Enter CAMILO, a gentleman, and FLORO, his servant

CAMILO A fine message, indeed!
Tell her not to write me again.

FLORO Don’t tear it up,
for old time’s sake.
CAMILO It’s done now.

FLORO It meant nothing to you?

CAMILO It was a mere whim.

LEONARDA (Aside to URBÁN) Urbán, do you see that young man?

URBÁN Yes, I do.

LEONARDA Come closer.

She whispers in his ear

URBÁN His name and address? Got it.

FLORO Your disdain is not news to me. You’ve always been harsh to this woman.

LEONARDA Let’s go, Julia.

JULIA Come on, then.

LEONARDA (Aside) I’m dying! Will I ever see you again?

Exeunt LEONARDA and JULIA

SCENE 10

[On the street]

URBÁN (Aside) By my faith, to charge me with finding out this gentleman’s name and address!

CAMILO I want neither love nor cares. Let Celia stay in her house, and favor whomever she wants. Let her keep company, if she pleases,
with any who come and go.
Let her find a green young man
to drive mad with jealousy,
for I’m beyond all that,
and feel only pity for him.

URBÁN  (Aside) I didn’t even bring
my inkwell and my quills.
(Aloud) Excuse me, gentleman! I’d like . . .

CAMILO  Speak up, what do you want?

URBÁN  To see if you’ll be joining
the procession for the Jubilee. 36

CAMILO  I’d like to, good man.
What contribution do you expect?

URBÁN  It’s just one *real.* 37

CAMILO  Here you are.
Two *reales* for the two of us.

URBÁN  May God thank you for it.
Your name and address?

CAMILO  Camilo, and I live near San Juan parish.

URBÁN  Are you a nobleman?

CAMILO  Noble enough.

URBÁN  I need to write that down here.
And your good name, sir?

FLORO  Me? Floro.

URBÁN  That’ll do. I’ll get back to the church.

---

36 For Catholics, a jubilee year is a time for the remission of sins and universal pardon. The year 1600 was a jubilee.

37 Pronounced *reh-ahl.*
CAMILO May God be with you.

URBÁN exits

CAMILO Now we are both in the procession.

FLORO Will you pray? 710

CAMILO I will start today.
Wait! Oh God, I gave the man a doblón\(^{38}\) instead of two reales!

FLORO Now you notice?
There’s no redeeming it now. 715

CAMILO Get in there.
There must be something we can do.

FLORO That’s why he said you were a nobleman.

CAMILO Damn it!
This procession doesn’t come cheap! 720

Exeunt

SCENE 11

[LEONARDA’s house]

Enter LEONARDA, JULIA, and URBÁN

LEONARDA Well done, Urbán!

URBÁN What can I say?
I am one in a million.

LEONARDA How clever to get 725

\(^{38}\) A doblón (doh-blohn) was worth twenty reales.
their names and addresses on paper!
So his name is Camilo?
In that, too, he is like the deceased?\footnote{Camilo was the name of Leonarda’s late husband. It is also a reference to Saint Camillus, the patron saint of the sick.}

URBÁN

There’s no doubt he’s noble,
though we’ve never heard of him.
After all, didn’t he give me a 
\textit{doblón}
when a \textit{real} would have done?

JULIA

He must be generous.
It was a noble gesture, indeed.

LEONARDA

Tell me, Julia,
what could one lack,
whom nature grants such gifts?

URBÁN

About those gifts . . .
I swear I’ve never seen
a finer looking man
since the day I was born.
What a face, what elegance!
What a neatly kept beard!
Such generous hands!
They looked like pure snow.
What a figure, what a well-turned leg!
What charm, what cleverness!
What an elegant way with a 
\textit{doblón}!
And how I swooned
when I saw it gleaming!

LEONARDA

I can no longer bear
this unbearable flame—
it is killing me.
My dear friends,
this may seem
like a great weakness on my part,
but my heart trusts
in your love and loyalty.
You have served this house
since my parents’ time.
I know how much you love me.
Since I don’t intend to marry,
nor to become engaged,
today you must find my remedy,
today I entrust you with my life.
My reputation is in your hands.

URBÁN Is it your fear or your love
that makes you doubt us now?
By God, they’d never get a word out of me:
not if they put me on the rack,
not if they tried
to buy me off with gold!
Trust Julia and me,
and tell us what to do.

LEONARDA You, Urbán, must be my remedy.
Listen carefully.

URBÁN I’m listening.

LEONARDA You see how Valencia is all a riot at Carnival,
with masks and costumes everywhere.

URBÁN That’s right.

LEONARDA Well, if anything goes,
then put on a costume and a mask,
go find this gentleman
and let on, Urbán,
that a certain lady favors him,
that she loves him dearly,
and that he could have her
if he waits for you tonight
on this side of the Palace Bridge.
If he agrees,
you will fetch him there tonight.

URBÁN Shall he see me
and where you live?

40 Early modern form of torture.
LEONARDA  No. You will wear a mask, you’ll place a hood over his head,\(^{41}\) and bring him thus to the house. We’ll keep him in the dark, and when it’s time for him to go, he must wear the hood again. Whom could he know that way?\(^{42}\)  

URBÁN  A well thought out plan, indeed! He’ll yield like a tame falcon.\(^{43}\) What am I waiting for? I’m off.  

URBÁN  *exits*  

LEONARDA  Don’t be long.  

URBÁN  I won’t.  

JULIA  Whose idea was this?  

LEONARDA  It was Love, who has the wise at its feet.  

JULIA  I think someone is at the door.  

LEONARDA  Go and see who it is.  

JULIA  *exits*  

LEONARDA  (Aside) What won’t a determined woman do for the sake of her pleasure? What torment could change her resolution? What flame, what noose, what sharp sword? \(^{815}\) What more daring giant reaches for the heavens? What more daring Hercules attempts the descent to hell?  

---  

\(^{41}\) In production, if blindfolding the actor seems preferable, this line can be changed.  

\(^{42}\) Pun on carnal knowledge.  

\(^{43}\) In falconry, hoods are used to train the birds and keep them calm.
That powerful boy has melted my frozen heart with his love
and vanquished my devotion to my first husband.
I’ve been like a dammed up river
that only now runs wild.
I have been, in short, a woman.

SCENE 12

Enter JULIA

JULIA There is someone here
selling books and etchings.

LEONARDA What does he want,
if he’s in costume?

JULIA He doesn’t have a mask.

LEONARDA We must keep up appearances.
I am still pious. Let him in,
and let’s see what he wants,
or if there is something we can buy.

SCENE 13

[At LEONARDA’s front door]

Enter OTÓN, in foreign or French clothes with four books in a basket

OTÓN May God keep you,
and give you a fine husband.

LEONARDA He’s been very merciful
in not wishing one on me.

OTÓN Why, when you are so beautiful?

---

44 Giant: mythological creature who defied the Olympian gods and tried to reach the heavens. Hercules: for his final labor, the mythological hero descends into hell to capture Cerberus, the three-headed guard-dog of the underworld. Powerful boy: Cupid, god of love.
LEONARDA  Show me what books you are selling.

OTÓN   I have one here that you can have for a reasonable price.  840
But it’s all my story, and might be too much for you.

LEONARDA  (Aside to JULIA) How irresistible! I told you so, Julia.  845
(Aloud, pointing at a page) Who is this?

OTÓN   That is the romance of *The Shepherd of Filida*.

LEONARDA  I know.

OTÓN   Gálvez Montalvo was its great author. He died at sea as a Knight of San Juan, 850
while I drown in a deeper and much rougher sea.

LEONARDA  Are you a bookseller or a suitor?

OTÓN     I couldn’t say.
Here’s another romance, of cruel *Galatea*.  855
If you want a fine book, then look no further.
It’s by Miguel de Cervantes, who lost a hand fighting at sea, while I lose . . .

LEONARDA  (Aside to JULIA) Hush, Julia, calm down.  860
(Aloud) What have you got to lose?

OTÓN     . . . my soul and my life, for another Galatea,

45 The love-themed pastoral novel was popular among female readers of the time.

46 The Catholic military order of the Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem.

47 Cervantes was wounded at the naval battle of Lepanto, in 1571.
one more cruel than Medea,\textsuperscript{48} and less obliging.

LEONARDA Who is this?

OTÓN Espinel, a brave poet.\textsuperscript{49}

LEONARDA What is it about?

OTÓN It’s just sonnets, but it has some nice lines, and some serious poetry, too. He loved until death, though he did not die of it, unlike me.

LEONARDA So are you a suitor or a bookseller?

OTÓN I couldn't say. Here you have a songbook, full of nonsense.

LEONARDA Don’t deal in bad imprints.

OTÓN It’s better imprinted in me . . .

LEONARDA What?

OTÓN Eternal servitude, and love, and suffering!

LEONARDA Is this wooing or selling?

OTÓN I couldn't say.

SCENE 14

\emph{Enter VALERIO, dressed as merchant, with prints}

\textsuperscript{48} In Greek mythology, the distraught princes Medea killed her children to punish her husband, Jason, for abandoning her.

\textsuperscript{49} Vicente Gómez Martínez Espinel (1550-1624) was a Spanish priest, writer, and musician.
JULIA  Now the printseller is in the house.

VALERIO  Prints, prints, get your fine prints!

LEONARDA  *(Aside)* Either I am missing something, or this peddling is a set-up, for both these suitors, who came up with this ploy, took off their Carnival masks as they came into the house. Julia, is this appropriate, in my seclusion?

JULIA  *(Aside to LEONARDA)* I think there’s something fishy here.

LEONARDA  *(Aside)* I can see that. So many men in my house!

VALERIO  *(Aside)* Otón got here first?

OTÓN  *(Aside)* Valerio is here, too?

LEONARDA  What is it that you’re selling, exactly?

VALERIO  Can’t you see? I offer you my heart.

LEONARDA  Let me see, what is this print?

VALERIO  The beautiful *Adonis*, painted by Titian with divine strokes. Oh to be loved as he was! I die in despair, while he died in his lover’s arms. This one, on my word, so fine and delicate, is the work of Raphael, and superbly engraved. And this one is Flemish,
and that one Italian. 50

LEONARDA  These are hardly suitable for me.  Do you have any religious images?

VALERIO  Yes, here. Look at this,  an exquisite print on marriage.

LEONARDA  Which I hope never to see.

VALERIO  You are not impressed,  yet, why not?  Thousands await your “I do,”  and there might even be a certain gentleman nearby who is in love with you.  I am Valerio, although I am in disguise now.

OTÓN  Since we are naming names, you have Otón at your service.  I am rich and of noble birth, and madly in love with you.

LEONARDA  Is there no one here who can buy you off?  You there!

SCENE 15

Enter two servants

SERVANT 1°  My lady . . .

LEONARDA  Show the bookseller and the printseller out . . .

OTÓN  My lady, is it wrong to ask for what you owe us?

References to famous Renaissance painters, including Titian (1488-1576) and Raphael (1583-1520).
LEONARDA  Servants, what are you waiting for?

VALERIO   Hold on, there is no need to get upset.

LEONARDA  You take liberties, and then want to charge me? Fine books indeed! Come now, throw them out!

VALERIO   That won’t be necessary, we will find our way out.

OTÓN      We won’t stand for this.

SERVANT 2º  The nerve of those foreigners!

SERVANT 1º  There is another one at the door with creams and perfumes.

SERVANT 2º  Well then! Down you go.

VALERIO   You’re back to your cruel ways!

LEONARDA  Close the door, that will keep this insolence out.

VALERIO   (Aside) Julia, are we still friends?

JULIA    (Aside) Hush, my lady will hear us.

Exeunt

SCENE 16

[On the street]

Enter CAMILO and URBÁN, disguised with a mask

CAMILO   By God, masked man, this is quite a risk I am taking, when I don’t even know who you are.
URBÁN  Camilo, this will be our little secret.  

CAMILO  Shouldn’t that lady trust me with her reputation, when she offers me her soul? Could I not serve her, talk to her, see her, hear her, and know her name?  

URBÁN  Let’s not talk about it. If you try to find out too much, all will be lost.  

CAMILO  I swear by my faith as a gentleman, you’ll make me lose my mind. As God is my witness, had I enemies out there, I would suspect a trap, but no man is more beloved, nor has more friends in this town. I am glad you said at least I could come armed and carry my pistol, to this secluded love nest.  

URBÁN  Bring one, bring a hundred. If you don’t let curiosity get in the way of your skill, your valor, your good taste, and your will, you’ll enjoy the finest this city has to offer.  

CAMILO  What does it matter how beautiful she is, if I must enjoy her in the dark? I assume she is ugly.  

URBÁN  When you speak to her and touch her, a light will shine upon you. If she does not please or bores you, you need not come back.  

CAMILO  My only complaint is having to cover up like this.
URBÁN  Those are the rules.
   Need I say more?

CAMILO  Must my head be covered?

URBÁN  Yes, Camilo,
   from the moment you enter and until you come out. 1005

CAMILO  What a ruse, brilliant!

URBÁN  You must accept these conditions.

CAMILO  And where should I wait for you?

URBÁN  Be at the bridge
   by the royal palace at three,
   and know that if you bring anyone else,
   I will not speak to you. 1010

CAMILO  *(Aside)* Do men not give up
   their country and their house
   to go see Italy and France?
   To reach the Portuguese Indies,
   do they not face the raging seas?
   Do they not leave their land
   to see foreign wars?
   Are there not thousands who,
   for the sake of a party,
   mingle with those they hate
   amid insufferable heat?
   Does the hunter not endure
   sun and ice to see
   a shy little rabbit
   emerge from its den?
   Or the fisherman for the sake
   of a fish on his hook?
   And I, young and proud,
   why am I so afraid of this charm?
   *(Aloud)* Go on then, I will be there. 1020

URBÁN  You’ll be happy if you go.
CAMILO  You will find me on the bridge at the agreed upon hour.  1035

URBÁN   And what a night you’ll have with that angel!

CAMILO  Enchanted, to say the least.

URBÁN   She’ll be expecting you.
        Goodbye.  1040

CAMILO  I am eager for your return.

URBÁN   It will not be long.

CAMILO  I shall find out what this is, if it costs me my life.  1045
ACT II

SCENE I

[On the bridge]

Enter CAMILO

CAMILO  Be brave, my thoughts,
in your reckless endeavour!
We’ve come to that pass
where your boldness would have me
conquer though I’m conquered.  1050
Torn between fear and desire,
I set off in fits and starts,
and no longer know
if I’m coming or going.
Could it be that someone,  1055
envious of my nobility,
has double-crossed me?
Will this come
to clubs or swords?
Shall I bravely bend my neck,  1060
like a little lamb who can’t tell
it’s already been sold,
and is headed straight for the slaughter?
I never meant to offend anyone.
I must be mistaken.  1065
He who has not offended
need not watch his back.
And the one who told me of this affair
said I was welcome to come armed . . .
but that was to make me afraid,  1070
for fear is always on guard.
Even if I go as I am,
what danger could I avoid
when he will cover my eyes?
Blind, I will be easy to catch.  1075
Who ever heard of such a thing,
that a beautiful woman,
wanting a man so badly,
should not let him see her?
How cautious she is with her reputation!  1080
What if I think I am embracing a beautiful angel, while I’m actually taking a demon in my arms, one who flies around at night, too ugly to show its face? What if she is an old woman, without eyelashes or eyebrows, and a mouth full of fake teeth, whose spells render me as meek as a sheep? Or what if she is a wretch, all pocked with the French pox, who would give me years of suffering for the sake of one hour’s pleasure? But there are people coming.

SCENE 2

Enter URBAN, wearing a mask and carrying a hood

URBÁN There is a man standing by himself. Who goes there?

CAMILO Are you by chance that friend of mine?

URBÁN At your service.

CAMILO (Aside) How could any sane man be doing this?

URBÁN Can anyone see us?

CAMILO The moon and the stars.

URBÁN Let them not shine upon us. Oh, what a lovely angel awaits you! You are a lucky man.

CAMILO No doubt, but whether she be ugly or beautiful, loathsome or lovely,

---

51 Syphilis.
what difference does it make,
if I am to enjoy her in the dark? 1110

URBÁN  What difference? What do you mean?
Is it not better to feel a plump and perfect body,
than to caress a skeleton,
the very image of death?
Beauty is like a fine scent, 1115
a natural quality
that you know, see, and smell
for the soft breath it exhales.

CAMILO  Am I a doctor or a healer?
Why should I care about scents? 1120
Pleasure comes through the eyes,
the very act of seeing,
knowing, and conversing with a lady,
is what makes love desirable.
A blind man, on the contrary, 1125
such as I will be with this lady,
takes his pleasure like a beast.

URBÁN  I don’t agree,
for the blind man can only
imagine a face, 1130
but if you’re awake
and look carefully,
you’ll see the real thing.
Certain eyes shine like fire at such a moment.
Won’t four of them together 1135
see heaven and earth?

CAMILO  While others may
just as well be dead.
Is she young?

URBÁN  You won’t see her. 1140

CAMILO  Is she married, or a dubious maid?
Or perhaps a widow instead?

URBÁN  It depends.
Sometimes she is married,
sometimes a maid,
and other times a widow.
She is neither married nor a maid,
nor a widow, nor dishonored and abandoned.

CAMILO  Has she been wrapped
in tissue paper?  
Some lady you have,
if I follow you!
(Aside) There must be a trick.
What if it’s a man,
and not a woman?
Am I so pretty, then?
Oh, how I’d like
to pull off his mask,
though it might cost me the lady
who has cost me so little!
But I am all ablaze now
with desire.
(Aloud) My friend,
let’s go see this obscure lady.
I’ve never seen the like of her.

URBÁN  Put on your hood.

CAMILO  Everyone will think
I’m crazy.

URBÁN   Not at all.

CAMILO  Sack cloth?
Could you not at least have made it silk?

URBÁN  *puts the hood on* CAMILO

Is it a long walk?

URBÁN  Very long, yes.

CAMILO  Now you’ll take me to the river,
and throw me in to put out my fire.
URBÁN  You must trust me.  
There is no need to be angry, my lord.

SCENE 3

[On the street, on their way to LEONARDA’s house]

Enter OTÓN and CAMILO holding onto URBÁN’s belt

OTÓN  Oh starry night,  
you who guide my steps and my life,  
on my way to the grave,  
turn black and dark  
so I might ask a favor of you.  
For though I’ve come out to these fields,  
whose calm should temper  
my blind ardor,  
it blazes all the more  
in the face of her disdain today.

URBÁN  (Aside to CAMILO) There is a man over there.  
Stay close.

OTÓN  Halt! Who is that? Who goes there?

CAMILO  (Aside) Here I am, fully armed,  
and playing blind man’s bluff.

OTÓN  No answer?

CAMILO  (Aside) This is good.  
What if he shoots now?

URBÁN  I am in disguise.

OTÓN  A fine fool!

URBÁN  We had a little to drink,  
and we were walking it off.  
(To CAMILO) Come this way, sir.

CAMILO  Oh, may the saints help me!
Exeunt URBÁN and CAMILO

OTÓN

How wine changes men!
And love, too,
for this ungrateful widow.
Can it be that she is
so chaste and honest,
an Artemisia of fidelity,
and gives so many gentlemen
that same “no” as an answer?
It cannot be—there’s something amiss.
I suspect the saintliness
of her life is feigned,
for saintliness usually
looks pale and wan.
But for a coddled widow
who easily eats up
three or four thousand in rent
to spend the cold nights
alone like a girl!

What does it matter
if she is locked up in her room,
and they all think she is praying,
when her steward gets her what she needs?
Now, I won’t sleep,
not in a hundred nights,
I’ll spend them all
on her street and at her door,
and if someone wakes her,
by God, he must die!
Neither snow nor rain—
though it rarely snows here—
or lack of sleep shall stop me.
I will be a stone at her doorstep,
and freeze anyone who faces me,
just like Medusa.52

OTÓN exits

52 Mythological monster who turned to stone anyone she looked in the eye.
SCENE 4

[In LEONARDA’s house]

*Enter LEONARDA in elegant clothing, and JULIA*

LEONARDA  Are the hangings and velvets all in their proper places?

JULIA   They are perfect, my lady. Turn around and look at them.

LEONARDA  Is that tapestry right for that sitting room?

JULIA   It is fit for a viceroy, and even for the king.

LEONARDA  And what a suitable story! It tells the loves of Jacob. 53

JULIA   Unlike your own swift glory, so quick to come. Jacob waited fourteen years for what you will have in an hour’s time.

LEONARDA  Pray to God that my good fortune not leave me now!

JULIA   What is taking Urbán so long? What should we do?

LEONARDA  He must not have liked the idea! I’m so wretched!

JULIA   Don’t make a scene. That would make no sense for such a strapping young man.

LEONARDA  Maybe there is something womanish

53 Biblical son of Isaac, who labored fourteen years to marry his beloved Rachel.
about his beauty!
And what Roland, what knight,
would agree to have his head covered
to come here in the dark?

JULIA He is a noble gentleman,
a manly, handsome youth,
not like those namby-pambies.
Next to him, Achilles himself
would seem a low coward!
Didn’t Leander swim the gulf
a thousand times for the sake of love?

LEONARDA Don’t you know that’s just a story?
And that was after they had seen each other, and spoken!
And up in that tower, away from the wind,
a single light was always lit,
while here he won’t have one,
even inside the bedroom.
Say instead he is like that Roman,
who leapt into the pit,
or the one who charged a bridge,
or the one who burnt his hand,
those I might believe.

JULIA I deserve a reward.

LEONARDA I don’t think so.

JULIA I’m waiting!

---

54 Medieval knight, hero of the French *Song of Roland* and of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*.

55 *Achilles*: great warrior of Greek mythology. *Leander*: famous lover of Greek myth, who swam across the Hellespont every night to be with his beloved.

56 Marcus Curtius, a young Roman soldier who, in order to save Rome, leapt into the chasm that had opened in the Roman forum after an earthquake.

57 Horatius Cocles, a Roman who charged against the Etruscan army at the Sublicius bridge, ultimately destroying it to impede their passage.

58 Gaius Mucius Scaevola, who set fire to his own right hand for being unable to assassinate the Etruscan king, Porsena.
LEONARDA  You may have the long cloak, Julia, the one I was wearing yesterday.

JULIA   The purple and gold one?

LEONARDA  Hurry, give me my mask, and take yours.  1290

SCENE 5

[In LEONARDA’s house]

Enter URBÁN, and CAMILO

URBÁN       We are here, Camilo.

CAMILO      Since I came up the stairs, I must be in the bedroom.

LEONARDA    Have him sit down.

URBÁN       Sit.  1295

CAMILO      Where?

URBÁN       Here.

CAMILO      Who was that who spoke?

URBÁN       My lady.

LEONARDA    And your slave.  1300

CAMILO      Is she the one who just spoke?

He takes it off

Damn it! I’m taking my hood off.

CAMILO      I’m taking my hood off.

By God, I’m in the dark!

LEONARDA    The only reason I allowed it,  1305
and forgive your trespass.
Give me a seat next to him.

CAMILO        What a charming spell.

LEONARDA      I will sit at your side, my lord.

CAMILO        My God, how difficult to bear!
This love in the dark sets my heart on fire,
for I cannot see—
like flint against steel,
it has lit my desire.
Like a man in the shadows
who strikes light,
your voice has ignited my soul.
My ready heart
was the kindling,
and your lips the flint
that struck the flame.
My soul is newly lit,
though not to see you in the dark
is like a cold wind that blows on it.
Let me see you,
and not only in my mind’s eye!
Who has ever heard
of so much fire with no light!
If you don’t trust me,
let this go no further—
for if this limbo leads not to bliss,
then let it not lead to torment.
So that I might see you,
do as great painters do,
who, having painted the night,
put in enough light to see it by.
I’m a gentleman,
and if I can talk to you face to face,
I am sure that my honorable ways
will delight you twice over.
This much you must grant me.
Give me your hand!

LEONARDA      My hand? Here.
CAMILO  At last!

JULIA  (Aside to URBÁN) I’ll say, this man’s no fool.  1345

URBÁN  He’s got a way with words.

JULIA  (Aside) Such pretty talk.

LEONARDA  Well, on Camilo’s life . . .

CAMILO  That’s my name, my lady.

LEONARDA  . . . to give you my hand so soon
         was no small mercy.  1350

CAMILO  I swear it is a supreme gift.
        I swear I am going mad.

LEONARDA  Tell me, do you like it?
        Don’t squeeze it. Goodness!  1355

CAMILO  The hand might well be Esau’s,59
        and the voice, I know not whose.

LEONARDA  Bring just enough light.

JULIA  exits

URBÁN  We’ll shine some light on this now.

CAMILO  This is to request light while sitting next to the sun.  1360
        Alas, Apollo is eclipsed.60

JULIA  enters

JULIA  Here’s the lamp.

59 Biblical figure, son of Isaac. His brother Jacob tricked him out of his father’s blessing by covering his hands in goat’s fur.

60 Greek god of the sun.
CAMILO
What is going on?
You are all wearing masks?

LEONARDA
Keep your hands to yourself, sir.
This is how it must be.
If you try to see me,
they’ll tear you to pieces.

CAMILO
They cannot touch me
in the sanctuary of your arms.
I fear them not, by God!
I’m here, after all.
I rein in my desires,
because you order me to do so.
Your body is so beautiful!
And what fine garments!
No wonder I have not
been worthy of your trust.
Stunning tapestries and brocades!
Stunning paintings and art!
Yet they hardly shine
when your eyes are covered.
Will no one here vouch for me
Will you love me,
yet not take me at my word?

LEONARDA
I entrust my soul to you.
with your grace’s pardon.
Once your loyalty
has been attested,
we will allow you to visit
this house in the light.
Sit down, and don’t get too excited.

CAMILO
If I am not to see my prey,
then tie on my hood and leash again,
my friend.
If I am to keep still,
it would be better to have no eyes nor ears,
for my senses fly
after that which I can see.
If you uncover the falcon
and let him see his prey,
the end is certain, 
and that heart will be his. 
But here, 
no sooner has he spotted her, 
he is stripped of the freedom to fly. 
And not only that, 
but in this house of veils, 
the partridge is hooded 
while the falcon can see. 
By God, my lady! 
Can it be that you’ll allow 
me to hear you, 
but not see you?

LEONARDA  Now, now. 
Fetch him some food 
to temper his heart. 

JULIA exits to bring refreshments

CAMILO  Food, by God? 
How can I eat 
when that same heart is on fire? 
I’ve had enough of this house! 
Am I not to see a single face? 
How am I to trust 
that the food you bring 
is not poisoned?

LEONARDA  Trust the heart in my breast, 
which has fallen for you.

CAMILO  That will not do. 
If you wore that hood to the shops, 
no one would give you credit, 
no matter how much bosom you showed. 
I am the shopkeeper here, 
and you, that woman in a veil. 
Why should I grant you life, 
when I’m not allowed to see you?

LEONARDA  Camilo, don’t be so put out 
that I should veil myself this way,
for there are things about me, sir, of which you are unaware. I saw you, and fell for you, so that I couldn’t resist this satisfaction. This is the remedy I sought, so that you could be here with me without being able to tell anyone who I am or where you’ve been. If you think this means that I do not trust you, let there be no doubt about my intentions. I shall give you jewels worth two thousand ducats.

CAMILO Fine jewels?

LEONARDA You there! Bring me those chains and that charm, the Cupid one. Bring them here . . .

CAMILO No. Don’t do that. It will only upset me further. For I desire your eyes more than any jewels you could offer. If you gave me those sapphires, or the rubies and pearls of your mouth, I could give you so much more, if only I could see them. Know that I, too, have gold in my house. Thank God, I’m not a poor man.

LEONARDA I wish you more than what the Orient sends to Spain. But take this ring as a token of my love. Your hand will set it off.

CAMILO And yours is perfect for this one. Please allow that white hand

61 Camilo is referring to Leonarda’s eyes, lips, and teeth.
to wear it in my name.

**JULIA enters, with refreshments**

**JULIA** Here are the refreshments.  

**CAMILO** There’s no point.  
By my faith,  
I will not eat a thing.

**LEONARDA** You can’t refuse,  
just one bite.  
I am an honest woman.

**CAMILO** Do you mean because of the poison?  

**LEONARDA** Yes.  
I swear on my life, you must try it!

**CAMILO** If you swear,  
them let a thousand deaths befall us.  
I will consume the poison  
as Alexander took his doctor’s.  
Where trust abounds,  
no harm can be done.

**URBÁN** *(Aside)* He certainly knows his history!

**JULIA** *(Aside)* He is very well read.

**URBÁN** *(Aside)* Don’t think he’s such a gem,  
he is just pretentious.  
*(Aloud)* I will fetch the drinks.

**URBÁN exits**

**CAMILO** *(Aside)* She’s witty, that’s for sure.  
*(Aloud)* Let’s make a deal.

**LEONARDA** *(Aside)* He is as smart as he is wily.

---

62 Alexander the Great, having been told that his doctor was seeking to poison him, showed his trust by consuming the medicine his doctor had prepared.
CAMILO    If this is how you carry on,  
you and your servants,  
how can you call to them  
without using their names?  
Let me give you false ones,  
so I can make sense of things.  

URBÁN enters with drinks  

URBÁN    Drink.  

CAMILO    I shall drink later.  

URBÁN    Have something to drink.  

JULIA    (Aside) They’re amused.  

URBÁN    (Aside) These sugar-coated youths,  
all syrupy sweet, drive me mad.  
Not even a nymph  
is so very particular.  
(Aloud) Drink.  

CAMILO    Give here, I will drink.  

URBÁN    (Aside) What a tiny, cautious sip!  
(Aloud) Tell me, did that do you any harm?  

CAMILO    How can I hesitate with all this fine silver?  
I have had enough, my lady.  

URBÁN    (Aside) So coy now,  
and later he’ll polish off a whole wine-skin.  
(Aloud) Here’s to my lady,  
and here’s to you, Camilo.  
And finally, Julia, here’s to us both,  
for he who drinks well, loves well.  

JULIA    (Aside to URBÁN) Listen up or get out of here.  
He wants to give us names,  
so he can call for us.
URBÁN (Aside) I am listening. Here’s to me.

LEONARDA What will you call me?

CAMILO You, I will call Diana, for obvious reasons.

LEONARDA And what are those?

CAMILO Isn’t she the moon? Does her light not shine?

LEONARDA Yes.

CAMILO Does she not darken and fade?

URBÁN (Aside) Oh, that is good!

JULIA Take note.

URBÁN (Aside) I am. Here’s to me.

CAMILO I shall call you Iris, Diana’s messenger, and you, Mercury.

LEONARDA Could anyone find us better names?

URBÁN (Aside) Me Mercury? Oh well. Wouldn’t Bacchus be better?

JULIA That’s enough out of you!

URBÁN (Aside) I am listening. And here’s to me.

LEONARDA It’s late. You should be going. All this talk…

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63 In Roman mythology, Diana was the goddess of the hunt, the moon, and nature.

64 Iris and Mercury: female and male messengers of the gods, respectively.

65 Roman god of wine, theater, and fertility.
The night has flown, hasn’t it?  

CAMILO  So you won’t take off your mask?  

LEONARDA  This won’t be our last night together, Camilo.  
         This is enough for now.  
         You must leave the way you came in.  
         (To URBÁN) Escort him to where you found him.  

URBÁN  All right, let’s get that hood on.  

CAMILO  May I not embrace you before I go?  

LEONARDA  Why, yes.  

CAMILO  A fleeting pleasure.  

URBÁN tries to put the hood over CAMILO’s head  

(To URBÁN) Careful!  

URBÁN  Your neck is really long.  

LEONARDA  You fool, you’re going to hurt him!  

URBÁN  They’ll never get a decent chord out of you.  
      God bless a good bass,  
      that lasts and lasts!  
      Grab on tight to my waist.  

CAMILO  Farewell, lady Diana.  

LEONARDA  Oh, how I long for tomorrow!  
         Off with this mask!  

JULIA   Yes, me too.  
         It’s time to retire for the night.  

Exeunt LEONARDA and JULIA  

CAMILO  What a state I’m in! Oh, blind love!  

URBÁN  Am I any better off?
This is the sick leading the blind.

SCENE 6

[On the street, next to LEONARDA’s door]

They exit and VALERIO enters, dressed in evening attire

VALERIO

Oh, suspicion!
You, who have driven even the sanest mad,
and drawn up in the finest minds
scenes more unlikely than those ever painted
on a new-fangled stage,
or drafted by an inspired bard.
Where are you taking me and my mad imagination,
as I roam the streets while everyone sleeps?
Even Ursa Major and its starry wagon
have retired for the night,
the six Pleiades have started their descent,
as has their seventh sister, who rarely shows her face.
And I, suspicion, hounded by you,
burn not as stars do, no,
but with the fire of the eternal abyss,
through whose gaping mouth
it blazes incessantly.
I hate to say it, but I can’t shake the thought
that this Leonarda,
with all her pictures and books,
has one in particular that she adores.
Night, if some man be in there,
let dawn break to drive him out.
Yet how will I spot him,
when this house is like Thebes,
with its hundred looming gates?
People are coming!
I’ll take this side of the portico,
and see where they are headed.

66 Conglomeration of stars, visible to the naked eye.

67 In the Iliad, Homer describes Thebes as the city of the hundred gates.
SCENE 7
[On the street, next to LEONARDA’s door and window]

OTÓN enters, dressed in evening attire, and VALERIO hides to one side

OTÓN A private matter—friends and family—kept me from arriving sooner. 1610
Forgive me, street,
and you, too, oh fortunate window,
if I am late to greet you.
What sighs of love
fly into you, window! 1615
More than April has flowers,
more than morning pearls of dew!
If only I knew what sighs fly out!
How many suitors, like Iphis before them,
hang from these gates, 1620
by a single one of her hairs,
begging the heavens to turn
that hard-hearted woman to stone?68
And you, door . . . But what’s this?
Can this be? 1625
What shade is this, or what new column?
My heart did not mislead me,
when it brought me here tonight.
Could this be that fortunate man,
who enjoys the widow now? 1630
What am I to say or do to him?
Oh heavens! I’ll balance out the façade,
and flank the door on the other side.

SCENE 8
[On the street, next to LEONARDA’s house]

Enter LISANDRO, dressed in evening attire, and OTÓN hides on the opposite side

68 In Greek myth, the shepherd Iphis killed himself for love of Anaxarete, who spurned him. When she was still unmoved, Aphrodite, goddess of love, turned her to stone.
LISANDRO

Widow, may God ever keep you thus!
While you stand fetchingly at that window,
from now until the dawn!
I’d like a word with you.
That “I do” that you deny
to your suitors one and all,
what would it take to hear you call?
Young yet pure, happy and sad—
I hate to see you a maiden once more.
You are so cutting and sharp,
even fools now think
you must have a secret lover.
You lock yourself in your house,
in order to deny it,
yet what difference does it make,
when you come and go to the village
as easy as you please?
These empty fields,
these orchards and gardens,
may not open for Matins,69
but they are open for love.
No one believes, good widow,
that your heart has gone unclaimed.
You look so sad,
when you’re not half bad-looking.
I cannot believe that a woman,
when she is young and rich,
or, indeed, any woman
who, like you, is free,
would not give herself over
entirely to pleasure.
Although you may say
you run from a second marriage
like Angelica from the knights,
I vow, I’ll join a convent
if you aren’t actually in love!
Oh! I’ve spoken too soon,
without realizing I’d be heard
by these living shadows!
Alas, dear wall, of course you have ears.
Oh, such a mighty house!

69 Prayers ending at dawn.
Giants prop up your doors,
your columns are girded.
You have guards here for the night.
And where there are so many guards,
there must be a treasure to be had.
If they are your support,
let us all buttress you up.
Leaving is out of the question:
make room, I’ll get in the middle.

SCENE 9

[On the street, in front of LEONARDA’s house]

LISANDRO stands between VALERIO and OTÓN, and a SHERIFF enters with a lantern, and servants, and a scribe

SHERIFF    Quite a take in that card game!

SCRIBE     And a nice pot, to boot!

SHERIFF    This house has many secrets.
They always hand out food,
and there are women going in and out.
I’ll charge them with something to flush them out.
There are people by that door. Who goes there?
Stop in the name of the King!

OTÓN       We’re not moving!
Get that lantern out of our faces.

SHERIFF    Come closer, hoods off,
so I can take a good look at you.

VALERIO    Look here, we are gentlemen.

SHERIFF    I believe you,
but I need to see you with my own eyes.
People like to play tricks on us.
So come over here . . .

LISANDRO   Please, can we do this somewhere else?
SHERIFF No, we will do it right here.
By God, show yourselves!
My lord Otón, Lisandro, and you, Valerio!
Could you not just have told me your names? 1705

OTÓN I would rather not have.

LISANDRO Nor I.
But I am glad to have the truth out.

VALERIO As am I.
I now confirm my worst suspicions. 1710

SHERIFF So, I can rest assured,
I haven’t inconvenienced you?

LISANDRO Not in the least.
We’re much obliged.

SHERIFF It is my pleasure. 1715
Gentlemen, shall I escort you anywhere?

OTÓN We’ll stay here.

SHERIFF All right, then. Goodbye. Let’s go.

The SHERIFF exits

SCENE 10

[On the street, in front of LEONARDA’s house]

LISANDRO We’re always running into each other!

VALERIO Otón is quite the architect. 1720

OTÓN What about Valerio?

LISANDRO With such a huge gate,
the three of us did all we could.
But I had the upper hand.
VALERIO  Of course: you were in the middle.  
OTÓN  If the sheriff hadn’t shown up, we would have sliced each other up.  
LISANDRO  I feel better knowing that we all acted a bit foolishly.  
OTÓN  That’s not the right word for this lunacy. But aside from that, you were the biggest fool of all, to get between two men.  
LISANDRO  I’d get among a hundred, though they were all Rodamonts.  
OTÓN  Look out for the lion!  
LISANDRO  I’m not kidding. I can crush trees and mountains just as Roland did. But the height of idiocy was that stunt you pulled when you went in there to sell books, and Valerio to sell prints.  
OTÓN  So what? Didn’t our disguises get us in the door?  
VALERIO  Hold on. I wasn’t the only one who made a fool of myself. He dressed up as a peddler with a thousand rosaries, and couldn’t get them to open the door.

---

70 Fearsome Saracen fighter in *Orlando Innamorato* and *Orlando Furioso*.

71 In *Orlando Furioso*, Roland goes on a mad rampage when he discovers that his beloved Angelica has married Medoro.
OTÓN  Is that right?
Well, let me congratulate him then.

LISANDRO  If all is revealed now,
then our game is up.
Let us change our tune,
and figure out who’s the lucky one.
That will give us something to talk about.

OTÓN  If that’s the case,
then I shall say why I, Otón,
came here tonight.

VALERIO  Was it to find out
for whom this door would open?

OTÓN  That’s exactly why I came.

LISANDRO  I am quite certain,
since that’s why I came, too.

VALERIO  As for me, what could it be,
but to answer that same question,
and cast myself in this jealous abyss?

OTÓN  Now that we’ve each spoken
let us affirm our friendship
against the fierce cruelty
of that cold ungrateful heart.
We must see to her dishonor,
and the loss of her reputation.

LISANDRO  Well said, Oton!
How shall we take revenge?
Do you know what has occured to me,
and yet I dare not say?

VALERIO  What?

LISANDRO  I think this widow has
a lover hidden in her house.
Why else would she refuse
to look outside,
if she didn’t already have
what she needs on the inside?
A woman alone, free and rich,
who has denied so many,
must have some manservant
she keeps by her side at night.
Among her servants, Urbán,
who is a quick-witted scoundrel,
is the one I suspect
of serving her best:
he never leaves her side,
goes around well-dressed,
always a little too cheeky,
and whispering to her.

OTÓN

By God! Now I see
her wicked game so clearly!
I’ll slash his face
or I’m no gentleman.
Who could doubt it’s all exactly as you say!

VALERIO

I agree completely,
for I have seen him do some things
which have made me suspect as much.
I swear on my honor,
I’ll leave my mark on him.

LISANDRO

Leave something, if you please,
for the one who revealed the secret.
For I too shall give him
a slash between your two.

OTÓN

Dawn has come.
By God, how sweet it is to take her down!
Let’s go, and we can speak of this later.

VALERIO

I swear I will kill him.

LISANDRO

I will cut off his nose!

OTÓN

What a slashing I’ll give him!

Exeunt
SCENE 11

[On the street]

Enter LUCENCIO, with a letter, and ROSANO, a foreigner

LUCENCIO  This letter explains everything.  
Ercino sends me a son-in-law, and a husband for Leonarda, praising his nobility.

ROSANO  No one can match his ancient blood. 
No young man is better favored: not Adonis, or Pyramus, or Narcissus. No one is wiser or more clever. He writes like the finest Galician poet, plays and dances like master Julio, paints portraits like a Guzmán, and fences like the famous Carranza. At court, he’s secretary to a most important prince, and he is famed there for his dashing ways.

LUCENCIO  Just as the letter says. 
When did you leave Madrid?

ROSANO  It can’t have been more than four days.

LUCENCIO  Any news from the Court?

72 Lucencio, Leonarda’s uncle, thinks of her as a daughter.

73 Examples of extraordinary male beauty from Greek mythology.

74 Galician poet: Galician poet known as Macías the Lover, whose love affairs met a tragic end. Guzmán: probable reference to Pedro de Guzmán (1557-1616), court painter for king Philip III. Carranza: Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, Spanish soldier and writer, considered the founder of Spanish fencing.

75 Lope himself served as secretary to the powerful Duke of Sessa from 1607.
ROSANO Nothing much. But let’s not get distracted. Be honest with me, if you can trust me, and show me this widow, so that I might describe her. They insisted that I see her, for her beauty is famous in Madrid.

LUCENCIO That will be up to her. She is more private than she is famous. Although you may be sorry to hear it, you should know she is as tough and stubborn as any wild creature, despite her wit and beauty. It’s been a month since I visited to encourage her to wed, and with this I’ve spared us hurt feelings and harsher words. If I were to bring this gentleman’s case, I suspect it would all be in vain, for if she will not marry here in Valencia, much less will she leave for Madrid. That being said, we will do our best.

ROSANO I am much disheartened by your news, sir, but we must certainly try it, so I can at least say I made the attempt.

LUCENCIO I will make arrangements for us to speak with her today, for I have always been beholden to Ercino.

ROSANO Go on, I beg you!

LUCENCIO People are coming. They mustn’t hear of this.

Exeunt

SCENE 12

[On the street]
As I was saying, Floro, after that first night when I was hooded like a hawk, and had to follow blindly, came another six or seven nights in the same manner, until finally I enjoyed her, only by the light of our eyes. I envy those birds that fly by night, and might see in the dark what I adore by touch alone. I have become fond of her without seeing more than I can sense by touch, as blind men do. It’s a strange business. I have done things to see her —don’t think I have not tried!— that would have softened any savage barbarian, any monster: now pretending mortal pains with moans and sighs, now swearing never to see her again with vows and promises. But neither sweet words, nor fury, nor anger would persuade her to show herself. And so, I am left enchanted and obsessed.

Of course you are! What a story! Why not take your own light?

To dare such a thing, Floro, could cost me my life. When Psyche looked upon Cupid while taking pleasure in the dark, she lost that glorious love,
and caused her own sorrow.\textsuperscript{76}

**FLORO**

What will you do,  
under the spell of such blind love?  
1910

**CAMILO**

I’ll imitate Cupid,  
who loves without seeing.\textsuperscript{77}

**FLORO**

Can’t you take some chalk with you,  
to mark the door?

**CAMILO**

Her man has such tricks  
that I lose my bearings.  
I could be outside the gate  
and he’ll tell me I’m inside.

**FLORO**

Here comes a lady’s coach.

*Enter LEONARDA and JULIA, with capes*

**CAMILO**

And from it descends,  
a beautiful widow.  
1920

**FLORO**

The maid’s not bad either.

**LEONARDA**

What a wonderful orchard.

**JULIA**

It’s lovely in all seasons.

**LEONARDA**

(Aside to JULIA) Julia, that’s Camilo!  
1925

**JULIA**

I saw him, too, my lady!

**CAMILO**

I am at your service, ladies.

**LEONARDA**

(Aside to JULIA) Should I speak to him?

**JULIA**

Do it.

\textsuperscript{76} In Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass*, Psyche forever forsakes the god Cupid’s love when she lights a lamp to see him.

\textsuperscript{77} Cupid is often depicted as blindfolded, symbolizing that love is blind.
The fields are deserted. 1930

LEONARDA (To CAMILO) You’re too kind.

CAMILO You deserve nothing less. You are like Apollo’s own light. I invoke light, you see, for that is what I most desire, of all the things I see, though I do not see my love so clearly. In any case, light is the only thing the heavens have given earth that might match your beauty. 1935

LEONARDA You’re very fond of light for a man who is not blind.

CAMILO It comes from a certain lack, but I mustn’t go on.

LEONARDA I understand: you mean love. 1940

CAMILO And would you believe that my lady herself is like a radiant sun?

LEONARDA Surely you exaggerate.

CAMILO No, for she is Diana, so powerful and divine, that I see her not, but feel her everywhere. 1950

LEONARDA Diana? Like the moon?

CAMILO The very same.

LEONARDA That’s a shame. For a thousand look upon her, yet none can touch her. 1955

CAMILO Yet I touch her without seeing her!

LEONARDA No doubt you must be mad.
CAMILO  Truly, for I have touched her in the dark, and I have fallen in love.  1960

LEONARDA  And this moon, does she see you?  

CAMILO  She claims she does, and swears she sees me every day. Yet I never see her, by God!  1965

LEONARDA  If she sees you, there can be no doubt: she must be in love.  

CAMILO  I think she likes me.  

LEONARDA  That is plain to see. Would you leave her for any other woman?  1970

CAMILO  I am insulted that your lips could so doubt my devotion. I would not leave her for an angel of beauty or a worthy Roman maiden.  1975

LEONARDA  If you saw her, disillusion might change your mind.  

CAMILO  I need not worry about that, for I have felt her with these hands: her brow is high, and her nose, the foundation of a beautiful face, is flawless. Her eyes are . . . pronounced, a sign of their loveliness. Her neck, her breast, everything else is pure perfection. Her wit and intelligence need no explanation: to witness both is enough to make you lose your mind.  1980  1985  1990
A very Iris is her handmaiden,  
and Mercury her ambassador!  
The world melts away  
when she sends them down for me.

LEONARDA You are quite the odd suitor.  
I’ve never heard the like.

CAMILO Nor have I ever seen anyone endure  
the darkness they inflict upon me.  
And though my happiness  
is somewhat clouded by this cruelty,  
I love those shadows of mine more  
than others value the light.

LEONARDA And what is your name?

CAMILO Camilo.

LEONARDA It’s good to know the name  
of such an Amadis in love.  
May you enjoy your Diana  
for many years.

CAMILO Do not doubt it,  
if her tricks do not kill me first.

LEONARDA God be with you, dark suitor.

CAMILO May he give you a wealthy husband.

FLORO (Aside to JULIA) Tell me: may I speak to you  
tonight in the courtyard?

JULIA I live all the way over by Zaidía.  
You wouldn’t want a lady so far away.

Exeunt LEONARDA and JULIA

78 The hugely popular chivalric romance *Amadís de Gaula* (1508) famously involves secret assignations.

79 Known today as Saïdia, this Valencian district is located north of Ciutat Vella (the Old City, today’s city center).
SCENE 13

FLORO You carried on like old folks:
“Nice weather we’re having! What a fine day!”
Why did you not court her?
She is a beautiful widow—
a thousand men die for her love.

CAMILO You read my mind!
But my love is steadfast.
I would not fall in love with her,
or even one more beautiful,
although she might fall for me.
She is not worth two cents,
nor anyone else you might name,
for that would be to compare
a queen with a slave.
I tell you, mine is an angel,
there can be no doubt.

FLORO You thought the widow was that bad?
CAMILO So-so. She would do.

FLORO Well, she seemed fine to me.

CAMILO Oh, Floro, if you could see my lady,
you would sing her praises instead!

FLORO I would take the widow.

SCENE 14

[On the street]

Enter URBÁN, with his sword out, backing away from OTÓN, LISANDRO, and VALERIO

URBÁN Three men against one!

OTÓN Let the dog die!
URBÁN Will you not tell me how I have offended you?  

VALERIO Die!  

CAMILO Stop, gentlemen, hold off! That’s enough! Surely my presence here should make you observe the rules of courtesy. I am Camilo, a friend to all.  

FLORO Get behind us.  

URBÁN If they came at me one by one . . .  

OTÓN He found a good second in you, Camilo, though he’s a vile and shameless lackey. 

CAMILO No more of this, on my life. If you’re lucky, he won’t have recognized you. 

VALERIO As you wish.  

LISANDRO We are at your service.  

CAMILO I am much obliged.  

OTÓN Let’s go.  

Exeunt OTON, LISANDRO, and VALERIO

SCENE 15

CAMILO Tell me, you devil, what did you do to those gentlemen?  

URBÁN Good Camilo, I throw myself at your feet. I swear that neither in deed, word, nor thought did I ever offend them.  

CAMILO Gentlemen would never gang up on a lone man with no provocation.
That’s impossible

URBÁN
That’s true.
They may have been confused,
and took me for another man. 2070

CAMILO
That must be it.

FLORO
They picked a nice deserted spot to let you have it.

CAMILO
Let’s see him to his house, Floro.

URBÁN
The city gate is far enough. 2075

FLORO
You really owe my master, now.

URBÁN
(Aside) If I owe him, I have paid him well.
ACT III

SCENE 1

[On the street]

Enter CAMILO and CELIA, lady, wearing a cape

CAMILO  Shut up, and leave me alone.

CELIA  What do you mean, shut up?

CAMILO  I’ll come later.

CELIA  There is no later.

CAMILO  Have you lost your mind, Celia?

CELIA  In the street or wherever I may be,

CAMILO  Calm down and be patient.

CELIA  it is only fitting

CAMILO  Let’s talk here, quietly,

CELIA  that all should know of your betrayal.

CAMILO  so no one will hear us.

CELIA  And let go of me.

CAMILO  What tokens of love

CELIA  In the street or wherever I may be,

CAMILO  have I received from you?

CELIA  it is only fitting

CAMILO  Bad nights, bad days,

CELIA  that all should know of your betrayal.

CAMILO  words, rages, and jealousies.

CELIA  Let’s talk here, quietly,

CAMILO  What worries me most

CELIA  so no one will hear us.

CAMILO  is that you’re no longer hurting me.

CELIA  And let go of me.

CAMILO  How could I love you, wicked as you are!

CELIA  Let’s go over there.

CAMILO  What worries me most

CELIA  Celia, go home and wait.

CAMILO  is that you’re no longer hurting me.

CELIA  There is much we need to discuss.

CAMILO  How could I love you, wicked as you are!

CELIA  You shouldn’t be out here in the street.

CAMILO  Look at me now, you traitor!

CELIA  Besides, people are looking at me,

CAMILO  and I have business to attend to.
CELIA  You, at my house?  
You haven’t been there in two months!  
And yet somehow you think I’m so crazy  
I would believe the words  
of a heart so false!  
No, my friend, once that heart gets away,  
I will be left to chase the wind.  

CAMILO  By God, be careful with your hands!  
You’ve torn my cloak.  

CELIA  I was after your heart,  
where such cruelty lies.  

CAMILO  It was soft for you once,  
and like wax to your will,  
but some men would rather not  
share the goods, you know.  
Look out, they can see us!  

CELIA  He’s afraid of being seen!  
Hush now, don’t make a fuss.  
Just let a new lady fall for him,  
if she hasn’t already,  
the new apple of his eye—  
the first time they fight  
over petty jealousies,  
then she’ll see what he’s about.  

CAMILO  You want to drive me crazy.  

CELIA  No doubt he will tell her too:  
“This woman is chasing me,  
but I cannot stand the sight of her,  
on your life and mine,  
there is no reason for you to worry,  
I will kiss your foot  
in front of her.”  

CAMILO  Would you stop this and leave me alone?  
Were we not over?
SCENE 2

[On the street. The stage is divided in two, on one side LEONARDA and JULIA, and on the other CAMILO and CELIA]

Enter LEONARDA and JULIA, with capes

JULIA    (Aside to LEONARDA) It’s very late for you to be out on your own.

LEONARDA As late as it is, Urbán still has not come.  

JULIA   He has taken a long time.  
         But why did you not bring Clara’s squire along?  

LEONARDA So I wouldn’t have to see that long sad face of his.  

LEONARDA sees CAMILO and CELIA

      Oh, Julia, but my fate is even sadder!

JULIA   My lady! What is the matter?

LEONARDA Oh, Julia!

JULIA   You look like death warmed over!  

LEONARDA How could I not, when I’m at death’s door?  

JULIA   Be careful, it’s not yet very dark.  
         Hush, or cover up your face.  
         We could have avoided all this,  
         if you had come by coach.    

JULIA also sees CAMILO and CELIA

      Oh, you poor woman,  
      now I see which way the wind blows!

---

80 Leonarda refers here to a servant who never appears in the play.
LEONARDA  This is what I deserve
for my mad desire.
I wish I didn’t know you,
just as you don’t know me.
Then I could enjoy you without seeing you,
just as you don’t see me.
This is what you get when you trust in oaths,
in words, and vows!
They are but scraps of paper
in the wind.
To think he claimed to love
no other woman in the world!

JULIA  And it is true,
for he said that by night,
and he loves her by day.
Look, my lady, you won’t keep the one you love,
if you won’t let him look at you . . .
Love is born of sight,
and touch alone won’t do.

LEONARDA  What about hearing?

JULIA  That may do
for the lover who is all talk.
Some men will follow a voice
hidden inside a cloak,
and when they find an ugly woman,
they say, “To the devil with her.”

CAMILO  Tell me, what is it I owe you?
I will do right by you.

CELIA  First, the great faith I put in you,
which is a novel thing with us.
Second, my loyalty in not
seeking pleasure elsewhere,
and always matching my desires to yours.
A thousand icy nights,
spent waiting for you by my window,
while an old woman scolded me—
and—oh, my poor arms, my poor hair!—
and, in sum, never to have denied you anything you wanted.

CAMILO
I’ve made up for all that and more by keeping you in fine style. You cost me a pretty penny, not to speak of the clothes.

CELIA
That’s a nice speech coming from a gentleman! I want nothing of yours. Let Floro come, and I’ll give him back in gold anything I’ve had from you. Fine clothes those were! A sad little skirt with two miserable sashes, a wretched little petticoat . . . What strings of pearls you’ve decked me with! What chains you’ve hung about my neck! What rich tapestries, the best in Flanders! What a house you have built me, with its garden, its gate, its balcony! Even those who are but the dirt beneath my feet have more than I do. Given how you ignore me, I should have spent time with another— I might have had fewer complaints, at least, if not anything to gain. Was I so very poor, so wretched, so despised, when I let you in my house?

LEONARDA
Do you see how riled up she is? If only I could hear what they are saying!

JULIA
Would it not have been better to go home than to hope that no one will recognize you as they pass you on the street? Besides, it’s getting dark.

LEONARDA
That and my mantle
means no one will see me.

**JULIA**
I do believe you’re jealous.
I never would have imagined
that a lady who enjoys
such affairs in the dark
would light up with jealousy.

**CELIA**
What, me?

**CAMILO**
Yes, you, Celia.
Now you know where I stand.
Leave me.

**CELIA**
Consider yourself left.
Jesus, such treachery! Jesus!

**CAMILO**
You can cross yourself a thousand times over . . .

**CELIA**
You leave me with these protestations?
Goodbye. No more accusations.

**CELIA exits**

**CAMILO**
The facts are clear . . .

**SCENE 3**

[On the street, LEONARDIA and CAMILO meet and talk]

**CAMILO**
Where has she gone?

**LEONARDIA**
*(Aside)* What do I say?

**CAMILO**
Are these veiled ladies speaking to me?

**LEONARDIA**
We’re not quite as shameless
as that fool over there.
Is she that Diana
you mentioned in the orchard?

**CAMILO**
*(Aside)* This little widow is dying
to play loose with me.  
*(Aloud)* Uncover yourselves,  
so you won’t resemble her, either.

**LEONARDA**  
I’m glad to see that you hate  
what you loved so recently.  

**CAMILO**  
Those goddesses  
are just fantasies now.  
They are like nights without days,  
and lies made of truth.  
They are dubious pleasures,  
and bland delicacies,  
a confusing masquerade,  
and waking dreams.  
They make one sneak  
through gardens at night,  
pretending to see  
what remains unseen,  
counting and taking  
money in the dark.  
If you will love me,  
we’ll just let Diana sleep,  
for she is a night with no dawn,  
and much too fond of herself.  
She wants to be loved on faith alone,  
as if she were heaven itself.  
Yet she is nothing but a sound,  
heard but not seen.

**LEONARDA**  
You must have seen her  
and lost your illusions.  

**CAMILO**  
It’s because I haven’t seen her  
that I want no more of this arrangement.  
If I could see her as I see you,  
and if she were as beautiful,  
no doubt I would love her.  

**LEONARDA**  
Truly?

**CAMILO**  
By God, yes!  
Because you’re a pearl,
and soon enough I’ll tire
of being a slave to a lady, who will not let me see her.
Why should I waste my youth
taxed with the burden
of safeguarding her modesty, just because she feels like it?
If she is afraid of being exposed and defamed by the common people
as other women are, if she values her reputation so dearly,
let her post a giant by her door.

LEONARDA    That’s very well said.
But you must be off now, sir—people are coming.

CAMILO     So scornful so quickly?
You dismiss me because you think I’m fickle.

LEONARDA    Did you not hear me? Go.
CAMILO     I’m leaving, you intractable little widow.
CAMILO exits

SCENE 4

LEONARDA    Ah, traitor!
As if insulting me were not enough, he also wanted to woo me?

JULIA       Now you know.
The sermon was not bad if you know how to take it.

LEONARDA    He couldn’t have said it better if he’d known the truth.
He left me speechless!
I did not know what to say!
JULIA  It was a lofty sermon.

LEONARDA  A shock like that
overcomes all the senses.
Tonight and no more!
You'll see how I dismiss him
for his good sense.

JULIA  And what will you say to him about this?

LEONARDA  Why would I bring it up?
What fine nonsense!

Enter URBÁN

URBÁN  There is not a place in the city
I have not looked.
I have been home twice,
hoping to find you there.

LEONARDA  You were nowhere to be found
on the one day I went out on foot.
Tonight you must summon
that suitor from the bridge.

URBÁN  I will, right away.

LEONARDA  Julia,
you will see to the side door.

URBÁN  Your uncle awaits you at home.

LEONARDA  Wonderful!
That’s the icing on the cake!

URBÁN  A stranger from Madrid
is with him.

LEONARDA  What brings him here?

URBÁN  I don’t know.

LEONARDA  Lord, let me just make it
through tonight.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE 5**

[On the street, next to LEONARDA's house]

*Enter LISANDRO and OTÓN, by night*

**LISANDRO**

Now that the night will finally allow us to act, Otón, why are you so sad?

**OTÓN**

My sorrow speaks for itself. That’s explanation enough. What pain compares to mine, when my fury has brought me to this pass?

**LISANDRO**

What do you mean?

**OTÓN**

She favors my rival.

**LISANDRO**

My patience is wearing thin with this talk of jealousy and insults. We agreed on a truce. A wise man must persevere calmly.

**OTÓN**

That’s not what bothers me. But why should Urbán deny such dashing young men as ourselves a reward well deserved? I am a brave man, and even if a hundred Camilos were to come to his defense, he would be bloodied once the knives were out. And Camilo, who is he to be running the show? It’s good to show a man respect, but I swear I regretted it afterward.
LISANDRO  Don’t let it weigh on you.  
No matter how dark the night,  
this door will never see a man  
pass through without getting  
his face slashed open.  
Here comes someone who looks like Valerio.  

OTÓN  It’s about time  
for him to get his sword.  

*Enter* VALERIO  

VALERIO  Just let him try to enter this street!  

OTÓN  A fitting response.  
No Gradasso, no Roland, would guard the entrance  
as you two do.  

LISANDRO  Sit.  

OTÓN  Where?  

LISANDRO  Just on the ground,  
sit on your cape with  
your shield to the side.  

VALERIO  There is not much light  
From the moon tonight.  

OTÓN  It’s veiled like the widow,  
surrounded by clouds.  
The storm is about to break.  

LISANDRO  If only we had  
a bearded witch in this city!  

VALERIO  What for?  

LISANDRO  So that she could make the widow

---

81 Two knights in Boiardo’s *Orlando Innamorato* and Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*. 
pine for thirty men.  82

OTÓN  As long as she forgets that one traitor whose face awaits its just reward.

VALERIO  Let’s write a little song about it.

OTÓN  By God, what splendid villainy! Rest assured, we will shame her.

LISANDRO  Shouldn’t we be ashamed, noblemen that we are?

OTÓN  I always say, “If you can’t say anything nice . . .” Such pointed satire would be a low blow, and unworthy of us.

VALERIO  You’re right, brother, and yet it’s so good to criticize that all rules go out the window. It’s like a good fire in winter, or a cool room in summer. We’d better sing their praises instead, or improvise a song for the lovers.

LISANDRO  Do you have any rhymes for me?

OTÓN  Let’s work the refrain.

VALERIO  Oh, aren’t you a song-book!

LISANDRO  Let’s hear it.

OTÓN  How about this: “the widow and her squire.”

82 Lisandro is invoking a figure like Celestina, the famous matchmaker and sorceress in the eponymous text, who specialized in love-spells.
Valerio: Oh, that's good!

Lisandro: I will start:
Gentlemen, in these loves,
and our fierce rivalry,
Angelica and her suitors
inhabit our fair city.
Roland are you,
you, the brave Sacripante.
I, Ferragut, the Moor.
But Angelica and Medore . . .
ah, the widow and her squire!

Valerio: Most honorable squire
Spain ever could yield,
you have taken as yours
a most burnished shield,
adorned with your arms.
I'd like to enhance it,
so it comes to no harm
with the finest medallion,
in gold as bright as fire,
ah, the widow and her squire!

Otón: There sits shining Gemini
in the heights of heaven.
Two figures form this sign:
a man and a woman,
their flesh intertwined.
The stars I can't decipher,
but, by God, in my mind,
every night they conspire
just like in that sign:
ah, the widow and her squire!

Valerio: Look! They've opened the door,
and Urbán is coming out, with his hood up.

Otón: Who?

---

83 Sacripante and Ferragut are additional Saracen knights in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*. Angelica spurns Orlando and the other knights who pursue her to marry Medoro.
VALERIO Urbán.

OTÓN Are you sure? 2470

VALERIO Yes.

LISANDRO I can’t believe it!

VALERIO Go and give it to him.

ROSANO appears, and LISANDRO stabs him

LISANDRO Enough of this!

ROSANO Oh! I’ve been stabbed! 2475

OTÓN Around that corner!

LISANDRO Well done.

Exeunt LISANDRO, VALERIO, and OTÓN

SCENE 6

[On the street, outside of LEONARDA’s house]

ROSANO Open this door. Oh, this is the end of me! It’s a big house, and they can’t hear my call. Was this what you brought me to, you false old man? They must have been other suitors. Be strong, courage is no match for betrayal. A fine blow they’ve given me. This is how they send me back to Madrid!

ROSANO exits

SCENE 7

[In LEONARDA’s house]

Enter LEONARDA, JULIA, and LUCENCIO
LEONARDA Have a servant light the way for my uncle. 2485
JULIA Rodulfo is bringing one now.
LUCENCIO Is that necessary?
LEONARDA Of course, my lord.
And I’ll have another servant
escort you as well, with a sword. 2490
LUCENCIO Who would want to hurt me?
LEONARDA I know you’re loved by all.
LUCENCIO I’m pleased about that fellow,
and he leaves well served.
LEONARDA I admit, uncle,
I’m happy to make this marriage.
I’ve been unkind to so many of our own,
I hope I’ll find forgiveness
in loving a man from elsewhere. 2495
LUCENCIO He’s been fortunate.
He’ll be richly rewarded
when he gets to Madrid.
LEONARDA Tell them to begin the preparations.
JULIA They have waited so long.
LUCENCIO God keep you. 2500
LEONARDA May He go with you.
LUCENCIO exits
JULIA I was getting worried.
There was someone at the side door.
Who it was, I do not know.
SCENE 8

Enter URBÁN

LEONARDA Urbán, my friend, why are you alone with your mask in your hand? 2510

URBÁN Everything has gone wrong.

LEONARDA What, my brother? Tell me what happened?

URBÁN I got to the bridge at ten. Camilo graciously awaited me, listening to the water’s murmur. I approached him at once, and he turned from the rail. Once I covered his eyes, I was the lad, and he the blind man. We walked through the city contemplating and praising, me, your beauty and fame, he, his love and desires. I asked him if there was another in Valencia who pleased him by day more than your dark chambers. And he is telling me a story about a jealous woman who chased and hounded him in streets, plazas, and churches, when a sheriff arrives and wants to know who we are. Camilo takes off Love’s blindfold at once. He approaches, and says who he is, leaving the sheriff satisfied, but he never asked that I be allowed to keep on my mask. So they take off my mask. Camilo and the rest see me, and though they let me go free, I might as well be their prisoner. 2545
Camilo, upon seeing my face, smiles and says: “Friend, let’s forget these games and continue on, unmasked.”

Then like the hounded deer running through the hills, swift as the wind, I leave Camilo behind and, by empty streets, return exposed and ashamed, to tell you of this sad turn.

LEONARDA No! Behind one misfortune, a greater one follows! What will I do?

JULIA This is not the time to forget who you are. Now is when courage counts.

LEONARDA There is no courage amid such grief, for heaven’s wrath cuts through steel and diamonds. Any weakness will be noted in someone like me. But I think I can muster a clever way out. Urbán, for a few days, you’ll serve my cousin, and make your way through Valencia, never coming near me. That way, when Camilo follows you, he’ll believe it’s for her sake that he comes and goes.

JULIA This is no small thing, what honor requires of you.

URBÁN So let’s see: you’ll dishonor your cousin? Is that not a mad idea?

LEONARDA Urbán, for the sake of my honor, all must be forgiven. Let this stain fall on my cousin, as long as my reputation shines.
URBÁN Don’t you see this is an outrage?

LEONARDA That’s reputation for you. You push another man forward when you’re threatened with a knife, and let him take the blow that was meant for you. Just as your hand flies up to defend your face, which is the nobler part, surely there is nothing inhuman in this. Go rest, and tomorrow, you’ll go with her to mass at the Church of the Miracle.

URBÁN You’ll make your own miracle with this Grecian plot. But tell me, who will go, tomorrow, to fetch your beau?

LEONARDA Julia, in disguise, Urbán. She will dress as a man.

JULIA And if I run into trouble?

LEONARDA Your blind man will defend you.

JULIA He’s the one I’m afraid of.

LEONARDA What?

JULIA He’s all fired up—he’ll know tinder when he sees it.

Exeunt

SCENE 9

Ancient Greeks had a reputation as tricksters, in part because of the Trojan horse, the treacherous gift that led to the fall of Troy.
[The next morning, in front of LISANDRO’s house]

Enter OTÓN and VALERIO

VALERIO They say he’s getting up now.

OTÓN He sleeps like a log, and the time it takes him to dress, Valerio, is something to behold.

VALERIO He must have gone to bed early. He didn’t make many rounds last night.

Enter LISANDRO

LISANDRO On the contrary, I was up all night with the squire and the surgeon.

OTÓN You’re still buttoning up?

VALERIO The surgeon kept you up? Great joke! But I’ll believe it.

OTÓN Enough. Was there anyone, you think, who might have recognized us?

LISANDRO The street was deserted.

VALERIO You gave it to him good!

OTÓN It was unbelievable! Did you get him in the head or the face?

LISANDRO I think I got it all, because the slashes I give run all the way to the neck.

OTÓN Good God!

VALERIO Amen.

OTÓN That’s what they say about Roland. Look out! Here comes Urbán.
VALERIO Who?

OTÓN Urbán.

LISANDRO What? Who did you say?

OTÓN Indeed! It’s Urbán, and he’s the picture of health.

LISANDRO Take a good look at him.

OTÓN What is there to see? You must have had a soft touch last night.

VALERIO “The slashes I give run all the way to the neck.”

OTÓN Head and face both—he’s split from head to toe!

SCENE 10

URBÁN has entered

LISANDRO I’m ready to give it to him now.

OTÓN Stop.

VALERIO Urbán, where are you going?

URBÁN I’m in a hurry and full of worry. My lady is off to mass.

OTÓN Who? Leonarda?

URBÁN I’ve been at her cousin’s house for a long time now, and I come and go with her.

VALERIO (Aside to LISANDRO) Not likely to get him, then!
LISANDRO  

(Aside to VALERIO) There must be some wounded foreigner or servant around.  

OTÓN  

Then, please, be on your way.  

LISANDRO  

But wait.  

URBÁN  

Anything else? I’m in a hurry.  

OTÓN  

Tell us something about your lady.  

URBÁN  

She is a Portia by reputation.  

LISANDRO  

Come here.  

URBÁN  

The bells are ringing for Mass.  

URBÁN exits  

VALERIO  

He’s gone, the scoundrel.  

OTÓN  

If he’s not there, then Leonarda must be alone.  

LISANDRO  

Oh, such empty gossip! If he were her gallant, she would not spare him for an hour.  

VALERIO  

That’s how love is.  

LISANDRO  

So whom did we honor with our affection last night? And not with the flat of the knife, but with the blade!  

VALERIO  

The Roman Fabricious could not have done it better.  

---

85 Roman model of female virtue. Portia, Brutus’s wife, injured herself to test her courage.  

86 Gaius Fabricius Luscinus Monocularis was an ancient Roman magistrate from the third century BCE, praised as an example of integrity and virtue.
It’s no use asking who he was, for he is no longer.

_He draws his sword_

LISANDRO I need to know.

OTÓN Blood will out.

LISANDRO There’s blood all over. Is that not enough?

VALERIO I believe it, Lisandro.

OTÓN Where shall we go now?

VALERIO To the cathedral.

LISANDRO No, we should go to San Juan, instead.

_Exeunt_

SCENE 11

[On the street]

Enter CAMILO and FLORO

FLORO Why are you crossing yourself so much?

CAMILO What do you expect, now that the truth has undone the spell?

FLORO Could you make that man out last night?

CAMILO I saw him, Floro, as clear as I see you now. And I stared at him without blinking, memorizing his visage. I laid awake, contemplating his features, etched in stone in my memory till sleep got hold of me at dawn.
I could paint his portrait on this table,  
as they say Apelles did.87

**FLORO**  
And you say you saw him with his mistress today?  

**CAMILO**  
That’s the end of my illusions, Floro.  
I saw his face last night,  
today I saw him with this good matron,  
and now I’m miserable.

**FLORO**  
Tell me the whole thing,  
so I may get the picture.

**CAMILO**  
Then listen:  
I was leaving the Church of the Miracle,  
mulling over last night—  
for that was truly something—  
when, going down the steps,  
all at once, I see the squire,  
his pace calm and slow,  
his face modest, his stance upright.  
He led by the hand a fair maid  
—as they say in old books—  
sixty if she was a day.  
I wouldn’t want more points  
in a game of cards than this goddess  
had wrinkles on her face.  
For if she was ancient as a goddess,  
she was uglier than the devil,  
her color somewhere  
between pale and dun.  
A low and hairy brow,  
a few white hairs,  
eyebrows smudged with soot  
to make up for the hair she lacked.  
Eyes that shone in the dark  
like those of a dead nag,  
a nose like a lump of chalk,  
and a beard to boot.  
Her head was on crooked, Floro,

---

87 Famous Greek painter from the fourth century BCE. On one occasion Apelles drew a portrait on a wall,  
making the subject recognizable to everyone after just a few strokes.
she had no neck to speak of,  2735
waddling like a goose,  
bow-legged and sluggish.
I felt like pushing her,  
and throwing her to the ground,  
but I came to my senses,  
and retreated in my shame.  2740

**FLORO**  
These were the dangers you faced, sir?  
For this you risked eternal shame?  
If only you had followed my advice  
to tear a peephole in your hood,  
or made good use of your sword!  
No one would have killed or offended you.  
You fell for a rough bed  
covered with damask and fine linen,  
velvets and brocade!  
But what are you going to do now?  2750

**CAMILO**  
I’ll get ink and paper at the nearest tavern,  
and I’ll tell her what’s what,  
and what I think of her.  
I’ll give her a good tongue lashing.  
Tongues can be harsh, you know,  
all the more when she realizes  
she has been found out,  
and has lost the tender lad she tricked.  

**FLORO**  
Didn’t you tell me that you touched her,  
that she was young and spirited and fit,  
that she spoke with elegance and wit?  2760

**CAMILO**  
Don’t shame me, or blame me: I couldn’t see.  
Urbán is with her now, at Mass.  
Give him this message I’m writing now,  
so he can give it to her.  2765

**FLORO**  
A fine lady you’ve enjoyed!

**CAMILO**  
This is no time for jokes, Floro.

**FLORO**  
Oh, what a beautiful girl!
SCENE 12

[In LEONARDA’s house]

Enter LEONARDA and JULIA

JULIA So you’ve made up your mind to love a foreigner at last? 2770

LEONARDA Jealousy, Julia, has brought me to this pass, that traitor for whom I die, and my honor, which I cherish. 2775

LEONARDA I’d better leave Camilo before anyone gets wind of my secret ways. Absence will work best, Julia. He is so deeply imprinted in the soul he took from me. I would go mad, I confess, were I to stay without him. 2780

JULIA It was a fine way to take your pleasure, and leave your honor unstained. 2785

LEONARDA A woman in love unmakes any law. 2790

JULIA Yet if the secretary lives up to what those letters promise, he’ll easily rival Camilo.

LEONARDA I’m sure he’ll be his equal, but the bird in hand was good.
JULIA  What an uproar there’ll be throughout the city, when they see you’ve married in another kingdom!

LEONARDA  It won’t matter. I’ll be gone.

Enter URBÁN

URBÁN  (To LEONARDA) Me, doing your bidding? Priceless.

LEONARDA  Why the rush, Urbán?

URBÁN  Now that gentleman has seen me walk your cousin to Mass.

LEONARDA  And? How did he react?

URBÁN  With a candle in each hand, he rushed up to see us, then crossed himself a thousand times, which proves that your plan worked. When we left, his servant gave me this sealed letter to hand to your cousin, as if she had anything at all to do with this.

LEONARDA  We’ve played him well. Show me, let’s see what it says.

URBÁN  No doubt he’ll tell her to stay away from him.

LEONARDA  He’ll say he’s angry, and complain he has been tricked.

She reads

“You old bag from hell, in love at seventy, and enjoying lusty lads,
whom you entice with spells,
by pretending to be
a tender young girl.          2825
Today I saw your ancient face,
your sooty brows, your grey hairs,
your crooked nose, your dentures too,
your hands like mortars through and through.
Then I came to my senses and said, full of shame:
“Farewell, oh Circe.”
If you were to play instead Lancelot’s aged maid,
you might look young, in truth.
Just fool another as you fooled me,
and make him wear that hood,
you’ll be crowned as a witch soon enough.”89

URBÁN He breathes fire,
but it’s all smoke.

LEONARDA I’ve brought this upon myself.
His every word burns me,
because I take it to heart.       2840

URBÁN No woman
can stand being called ugly.
Are you ashamed?

LEONARDA Not for a moment.

JULIA Can there be any worse insult?         2845

URBÁN What insult?
He thinks your old cousin
is the one who tricked him!

LEONARDA Fortunately love inspires me
to come to my own defense.
Camilo is being a fool.
He felt how tender I was,

88 Circe: in Homer’s Odyssey, the sorceress Circe detains the hero and turns his men to beasts. Lancelot: in Arthurian legend, Lancelot was one of the Knights of the Round Table.

89 A pointed hood was placed on the head of convicted heretics or witches, to mark their infamy.
and now calls me a tough old bird.

URBÁN We should right this wrong at once, but talking won’t do the trick. What do you propose?

LEONARDA You’ll go to his inn tonight, for I have a better trick to show him what’s what.

URBÁN You’ll be the one tricked instead.

Exeunt

SCENE 13

[In CAMILO’s house]

Enter CAMILO and FLORO

CAMILO Really, Floro?

FLORO I knew you would not like it, my lord, and God knows how painful it is to let my mouth speak such shameful words. Ever since this morning, when you gave me the message to hand to the squire, I’ve been trying to tell you, though I could not find the words. I know I was wrong, sir, but someone so reasonable, and who has read so much, should know that the effects of love must always be excused.

CAMILO I know, Floro. I do not blame you for that.

FLORO When I saw you had rejected Celia, my lord, and that she was so helpless,
I went to visit and comfort her. Love descended upon me then, and I promised to marry her, as long as you agreed and gave permission. She, with no hope of seeing you again, and flattered by the talk of marriage, gave me her word and her oath. I pray you tell her that you agree to repay my services with such a favor. My parents raised you, you know, and I’ve been your slave since the start.

CAMILO    Floro, I would never resent your marrying Celia because she was mine, or because I’m jealous, or I wished things had ended otherwise. No, it was only my love for you that made me want to find you a better match. If this is your wish, I will not contradict you. If this is God’s will, man should not interfere. Fetch Celia at her house, and I will talk to her.

FLORO    She’s closer than that, sir.

CAMILO    What?

FLORO    She’s here. In my room.

CAMILO    Go fetch her.

FLORO enters again, and CELIA

FLORO    Here is Celia, and your slave (pointing to himself).
CELIA    Heaven knows, sir,
that I am mortified to come to you.
But I hope for your blessing
for such a fitting end.  

CAMILO   Celia, heaven has smiled on you
by giving you such a gift as Floro,
who is not my servant, but my friend.
I will be like a father to you,
and on the day you marry, Celia,
beyond dresses and jewels,
I’ll give you a thousand ducats.
Take her back to your room, Floro.  

CELIA    May God give you a long life.

FLORO    Let me kiss your feet, sir.  

CAMILO   Get up.

CELIA    There’s no prince like him.

FLORO    No one can compare.

*Exeunt FLORO and CELIA*

CAMILO    Happy Floro, who saw clearly what he wanted,
not like the great fool,
who took his pleasure in the dark.  

SCENE 14

*Enter FLORO*

FLORO    It’s not even dark yet,
and that masked man of yours is at the door.
He gave me this message for you to read.

CAMILO    Will these masks never leave me alone?
Is that old woman still after me?
Read it. Let’s see what she says.

*He reads*

“It’s madness to believe so readily, and leads to your own harm. This is no trick, be not alarmed, for no deceit can last so steadily. Come, Camilo, witness my faith so true. You’ll find the truth this very night. At least, before you propose to fight, take the full measure of what you do. I’m not who you think I am, and so, though I must protect my reputation, I propose to you a revelation: in truth, your choice was not so bad, no. Your beloved was no magic Circe, but rather like you, if a bit more gutsy.”Have you ever heard anything like it? Either I’ve lost my mind, or she’s a witch. Is she at it again? Does she want to bewitch me anew? In for a penny, in for a pound. Get me a horse.

I’m going.

Hurry.

She wants to protect her reputation? Tonight I’ll carry a light even if they kill me. Put a candle in a lantern for me.

Unlit?

Lit, you idiot, but covered. With luck they won’t see me carrying it. That hag still wants to pretend she’s a beauty!

*Exeunt*

SCENE 15
[At LEONARDA’s house]

Enter LUCENCIO, LEONARDA, and JULIA

LUCENCIO I hadn’t learned of this until today, niece, and now I’m beside myself.

LEONARDA How badly have they injured him?

LUCENCIO What do you mean, injured? Had he not been in Valencia, he would not have survived. We have the best doctors here, so he should be fine. A fine reward he got that night when he left us with the letters we wrote!

LEONARDA He must have done something to deserve it.

LUCENCIO He swears he spoke to no one, nor does he know why they attacked him.

LEONARDA And he does not know who they were?

LUCENCIO I would give half my wealth to know.

LEONARDA Are you taking care of him?

LUCENCIO I shall take him home, and make sure no one finds out, as your honor demands. Is there ink and paper here? I must let his noble master know.

LEONARDA You there! Light some candles in my room.

LUCENCIO Right away.

Exeunt JULIA and LUCENCIO
LEONARDA  I cannot get rid of this old man tonight!
I am to see Camilo,
yet my uncle hangs around like a shadow.
They should not run into each other, though.
I’ll find a way to hide him.

SCENE 16

Enter JULIA

JULIA  The old man is writing away.

LEONARDA  Urbán must be back by now.

Enter URBÁN and CAMILO

URBÁN  You cannot say
I didn’t bring you your blind man.

LEONARDA  Just seeing him offends me.

CAMILO  Can I take this off now?

LEONARDA  Take these lights away.

CAMILO  Still with this dark lady business?
I will not put up with it.
Here, I am taking this off.
Why should I remain blind,
if everything shall be revealed?

LEONARDA  Then I will hide from you,
as I am who I am.
But you shall not leave here tonight
without knowing the truth.
You have greatly offended me
for thinking such things.
You were mad not to notice
that the lady you enjoyed
was not so very tough and awful.
A man is not so blind
as to let his hands deceive him,
and then to vainly suppose
he has happened on the truth.
But you are inexperienced, it seems,
and quite sure of yourself.
And so you have proved yourself unwise in word and in deed.
Yet I want to forgive you, if only because I love you.

CAMILO
If I was wrong, I hope to excuse myself
but if there is no light, how can we see the truth?
She who put on that show will try many others.

LEONARDA Light is out of the question.

CAMILO That’s that, then?

LEONARDA Though I may lose you, you will not enjoy me in the light.

CAMILO Well, neither is it just, my lady, to deceive a gentleman.
I have unfortunate news for you: I have a light, and I will see you.

He uncovers the light

Jesus! Are you not the widow I have seen so many times?

LEONARDA Oh no!

CAMILO At last my luck has changed.

LEONARDA Is this how a gentleman behaves?

CAMILO Move your hand away from your face.

LEONARDA How could you be so cruel?
SCENE 17

Enter LUCENCIO

LUCENCIO Leonarda, I came as soon as I heard your voice. What’s this? A man here, a man with a naked sword!

CAMILO It was covered until now. It is only naked because of you.

LUCENCIO Get a light, call the others.

JULIA gets a torch

LEONARDA Sir, this is done now. Discretion is the better part of valor. This gentleman is Camilo, whom you know so well. He cares for me, and I for him. And if he is willing, I want to be his wife.

LUCENCIO If you both agree, I’ll be glad to make it so. Go easy, fearsome warrior, I knew you when you were this tall.

CAMILO You are my father and my master. Please, do as requested of you.

LUCENCIO Go, Urbán, and call some witnesses.

URBÁN I will go as fast as I can.

Exeunt CAMILO and URBÁN

LUCENCIO What is this? While I am home, my dear niece, you bring enemies into the house? Why did you have me write a letter,
if this is what you were up to?

SCENE 18

Enter URBÁN, OTÓN, LISANDRO, VALERIO and FLORO

LEONARDA You might as well have brought the whole city!

URBÁN They were almost at the door.

LUCENCIO A good choice! These are honorable gentleman. Now you can witness the betrothal of Camilo and Leonarda, who swear to marry each other.

VALERIO As well they should, noble as he is, and beautiful as she is. May God in heaven give you many good years, and shower you with treasure.

FLORO You and I are both married, my lord, on the very same day.

LISANDRO Such an honorable marriage makes me forget my own love. Instead of leaving for distant lands, you can stay here, to relish what you have, and so enjoy one another for many years to come.

URBÁN Won’t you give Julia to me?

LEONARDA From now on she will be your wife.

OTÓN I’ve ended up a witness, although I was a suitor. I confess he is my better—you have chosen well.
And so enjoy one another for many years to come.

LISANDRO When is the wedding?

LUCENCIO Tomorrow.

VALERIO So soon?

LUCENCIO It is best that way.

CAMILO And with that, I say, ends *The Widow of Valencia*. 