

SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ

LOVE IS THE GREATER LABYRINTH

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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. 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

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was born in Mexico in the mid-seventeenth century (c.1650), the illegitimate daughter of a Spanish father and a *criolla* mother (Mexican-born, but of Spanish descent). She showed an early love of learning, mastering Latin, Greek, and Nahuatl (an indigenous language of central Mexico) at a young age, and pursued the study of philosophy, religion, the arts, and other subjects throughout her life.

Eventually she entered a convent in order to continue her intellectual pursuits free from the constraints of marriage, and soon distinguished herself as a prolific author and scholar. Her works were published and performed widely, as far away as Spain and the Philippines, and she was hailed in her lifetime as “la Décima Musa”—“the Tenth Muse.” However, her fame was also met with controversy, especially her outspoken critiques of the misogynistic culture that limited the opportunities for women in her time.

For many years Sor Juana was affiliated with the court of the Viceroy of New Spain, producing entertainments for religious festivals and state events on commission, in addition to poetry on proto-feminist themes. *Love is the Greater Labyrinth* (*Amor es más laberinto*) is one of only three full *comedias* we have from her. She wrote the play for the new viceroy’s birthday celebration on January 11, 1689 with her collaborator, Juan de Guevara, a priest and author about whom little else is known today.

The play shows Sor Juana’s grasp of the courtly mores of her day and lightly pokes fun at some of their excesses, transposed to ancient Greece, while at the same time offering the kind of spectacular entertainment (with musical interludes, masked balls, and swordfights) then in fashion with her patrons. It also demonstrates her education and Baroque style, featuring intricate verse forms in the original Spanish and complex poetic conceits which make use of everything

from Neoplatonic love theory to philosophical paradoxes and classical allusions. The labyrinthine plot and its complicated tonal shifts show an author confident in her powers and well-versed in the *comedia* tradition pioneered by Spanish luminaries such as Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

Sor Juana died of a plague in 1695, having been forced at the end of her life to give up her studies, but leaving behind a substantial body of work which continues to live on and find new audiences.

Introduction

RHONDA SHARRAH AND AINA SOLEY MATEU

Like the Minotaur itself, *Love is the Greater Labyrinth* (*Amor es más laberinto*, 1689) is a chimerical mix of elements, skillfully weaving the myth of Theseus and the Cretan labyrinth with threads of romance, humor, and sociopolitical commentary. The play demonstrates the variety and playfulness of Baroque drama in the late seventeenth century and provides a dazzling showcase for the pen of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the famous Mexican philosopher, poet, playwright, and nun. The result is a mythological play that finds its Greeks acting suspiciously like seventeenth-century courtiers, matching wits and swords in messy love pentangles as their servants crack sly metatheatrical jokes behind their backs. The plot moves nimbly between emotional registers, from a ranting tyrant spewing death threats one moment to a flirtatious musical interlude at a masked ball the next, as Sor Juana explores the epic consequences of emotion run amok. This new translation of *Love is the Greater Labyrinth*, her final play, provides the English theatrical canon with another example of Sor Juana's timeless brilliance.

THE PLOT

After defeating Athens in war, **Minos**, the tyrannical ruler of Crete, institutes a yearly tribute of fourteen Athenian youths to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, a beast that lives deep inside the labyrinth in his palace. **Teseo**, prince of Athens, is selected as one of the tributes, chosen by lots. He is taken to Crete as a prisoner, accompanied by his servant, **Tuna**. Minos is delighted by this opportunity to avenge his beloved dead son, Androgeus, killed in Athens. Neither the intervention of Athens' ambassador, **Licas**, nor Teseo's account of his own heroic deeds soften Minos' desire for bloodthirsty vengeance.

Meanwhile, the two princesses of Crete, **Fedra** and **Ariadna**, both fall in love with Teseo at first sight. They decide to save him from his fate. Fedra tells Teseo not to lose hope, since Fortune might yet save him. She stops short of confessing that she loves him, mindful of decorum, but he falls for her as well. Ariadna overhears this, becomes jealous, and decides that she will save Teseo before her sister does, in order to redirect his love towards her.

Baco, the prince of Thebes who has been courting Ariadna, overhears her talking about how she loves the man who is courting her sister (meaning Teseo), and wrongly deduces she is talking about **Lidoro**, the prince of Epirus who has been unsuccessfully wooing Fedra. Baco's servant **Vinny** suggests that Baco should make Ariadna jealous by pretending to court Fedra. Baco reluctantly attempts this, until Lidoro walks in and jealously challenges him to a fight. Minos interrupts them and Fedra makes up a story to cover for them, as the act ends with asides from everyone about their tortured feelings (along with Vinny's mockery for their dramatic behavior).

As Act II opens, Teseo has been led into the labyrinth, presumably to his death, but Minos remains overcome by grief over his son and thirst for vengeance. Unbeknownst to him, Teseo has escaped the labyrinth thanks to Ariadna's thread. Ariadna and Fedra organize a masked ball at the temple of Diana in Minos' honor. Each sends her servant with a gift for Teseo, so they can recognize him at the dance. Fedra sends **Laura**, with a sash, while Ariadna sends **Cintia**, with a feather. Teseo and Tuna have a talk about both women courting Teseo—Teseo feels indebted to Ariadna because she saved his life, but he loves Fedra, so he decides to go with his feelings. He takes the sash and gives the feather to Tuna.

Once at the ball, Teseo overhears Fedra asking about the sash, approaches her, and they dance. Baco recognizes Ariadna by her dress, approaches her, and they dance. Lidoro mistakes

the servant Laura for Fedra and dances with her. Tuna has Ariadna's feather, but while dancing with Cintia, he drops it on the floor. Baco picks it up and recognizes it as Ariadna's. Baco thinks Ariadna has given the feather to Lidoro because of what he overheard earlier. Baco wears the feather, and Ariadna, believing he is Teseo, arranges a meeting with him later that night. Lidoro sees Teseo talking to Fedra and thinks he is Baco, since he is under the impression Baco is courting Fedra. Everyone but the princesses (and their servants) still believe Teseo is dead. Meanwhile, Fedra arranges a meeting with Teseo later that night.

The dance ends, and Ariadna and Fedra, separately, wait outside in the garden for Teseo. When Teseo arrives, he runs into Ariadna. Because it's dark, he thinks she is Fedra and begins a romantic conversation with her, in which they both confess their feelings without ever mentioning each other's names. Fedra overhears them and believes that Teseo loves Ariadna. Teseo, however, eventually refers to Ariadna as "divine Fedra" and Ariadna realizes his mistake. Ariadna decides to pretend to be Fedra and rejects Teseo harshly, much to his confusion.

Baco arrives, thinking he is going to meet Ariadna, and both Ariadna and Teseo leave, afraid her father Minos is about to discover them. Baco sees Fedra and mistakes her for Ariadna in the dark. Fedra, for her part, thinks Baco is Teseo and decides to be cruel to him to test his devotion. Ariadna, returning, sees Baco talking to Fedra and assumes he is Teseo, causing her to feel further betrayed. However, as she overhears their discussion, she realizes that Fedra was the person who sent Teseo the sash as a token, and this mysterious man with the feather –her own token– is someone else. Ariadna, then, comprehends that Teseo has chosen Fedra over her. Teseo, also eavesdropping, soon realizes that Fedra thinks she is talking to him instead of Baco, so he decides to interrupt their conversation and Baco's attempts to woo her.

Teseo leaps out of hiding and begins to fight Baco, as the two princesses call for their servants to bring a light. Teseo and Tuna flee into the labyrinth to avoid being discovered just as Lidoro, drawn by the sound of swords clashing, enters and begins to fight Baco himself. Laura and Cintia enter with the torches, and all the characters remaining onstage finally recognize each other. Fedra and Ariadna are relieved Teseo has escaped and attempt to deflect attention from their own compromising position outside at night by chastising Lidoro and Baco for their indecorous behavior. Lidoro and Baco privately swear vengeance on each other, and each character closes the act lamenting that they are now truly caught in the labyrinth of love.

Act III begins with Baco seeking to challenge Lidoro to a duel, because he now believes Lidoro is courting both sisters. While Baco's servant Vinny is on his way to Lidoro with a letter bearing the challenge, he runs into Tuna. Vinny thinks Tuna serves Lidoro, and gives him the letter, assuring him Lidoro will reward him for his services. Secretly, Vinny hopes to avoid being punished as the messenger delivering bad news. Tuna assumes the letter is from one of the two princesses, and Vinny, hoping to encourage him to take over the delivery, tells him it is from Fedra. Tuna is excited about his upcoming reward.

Before Tuna can find Lidoro, Teseo enters and assumes Tuna is bringing him a letter from Fedra. When Teseo reads it, however, he finds it is a challenge to a duel and assumes it was intended for him. He takes out his anger on Tuna (just as Vinny feared) and goes to fight Baco in the garden, leaving the letter behind. Tuna, who can't read, thinks Fedra must have named Lidoro in what he believes is a love letter, causing Teseo's anger. Nonetheless, Tuna still hopes for a reward from someone, so he reseals the letter and goes off again to find Lidoro.

Meanwhile, Baco is delayed from going to the duel by Minos, who has news that Athens, outraged by Teseo's supposed death by Minotaur, is sending an army to destroy Crete in

revenge. They leave to discuss the situation just before Teseo arrives at the garden for the duel. Lidoro, who has finally received Baco's challenge, arrives as well. They each mistake the other for Baco and begin to fight. Teseo kills Lidoro, but then realizes he will be in great danger if he is found next to Lidoro's body, so he flees the scene.

Baco comes back and finds Lidoro dead. The captain of the guards, **Tebandro**, and his soldiers enter to find Baco next to Lidoro's body, and Baco's letter to him challenging him to a duel over the princesses. Despite Baco's efforts to deny his involvement, Tebandro accuses him of murder and leaves to notify King Minos, since only he can arrest a foreign prince such as Baco. Baco decides to escape Crete to avoid being sentenced for a murder he didn't commit. He heads for the harbor, where he has ships ready to depart.

Ariadna enters, with Tuna at her heels updating her on the situation. Tuna tells her it was Teseo who killed Lidoro. Ariadna fears this will lead to Teseo's execution and resolves to help him escape and flee with him, since she will be blamed for helping him escape the labyrinth in the first place. She continues to hold out hope that he will reward her assistance and ingenuity by marrying her. She tells Tuna to go find Teseo and bring him to the balcony facing the gardens, and they leave.

Fedra and Teseo enter, with Teseo explaining to Fedra that he had to kill whom he thought was Baco (still not knowing it was really Lidoro), as he had somehow discovered that Teseo was still alive and in love with Fedra. Though still indebted to Ariadna, Teseo declares his love for Fedra and asks her to go back with him to Athens, where they will both be safe. Fedra agrees, finally declaring her love for him but still careful to maintain decorum, and tells him to hire an Athenian boat that she will pay for with her jewels. They agree to meet in the garden, and Teseo leaves.

Baco enters to bid farewell one last time at Ariadna's window. Ariadna comes out on the balcony and, mistaking him for Teseo, tells him they must depart at once since he is wanted for murder. Baco is unsure why Ariadna has had a change of heart and wants to be with him now, but decides to go along with this stroke of luck. As Baco is waiting for Ariadna to come down from the balcony to the garden, he runs into Fedra who is there to meet Teseo. Mistaking each other for the one they are waiting for, they leave together. Teseo arrives just in time to meet Ariadna, whom he mistakes for Fedra, and they also leave for the harbor together.

Tuna appears, chasing Teseo to deliver Ariadna's message. Fedra and Baco, who are walking ahead of Teseo and Ariadna, hear them approaching and hide. Tuna addresses Teseo by name, so that Fedra realizes the man she is hiding with cannot be Teseo. Ariadna realizes that Teseo has mistaken her for Fedra, while Baco realizes he is not with Ariadna. Fedra calls for Teseo's help, since she thinks she is being kidnapped by a stranger. Teseo and Baco start fighting and, in the darkness and confusion, Fedra and Ariadna switch places while trying to locate the real Teseo.

Vinny enters, chased by Tebandro and some guards, and they all stumble upon Baco and Teseo's fight. Tebandro and the guards try to stop the fighting, as King Minos arrives and orders everyone to be arrested. Upon realizing his daughters were fleeing with two strange men, Minos becomes furious. Baco reveals himself and intervenes on behalf of Ariadna. Teseo, although surprised because he thought Baco was dead, also reveals himself to save Fedra. This causes a general shock as all present (except for Fedra, Ariadna, and Tuna) believed Teseo had been killed in the labyrinth. Minos, in his wrath, orders all of them executed, including his daughters for their immoral behavior.

Just then, soldiers rush in to inform Minos that Athenians have breached the palace and Crete's fall is imminent. Licas, the Athenian ambassador, returns and declares he will kill Minos to avenge Athens' prince, but Teseo reveals himself and announces he intends to spare Minos' life because the king's daughters saved him from the Minotaur. With this gesture of mercy, Minos' insatiable desire for revenge finally dies, and he agrees to let Teseo marry Fedra. Ariadna, realizing she has no hope of marrying Teseo, settles for Baco, who is cleared of Lidoro's murder. Vinny and Tuna ask for Cintia and Laura's hands, respectively. The End!

REMAKING THE MYTH

In *Love is the Greater Labyrinth*, Sor Juana freely adapts the Greek myth of Theseus and the Cretan Minotaur, adding and subtracting elements of the story in order to fill out her intricate love plot and make it into the kind of witty, modern entertainment her courtly audience would enjoy. Her adaptation choices enhance both the roles of the female characters and the political significance of the conflicts, which scholars have interpreted as Sor Juana's subtle warning against the temptations of tyranny directed to the newly arrived Viceroy Gaspar de la Cerda y Mendoza, and, perhaps, the male religious and secular authorities who sought to repress her voice throughout her life.

The basic setting and background of the action follows the myth fairly closely. King Minos of Crete has gone to war with Athens to avenge the death of his son Androgeus. As the victor, Minos demands a yearly tribute of Athenian youths to sacrifice to the Minotaur, a fierce beast that is half-bull, half-man. Minos sends the sacrifices into the bloodthirsty Minotaur's lair, a labyrinth so complex that no one could ever find their way out, doubly ensuring his victims' doom. Theseus (Teseo), the prince of Athens, finally arrives and defeats the monster, ending

Minos' reign of terror. All this is present in the play, but Sor Juana tellingly omits some details, such as the misogynistic implications of the Minotaur's birth, while adding and amplifying others, including the agency of the Cretan princesses, Ariadne (Ariadna) and Phaedra (Fedra).

The myth provides an origin for the Minotaur which portrays uncontrolled female sexuality as a threat to order and humanity itself. After King Minos refuses to sacrifice a pure white bull to the ocean god Poseidon, the offended god makes Minos' wife Pasiphaë fall in love with the bull. She then gives birth to the monstrous Minotaur, which wreaks havoc in the kingdom until Theseus kills it, having already proved his manly prowess by seducing Minos' daughter Ariadne and procuring her help. The play, however, makes no mention of Pasiphaë or the Minotaur's birth. The monster instead becomes a symbol of Minos' unchecked rage and barbarity, which the king has allowed to undermine his own humanity.

In this he is contrasted with Prince Teseo, whose rationality and mercy are emphasized. In Act I, Teseo narrates his life story with a focus on victories over bloodthirsty villains and beasts who terrorized citizens with their excessive appetites and moods (Corynetes, Creon, Sciron, Procrustes, etc. – ll. 452-513). Teseo displays his selfless virtue and self-control when he recounts his aid to his friend Pirithous, whose wife was abducted by centaurs. Even when Teseo briefly succumbs to the temptation to abduct the beautiful Helen, he swiftly returns her. He says he was moved by pity to “restore her to her land and her family,” even when “[he] had in [his] grasp / the prize of her beauty.” He calls this “that greatest of victories: / to triumph over myself” (ll. 533-42). He also notes that he eschewed “a tutor in courtly manners” and preferred instead to gain distinction through his actions rather than his noble birth (ll. 418-26). He eloquently sets forth a theory of the natural state of freedom in man, displaying the good judgment befitting a hero associated with Athens, the city ruled by the goddess of wisdom, Athena.

Teseo's most famous triumph in myth is slaying the Minotaur and escaping the labyrinth, so an audience member might expect to see this heroically reenacted during the climax of the play. Instead, Sor Juana subverts expectations by placing the battle entirely offstage between acts. The labyrinth and its monster are often mentioned, but never explicitly shown. (A production may choose to have a dumb show or some other depiction of the battle in between Act I and Act II, or maintain the somewhat tongue-in-cheek withholding of the monster-fighting spectacle.) It becomes clear through this unexpected swerve in the narrative that the play is more interested in emotional, rather than physical, challenges, and heroism of a different sort.

Scholars suggest the comparison between Teseo and Minos could have been designed by Sor Juana to impart political and moral advice to the incoming viceroy. Minos, of course, is the ranting, over-emotional, vengeful tyrant that no enlightened ruler would ever want to emulate. Teseo, on the other hand, behaves valiantly but selflessly, offering himself as a sacrifice for his people in the beginning and finally showing extraordinary mercy to Minos, which ends the cycle of violence and inaugurates a new age for the kingdom. Teseo also distinguishes himself through his constant concern for the courtesy and gratitude he owes to the female characters. Throughout the play, Teseo mostly follows the princesses' lead—first with Ariadna's life-saving plan to escape the labyrinth and then with Fedra's remarkably assertive attempts to arrange an amorous rendezvous with him. This is opposed to Minos, who rages about his daughters' supposedly lost virtue and goes to nearly fatal lengths to avenge his tarnished patriarchal honor. Nonetheless, Minos' grief over his dead son is his driving motivation throughout, which makes him somewhat sympathetic. His lack of self-control has driven him away from being the "generous king" and "glorious lawgiver" that Teseo describes in the beginning (ll. 344-50), but once his "desire for revenge is undone by [Teseo's] reason" he may be able to return to that earlier self (l. 3178).

The addition of Fedra to the Cretan section of the story is another major change. In the myth, Ariadne is indeed in love with Theseus and helps him in the hopes that he will marry her. He takes her off the island with him, only to abandon her on another island, Naxos, where she then catches the eye of Dionysus (Bacchus, or Baco here), the god of wine. Dionysus makes Ariadne his bride while Theseus later marries her sister, Phaedra (though their marriage also ends tragically, due to Phaedra's deceit and adultery). In the play, Fedra is present from the beginning and there is a genuine love triangle (plus some other complications with the princesses' suitors, Lidoro and Baco).

There is also a greater emphasis on comparison between the two sisters. Ariadna proves herself to be resourceful and assertive by saving Teseo and attempting to advance their relationship, drawing scholarly comparison to a female author figure who pulls the strings of the plot. However, Fedra is in the end a better match for Teseo because she shows the kind of emotional self-restraint that he praises in the beginning and embodies at the end when he spares her father's life. Ariadna is more volatile throughout, but she is not a villain, nor is she punished, except by not getting the man she wants. Baco, though no longer a god, proves his devotion to Ariadna throughout the play despite various setbacks and seems to be a good match for her. In the end, they return to their status quo at the beginning, with Ariadna charmed by Baco's "handsome looks / [which] lead [her] bit by bit / to return his fine affections" (ll. 131-3).

Sor Juana uses the myth of the labyrinth loosely, as a source of larger-than-life characters to populate her world and as a metaphor for the overwhelming and disorienting power of love, for good or ill. For theaters today, it can offer design inspiration for productions (palaces, temples, robes and laurels, labyrinth motifs) and establish intertextual connections with other mythological plays, which were a robust genre in Spanish *comedia* drawn from a well of cultural

references shared across Europe (see Theseus in another tale of confused, wandering lovers: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Sor Juana's playful attitude toward adapting the classics is matched by her metatheatrical engagement with the audience, as discussed below.

METATHEATRICAL PLAY

Theater was a very popular diversion in seventeenth-century Spain, and people from all backgrounds would often gather at the *corrales de comedia* to watch the latest play. The audience was well acquainted with recurring themes, plots and characters, and plays often contained self-referential remarks or jokes written with this sophisticated audience in mind. Characters would comment on the action, make judgements about a situation, or make jokes that broke the fourth wall. Much of this metatheatrical play falls to the *gracioso*, who often voices what the author assumed would be the thoughts of the audience.

The *gracioso* is the hero's sidekick, belonging to a lower class than the protagonist and usually portrayed as their servant. *Graciosos* are often characterized as street smart or at least the ones in charge of cracking self-aware jokes. In *Love is the Greater Labyrinth*, the role of the *gracioso* is embodied by Tuna and, to a lesser extent, Vinny. Both of these characters take turns commenting on the development of the play in a metatheatrical key, as if momentarily realizing they exist within a performance. Thus, Vinny complains in Act I about having to enter the stage with his master Baco, only to be sidelined: "Oh that I might have my revenge, / for having to keep my mouth shut. / I came on stage and didn't say a word!" (ll. 616-8). Similarly, Vinny is the one to notice at the end that "the lackeys and maids were left in the wings, / with no time for love-plots" (ll. 3239-40), referencing the fact that, although *comedias* often feature servants parodically mirroring the love scenes of the upper-class characters, *Love is the Greater Labyrinth*

leaves little space for the development of such a subplot (although Tuna is a constant flirt). Vinny points this out in a tongue-in-cheek gesture that successfully, and swiftly, ties up the romance of all four servants. It is a last-minute arrangement, true, but its metatheatricality makes it an entertaining flourish at the end.

The main voice for the audience is, without a doubt, Tuna. His remarks, especially at the beginning of Act II, anticipate what spectators might expect in that section of the play. After the first act, which closely follows the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, *Love is the Greater Labyrinth* shifts completely into full farcical mode, with plenty of misunderstandings, masked balls, and secret meetings under the cover of darkness, all of which lead to mistaken identities and unexpected consequences. When Teseo receives both Fedra's and Ariadna's invitations to the dance, Tuna muses: "This must be the second act / of this comedy of love, / where the beauties come in pairs" (ll. 1327-9). He also predicts the mix-ups that will take place in the aforementioned ball, when Teseo gives Ariadna's feather to Tuna himself: "They've got a big party planned, / where princes and nobles will mingle / in masks, costumes and finery, / so no one will know who they are" (ll. 1186-9). And he is right: for the remainder of the play, the main characters rarely know whom they speak to at any given moment, a situation often exacerbated by their self-conscious performance of courtly love conventions, such as when Baco responds to Fedra asking who he is with a complicated metaphor of himself as a sunflower, rather than simply stating his name (ll. 2822-7).

Tuna observes the events on stage and shares his conclusions with Teseo, yet this role as a partial spectator also connects him with the audience, placing him in a liminal space between performance and reality. The *gracioso*, despite his lower status, proves he sees more clearly than the upper-class characters through his metatheatrical sense, and delights the audience by pointing

out tropes they too would recognize, proving their own discernment. At the same time, by speaking through Tuna and Vinny, Sor Juana demonstrates her grasp of the conventions of the stage.

Throughout the play Sor Juana cleverly mixes the mythical and the modern, subtly commenting on her contemporary society while winking at humanity's perennial foibles. With metatheatrical humor and a fresh take on a classical story, *Love is the Greater Labyrinth* is a lively display of Sor Juana's impressive learning and her keen eye for the eternally relevant complexities of life and love, from ancient Greece to colonial Mexico and all the way to today.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The play originally premiered on January 11th, 1689, celebrating the appointment of Gaspar de la Cerda y Mendoza as viceroy of New Spain, as Mexico was known under Spain's imperial rule. The play was also performed in 1708 in Manila, then part of the Spanish East Indies, at royal festivities celebrating the birth of Prince Luis Felipe of Spain.

In 2018, an adaptation of *Amor es más laberinto* by Gilberto Guerrero, Paola Izquierdo and Ortos Sayuz, was presented at the Benito Juárez Theatre and at the cultural center Foro Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, both in Mexico City. In 2019, the Almagro Festival hosted a production by the Mexican theater company Teatro de la Rendija. This same company also performed *Amor es más laberinto* in Mexico City in 2020, as a part of the Mexican Compañía Nacional de Teatro's initiative *En compañía de la compañía*. In September 2021, a Zoom reading of this English translation, directed by Melia Bensussen, was performed as part of a series presented by Diversifying the Classics and Red Bull Theater in New York, which also included an online reading of the play's original Spanish text by Repertorio Español.

ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

The original text used for this translation is based on two editions of *Amor es más laberinto*: Vern Williamsen (1998) and Celsa Carmen García Valdés (2010).

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Pronunciation Guide

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

a – AH e – EH i – EE o – OH u – OO

The underlined syllable in each word is the accented one.

Minos: Mee-nohs

Ariadna: Ah-ree-ahd-nah

Fedra: Feh-drah

Teseo: Teh-seh-oh

Baco: Bah-koh

Lidoro: Lee-doh-roh

Licas: Lee-kahs

Tebandro: Teh-bahn-droh

Laura: Low-rah (ow as in ouch)

Cintia: Seen-tee-ah

infanta: een-fahn-tah

Characters:

MINOS, king of Crete

ARIADNA, princess, his daughter

FEDRA, princess, his daughter

TESEO, prince of Athens

TUNA, Teseo's servant, a *gracioso*

BACO, prince of Thebes

VINNY, Baco's servant

LIDORO, prince of Epirus

LICAS, ambassador of Athens

TEBANDRO, captain of the guard

LAURA, Fedra's servant

CINTIA, Ariadna's servant

GUARDS & SOLDIERS

CHORUSES & MUSICIANS

Love is the Greater Labyrinth

ACT I
SCENE 1

*Enter ARIADNA and FEDRA, princesses, and LAURA and CINTIA, their servants.
CHORUSES sing offstage*

CHORUS 1	<i>Behold the beauty of Fedra, the loveliness of Ariadna. More than one can triumph in the contest of Love. Love leaves no destruction in its wake, yet bestows victories as it takes shape.</i>	
ARIADNA	Who has requested this music, Cintia?	
CINTIA	Who could it be but Lidoro, the prince of Epirus and Baco, the prince of Thebes, who serve you so extravagantly, and vie to express their longing, singing their sorrows in the voice of another? And since you and Fedra are sisters in both blood and beauty, they celebrate you with equal praises, unlike those fools who believe they can praise one by offending the rest.	10
FEDRA	That is courtly and gallant. But now they sing again. Listen.	20
CHORUS 2	<i>In Prince Teseo, Fortune reveals that surrender requires no battle. Love leaves destruction in its wake, yet bestows no victories as it takes shape.</i>	
ARIADNA	What's this? What sad voices, singing as one, contradict what came before?	
CHORUS 1	<i>When sovereign beauties display their brilliance, neither is vanquished, both are victorious.</i>	30

FEDRA	How different are the feelings these harmonies express: those ones sing of suffering for love, while these actually suffer as they sing.	
CHORUS 2	<i>Teseo dies so cruelly, so great is his woe, none other should triumph where he cannot go.</i>	
ARIADNA	How proud he looks! His fierce defiance proves this punishment is unfit for one so noble.	40
CHORUS 1	<i>Beauty such as theirs could never be surpassed. They rival only each other, each her sister's match.</i>	
FEDRA	A fine composition. Their claim couldn't be more precise, nor the argument more sound.	50
CHORUS 2	<i>The hero bemoans not death, but only dishonor. Oh, for one of such high birth to face a death so common!</i>	
ARIADNA	Well said. A noble soul laments an unsuitable death more than death itself.	
ARIADNA & CHORUS 2	<i>Love leaves destruction in its wake, yet bestows no victories as it takes shape.</i>	
FEDRA & CHORUS 1	<i>Love leaves no destruction in its wake, yet bestows victories as it takes shape.</i>	60
ARIADNA	Why these sorrowful verses?	
LAURA	They warn of this citadel, which begins with a palace and ends in a labyrinth so intricate that though your feet might trace it, your mind will never grasp it.	

No one has ever escaped
 the confusion of its rooms,
 all indistinguishable. 70
 Their architect designed them
 with such clever artifice
 that they meld into each other.
 Each one seems like the others,
 all the same, yet each distinct.
 It serves as a prison
 where your father takes his revenge
 on the Athenians,
 offering the Minotaur—
 that monster of contradictory form— 80
 a feast of human blood.¹
 Yet that prison needs no gate
 beyond the labyrinth itself.
 Fortune turned its wrath
 against Athens this year,
 so that a sad fate befell its prince.
 His family grieves
 as your father prepares to deliver him
 to that wild monster.
 They expected a young man 90
 blessed with so many graces
 to live a blissful life,
 or at least to die a death
 worthy of his martial disposition
 and illustrious deeds.
 Yet this is what the Fates have made of him:
 though he ruled a kingdom yesterday,
 today he must be a morsel for some brute.
 And so, their voices curse the injustice of Fortune,
 the only reason for his death. 100

LAURA
& CHORUS 2

*Love leaves destruction in its wake,
yet bestows no victories as it takes shape.*

ARIADNA

Oh what pain your words cause me!
 There is no nobility without mercy.
 What is this force
 that so draws my soul
 to his tragedy?
 How is it enough to move me?
 Yet how could it be otherwise,

¹ Minotaur: a half-man, half-bull creature who eats people and lives in the Cretan labyrinth. See the introduction for its origin and the mythological source for the play.

when misery gives rise to mercy? 110
 The noblest of breasts,
 the most tender of hearts,
 would never know mercy
 without misfortune.
 Laura, when was this prince brought here?

LAURA Yesterday, with all the majesty
 of one about to be crowned.
 The king has not seen him yet.
 The Athenian ambassador
 must hand him over soon. 120

FEDRA Oh inhuman fate!

CINTIA Here comes your father now,
 in the company of the princes,
 to receive the captive.

FEDRA Let us wait here, Ariadna,
 to see such a strange sight.

ARIADNA I'll do so happily,
 yet not to see the Athenian prisoner
 so abused by fate,
 but so I may speak to Baco, 130
 whose handsome looks
 lead me bit by bit
 to return his fine affections.

FEDRA I wouldn't say that of Lidoro,
 whose tender longings drive me away
 the more he tries to bring me close.
 His flattery is ever so tiresome,
 and I've never led him on.
 A suitor pays a lady compliments,
 then expects her to be forever in his debt, 140
 even if his flattery falls flat.
 It is out of all proportion,
 and offensive to boot.
 He would have me show him love
 or else appear ungrateful.

Enter King MINOS, Princes BACO and LIDORO, VINNY,² servant, and TEBANDRO, captain

² Vinny's name in Spanish is "Racimo" which means "cluster or bunch." This is a pun referring to grapes and his affiliation with his master Baco, who shares a name with the Greek god of wine (Bacchus).

with no exceptions made,
 even for the prince or his sisters.
 I send my most trusted ministers
 to Athens every year to draw lots
 and force those who are selected
 to come to Crete, where my fury
 has prepared a grave for them
 in the bowels of the Minotaur.
 And although so many deaths
 might have tempered my fury,
 those young lives cut short
 have never been enough.
 Although they fed the beast,
 they left me hungrier for revenge:
 an eye for an eye,
 and a crown for a crown.
 Today the balance is restored.
 Fortune, which now favors Crete
 while it scorns Athens,
 has tipped the scales and
 caused their prince's downfall.
 And so one prince's death will,
 at last, repay the death of the other.
 Athens must not boast of a prince
 when Crete goes without.
 Let Teseo die, and with him
 the hopes of his vile homeland,
 which his courage had sustained,
 as well it might.
 And so I cherish my wrath,
 which destroys an entire kingdom
 by slitting one throat.

190

200

210

ARIADNA
 May you live for many years,
 the edge of your steel undulled
 by the wisdom of your white hairs.

FEDRA
 And may all who once witnessed
 your bloodline offended
 now see how only Teseo's blood
 can satisfy your blood wronged.

220

BACO
 My lord, I regret that such mighty victories
 will leave less for my valor to do
 on your behalf.

LIDORO Not I, my lord:
your deeds are the shining example
that will teach me how to achieve
my own triumphs.

MINOS Exalted princes, I cannot express
how much I owe you
for your good wishes. 230
My debt to you is so great
that it will never be satisfied
until I can grant your just rewards.

BACO Great lord, your promise is enough for me.
A man's word is as good as gold.

MINOS Tebandro, let us speak alone.

TEBANDRO What is your command?

MINOS and TEBANDRO speak privately

LIDORO Oh noble Fedra,
at least look at me.
I don't ask this on my own behalf, 240
for my affection is so selfless
that it would renounce
any speck of comfort for your sake.
It's only that I know how you relish my pain
and so I request your attention
so you can properly savor it.

FEDRA I appreciate your efforts to please me,
but you are mistaken if you think
that I enjoy your anguish.
A woman who doesn't yield to love 250
may choose to remain aloof
without seeming ungrateful.

LIDORO If that is the case, my lady,
I can at least serve without offending,
even if I don't deserve you.
It would be presumptuous to think I could.
My soul finds solace in knowing
that you tolerate my service,
even if you won't reward it.

FEDRA I could not have put it better myself. 260
We are agreed, then,
that one who loves without being tiresome
avoids becoming a bother.

LIDORO This gives me hope, my lady...

FEDRA What?

LIDORO That I might be happily spurred on by your—

FEDRA Stop, don't say another word.
Permission is not the same
as encouragement.

LIDORO I was too forward. I apologize. 270
I spoke of hope when it should not even be named.
But know that my hope is not so lowly
that it pursues only what it can reach.
Although my hope doesn't expect a thing,
there is hope that lives on
by losing all hope.

MINOS *and* TEBANDRO *return*

MINOS Tebandro, have the prince brought in at once.

TEBANDRO *goes to the side to get Prince TESEO, LICAS, ambassador, and TUNA, servant*

LICAS Here at your feet is the Athenian ambassador,
whose fortune has brought him
to this unfortunate point 280
on this singular mission.
I bring my own prince as your tribute,
though it pains me.
I would gladly choose death
over this duty, if only I could.

MINOS Rise.
I want to offer you
all the courtesies
due to an ambassador.

LICAS I acknowledge your courtesy, 290
yet I cannot accept it.
My prince is here,

and it's not fitting for his servant
to receive honors in his presence,
especially when he is a prisoner.
I could never enjoy
the privileges of my position
while he suffers this misfortune.

MINOS

Well said.

Bring Teseo closer.

300

I did not plan to meet him face to face.

To gaze upon a king is not a gift
usually granted to prisoners.

However, just this once

I will make an exception,
prompted by his fame.

I want to see the prince

and hear of his deeds

from his own mouth.

I will savor my vengeance more
when I behold the magnificent offering
I sacrifice on its altar.

310

TUNA

Some favor!

He's really showing us his good side.

LICAS

Come closer, Your Highness,
the king awaits.

TESEO

Oh, tyrant fortune!

Behold your prisoner, my lord.

MINOS

Although you are a captive,
in my benevolence

320

I shall treat you as a free man...
at least for a short while.

TUNA

And I am Tuna,
come to kiss your bloody paws.
I'll be the side dish,
unless you change your mind.

ARIADNA

(Aside) How handsome he is!

What a tragedy!

If only I could grant his freedom!

FEDRA

(Aside) The very sight of him moves my soul.

330

If only I could buy his freedom,
I'd gladly give my life for it!

MINOS Teseo, give us an account
of your heroic deeds.

TESEO An account of my misfortunes, you mean.
But since you wish to hear them,
listen closely.

MINOS Go on.

FEDRA *(Aside)* May heaven save you!

ARIADNA *(Aside)* May heaven help you! 340

TESEO Listen well, so that you may learn
from Fortune's extreme highs and lows
how I lose and you win.
Generous king of Crete,
whose glorious feats exceed
the archives of time.
Glorious lawgiver,
whose righteous rule
dictates laws to the world,
and decrees unto the depths of hell— 350
your justice, courage,
righteousness, and zeal
would breathe harmony
into chaos itself.
You, whose venerated laws
will be remembered forever,
so that through them
you will reign beyond death.⁴
Although you know who I am,
I want to speak my name again, 360
lest it be lost to oblivion,
for no one will acknowledge
a man on the wrong side of Fortune.
I am prince and heir to Athens:
once its ruler, now its tribute.
But what if I am a prince?
I am not merely a ruler—
I am Teseo.
Being born a great prince

⁴ In some myths Minos becomes a judge of the dead in the Underworld after his own death.

is mere chance, 370
 a result of my bloodline
 rather than my merits.
 I do not value what I owe another,
 not even my father,
 over what I owe myself.
 Although most would say
 it's lesser to be a soldier
 than a prince,
 I stand by the former.
 From a brave soldier 380
 a great king may come,
 but just being a king
 does not make a good soldier.
 Listen and I will explain:
 valor cannot be inherited,
 as kingdoms may be.
 And here is the proof:
 when all men were born equal,
 Might commanded the world.
 The distinctions we now see 390
 between king and vassal,
 between noble and peasant,
 have no other source.
 It strains reason to believe
 men would, of their own volition,
 subject themselves to another's yoke
 and let another take the reins.
 Man was born to command
 and can only be subjected by force.
 No sane man would choose that state, 400
 nor would any fool endure it.
 The wise man lives by his own laws,
 while the fool is satisfied
 to abide by his ignorance.
 Fools use arrogance
 to cover for their flaws.
 Only courage is mighty enough
 to set men apart,
 though born equal
 and of the same distinction. 410
 Although cut from the same cloth,
 some serve as slaves
 and others rule as masters.
 Thus, though I owe the gods
 for the privilege of being high-born,

it is not arrogance to take pride
 in my bravery over my birth.
 Listen and I will explain:
 when my beard first came in,
 a sign of my valor and judgment, 420
 I chose not to join
 the refined youth of Athens,
 the very picture of elegance.
 Instead, I chose Hercules as my companion.⁵
 I sought a mentor in the art of war,
 not a tutor in courtly manners.
 Among many other victories
 achieved in his company,
 my most remarkable triumph
 was defeating the Amazons.⁶ 430
 Conquering a woman
 is the greatest feat of all:
 to overcome an enemy who both
 beguiles you with her gaze
 and battles you with her steel!
 Even when she lacks beauty,
 her womanhood alone
 gives her the advantage.
 For beyond her own courage,
 my pity and respect 440
 are both on her side.
 And that's not all:
 having triumphed over a woman,
 one must enjoy one's conquest
 with a certain grace.
 This requires a proud heart in battle
 and a humble one in triumph.
 Victory is tarnished
 if what was gained
 with so much danger 450
 is enjoyed with contempt.
 In Epidaurus, I took the life
 of the beastly son of Vulcan,
 whom the people call Corynetes.⁷
 In Marathon, I killed the bull
 that brought destruction to your kingdom,

⁵ Hercules: Greek hero and demi-god, son of Zeus, with superhuman strength.

⁶ Amazons: legendary female warriors who were often opponents of the Greeks in myth. In some versions, Teseo (Theseus) defeats and/or marries the Amazon queen Hippolyta.

⁷ Corynetes, Creon, Sciron, Procrustes, Sinis: Teseo summarizes his most famous heroic encounters with various monsters, bandits, and tyrants from myth.

sacrificing it in Athens.
I freed the great city of Thebes
from the oppression of fierce Creon,
who, at odds with all human laws, 460
would not allow proper burial for the dead.
I also slayed merciless bandits:
first Sciron, then Procrustes,
who craftily welcomed unwitting travelers
to his inhuman bed,
and turned a place of respite
into a cruel rack for torture.
If they were too long,
he would cut off the excess,
and if too short, 470
he would brutally stretch them
out of all proportion,
until their torn nerves
and shattered bones
occupied the bed's full measure.
So all bodies had to conform,
as this tyrant had decreed.
No less cruel was Sinis,
who barbarously abused
the strength Heaven gave him 480
to offend Heaven itself.
(Oh blind human reason,
what won't your errors attempt!)
He would violently force two trees,
far from each other,
to kiss the ground
with their uppermost boughs.
To these he would tie a traveler
and then release the branches.
Rebounding, they broke apart so suddenly 490
that the soul could not quite grasp
where its body had gone.
Yet Heaven sent my strong arm
to punish him at last,
a warning that although those slights
might be tolerated at first,
they would be punished in the end.
I will not even tell you
of my amazing victory

at the wedding of my friend Pirithous,⁸ 500
 when the fierce centaurs,
 debased by wine
 and incited by desire,
 tried to steal his wife.
 No, I will not sing my own praises.
 What else could I have done?
 A true friend is like oneself,
 not “another self”—
 that implies a separation.
 Any offense to my friend 510
 obviously offends me, too.
 And so, I fought those centaurs
 like an aggrieved and jealous husband.
 My victory, therefore,
 was no proof of valor,
 but rather of how jealousy
 will make any man brave.
 To please this same friend,
 who ruled over my actions
 as over my affections, 520
 I descended to the underworld,
 where, despite three-headed Cerberus⁹
 standing guard above,
 I tried to steal Pluto’s wife.
 Though I did not succeed,
 I did not lose my laurels,
 for the attempt itself is worthy of praise.
 But my greatest triumph, my lord,
 was to steal Helen herself,¹⁰
 whose beauty so moved me. 530
 Yet this was not what proved my valor,
 though I risked much to steal her away.
 Rather, when I had in my grasp
 the prize of her beauty
 and the satisfaction of my desires,
 I was moved by her tears
 and obliged by her pleas
 to restore her to her land and her family.
 My love could only weep

⁸ Pirithous: King of the Lapiths and friend of Theseus. When Pirithous attempted to abduct Persephone (the god Pluto’s wife) with Theseus’s help, both men were struck immobile and became trapped in the Underworld. Theseus was eventually rescued by Hercules, but Pirithous had to remain as a punishment.

⁹ Cerberus: Monstrous dog with three heads that guards the Underworld, ruled over by the god Pluto.

¹⁰ Helen: Daughter of the god Zeus and the mortal Leda, considered in myth the most beautiful woman in the world. Her subsequent abduction by Paris was the cause of the Trojan War. See introduction for more on this episode.

as my valor achieved 540
that greatest of victories:
to triumph over myself.
These are the marvels and wonders
that Fame sings of me, my lord,
not to speak of many other deeds
I will not recount here,
for either they are known all too well,
or I can scarcely recall them.
I never kept a list,
and so neglected to count them— 550
I simply carried them out.
This is who I have been, great lord,
though now, exposed to your rage,
I find myself nothing more than a prisoner.
Let my pride, my noble blood,
my glory and my trophies,
satisfy you in your anger
so that my fatherland may be free
of the painful burden
of this unfortunate tribute. 560
I will die happy
if my death can free Athens
from this inhuman servitude.

MINOS I'm most impressed,
but I will not yield.
Tebandro, take him to the labyrinth.
Come, princes.

LICAS Your Majesty, cruelty should not touch
such a noble person. 570
Though you wish to avenge
the death of your son,
killing Teseo will not bring him back.
When his kingdom accepted
these harsh terms at their defeat,
who would have thought
their prince would pay?
But now this fierce cruelty falls on him.
Though he offers no resistance,
he hoped his worth might merit
clemency from you. 580
Had he chosen to fight,
we would all have met our deaths
before this prince surrendered.

Yet when he demonstrates
he'd keep his word over his life,
why, then, for the sake of revenge,
does your Majesty wish
to repay his trust with cruelty?
I seek forgiveness on my knees,
my lord, for if you forgive him, 590
you are all the more nobly avenged.
You shall have twice the satisfaction.
There is no harsher punishment
for a noble man than to be forgiven.
Convinced of his error,
he lives on in the shame
of receiving favor from one he offended.
So, my lord, grant the prince his life,
for if only you spare him,
the whole of Athens will be at your service. 600

FEDRA *(Aside)* Perhaps my father will pardon him
given what he has heard.

ARIADNA *(Aside)* Perhaps he'll choose one reason,
of the many offered.

TUNA *(Aside)* How can this old geezer
dig his heels in like this!

MINOS Princes, come with me.
Tebandro, do as I said.

BACO I am coming.
(Aside) What cruelty! 610

LIDORO I will follow.
(Aside) What harshness!

Exit MINOS, BACO, *and* LIDORO

ARIADNA *(Aside)* Oh that I might meet my end,
instead of him!

FEDRA *(Aside)* Oh that I might die in his place!

VINNY *(Aside)* Oh that I might have my revenge,
for having to keep my mouth shut.
I came on stage and didn't say a word!

TESEO, FEDRA, TUNA, and LAURA remain. ARIADNA and CINTIA move to the side¹¹

FEDRA (Aside) The prince is alone now.

TESEO What misery!

FEDRA (Aside) Do I dare speak to him?

TESEO For all my courage
to have come to this!

FEDRA (Aside) I will approach him. 660
Oh great sorrow!
Now that he must die,
let my pity at least serve
as condolence for his loss.
Decorum does not prevent
consoling one so afflicted,
not when he is entirely helpless
and can find no mercy.

FEDRA moves closer

(To TESEO) Oh prince, 670
if pity can find purchase
in a foreign breast,
know that I suffer for your sake.
I am a princess of Crete,
and though you offended my family,
you will owe more to my mercy
than this courtesy I now show.
I want to find a way to free you.
I would much rather give you aid
than my condolences.

ARIADNA Look, Cintia, 680
Fedra is over there with Teseo—
how it pains me!
Let us listen to see
whether she speaks of pity
or of love.

TESEO (To FEDRA) Lady, I thank you for your pity.

¹¹ Character groups often move to a separate stage area, whether because they are hiding or eavesdropping, or just because there are multiple groups of characters on stage at once. This could be staged with a door or a curtain (mentioned in the original stage directions), or by indicating a separate space in some other fashion.

How could mercy not rain down
from such a heaven as you?
I am so grateful to you, lovely princess,
I only wish I could live, 690
to put my life at your service.
Yet since my life is at an end,
and I cannot repay the kindness you offer,
receive my shame instead.
I have nothing else to give you.

FEDRA Let not this misfortune
destroy your confidence, oh prince,
for where there is life there is hope.
Fortune's wheel never stands still,
and though you are now so low, 700
it may turn once again
before your days are over.
A remedy for such woe,
may yet come between
the neck and the blade.

ARIADNA I can tell she wants to free him,
but I will prevent it.

CINTIA Why, my lady?

ARIADNA Because I must free him first.

TESEO (*To FEDRA*) How will I ever repay 710
such outsize favor?
No gratitude could ever suffice.
Oh, how I wish my life were mine,
so I could place it at your feet.
Even if I were not condemned,
I would die for you!
You take the prize,
my sweet assassin.
In stealing away my soul,
you take my life as well. 720

ARIADNA See, Cintia, how taken he is,
and how he woos her in return?

CINTIA Hush, my lady,
he's just grateful.

TUNA	<p>A fine death you choose, my lord. No bells ever tolled for those who die of love. I must say, if you allow me, I'd also like to die of this thing that you call death.</p>	730
	<p>And I'd like it to come quickly, in all its violent pain, for dying of love is like dying of laughter. <i>(To LAURA)</i> Especially because I've found in you just the one to do me in.</p>	
LAURA	<p>That bull will take care of you, and pluck your soul clean out.</p>	
TUNA	<p>Why would I want a bull, with this pretty heifer right here?</p>	740
LAURA	<p>And who are you?</p>	
TUNA	<p>They call me Tuna.</p>	
LAURA	<p>The bull will take care of this one: meat is what he feeds on.</p>	
TUNA	<p>Good thing I'm a fish, then.</p>	
LAURA	<p>He is a relentless butcher.</p>	
TUNA	<p>A butcher's no problem, as long as he's no fisherman.</p>	
FEDRA	<p>Prince, since you will be the last of the seven tributes offered up to this cruel monster today on my father's command, do not lose hope, for in that time there may appear some way to save your life. I will do all I can to find it. You must believe me— your life matters more to me than you can ever know.</p>	750
TESEO	<p>But why, my lady?</p>	760

FEDRA Don't ask me why.
It is wrong to try to decipher
that which I do not declare.
If you happen to draw
your own conclusions
based on observation,
and they happen to favor you,
so be it, but do not ask me
to confirm them for you.

TESEO and TUNA speak aside

TUNA Make her yours, sir! 770
She is so far gone already
she may help you escape
the cruel danger you face.

TESEO Oh Tuna, I dare not!

TUNA So you're going to play hard to get?
I did not think you such a lady.
Let yourself be loved at least.
Pretend she is Prince Fedro
and you the Princess Tesea.

TESEO Will you let me alone? 780

TUNA I will, I will.
I am not the princess,
I don't want to hold on to you.

TESEO *(To FEDRA)* In that case, my lady,
I will give free rein to my thoughts.

FEDRA Do as you will,
as long as you do not seek confirmation,
which I ordered you not to do.

TESEO Well, then, 790
I shall keep my conclusions secret.
My heart will feel
what my lips may never speak.

FEDRA Then we may leave it at that.
Farewell, now,

for I should not be seen
speaking to you.

TESEO Then farewell, my lady.

FEDRA Farewell.

TESEO But listen!

FEDRA What is it? 800

TESEO Since you granted license
to my thoughts,
you should give free rein
to yours as well.
To obey you,
I will not disclose my longing,
but I hope it echoes in you.

FEDRA Farewell, prince.

TESEO But my lady,
why will you not answer me? 810

FEDRA It's for your own good.

TESEO For my own good?

FEDRA Yes, because if I answer,
I must say no.
Only by remaining silent
can I spare you this scorn.
The absence of rejection
is tacit acceptance.

TESEO Then farewell, my lady.

FEDRA Farewell. 820

TESEO *(Aside)* How divine!

FEDRA *(Aside)* How gallant!

Exit TESEO and FEDRA

TUNA Are you listening, Laura?

Scarcely had I felt your arrows,
tyrant Love, which pierce most
the one who most resists,
when I knew their pain
went beyond a mere wound.
No, I did not believe
you would pierce my courageous heart, 860
nor that the delicate gold
of your wingèd dart
would be adorned
with my carmine blood.
Nor even that your deception
could persuade my pride
that triumph could ever come
from such surrender.
Were I free from jealousy,
even servitude might be a happy state. 870
Yet now I feel, in giving up
the kingdom of my free will
to that charming Athenian,
that I die for one
who would not die for me.

CINTIA What are you saying, my lady?
Come back to your senses.
There is no helping one
who gives herself over to such feelings.

ARIADNA I will be the one to set him free. 880
I have a scheme to help him get away.
Though he may love Fedra,
I adore him,
and my love will not allow me
to ignore his unhappiness.

CINTIA How will you free him?

ARIADNA Through means so subtle
that by a single thread
he shall triumph and live. 890
In the fight, he will bring
that fierce monster to heel.

BACO enters at the side

BACO *(Aside)* Unless desire deceives me,

that was Ariadna's voice I heard
in a sad lament.
Since she has not heard me,
I will listen from here,
so I may find out what pains her.

CINTIA My lady, take comfort,
for though the one
you've crowned your king 900
may love your sister,
there must be some way
to make him leave her
and desire you instead.

BACO *(Aside)* Her sister's suitor!
What is this?
Woe is me, seeking to know
what I do not wish to hear!

CINTIA But do you not love Baco?

ARIADNA How can you ask me that, 910
seeing how I burn,
how I perish,
how I've surrendered
to the man who courts Fedra,
so that I'm about to lose my mind?
Enough advice, then.
Willful lovers won't be deterred.
If you want to please me,
help me find the means
to get what I want. 920

CINTIA Come, my lady.
Of course you prefer
the one you love
to the one who loves you.

Exit ARIADNA and CINTIA. BACO remains and his servant VINNY enters

BACO How can I witness such a thing,
and yet go on living?
I must have no soul to feel with,
no life left to lose.
How can I love such a tyrant,
who freely pursues her sister's suitor? 930

It must be Lidoro, of course!
To suffer an injury such as this!
Oh ungrateful creature!
If you must leave me,
couldn't you at least choose a man
who loves you in return?
You are so ungrateful,
and yet my anger is so noble
that I feel more pity than jealousy
at the harm you do yourself. 940

VINNY Well shouted, sir!
Now calm down
and don't lose your senses—
though if Love itself is madness,
what can you expect
from the god of wine in love?
If I may say so,
there is little difference in your case
between being bullheaded
and being cuckolded, 950
though of course, I imagine,
those horns on your head
must be very troublesome.¹³

BACO Fool! Bold villain! (*Grabs him*)
How can I calm down?

VINNY Stop, sir!
If you squeeze too tight,
my grapes will burst.
Besides, I've thought of a solution
that will bring your love to fruition. 960

BACO What are you thinking?

VINNY If you woo Fedra,
you'll be avenged on Ariadna.

BACO You're mad!

VINNY Does it sound so bad?
Court her lovely sister instead.
Two wrongs might make a right.

¹³ Referring to an early idiom about husbands with unfaithful wives who were said to “grow horns.”

BACO I will do so at once.
 Though I might seem as mad as you,
 no one should be shocked 970
 when a madman takes a fool's advice.
 Come then. If I can find Fedra,
 I'll make a show of my love.

VINNY Here she comes now,
 a fly falling into your honeypot.

Enter FEDRA

FEDRA (*Aside*) Perhaps some servant of Teseo's
 stayed behind, who might tell me...
 But there's Baco.
 I hope he hasn't seen me.

VINNY My lord, go make your move, 980
 don't let her fly away.

BACO I'm afraid I will miss the mark, Vinny.

VINNY What does it matter?
 Take a shot,
 practice makes perfect.
 Imagine you're a poet
 in the middle of a play,
 and though you're not in love,
 you must imagine one who is.
 Speak of suns and stars, 990
 sleepless nights, infatuations,
 fears, silences and cares,
 hopeless devotions—
 all those things that play well at court.
 You'll see how you hit the mark.

BACO Here I go.
 (*To FEDRA*) Oh beautiful miracle,
 divine Cupid himself
 lays down at your feet.
 A fire as pure as yours 1000
 requires no less a sacrifice
 than that winged boy.

FEDRA ...Thank you, Prince Baco.
 That's very nice.

ACT II
SCENE 1

Enter MINOS and TEBANDRO

MINOS In this dark cave of horrors,
my insatiable desire for vengeance
seeks to assuage my pain most severe,
the worst of all torments,
this terrible legacy of loss and hate
that tyranny has wrought. 1100

TEBANDRO Teseo's death will give Your Majesty
satisfaction for the death of your son.
The Minotaur will have his fill
as Teseo meets his end in the labyrinth.
His misfortune will pay the debt in full:
a life for a life at the hands of a bull.

MINOS I offer up a prince of Athens,
and yet my grief still runs so deep
I can hardly stay afloat
amid the waves of anguish. 1110
I'm sinking in a sea
of never-ending torments.
Drowning in sorrow,
I lose all sense.

TEBANDRO Fate now dictates the end of this great prince
in a frenzy of violence,
to a chorus of laments.
In those games at which he excelled,
his life will tragically be ended.
Of highest rank, in parts unmatched, 1120
a lightning bolt unsurpassed.
In all these contests he was, without fail,
enough to make bravery itself quail.

MINOS What does his courage matter
when Fortune envies his happiness,
an enemy as monstrous and inhuman
as it is treacherous and tyrannical?
The happiest man cannot avoid it.
Envy craves what it does not have.
Driven wild with mad hopes, 1130
it slakes its thirst with horrible vengeance.

Exit TEBANDRO *and* MINOS. TUNA *comes forward*

TUNA This is great!
Now that the king is off to see
what those two princesses are up to,
it's time to come out into the sun!
I'm in a labyrinth of my own here.
I pray that everything will turn out all right. 1170
This horrible prison is a study in gloom—
the portrait of darkness and shadows is well done,
and yet it's missing a touch of color.
All right, time for my master now.
Come out, come out, wherever you are.

Enter TESEO, *coming from the labyrinth*

TESEO Tuna!

TUNA Sir, listen closely,
have I got a scheme for you!
You could be dancing away the evening
with Ariadna and Fedra! 1180
Go on, no point in putting it off til later,
where's my reward?
Give me what you'd like to get
and not what you'd like to give.

TESEO Dancing?

TUNA Yes! They've got a big party planned,
where princes and nobles will mingle
in masks, costumes, and finery,
so no one will know who they are.
You can drop the princely stuff 1190
and dress as a dancer.
I beg of you, sir, hop to it!

TESEO How can I be so happy and unhappy all at once?
My heart is caught in the crossfire of love.
Fedra, to whom I gladly surrender my devotion,
hints that she loves me
and so persuades me to affection.
Meanwhile Ariadna, to whom I owe
no less than life itself, also loves me,
and if I do not surrender to her heavenly beauty, 1200

I will show myself an ingrate.
 She was the instrument of my escape
 and helped me put the Minotaur to death.
 What noble heart could receive such a gift
 and not repay the debt?
 I find myself in a labyrinth still,
 surrounded by doubts,
 with no signs pointing the way.
 Ariadna's love provided that merciful thread
 which my courage followed—
 she saved my life. 1210
 But it was Fedra who wished me
 to pretend to be Ariadna's suitor
 so I could gain my freedom.
 What a rare and generous act of love,
 for Fedra to endure such an insult for my sake!
 She set aside her feelings to protect me,
 and allowed her sister to show me affection.
 Fedra is a cunning tactician.
 She weighs her sorrows 1220
 against her politic ends.
 When she insisted I give Ariadna my attentions,
 she knew she would win my love in the end,
 all without showing her hand.

TUNA They could still tie you
 to the death of the Minotaur,
 just by following the thread,
 but you did such a fine job
 the king doesn't even know it happened.

TESEO But tell me, how did you find out 1230
 about the dance this evening?

TUNA I heard Tebandro telling the king
 that Ariadna and Fedra wish to celebrate him
 to distract from their own sorrows,
 and have arranged one of those fancy dances
 that palace types like.

TESEO If only I were a better dancer.

TUNA There will be thousands of princes
 swanning around.

TESEO I have just the thing to wear. 1240

A prince, though a prisoner,
never packs light.

TUNA Well, it didn't take much work
to persuade you.

TESEO Oh, to dance with Fedra!

TUNA I hope she dances to your tune.

TESEO You think she will?

TUNA It's obvious!
I can see which way
the wind is blowing, 1250
and you have a fine air about you.

Enter LAURA, veiled

LAURA I've come looking for Teseo,
but if my eyes don't deceive me,
this is Tuna I see here.
You there, good sir!

TUNA This clever maid
must have a hook
to catch me with.

TESEO She's looking for you.
Go to her. 1260

TUNA She's out looking for men
and I should go to her?
No chance!
Well...all right, here I go.
What do you want from me, my queen?

LAURA Call your master.

TUNA But he's so uptight,
and you can let loose with me.

LAURA Look, I'm in a hurry here.

TUNA I prefer to take it slow. 1270

LAURA Don't waste your flowery language on me.

TUNA Though I shower you with compliments,
the ladies have always found me
more flagrant than fragrant.

TESEO May I know to whom I owe such favor?

LAURA Let's just say it's a princess.

TUNA A princess?
That's good enough for me!
Bring on the sash.

1310

TESEO Stop that.

TUNA Tie me up!

TESEO Which princess?

LAURA Come closer: it's Fedra.
Goodbye and God keep you.
Go to the dance
and she'll come find you
by the room that faces the garden,
the one next to the labyrinth.

Exit LAURA

TESEO What luck!

1320

TUNA She's like the wind in a veil.
She sure puts the wind in my sails.
If I'm not drawn and quartered first,
I'll let her blow me away.

Enter CINTIA, veiled

CINTIA You there, good sir!

TUNA What is this I see?
This must be the second act
of this comedy of love,
where the beauties come in pairs.

CINTIA	Call your master. I have an important message for him.	1330
TUNA	And what's that to me?	
TESEO	I'm ready to obey, my lady. Do not hesitate to command me.	
CINTIA	A lady requests that you wear this feather as a mark of her favor.	
TUNA	A decorated chicken!	
CINTIA	She invites you to the dance.	
TESEO	<i>(Aside)</i> Though it is a masked ball, if I wear this lady's favor, my feelings will be revealed. <i>(To CINTIA)</i> Won't you tell me who wishes to test my obedience? Must you conceal her identity?	1340
CINTIA	I have said enough.	
TUNA	Not so: she might be ugly, in which case, who cares?	
TESEO	What have I done to deserve such exalted favor?	
CINTIA	Let's just say it's a princess.	1350
TUNA	If a princess is an <i>infanta</i> ¹⁴ and all men are born infants, does that make me a prince too?	
TESEO	Stop, you fool.	
TUNA	You call this nonsense? I'm trying to make something of myself here.	
CINTIA	Goodbye, I cannot stay any longer. It's late and my lady awaits me.	
TESEO	Who?	

¹⁴ Infanta (and "infante"): Title given to the daughters and sons of a king in Iberia.

CINTIA	The princess Ariadna.	1360
TUNA	Bless her, she speaks more clearly now...	
CINTIA	A suitable room has been prepared so that the two of you may converse, far from this labyrinth. Goodbye.	
TESEO	Wait a moment.	
CINTIA	Goodbye, goodbye, I must go. It's late.	
<i>Exit CINTIA</i>		
TESEO	Tuna, what do you say to this?	
TUNA	What I say is get ready. Both <i>infantas</i> ? All this infantry will require your big guns.	1370
TESEO	They both expect me, but I am just one man.	
TUNA	Are you not a man endowed with many talents?	
TESEO	Fedra's sash has quite a pull on me.	
TUNA	Ariadna's feather might sweep you away.	
TESEO	I will just wear the sash.	1380
TUNA	Feathers are lost to the wind...	
TESEO	But what if I am recognized?	
TUNA	But what if we make a mess of it?	
TESEO	I will risk my life, come what may.	
TUNA	I have no plans to die today!	

TESEO I can half-see a way out.

TUNA We're more than half-cooked.

TESEO Is this not a masked ball?

TUNA Yes, they hide their faces
so they can show their true colors. 1390

TESEO Well, you must swoop in
and crash the party.

TUNA Then it will all come crashing down!

TESEO I will wear the sash
and you the feather,
and together we'll make quite the pair.

TUNA What do I look like,
some kind of witch?
You can't tar and feather me on a whim.

TESEO He who loves a lady fears nothing. 1400

TUNA He who serves sure does.

TESEO I will have my way.

TUNA Others will have their way with me.

TESEO But what if the king finds out?

TUNA The moment he finds out...

TESEO What will he do?

TUNA For God's sake, it won't be pretty!
He will minotaur us again.

TESEO The princesses are lovely.

TUNA Sure, but their old man is a killer. 1410

TESEO Oh, if only I can succeed in this endeavor!

TUNA Oh, if only I can pluck some favor while I'm at it!

TESEO Oh, to be worthy of Fedra!

TUNA Oh, to have Ariadna at my feet!

Exit TESEO and TUNA

SCENE 2

Enter VINNY

VINNY *(To the audience)* I must tell you:
my master, Baco, makes it clear
with how he treats me
that there is a god...of wine.
I don't know what he means
by coming to the dance, 1420
or why such a stick-in-the-mud
is even at a party.
I'm always on the go,
trying to keep up with his affairs.
Though he dresses me nice,
he squeezes me dry.
His affairs leave no room for mine.
He takes everything for himself
and leaves me the dregs.
Though I want to serve Laura, 1430
and even get a little free with her,
my master keeps me tied up.
She does the dishes in this palace,
to judge from her hands.
Though she might be a little tough,
she'd make a tasty dish herself.
It's almost time for the party.
Now let's see who dances with whom.

Music and singing comes from inside

MUSIC *Behold Fedra and Ariadna:
two beautiful suns rise. 1440
They make heaven envious,
outshining Dawn with their eyes.
Their graceful movements
trace a bright path of light.*

Enter MINOS, TEBANDRO, and MUSICIANS, accompanied by the sound of instruments; FEDRA, ARIADNA, CINTIA, and LAURA enter together with masks and hats with feathers; TESEO, LIDORO, BACO, and TUNA enter together; the ladies on one side of the stage and the gentlemen on the other side. The king is seated and the rest remain standing.

MINOS	What a splendid spectacle, fine clothes and fine looks on all sides.	
MUSIC	<i>Confidence trusts in good fortune, and applauds its work with pride. The bliss that fortune chooses always has luck on its side.</i>	1450
FEDRA	Your Majesty, please allow us to wear these masks for the sake of modesty. They will make the celebration more free and natural.	
ARIADNA	It is for custom rather than adornment. Disguises are the fashion whenever courtiers celebrate at the palace.	
MINOS	It is my great pleasure to grant your wish.	1460
TESEO	Your approval crowns this great event with happiness.	
BACO	I add my due respects, as is only right.	
LIDORO	I need never fear in your gracious presence.	
TUNA	<i>(To ARIADNA) Lady, I would throw myself at your feet, but you wouldn't want a man who can't stand firm.</i>	1470
MUSIC	<i>Although favor may hide, when bliss arrives at last, only those who recognize it enjoy it before it's passed.</i>	
FEDRA	Who among these dancers	

. is wearing my sash?

TESEO (Aside) Her sash?
This must be Fedra.
How fortunate!

TESEO goes to FEDRA and takes her by the hand. They dance downstage and bow

(To FEDRA) I have found a way out. 1480
I am released from the trap
of redoubled devotion.
My fortunes turn to happiness.

FEDRA I never lost my faith, to your credit,
and will now follow your lead.
I am so glad you have turned
to me once again.

MUSIC *Venus herself imitates
these sovereign ladies.
Their loveliness illuminates
a miracle of beauty.* 1490

BACO (Aside) From her dress,
this must be Ariadna.
What am I waiting for?
I will take her by the hand,
and with her, my good fortune.

BACO takes ARIADNA by the hand, and they dance the same steps

(To ARIADNA) I so admire your beauty.
And yet I must tell you
that the courtly thing to do
is to bestow your reverence 1500
on the one dancing with you.

ARIADNA I cannot think of such things,
I'm keeping to the measure,
and rather well too.
Surely it's enough that I follow
step for step.

MUSIC *When opportunity arises,
take fortune by the hand.
The chance to turn one's luck*

comes but once in life's long dance. 1510

LIDORO
(*Aside*) Can my luck be so great?
Could this be Fedra
who moves with such grace?
I am sure of it.
I must ask her to dance.

LIDORO *takes LAURA by the hand, and they dance the same steps*

(*To LAURA*) Your bright eyes enthrall me
with their unending light.
Their dancing glances
ensnare my heart.

LAURA
I am only too glad
to grant you this dance. 1520
How could I say no?

MUSIC
*When luck is wanting,
misstep and you're out of place.
But do not fear,
just catch up and save face.*

TUNA
(*Aside*) Dancing with this lady
takes everything I've got.
At least I look the part in this get-up.

TUNA *takes CINTIA by the hand, and they dance like the others*

(*To CINTIA*) I'm glad to dance, 1530
but when I see how you step,
and I mean no disrespect,
I'm afraid I don't measure up.

CINTIA
You cut such a fine figure
that you are easily a match
for any dancer here.
Just don't step on any toes.

The music plays and everyone dances. TUNA's feather falls and BACO picks it up

BACO
(*Aside*) What is this feather?
I know I have seen it before,
in Ariadna's hair. 1540
I am beside myself with jealousy.

I will wear it myself to see
if it was meant to show Lidoro favor.
Go slow, my jealousy,
until I see if I am right.

BACO *puts the feather in his hat*

FEDRA	(<i>Aside</i>) Now that I am sure he is Teseo, for he is wearing the sash, I will arrange to meet with him in private. (<i>Whispers to TESEO</i>) Teseo, I will await you tonight.	
TESEO	How can I deserve such favor?	1550
ARIADNA	(<i>Aside</i>) This must be Teseo wearing the feather. (<i>Whispers to BACO</i>) Prince, I will wait for you tonight.	
BACO	Could there be any greater bliss?	
ARIADNA	There will be, if you wear the feather.	
BACO	(<i>Aside</i>) Aha! I burn with jealousy. She must have given it to Lidoro as the mark of her favor.	
TUNA	(<i>Aside</i>) God, I'm tired!	
LIDORO	(<i>Aside</i>) That must be Baco and Fedra whispering over there. How can I suffer so and yet not take my revenge?	1560
TESEO	(<i>Aside</i>) Though Fedra's words are measured, her smoldering eyes strike lightning in my heart.	
BACO	(<i>Aside</i>) One born unhappy should never aspire to bliss. It is a slight to the stars to try to resist.	1570
MINOS	These are fitting gallantries for our court, as lords and ladies display their charms. They gather reverently for this ritual, making their offerings on the altar of love.	

.
 (Aside) Those two must be Baco and Lidoro,
 princes of high degree.
 I'm sure of it, it must be them.
 (Aloud) You must believe me when I say
 how happy I am to have found relief
 from the sorrow and misfortune
 that tyrannized me. 1580

TESEO Sir, this entertainment is most delightful
 for having consoled you.

MINOS How could any torment
 withstand such festivities?

MUSIC *In all that I do not know,
 sometimes confidence I feign,
 so that the forces of desire
 may yield the hope I claim.*

TESEO What a good refrain. 1590
 Let me try to explain what it means.

BACO It's so close to my heart,
 it's as if they sing it for me.

LIDORO Let's make a game of it.¹⁵

TUNA Well if they're going to play,
 let's hear the four of them
 so we don't miss a beat.

TESEO *In all that I do not know,
 sometimes confidence I feign,
 so that the forces of desire
 may yield the hope I claim.* 1600
 (To FEDRA) Although it relieves my pain,
 your favor is but an illusion,
 for an unfortunate man
 can never find favor.
 To think I might is a mistake,
 a trick of my desire.
 Yet at the sight of you
 I am moved to oppose my fate,

¹⁵ This courtly game of poetic invention allows the couples to show off their refinement and flirt at the same time. Their responses reveal their real insecurities and desires in a coded way, without King Minos catching on. The song lyrics also ironically comment on the mistaken identities and entanglements already in motion.

	though I may be much deceived <i>in all that I do not know.</i>	1610
FEDRA	(To TESEO) Though doubt may accuse you, love makes your case, and so I recover my hope and certainty. Despite this turn of events and your shifting loyalties, with loving and true faith, <i>sometimes confidence I feign.</i>	
BACO	(To ARIADNA) My despair is such that it may never fade. Another had to lose your favor for me to even find it. And so I can find no rest, even as I wear it now. Though I may hope, it is unclear how this path, by leading to some remedy, <i>may yield the hope I claim.</i>	1620
ARIADNA	(To BACO) It's not easy to find the words to spurn another, but once you do, the real challenge is knowing how to hold back. There's no use resisting. When it's time to defend myself, I find my strength in <i>the forces of desire.</i>	1630
MINOS	These are noble conceits, urbane and delicate, and wise all around. Let the music resume so that we may proceed. The rest should not miss out, for they have not mis-stepped.	1640
MUSIC	<i>In all that I do not know, sometimes confidence I feign, so that the forces of desire may yield the hope I claim.</i>	
LIDORO	(To LAURA) Though I am undeserving of love's sweet triumph,	

yet desire leads me on, 1650
 so that I must be wary of
all that I do not know.

LAURA (To LIDORO) Blind hope and quiet despair
 cannot sustain me.
 Though it may not be true,
sometimes confidence I feign.

TUNA (To CINTIA) My good fortune, alas,
 is all imagination.
 My desire seeks it out,
 not so I may possess it, 1660
 but so it *may yield the hope I claim.*

CINTIA (To TUNA) With such good reasoning,
 it stands to reason I should reward you,
 if not in deed,
 then with *the forces of desire.*

MINOS That's enough.
 You have enlivened the celebration
 with your gracious efforts,
 and now you must rest.

TESEO How considerate of Your Majesty. 1670
 See how the night begins
 to unfurl its black cloak.

FEDRA (Aside) Oh Love, let me find relief
 and the happiness I await.

ARIADNA (Aside) Oh my tormented thoughts,
 let me find a remedy for you.

LIDORO (Aside) Oh my sorrows,
 death cannot come soon enough.

TESEO (Aside) Oh Fortune, let us go in haste,
 so I can savor my rewards at leisure. 1680

All exit except TUNA and VINNY

TUNA (Aside) Am I all alone? No, I lie.
 There's that fellow over there,
 giving himself airs.

A servant, I'm sure of it.
I must find out what he's up to.
(*To VINNY*) Hey, would you mind?
I don't know who you answer to,
but could you answer a few questions?

TUNA *takes off his hat and discovers the feather is missing*

What's this? Where's the feather?
Oh God, I've been robbed! 1690
Now the gallant who took it up
will leave his mark everywhere.¹⁶

VINNY I already have a master.

TUNA Who is that?

VINNY It's Baco.

TUNA How you can stand to serve him
when he's always falling down drunk?

VINNY How can you speak like that?

TUNA It's the only style I know.
Doesn't serving Baco 1700
leave you high and dry?

VINNY High and dry? Why?

TUNA Because he drinks like a fish
and leaves you the dregs.
(*Aside*) I need to get away from this fool.
It's getting dark.
(*To VINNY*) Goodbye!

VINNY I'll come with you.

TUNA Hurry up then, if you're free.

VINNY Of course I'm free. 1710
It's not like you're going to pay me.
We're off!

TUNA You mustn't, really.

¹⁶ A pun about writing with feather quills, with a double entendre implied.

Tinged with the same tragic colors,
the night, without light, paints the sad trials
that I, without rest, have painted myself.
Wellspring of relief and torment,
my love is a wound that craves,
more alive and penetrating in its reach
as I feel its grasp grow.
To live while dying—my torment has taken my soul 1750
as its lover, and not until death will they part.

FEDRA (Aside) Oh, how hope draws out the hours,
as past torments linger in the soul.

ARIADNA (Aside) Oh, how the night weaves together
shadows and horrors,
confusion and fear—
all signs my death is near.

FEDRA (Aside) If I live but to die of bliss,
it is only because love's greatest triumph
lies in surrender. 1760

ARIADNA (Aside) My misfortune brings me misery
that is so pleasant it makes me seek out
further injury to remedy my sorrows.

FEDRA (Aside) I crave this torment and pain
like I thirst for water,
drinking every last drop
until there's nothing left.

ARIADNA (Aside) My pain is such a constant companion
that I cannot imagine leaving it behind.

FEDRA (Aside) No happiness could mean as much 1770
as this happy sorrow.
The last thing I need
is this love I must have.

ARIADNA (Aside) I will wait for Teseo.

FEDRA (Aside) In Teseo my love will meet its match.

ARIADNA (Aside) He should be here any moment.

FEDRA (Aside) Has he not found his way here?

This was the place we agreed on,
 by the cunningly designed door
 through which he escaped that prison. 1780
 Here will my happy love find him at last,
 as fate finally turns kind.

ARIADNA *(Aside)* I left Fedra behind.
 I want no other witnesses
 to my amorous passion
 than my own sighs of love.

FEDRA *(Aside)* I fear Ariadna will notice my absence.
 And yet only without her
 can I find some release.

Enter TESEO, apart from the others

TESEO *(Aside)* It'll soon be time 1790
 for the divine Fedra to appear,
 a sight as wondrous
 as the sun coming out at night.
 I will await her here,
 for she said she would be expecting me tonight.
 How much longer?
 This is such torment!
 But wait, I think I hear the gentle rustle
 of her gown coming this way.

ARIADNA *(Aside)* What is that shape there 1800
 in the darkness?

TESEO *(Aside)* Either my desire is playing tricks on me,
 or I hear a noise.

ARIADNA *(Aside)* Oh, if only it were him!
 I can hardly believe it.

TESEO *(Aside)* I will speak to her.

ARIADNA *(Aside)* I will speak to him.

FEDRA *(Aside)* I hear steps over there.
 Could it be Teseo?

ARIADNA *(Aside)* It is my love, 1810
 or I'm seeing things.

and sighs for sails.
 Though love but teases with its whip,
 how its blows do sting
 as my heart flirts with death. 1850

FEDRA
(Aside) It's an insult to my love
 that I can even bear such blows.
 But softly, my torments,
 let's go bit by bit,
 for my love must withstand
 the sorrows I cannot resist.
 I may endanger my love
 if I risk it all now.
 To snub him would be unworthy of that love,
 though to speak might compromise my virtue. 1860
 And so, my sorrows,
 I must leave you behind!
 Oh, let my lips spout their poison!
 Yet could I really utter such words
 and risk what I love?
 No, Love, that will not do.
 But what to do instead?
 Bear it somehow.

TESEO
(To ARIADNA) My heart is at once
 as poor in joys 1870
 as it is rich in sorrows.
 Enough, divine Fedra.

ARIADNA
(Aside) What is this I hear?
 Oh, ingrate!
 I will lose my mind
 at such cruel disdain.

TESEO
 Will you not respond?

ARIADNA
(Aside) Who has ever found herself
 in such a tight spot?
 I must pretend to be Fedra. 1880
 Oh, to be tested as a martyr to love!

FEDRA
(Aside) Did someone call my name?
 Yes, I think so.
 The clear echo of my wretched name
 does not bode well.
 That is Ariadna,

who has found with Teseo
the love that escapes me.

ARIADNA (To TESEO) Though I deign to answer,
I am not moved by your misspoken love. 1890
In truth, you miss the mark.

TESEO
When someone worships you,
offering his soul as a sacrifice,
the thing to do is accept it.
It's to your own credit, not mine.

ARIADNA
That is more insult than courtesy.
I would not accept such an offering,
except to be free of you.

TESEO
I do not understand you.

ARIADNA
If you cannot make sense of the content, 1900
or study my words closely,
then at least work on your style,
you ignorant fool.

TESEO
What is this, my lady?
If my ship has run aground
on the shoals of misery,
it must be the will of Fortune.
Although loving you makes me
like the towering pine
at the peak of its strength, 1910
whose vain splendor
is dashed by lightning;
like the flower nourished by dawn's light
and drained of life by evening,
born but to die again;
like the sun in its blue cradle,
whose blazing red ruby soon fades
into the topaz of twilight;
like the meadow with its lush green mantle
turned to dust under a summer blaze; 1920
like the crystal waters whose summer dance,
that harmonious flow,
is stilled by icy winter:
I embrace it all.
I am that ship in stormy waters,
that towering pine of misguided pride,

my love the tender flower,
my pain the harsh summer sun,
my burning soul the lightning bolt,
my tears the crystal waters. 1930
For, to my sorrow,
I am now met with a winter's freeze,
a shoal before the harbor,
a sad twilight for my blazing sun,
withering looks for my flower,
no regard for my youthful strength.
All of these obstacles,
harsh tutors for my love,
will seem sweet to me
once they have refined my style. 1940

LAURA and BACO enter at the side

LAURA Come in now,
this is the place agreed upon.

BACO Gladly, and I will repay
the courtesies offered me.

LAURA Come in,
and I will tell my mistress at once
that you are here.
(Aside) Teseo is not the only one
who will have to reward me.

Exit LAURA

BACO *(Aside)* Among the shadows I seek the light, 1950
like an eagle that dares stare at the sun,
for I have been called here
by the lovely Ariadna tonight.

ARIADNA I hear steps over there.

TESEO I hear a sound over there.

ARIADNA I am lost if they see me.

TESEO If they see me, all is lost.

BACO *(Aside)* I will approach,
for according to the signs

that must be my guiding star there, 1960
lighting the way to happiness.
That must surely be Ariadna.

BACO approaches FEDRA

(*To FEDRA*) Oh sun most divine,
let not the shadows hide you
like those spots that sully
the face of the sun.
To obey you will be my greatest joy,
as it has taken centuries
for us to get to this point.
I am your servant. 1970

FEDRA (*Aside*) Is this Teseo?
I must find out.
(*To BACO*) I did not expect you here.

BACO What do you mean?

FEDRA I mean I did not expect you here.

BACO I know, to my great sorrow,
that only Lidoro is worthy
of your favors.

FEDRA (*Aside*) Teseo must have found out
that Lidoro attempts to woo me. 1980
(*To BACO*) You are not only neglectful,
but also too bold.

ARIADNA (*To TESEO*) I must close that door,
for my father is still awake.
Wait here.

TESEO What is this I hear?
Must you go?
How am I to bear this?

Exit ARIADNA

(*Aside*) There are people here now.
Will she add insult to injury? 1990
I am determined to avenge this offense
though it may reveal my jealousy.

I will hide here to see
what she will do next.

TESEO *hides*

FEDRA (Aside) With disdain, with rejection,
I will test his devotion.
(To BACO) Be off with you.

BACO How could I refuse you?

TESEO (Aside) This must be Fedra
who has heard me come in. 2000
Now she is the one
who holds my life by a thread.
What was the point of Ariadna's scheme?
Oh you sly basilisk,¹⁸
though you avert your lethal eyes,
you have killed me by the ear!

FEDRA (To BACO) Since my eyes have found you
so loving in your surrender,
there is no need for me to hear you out.
Off with you. 2010

BACO I do not understand what you are saying.

ARIADNA *enters at the side*

ARIADNA (Aside) Perhaps just one more quiet word with Teseo.

BACO (Aside) This calls for some guile.
(To FEDRA) When you honored me so greatly
by granting me this feather,
tell me, what was your intention?

ARIADNA (Aside) This is worse and worse.
That must be Fedra,
and Teseo, that bold man
who is speaking with her there. 2020
I was wrong to leave,
but my vengeance must be my defense.
Teseo must believe he is speaking to me.
I wish I could send lightning
to smite him now

¹⁸Basilisk: Legendary monster with a snake-like form whose eyes could turn people to stone.

BACO I will take care of him.

TESEO You will see how this tongue of steel
speaks of the wrong you have done to me.

BACO and TESEO fight

FEDRA Laura!

ARIADNA Cintia, come quickly!

FEDRA Bring torches! 2060

TESEO *(Aside)* If I don't fall back,
I will risk my life and my lady both.

LIDORO enters at the side

LIDORO *(Aside)* Caught off guard
while I sought to catch a glimpse of Fedra,
I heard the clashing of swords
and came to see what's going on.
(Aloud) What's all this?

LIDORO comes forward, and fights with BACO

TUNA My master is in a fix.
My lord!

TESEO Tuna, is that you? 2070

TUNA There are many fish in the sea,
but Tuna, that's me.

TESEO The labyrinth must now
be our sanctuary.
Let us hurry away,
they are bringing torches!

TUNA God, isn't this wonderful!
Hurry! If they see us,
it won't look good.

TUNA and TESEO go into the labyrinth. LAURA and CINTIA bring torches

LAURA My lady, here are the torches. 2080

CINTIA What now?

BACO What is this I see?
Lidoro, can it be you?

LIDORO Can this be Baco?
And the enemy he was fighting,
where did he go?
Surely we are under some spell.

FEDRA *(Aside)* The respect I command
must serve me in this pass.

ARIADNA *(Aside)* The decorum I am owed 2090
must serve as a remedy.

FEDRA *(Aside)* Oh, I fear they have seen us!

ARIADNA *(Aside)* No one has seen Teseo.
He is a lucky man!

FEDRA *(Aside)* I will get us out of this tight spot
with my anger.
(Aloud) Lidoro, what brings you here?

ARIADNA *(Aloud)* And you, Prince Baco,
madly profaning this sacred space?

BACO My lady, I am ever... 2100

LIDORO My lady, your words...

BACO ... at your service.
That is why I am here.

LIDORO ...are my command.

ARIADNA My father will surely punish
this brazen wrong.

LIDORO *(Aside)* What is happening to me?

BACO *(Aside)* What's happened to me?
I must exact my vengeance on Lidoro.

(*Aloud*) Bearing news from Athens,
I've come to see His Majesty. 2110

LIDORO They have written me too,
with the same news.

LAURA (*Aside*) What a coincidence,
this excuse cuts both ways.

BACO (*Aside*) That was my line!

LIDORO (*Aside*) His excuse has saved me.

FEDRA And what, pray tell,
does your conveyance of such news
have to do with your trespass here? 2120

BACO I heard a noise in the palace.

LIDORO That same ruckus brought me here, too.

BACO (*Aside*) Lidoro has lost his mind,
and I am consumed with jealousy.

LIDORO (*Aside*) Who could that hidden figure have been,
fighting with Baco?
Was I just dreaming?

FEDRA (*Aside*) Only if Teseo escapes
can I find good fortune.

ARIADNA (*Aside*) With Teseo far from harm's reach,
I have nothing to fear. 2130

LIDORO (*Aside*) Tell me, sweet gnawing vengeance,
how can I satisfy you?

BACO (*Aside*) Soon, my innermost pangs,
you shall have relief.

FEDRA (*Aside*) Help me, oh sufferings,
keep the memory of this love alive.

LIDORO (*Aside*) To love you despite this risk...

BACO (*Aside*) Determined despite myself...

FEDRA	<i>(Aside)</i> Defying my destiny...	2140
ARIADNA	<i>(Aside)</i> Determined now...	
BACO	<i>(Aside)</i> ...to embrace death...	
LIDORO	<i>(Aside)</i> ...to endure suffering...	
BACO	<i>(Aside)</i> ...as a lover.	
LIDORO	<i>(Aside)</i> ...as one conquered.	
FEDRA	<i>(Aside)</i> Yet I will prove in my anguish...	
ARIADNA	<i>(Aside)</i> Yet I will show in my madness...	
FEDRA & ARIADNA	<i>(Aside)</i> ...amid all this confusion, love is the greater labyrinth.	

END OF ACT II

ACT III
SCENE 1

VINNY *enters with a letter in his hand*

VINNY Heavens! How is it that I find myself 2150
 with a master of such strange mind?
 He is the only lord of Thebes,
 where he has taverns and public houses
 in which you can eat a whole horse
 and drink like a fish.
 Yet he has come to Crete
 to present himself as a suitor.
 With all this wine and love freely flowing,
 he's got everyone seeing double,
 thinking he is both Bacchus and a lover. 2160
 And now, simply because he's jealous,
 he tasks me with delivering
 this damned challenge to Prince Lidoro.
 But my fear has granted me prophetic powers.
 I wasn't born yesterday, after all.
 If I bring him this letter,
 Lidoro will blame the messenger.
 I should find a pageboy to carry it instead.
 Before Lidoro cuts me to ribbons,
 I'll have his guts for garters. 2170

TUNA *enters*

TUNA *(Aside)* I have a message for Fedra,
 but I fear someone may see me.
 Yet it doesn't matter,
 no one will recognize me.
 The palace is a sea of faces
 constantly coming and going,
 like tides rolling in and out,
 so no one remembers a face.
 If they ask me anything,
 I'll simply reply that I'm on my way in, 2180
 or on my way out.
 After all, they can't even tell
 whether they're coming or going themselves.
 A playwright would say
 they're just bit players.

VINNY *(Aside)* Just the pawn I needed.

May Fortune smile on me now
as I set the scene!
(*To TUNA*) Pardon me, good sir?

TUNA	What do you want with me?	2190
VINNY	Who are you?	
TUNA	A bit of a bit player.	
VINNY	Whom do you serve?	
TUNA	Lord Bits and Pieces.	
VINNY	And who is this lord?	
TUNA	Me, myself, and I.	
VINNY	Sounds fishy to me.	
TUNA	No fish here, sir. Only Tuna.	
VINNY	You lie.	2200
TUNA	What are you saying? Do you mean to offend the long and noble dynasty of the Bits and the Pieces?	
VINNY	I know you serve Lidoro. (<i>Aside</i>) I'll make him deliver the letter.	
TUNA	It is true, sir, I do serve Lidoro. What of it? (<i>Aside</i>) I guess I can play the part. What harm could come of it?	2210
VINNY	So, you really serve Lidoro?	
TUNA	Just like fish goes with chips.	
VINNY	Then take this to him, and you will have a handsome reward.	

TUNA A reward?
Well, I'll be battered and fried
if this isn't from some princess or another.

VINNY *(Aside)* This is a bit fishy—
now he wants to play Cupid. 2220
(To TUNA) But of course!
It's from Fedra's very hand.
(Aside) He'll take the bait now.
(To TUNA) Farewell.

Exit VINNY

TUNA Bye then.
That couldn't have gone any better.
Imagine if I get a gold chain
or a diamond for delivering this letter.
The princes of Epirus wouldn't be any less generous
than the princes of Spain, would they?¹⁹ 2230
They won't lead me by the nose—
no, they'll cover me with chains.
I'm off to find Lidoro.

Enter TESEO

TESEO Tuna, what letter have you got there?
Have you seen Fedra?
Is that from her perhaps?

TUNA *(Aside)* It's from the devil himself,
who's got me in his clutches.
No way out now.
I'll have to say it is for him. 2240

TESEO What's wrong with you, Tuna?

TUNA *(To TESEO)* I'm wondering
if you might have a little gem
as a reward for me.
Surely such a letter merits as much.

TESEO Hand it over.
The wax is so fresh
that I can get into this letter
without even leaving a mark.

¹⁹ A winking metatheatrical remark aimed at the audience.

Reads the letter

“Prince, I have discovered
that you have tricked me
by courting both princesses.
Since you offend my love on the one hand
and my honor on the other,
I am left with no choice
but to seek satisfaction.
I shall await you in the garden. Baco.”

2250

What is this?
You wretch,
are you trying to trick me?

2260

TESEO hits TUNA

TUNA
That’s my head!
Wait, my lord.
I am just a bony tuna fish,
not some rubbery octopus
for you to tenderize.
Is this how you thank me?

TESEO
This is what your treachery deserves,
you scoundrel.
But my fury distracts me
from punishing the one
who has truly offended me.

2270

Exit TESEO

TUNA
Be gone and do not hurry back.
Who, in the name of God,
goes looking for chains,
only to be torn to ribbons?
Fedra must have named Lidoro in her letter,
and treated him with courteous favors.
And so my master,
transformed into a vile beast,
wants me to pay for what Lidoro owes him.
But the letter is right here.
It must have fallen from that hand
so eager to beat me.
Oh, if only I knew how to read,

2280

all its madness would be revealed!
But it was meant for Lidoro,
and is in good enough shape to seal again,
so nobody need be the wiser.
By God, I'll take it to Lidoro!
Better luck next time, right? 2290
Everyone gets the stick at some point
and I've had my turn already,
so where's the carrot?

Exit TUNA

SCENE 2

Enter BACO and MINOS

BACO My lord, I am at your service.

MINOS I value your discretion,
and have something to ask you.

BACO *(Aside)* Heavens, the king will prevent me
from meeting Lidoro for the challenge.
(To MINOS) What does Your Majesty require of me?
Your wish is my command. 2300
(Aside) If only I could take my leave!

MINOS Prince, no sooner had Teseo's death
given me a taste of vengeance
for the wrong done to me,
then my spies brought me news from Athens.
As word of their prince's fate reached the city,
it set the kingdom in an uproar.
Every last citizen vowed to take up arms,
promising not to return 2310
until they had reduced Crete to ash and embers.
And so they set sail in a fleet so large
that the sea became a crowded city
and the land a desert.
Now I must prepare my defenses,
taking care that it seem like prudence and not fear.
My people must not assume I will be defeated
just because I show concern.
But come with me.
I will show you the letters

and we'll decide on a strategy accordingly. 2320
These matters require careful thought
and swift action.

BACO
Let us go.
(*Aside*) What will Lidoro think of my delay?
Yet I must follow the king.
If this should harm my reputation,
my courage will later make amends.

Exit MINOS and BACO

SCENE 3

Enter TESEO

TESEO
I am tired of waiting for my enemy.
This is far more tedious than fighting!
How could Baco have known the whole story— 2330
how Ariadna gave me freedom,
how Fedra showed me love?
But wait, someone is coming.
I'd better see who it is.

Enter LIDORO with the letter

LIDORO
(*Aside*) My honor requires a response
to this letter I just received.
Baco is trying to drive me mad.
He is now accusing me
of the very thing he has done.
He courts Fedra, despite my love for her, 2340
then he calls me a traitor
and claims I court Ariadna.
Is he trying to fool me?
He hopes to excuse his offense
by claiming I've done the same.
But I've done nothing to him,
and he is in the wrong.
And so he must die for his deeds,
in spite of his words.
Ah, there is someone over there. 2350

TESEO
Who goes there?

LIDORO (Aside) It must be Baco.

TESEO (Aside) No doubt it's Baco.

LIDORO Prince.

TESEO Come then, once and for all!
Fight me now.
Since you know who I am,
I am certain it is you.

TESEO and LIDORO fight

LIDORO What courage!

TESEO Nice move! 2360

LIDORO You're a brave man.

TESEO And an honorable one.

LIDORO If I did not have my own valor,
I would envy yours.

TESEO You've nothing to envy.
You're like Hercules himself.

LIDORO I am just trying to defend my good name.
Alas! I fear you have killed me.

LIDORO falls

TESEO Heavens, I'll be in great danger
if they find out I've killed this man. 2370
They wanted my own life,
and now I've taken another.
I must go at once.
That's the only solution.

Exit TESEO, then BACO enters

BACO How tedious that was!
I don't know how I could stand it.
The king's fears are not my own,
and though he desired my opinion
of his every last plan,

he just droned on like a fly. 2380
 But why is everything so quiet?
 There's no one here.
 Could it be that Lidoro
 got tired of waiting and just left?
 But what's this?
 By the faint light of the moon
 I see a man shuddering in agony.
 Who could it be?
 Good Heavens!

VOICE (Offstage) The noise came from the gardens. 2390

Enter TEBANDRO and GUARDS

TEBANDRO The voices come from over there,
 and they don't lie—
 there's a man hiding behind his cloak,
 with another at his feet,
 either wounded or dead.
 (To GUARDS) See who they are.

GUARD (To BACO) We must detain you.

BACO I can barely restrain my anger.
 (Reveals his face) It's me, Tebandro.
 I am Prince Baco. 2400
 I've only just arrived
 and seen what you see now.

TEBANDRO Your word is enough for me, sir,
 but we must see who this is.

BACO Yes, do so.

TEBANDRO Good Heavens, what is this I see?
 It is Lidoro, prince of Epirus,
 drawing his last breath
 and covered in his own blood!

BACO Heavens, how could this have happened? 2410

TEBANDRO Sir, you killed him with your own hands,
 and now you are surprised?

BACO It can't have been me

when I am this surprised.
I would never disown my culpability
and turn a crime into a vile deed.

TEBANDRO Prince, everyone at court knew
of the bad blood between you two,
whatever the reason for it.
And who else but you would have dared
to kill a man such as him? 2420

One of the GUARDS arrives with the letter

GUARD This letter was there on the ground.
It was probably Lidoro's
and may give some hint
of what just happened.

TEBANDRO Well said.
I want to see what it says.
Bring a light.

GUARD Here you are.

TEBANDRO *(Reads)* "Prince, I have discovered
that you have tricked me
by courting both princesses.
Since you offend my love on the one hand
and my honor on the other,
I am left with no choice
but to seek satisfaction.
I shall await you in the garden. Baco." 2430

You see how things stand, Prince Baco.
We hadn't the slightest clue
about this crime, did we? 2440

And now we have evidence to spare.
Yet I am just an officer
with no jurisdiction over you.
My duty is only to notify the king
of what has occurred.
Should he ask for your whereabouts,
I'll reply I haven't seen you,
though you are hardly a man
who can hide for long.
(To GUARDS) You there, remove the body. 2450

Exit TEBANDRO *and* GUARDS

BACO

What dire straits,
to be suddenly convicted
of a crime I am not guilty of!
The letter I wrote Lidoro
to challenge him to a duel
is the main proof against me.
Will anyone believe
that I am not guilty
when my name is right there
on the letter itself? 2460
What a bind,
at once innocent and condemned
for a crime I did not commit!
To claim I succeeded in my intent
to take revenge on Lidoro
would put me in grave danger,
and it would not be true.
I cannot do such a thing
just to satisfy their mad conjectures.
Yet even if I say I didn't do it, 2470
the letter bears fearsome witness against me.
Though I wrote those words,
I cannot unsay them.
Besides, I shouldn't bring dishonor upon myself
by telling a truth that no one will believe.
Since there is no remedy
and my mind cannot find any proof to deny it,
any claim to contest it,
I must leave Crete at once.
I have ships at the ready. 2480
They will save me from risking
not only my life in this foreign kingdom,
but also my estates back in Thebes,
which Epirus would attack
as soon as they got word
their prince had died at my hand.
Farewell, oh beguiling Crete.
This palace holds more than one labyrinth.

Exit BACO

and mine with his.
If I trust in him, that will redeem us both.
Love tells me Teseo will behave honorably,
given what I have done for him.
Tuna, go tell Teseo to come to me at once.

TUNA I'll move so fast 2530
I'll leave your desire in the dust.
Only your wit can save us now.
We will find life
in the skillful web you weave.
A thread in the hand
is worth two in the bush,
as they say.
In case my master is out,
what should I say?

ARIADNA Tell him to stay away to avoid any scandal, 2540
given what has happened.
Even the labyrinth is no longer safe for him.
I will be on the balcony facing the gardens.

TUNA Very good then.

Exit TUNA

ARIADNA My love for Teseo breeds fear for his death.
If only I could die first,
and evade the continual torment of seeing his pain
and nervously awaiting his last breath.
A thousand times my fear gains new depths 2550
as I imagine the sharp edge of a blade
nearing his gentle neck, yet unscathed,
and so, dying of fright, I picture his death.
And yet, all these dangers do not pain me
as much as imagining a greater threat:
that I have given my life to a treacherous soul,
who would repay me with death.

Exit ARIADNA

SCENE 5

Enter TESEO and FEDRA

FEDRA

What? You killed Baco?

TESEO

My lady, how can my lips deny
what my bloody hand cannot hide?
I received a note from him, 2560
in which he avowed his jealous passion
and his bold desire to act upon his anger.
He claimed that, for pleasure or for vanity,
I courted both you and your sister,
offending his honor in the one case
and his love in the other.
I don't know how he found out about us,
though I am sorry he did.
I met his challenge,
fortune favored my sword: 2570
in short, I killed him,
and that's all there is to say.
Now listen to why I am here.
My dear and most lovely Fedra,
since the moment I first saw you,
I offered you my soul.
I was so beside myself
that not even my longing was my own,
it was all for you.
Since I was yours all at once, 2580
there was no more for me to do,
and so you owe me nothing
for what you entirely possessed.
This was the greatest sign of love:
that having fallen for you so completely,
I could do no more.
You also know how Ariadna,
whether from nobility or mercy,
spun such webs to set me free,
with sharp skill and generous actions, 2590
that if my soul were still my own
it would not suffice to repay her.
Especially when she is adorned with such beauty.
She was as gracious to me
as one less favored might have been.
You know well that in those duels
women fight with each other
it's considered a low blow
to woo with all your charms.
This is why beautiful women 2600

are well known for their disdain.
 They make sure everyone knows
 their beauty is more than enough.
 And so... what's this?
 Have I offended you
 by praising her loveliness?
 Excuse my oversight,
 and don't take it as an insult
 when I owe her so much.
 I must at least acknowledge her charms, 2610
 since I cannot return her love.
 A lover can show his devotion
 without being rude to another woman.
 And if all this does not convince you,
 consider I have come now
 to beg something of you,
 since Ariadna's clever design
 will not save me now.
 Whoever told Baco of our love
 will surely tell others, 2620
 and they will realize
 it was I who killed him.
 This will redouble the risk.
 The one who told him of my love
 may know he then challenged me,
 and from there may easily deduce
 what happened, leaving me
 no comfort for my sorrows,
 no refuge from my troubles.
 Don't think it is the threat 2630
 to my life that scares me.
 I'd count myself lucky
 if I were the only one in danger.
 But now both you and Ariadna
 may be swept away
 by these waves of misfortune
 that threaten death and dishonor.
 Only by fleeing can we avoid the risk
 and set ourselves free.
 Beautiful Fedra, 2640
 if you love me as you claim,
 if you are moved by my pleas,
 if you feel for my sorrows,
 then let us go to Athens.
 From there it will be easier
 to obtain your father's pardon.

Although he opposes us now,
I am sure that once I take up arms,
he will see fit to relent.
Many things are granted in war
that are denied in peace. 2650
If you go with me, they will think
you set me free out of love,
and that will free Ariadna
of any lingering suspicion.
She alone will wear the crown of Crete,
while you rule over Athens
and my soul—in truth, the better prize.
What do you say to this?

FEDRA Teseo, you anticipate my every wish. 2660
I blush to say the reasons
to flee with you are so obvious
that I was almost compelled
to suggest it myself.
Your plea saved me from speaking first.
I don't know why words of love
always sound better when the man speaks them,
but all a woman needs to do
to be heroic in love
is to concede the motion. 2670
To be the one to propose it
dims beauty and damages honor.
And she who pleads with her lover,
even when she knows he adores her,
may not be denied,
but will not be admired.
There are so many rules
governing a lady's decorum
that, to protect her honor,
no matter how much she loves, 2680
she should merely suggest
that she is vanquished,
rather than fall on her knees.
But no matter—
take my life and myself.
Having declared my love to you,
there is no more to say.

TESEO How you draw me to you!
Let me kiss your feet.

thus preventing the vengeance of my steel;
when, to free myself from danger,
I must flee from Crete at once,
readying a ship to save my life,
then I see what the love
of an ungrateful woman can do,
she who kills with her disdain and beauty.
Though I forswear her forever,
I must return to her palace once more 2730
to say goodbye at the bars of her window.
Bending to my pleas,
they might lend a kind ear
to what my love has wrought.

Enter ARIADNA above, on a balcony

ARIADNA (Aside) The longer Teseo takes,
the more my anguish grows.
If waiting by itself is death,
what of the one who waits and doubts?
But if my eyes don't deceive me,
nor those dark shadows confuse me, 2740
a man is coming this way.

BACO (Aside) Someone has opened a window.
I must come near.

ARIADNA (Aside) Someone is coming.
It must be him.
(Aloud) Is it you, my lord?

BACO (Aside) I will pretend to be the one she asks for.
(Aloud) It is.

ARIADNA What took you so long, my lord,
when my breast shudders with so much fear, 2750
ever since I learned of Lidoro's unjust death
at your hands?

BACO (Aside) Heavens!
What is this I hear?
She who speaks must know who I am.
Who could she be?

ARIADNA And although I don't know the cause,
I'm sure it was for the love of Fedra,

a woman has been born.

BACO (To FEDRA) Two figures are coming, my lady.
Let's wait over here
until they've passed by.

FEDRA If I must.

BACO and FEDRA stand to one side while ARIADNA and TESEO pass in front of them.
TUNA approaches TESEO

ARIADNA Hurry, Teseo.

TUNA (Aside) Someone said Teseo.
Has my master gotten here before me
and taken the princess?
I guess he's already plucked her from her father. 2880
Might as well run off with her now.
I need to be careful as I get closer.
(To TESEO) Psst. Is that you, sir?

TESEO That's Tuna.
What do you want?

TUNA Tell me who you are.
Until I know if you are you,
I can't say if I'm me.

TESEO I am Teseo.
Is that enough? 2890

FEDRA (Aside) He said Teseo.
But isn't Teseo who I'm with?

TUNA Then tell me, sir, by God,
where have you been all night?
Ariadna sent for you
and I couldn't find you anywhere.

BACO (Aside) Who said Ariadna?

TESEO I was at the port to see
if any ships were sailing for Athens.
My valor will leave Crete in the shadows, 2900
for in Fedra I carry off the sun.

(*Aloud*) Teseo, my lord, my husband!²¹
This thief here steals away your Fedra!

TESEO My honor will not stand for this!
Die at my hand, you traitor!

BACO You are the one who must die!
My honor tells me you tricked Ariadna 2940
into leaving with you.

ARIADNA (*Aside*) What harsh fortune!

FEDRA (*Aside*) If that is Teseo,
I must go to him.

ARIADNA (*Aside*) Heaven help me!
In this horrendous darkness
I can't tell which of the two is Teseo.

FEDRA and ARIADNA switch partners. VINNY enters, running

VINNY Where can I hide?
For my service to Baco
I'll be the low-hanging fruit. 2950

Enter TEBANDRO and GUARDS

TEBANDRO (*To GUARDS*) Kill him if he resists.
The king has ordered it.

VINNY Who says a brisk pace
means I'm resisting arrest?

TEBANDRO What's going on here?
Once again, two reckless men
are dueling in the gardens.
Who are you that dare
disturb this sacred space?
(*To GUARDS*) Arrest them. 2960

TESEO You do not know my fighting spirit.

BACO You do not know my fighting hands.

²¹ Marriage vows exchanged in private had the force of an actual marriage before the Church began trying to enforce public unions instead. Fedra indicates that she considers her and Teseo already married.

TEBANDRO Kill them, then.
 What are you waiting for?

TESEO (*Aside*) If I don't fight them off,
 I'll lose my life and Fedra both.

BACO (*Aside*) If I don't defend my honor,
 I'll lose Ariadna and my life.

BACO and TESEO fight the GUARDS

FEDRA (*Aside*) Oh tyrannical heavens, give me death
 and put an end to the life that so offends you! 2970

ARIADNA (*Aside*) If my miserable life
 is the target of your fury,
 then aim for my heart.

GUARD Are you resisting the law?

Enter MINOS

MINOS What's this?
 In the palace, to hear such quarrels
 and witness such brawls?

TEBANDRO My lord, these two men here are to blame.
 They stubbornly resist the rule of law.

MINOS Well then, arrest them at once,
 or kill them if you must. 2980

TEBANDRO And also these ladies,
 over whom they must have been fighting.

MINOS Dueling over women?
 Arrest them as well.

TESEO It's impossible to escape.
 We're surrounded on all sides.

MINOS See who those women are.

ARIADNA Goodness, my life is over!

FEDRA Goodbye, miserable life! 2990

TEBANDRO *reveals* FEDRA and ARIADNA's faces

MINOS

What is this I see?
My daughters? No longer,
when they behave in such common ways.
Such fury burns within me
that my breath is turned to fire.
Oh, what insult! What suffering!
If only I could tell them of my pain
without having to name their shame!
How can I even bear to speak of you,
you treacherous monsters, 3000
you ungrateful instruments of my dishonor,
you portraits of my shame?
How could I find you—
what torment!—
in such a state—
what humiliation!—
in disguise—
what indecency!—
and alone with two men?
Speak. You won't respond? 3010
Tell me, what kind of villains spare my life
only to rob me of my honor?
Speak, traitors.
Don't be held back now by modesty.
If it could not stop you from the deed,
it should not stop you from speaking of it.

ARIADNA

My lord...
(*Aside*) Fear has turned me to ice.

FEDRA

My lord...
(*Aside*) I am turned to marble by fear. 3020

ARIADNA

If through my fault...

BACO

(*Aside*) What am I waiting for?
How can I not reveal who I am
when Ariadna is in such danger?

BACO reveals himself

(*Aloud*) My lord, it is just to punish
the one and only culprit, and I am that.

Pursued with courtly flattery,
persuaded by loving pleas,
and obliged by tender cries,
Ariadna merely followed me. 3030

ARIADNA (Aside) What's this I hear?
When have I ever followed Baco?
Good heavens. But I must be silent.
Perhaps his efforts will save me
from this danger.

TESEO (Aside) What's this?
How can Baco be alive
when I already killed him?

FEDRA (Aside) I cannot believe he's alive.

MINOS I realized at once that you, Prince Baco,
must have been responsible 3040
for this beastly offense against me.
Who else but you would dare sully my honor?
You, who have set your sights so high
and now stoop so low.
But your death will serve as an example
to other rash fools,
as I avenge Lidoro
and restore my honor.

TESEO (Aside) If Baco is willing to face death for his love,
my courage must not seem the weaker. 3050
I wouldn't want everyone to see him
embracing danger while I run from it.

TESEO reveals himself

(Aloud) My lord, if, for Ariadna's sake,
Baco is willing to face death,
Teseo must do no less for Fedra.

FEDRA What have you done?

ARIADNA (Aside) What's this I see?
He will risk death for Fedra?
Then let him die. 3060
I will no longer be blind to his ingratitude.
It has turned my love into hate.

BACO *(Aside)* What? Teseo, alive?
And in love with Fedra?
I thought he was dead!
She must have saved him.

TEBANDRO *(Aside)* Can this be real?

TUNA They're all frozen in disbelief.
He frightens them more
now that he's come back to life 3070
than when they thought he was dead.

VINNY If Lidoro came back too,
it'd be the day of the dead²² on Crete.

MINOS I am so astounded I can barely move,
not even to avenge this great offense.
You are still alive?
What misplaced compassion freed you,
despite your treachery?
I can hardly believe it. 3080
I am too astonished to give vent to my wrath.
Just when I think I have laid my anger to rest,
you reappear, like a Hydra with its many heads,²³
bringing my wrongs back to life.
Why do you provoke me so?
Wasn't it enough to deepen my pain
by outwitting my rage, you traitor?
Did you have to destroy my honor, too?
What else will you attempt against my noble blood,
now that you have spilled it in Athens
then insulted it in Crete? 3090
What else will you plot against me?
First you spilled my son's blood with murderous intent,
and now you add this insult to that injury
by stealing my own daughters away?
But my merciless fury will punish you,
every last one of you!
If only I can ensure your downfall,
my own will be a small price to pay.
Let the world witness how my blood
will cleanse the stain upon my honor, 3100
which my own blood has offended.

²² The original Spanish is "el Día de los Finados," or All Souls' Day.

²³ Hydra: Many-headed serpent of Greek mythology, said to grow two new heads for every one cut off.

Those who have insulted me must die,
as did the only one who honored me.
I will kill all of you,
including Baco, that traitor,
who abducted Ariadna and slew Lidoro.
You have all done wrong in equal measure,
and so you will share the same fate:
you will all be put to death.
Take them away.

3110

BACO

What harsh fury!

TESEO

Could I suffer any greater torment?

ARIADNA

His cruelty is unmoved by our pleas.

FEDRA

His severity is unswayed by our misery.

MINOS

Die, so I may restore that honor
which you have attempted to destroy!

TESEO

How could he do this?

VINNY

This is crushing me!

ARIADNA

Sorrow, silence, and death!

FEDRA

Love, death, and silence!

3120

Drums sound and CINTIA and LAURA enter, frightened, along with two SOLDIERS

SOLDIER 1

My lord, why so slow to respond?
Crete will soon be destroyed,
and you are in imminent danger.

SOLDIER 2

Enemy troops have stealthily breached
the palace from the shore
and occupy it now.
Athens, spurred by the death of its prince,
seeks vengeance on every side.
My lord, they'll be here soon—
save yourself.

3130

MINOS

Oh, fickle fate!
Who has ever seen the like?
I must pay for my offenses,

when I am the one offended?

LAURA This tumult and distress portend our ruin.

CINTIA Having acted so freely,
I'd hate to be a captive now.

Enter LICAS, dressed as a general, with Athenian SOLDIERS

LICAS My anger will not be appeased
until I find the king
and make him pay with his life 3140
for the bloody tyranny
that took Teseo's.

TEBANDRO Cursed heavens!
There's no escape now!

LICAS Is that the king I see?
You will die at my hands!

FEDRA Teseo!

TESEO There's no need to prompt me—
I will do what I must,
and not because you ask it of me. 3150

MINOS Will no one help me?

TESEO I will, my lord.
Stop, Licas.
There is no need to avenge me
when I'm not dead.
Look! I'm Teseo.
I'm alive.

LICAS What a blessed sight, my lord!
How is this possible?

TESEO In their compassion, 3160
the princesses set me free.
(Aside) Mentioning only Ariadna
would cause suspicion,
and it wouldn't be honorable
to vaunt affection I can't repay.

VINNY The lackeys and maids were left in the wings,
 with no time for love-plots,
 but Cintia, I'm here if you want to follow suit. 3240

CINTIA I do. We'd be fools not to.

TUNA Laura, we wouldn't want to be left
 with nothing but hard feelings.

LAURA You're right.
 A catch like me shouldn't be left adrift
 while everyone else pairs off.
 Take my hand.

TEBANDRO And so the pen is spent
 and begs your pardon for the play it wrote,
 against the author's better judgment.
 It only meant to please,
 and knew not what it did.²⁵

END OF THE PLAY

²⁵ A traditional final apology for the preceding play, employing modesty tropes typical of the form.