

GUILLÉN DE CASTRO Y BELLVÍS

THE FORCE OF HABIT

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

Paul Cella
Nitzaira Delgado-García
Barbara Fuchs
Mar Gómez Glez
Laura Muñoz
Juan Jesús Payán
Payton Phillips Quintanilla
Kathryn Renton
Veronica Wilson

Our translations are free to use for educational and performance purposes with [attribution](#) to Diversifying the Classics, under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

Credit: [Title of translation], translated by Diversifying the Classics
from [Original title of play] by [Original author].

Notify us at diversifyingtheclassics.ucla@gmail.com prior to use of our translations.
We are happy to discuss and consult on performances and adaptations.

© 2014 Diversifying the Classics
Published by Juan de la Cuesta 2019

Table of Contents

The *Comedia* in Context

A Note on the Playwright

Introduction—Laura Muñoz and Payton Phillips Quintanilla

Pronunciation Key

The Force of Habit

Characters

Act I

Act II

Act III

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

Guillén de Castro y Bellvís (1569–1631) was a Valencian playwright whose theatrical oeuvre developed right alongside the *comedia* itself. He was highly involved with the literary world of Valencia, and at age twenty-three joined the *Academia de los Nocturnos* under the pseudonym *Secreto*. Castro submitted works of prose and poetry to the group, discovering his voice as part of one of the most renowned literary gatherings in Spain. The *Nocturnos* maintained Valencia's position as a highly influential city in the changing literary and intellectual landscape at the turn of the seventeenth century, and Castro's theater owes much to his years in the *Academia*. Like many of his contemporaries, Castro was a military man as well as a poet; in addition to serving as a captain in the Valencian coast guard in 1593, he also had a brief governorship of a district of Naples. Little is known about his time in Italy, although during his absence two of his plays, *El caballero bobo* and *El amor constante*, were published in a collection of *comedias* by Valencian dramatists. After failing to revive the literary circles of his youth with the short-lived *Academia de los montañeses del Parnaso*, Castro decided, like so many of his contemporaries, to try his luck in the capital city of Madrid. In preparation for his move, Castro published a collection of his plays with the last of his money, pinning all his hopes on selling these volumes to get him out of debt. The gamble paid off, allowing him to enter a thriving community in which poets, playwrights, and novelists jostled for fame. The care he took to publish his own creations and adaptations of some of the most popular works of the period, including Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, present us with a playwright who was not only interested in developing his craft but also deeply invested in succeeding in the emerging commercial theatrical market. He published a second volume of plays in 1625, and remained active in literary circles in Madrid until his death in 1631.

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

Like many of his Valencian contemporaries, much of Castro's theater portrays the dramatic lives of the high-born, and often uses legendary figures from Iberian history and ballads, adapting them to the stage as in his best-known play, *Las mocedades del Cid*. Castro's works also tend toward the tragic, and even his urban plays, like *Los mal casados de Valencia*, are full of dark humor. His works show a playwright fully engaged with his contemporaries across literary genres, and his skill in adapting popular stories, like the ballad of the Cid or Don Quijote's exploits, and unflinching presentation of urban life make him one of the most interesting playwrights of Spanish *comedia*.

Introduction

Laura Muñoz and Payton Phillips Quintanilla

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

The Plot

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

Act I opens with Félix's father, Don Pedro de Moncada, finally returning home after a long separation from his family. Félix's mother, Costanza, explains how she and Don Pedro met, married, and had a daughter in secret—Félix's sister, Hipólita. When Costanza's brother and father discovered them, Pedro narrowly escaped with his life and the baby girl, leaving Costanza

alone and pregnant with Félix. Following the recent death of Costanza's father, Pedro can finally return home to them after serving as a soldier in Flanders for the past twenty years.

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

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

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

Back at the family home, Hipólita continues to resist her training in ladylike behavior, and Félix begins his sword-fighting lessons with equally disastrous results. When Hipólita cannot resist demonstrating how to use a sword correctly, she is chastised and told to leave men's things to men. Félix, meanwhile, is humiliated by his father for not fulfilling the

expectations of a male heir. Pedro and Galván, his servant, concoct a plan to cure Félix of his constant fear. Later, while Félix anxiously stands guard in the street, his father comes out in disguise and attacks him; Félix, scared at first, finally begins to fight back as his father runs away. Leonor, awakened by all the noise, calls out to Félix and the two exchange sweet words. Félix excitedly tells his father about the fight and how Leonor saw him in his moment of bravery.

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

In Act III, the siblings' training is put to the test. The men discuss the best way for Félix to restore his honor and decide that he must do it alone, out of sight of the local constables who might interfere. Pedro asks one of his captains to keep an eye on his son, and come to his rescue if necessary. Once again, Luis declares his love for Hipólita, and she finally admits that she loves him, too. Galván seizes an opportunity to get back at Hipólita for punching him in the nose and tells her that Luis is already married to Marcelo's sister. Hipólita, jealous, angry, and hurt, goes off to look for Luis and avenge herself. Otavio calls at Leonor's balcony. Disappointed that the

wrong suitor has come, she decides to make Félix jealous to motivate him to fight Otavio. The two suitors argue, then go off to find a private place to settle their differences, with the Captain following closely behind. Hipólita, dressed as a man again, finds Luis and reveals herself, furiously challenging him to fight, but Luis explains that she has been tricked. Hipólita is embarrassed and tries to save face, and Luis uses this to his advantage, convincing her to meet him in a grove of trees to settle their argument. Hipólita is aware that Luis has no intention of fighting and every intention of wooing her, but follows his lead. In the meantime, the Captain has followed Félix and Otavio and hides behind a wall, the only witness to their fight. When Otavio appears, injured and defeated, Félix shows mercy and lets him run away. Alerted by the noise, some bailiffs appear and try to apprehend Félix, who fights them off successfully until the Captain can jump into the fray.

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

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

Performing Gender and Violence, Then and Now

Modern audiences may be surprised, even disappointed, by how Guillén de Castro ends his play: heterosexual love and marriage allegedly cure the siblings of their gender-bending ills by conquering habit and restoring nature. This tidy conclusion may feel forced, incomplete, or unsatisfactory after three acts that brazenly challenge traditional presentations of gender and genre, and that assert at nearly every turn the supremacy of habit (nurture) over biology (nature), despite the parents' hopes to the contrary. In the Spanish *comedia*, “happy” endings of this type—where all is made “right” and any unsettling or unsavory aspects of plot or character are swept away—are conventional, almost a requirement. For this reason, *comedia* scholar Kathleen Jeffs asks readers and audiences to focus on the body of the text or performance to identify the “nuanced views lurking below the surface” (148).

Critics have noted how unconventional Félix and Hipólita are even within the tradition of *comedia* cross-dressing. Harry Vélez Quiñones wonders why the siblings “should find it so impossibly difficult to adopt a performance of gender that matches their biological sex” when “hundreds of similar characters in plays by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, Agustín Moreto, or Juana Inés de la Cruz accomplish much more challenging performances of gender with absolute ease?” (192). The successful cross-dressers in those plays normally do so for a short amount of time and with a specific goal in mind, such as gaining

access to otherwise closed spaces in order to reach a lover or exact revenge, and then return to their normal clothing, names, and behavior once the job is done. In *The Force of Habit*, the siblings arrive onstage at ease in the expected dress and manners of the gender opposite their biological sex, and their struggle to conform to their parents' gender-swapping demands is long, difficult, and painful.

This is especially true for Hipólita, whose gendered performance appears to be more internalized and complete than that of Félix—even her parents initially refer to her as a young man, as opposed to a woman with masculine qualities—and whose physical, psychological, and emotional suffering as a result of the switch is more severe; after all, dropping her sword and stepping onto platform shoes is a huge step down in her society, in terms of power, independence, and prestige. This is sure to make modern sensibilities (and one might imagine, some early modern sensibilities as well) question whether the social gain of marriageability really outweighs her personal loss of self. While Hipólita is transformed at the last into a feminine figure acceptable to society's standards, one wonders why a suitor who fell in love with her when she acted like a man would threaten violence against her in order to make her a woman and his wife.

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

which include physical violence. Félix must commit an act of violence against a rival in order to claim his masculinity and recuperate his own honor, again in the name of love.

These acts of violence resemble each other in that they occur offstage and force audiences to rely on a secondary telling of what has occurred, all of which adds a layer of ambiguity that makes the play's ending less neat than it might appear at first glance. The audience's only view of Félix's transformative battle with his rival comes at the very end, when he mercifully allows the defeated Otavio to escape with his life. Of Hipólita's encounter with Luis we see nothing, and must determine from her words and distress the nature of her defeat. When Hipólita appears again onstage in the wake of the encounter, she is a woman who has lost her courage and strength of character in the shock of what has just occurred. She describes how she was overpowered by Luis, and how the encounter has made her realize that she is, indeed, a woman. This scene, occurring offstage and retold by a shocked Hipólita, is complicated by the ambiguous nature of the retelling: did Hipólita willingly allow herself to be overpowered, was the sexual act entirely nonconsensual, or was it something in between? A generous reading of this encounter is that perhaps Hipólita's shock stems more from her "defeat" in this contest than from the sexual act itself. Yet even if we accept this account, in that moment sex itself becomes masculinized as violent conquest. For a person who has lived her entire life being treated as an equal, and even admired by men for her strength and skill, the battlefield of sexual experience is also the final lesson in female subjugation and the breaking point of Hipólita's masculine characteristics.

Jeffs, however, argues that today's directors can present a more nuanced reading and performance in which Hipólita does not lose her masculine power to heterosexual love or a submissive sexuality, but instead begins "negotiating a balance of power within herself, calling

upon her resources of dominance and passivity when the situation requires one or the other, or a cunning mix of both” (170). Félix’s situation can be similarly nuanced, she says, if the director carefully stages an ending that remains true to the text while still allowing for “open interpretation” and “ambiguity” (171). This will indeed be a challenge for the modern director as there is little in the closing of Act III to support such optimism—particularly in the case of Hipólita.

The positive ambiguity that Jeffs recommends does appear in the early modern adaptation of the play by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, entitled *Love’s Cure, or The Martial Maid* (c. 1612-13). *Love’s Cure* is more explicit in its references to physical and sexual violence, more exaggerated in relation to the moral and physical shortcomings of its male characters, and presents—in spite of a similarly conventional ending—an even stronger argument for gender as performance than Castro’s original. Beaumont and Fletcher’s Hipólita character, Clara, emerges as the clear protagonist over her brother Lucio, as she pragmatically and effortlessly switches between exemplary feminine and masculine performances, using both to her advantage. Anne Duncan argues that Clara is “presented as the only ‘real man’ in the play” because she gives a superior performance of the male code of honor, and that her character therefore complicates contemporary English stage practice (in which she would have been played by a male actor) and anti-theatricalist debates (which reflected larger social concerns over gender performance) by positing that “a woman can perform a man best” (398).

The Félix character, Lucio, brings into full view the issue of gender as performance. In *Love’s Cure*, he is raised as a female, with a woman’s name, so that no one but the closest servants and his mother know that he is actually the male heir of the exiled Alvarez (Don Pedro). From the opening scene, the audience is aware that the only thing saving Lucio from death—

vengeance for his father's actions prior to the play's beginning—is the fact that the would-be avenger, Vitelli, thinks he is a woman. It is clear that Lucio's upbringing as a maiden is about more than learned manners: it is a disguise to protect him from notions of honor that would fault him for another's actions, and from the accompanying revenge. As Lucio battles for a woman's love and family honor, his newly gained masculine courage is tempered by restraint—a masculine honor code that other male characters appear to have discarded in favor of crude violence, and which Clara has displayed for the entirety of the play.

While *Love's Cure* appears to shy away from an outright indictment of the possible sexual violence and female subjugation in Castro's treatment of his female protagonist, it goes further in developing the latent interpretation of gender in *The Force of Habit* as a negotiation of different forms of power. Much like Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in modern productions, *The Force of Habit* should be a challenge welcomed by directors and actors alike because of the opportunities it presents for creative, nuanced performances and fruitful post-performance discussions. Playwrights, of course, have the luxury of adaptations, but instead of rewriting Castro's ending, they may wish to take another cue from Fletcher, who wrote a sequel to the *The Taming of the Shrew* called *The Woman's Prize*, the plot of which can be summed up in its alternate title: *The Tamer Tamed*.

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

Our Translation

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

As part of our goal of fostering new and expanded audiences for Spanish Golden Age plays, our translation is designed for maximum accessibility, readability, and adaptability. Directors, playwrights, actors, and dramaturgs as well as students, scholars, and casual readers will find Castro's complete text translated into clear prose (the movement from verse to prose is the only substantive textual manipulation), with brief but vital explanatory notes. This translation complements the play's only other English version, by Kathleen Jeffs, an adaptation for the stage performed under her direction at Gonzaga University in 2013.

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

robust curriculum designed for a 12-day teaching artist residency at the high-school level called “Embodying the Classics.” This work was also supported by the UCHRI, as well as the Pine Tree Foundation (New York).

Works Cited

- Duncan, Anne. “It Takes a Woman to Play a Real Man: Clara as Hero(ine) of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Cure*.” *English Literary Renaissance* 30.3 (2000): 396-407.
- Beaumont, Francis, and John Fletcher, *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*. Ed. Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Jeffs, Kathleen. “Gender Politics in Guillén de Castro’s *La fuerza de la costumbre*.” *On Wolves and Sheep: Exploring the Expression of Political Thought in Golden Age Spain*. Ed. Aaron M. Kahn. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011. 147-76.
- Martínez, Eduardo Julia. *Obras de Don Guillén de Castro y Bellvís*. Tomo Tercero. Real Academia Española, Biblioteca Selecta de Clásicos Españoles, segunda serie. Madrid: Tipografía de la «Revista de Archivos», 1927.
- Vélez Quiñones, Harry. “Lición de llevar chapines: Drag, Footwear, and Gender Performance in Guillén de Castro’s *La fuerza de la costumbre*.” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 14.2 (2013): 186-200.

Pronunciation Key

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

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

The underlined syllable in each word is the accented one.

ñ - pronounced like the gn in lasagna

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

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

The Force of Habit

Characters

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

ACT I

SCENE 1

Room in COSTANZA's home

Enter COSTANZA and FÉLIX wearing the long habit of a student

FÉLIX What novelties are these, my lady?
 What changes?
 From a sackcloth robe,
 a nun's brown habit,
 long wimples, and a rosary,
 to curled hair, braids of gold,
 a full skirt, and a fine chain?
 From mourning to celebration?
 Yesterday bare walls, sad and dull,
 and today dressed and decorated 10
 in brocades and silks.
 Yesterday sorrows, today pleasures.
 In short, all that wept with sadness
 now sings with joy.
 What is this?

COSTANZA Oh my son, Don Félix!

FÉLIX Even my name has changed!
 Yesterday I was just Félix,
 and today Don Félix?

COSTANZA Hear my reasons: 20
 My father, Don Juan de Urrea,
 whose nobility honored this famous city,
 had me and my brother
 with Doña Inés de Bolea.
 After three years of marriage,
 she settled that debt we most fear,
 and yet must all repay.
 With his protection and care
 we grew up in Zaragoza
 amid admiration and praise. 30
 My brother was renowned
 as an honorable gentleman,
 daring in love and in arms,
 and I for my beauty—
 how Fame must have lied!

It happened that a gentleman
 of the house of Moncada,
 on his way from Valencia to Italy,¹
 decided to hear Mass
 and visit that first great church 40
 of our Patron Saint in Spain.²
 In the church he found me,
 and in him I found
 good sense and arrogance
 in equal measure.
 He wore a cloth doublet,
 grey garter and hose,
 and on his black shoes
 two buckles of mother-of-pearl,
 breeches, jacket, 50
 and a cape of fine cloth,
 a pointed collar
 and a chain for a sash,
 his sword in its golden scabbard
 was dashingly girded to one side,
 while on the other,
 his dagger hung from a chain.
 His hat sported a broad brim,
 with feathers of blue and white
 cascading over the crown. 60
 He approached as I left Mass,
 and I, more well-dressed than devout,
 and more curious than saintly,
 observed him with rapt attention.
 It seemed his whole heart
 was in his mouth,
 and his soul in his eyes.
 Unnoticed he drew near,
 and mumbled something
 that wasn't clear, 70
 swallowing half the words.
 I did not want to answer
 but couldn't help it,
 for in church
 one's eyes can never lie.
 In any case,
 my answer was reason enough
 for him to abandon his journey.

¹ Hapsburg Spain held significant possessions on the Italian Peninsula.

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

He lingered in Zaragoza,
 and turned gracefully 80
 from military displays
 to courtly attentions.
 He served and flattered me,
 obliging me with sighs and longings.
 He venerated the corners of my street,
 the doors of my house,
 the railings of my balconies,
 the grates of my windows—
 all altars to the idol he adored.

I saw, at last, that my father 90
 had closed all doors
 to any discussion of marriage
 because he was a foreigner.
 Forced to stay in my room,
 I opened through a narrow window
 a wide door for him
 to reach his hopes.
 He entered through it many times,
 and, as he climbed,
 the darkness was his friend, 100
 and the dawn his enemy.
 From those long-awaited hours,
 from those wishes fulfilled,
 from those desires attained,
 from that cherished darkness,
 a daughter was born,
 though she remained hidden.
 God knows what care and
 caution it took!

But listen now 110
 to the greatest tragedy
 the world has ever known:
 about six months later,
 my brother happened to pass by
 just as Don Pedro,
 for such is my husband's name,
 began climbing the ladder.
 He noticed something amiss,
 came closer and saw who it was.

They both drew their shining swords, 120
 and bravely thrust at each other.
 Watching all this,
 I could hardly breathe,
 so that even now

I can hardly tell it.
My husband stabbed my brother
in the chest—a wound so large
his soul poured from it.
“Jesus!” he cried, “they’ve killed me,
bring a priest, oh Jesus!” 130
I can see him now—
leaning on his sword,
clutching the walls,
and falling to the ground.

FÉLIX What terrible misfortune!

COSTANZA His voice, when they recognized it,
roused the street and the house.
Don Pedro left him there and ran,
and I was so upset,
so bewildered, 140
so beside myself,
that I did not remove the ladder,
which was leaning on my wall
and latched on to my windows.
The noise brought my father out,
and there, by the light of a candle
he saw his son lying in his own blood,
and the delinquent ladder,
hanging there to my shame.

FÉLIX Dear God, what a disaster! 150

COSTANZA I did not see his reaction—
the servants took me away,
half dead.
To escape my father’s threats,
I turned myself in to the law,
and was placed in a lady’s house,
a cousin to my mother.
Don Pedro went to Flanders.³
They told me he took the baby girl,
barely more than a newborn, 160
torn from my breast!
But he left me another treasure,
and that was you.
From the moment you were born,

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

you consoled me in my anguish,
though I never spoke the cause.
Your father has served the king
in Flanders these twenty years.
He commands a squadron of infantry with honor,
and has great hope of preferment. 170
Yet all those years, your grandfather,
biding his time,
dropped neither the quarrel
nor his hope of revenge.
But he died six months ago,
and, although I was still in his bad graces,
I became the sole heir
to the home and estate.
I notified my husband
to come enjoy them, 180
and I await him now.
Already my heart tells me
that noise in the hallway just now
must announce his arrival
and the end of my long troubles.
Embrace me, my Félix.

COSTANZA and FÉLIX embrace

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

COSTANZA It may well kill me! 190

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

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

DON PEDRO and COSTANZA embrace

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

COSTANZA	My Don Pedro, our happiness is such that joy ties a tender knot in my throat— were it not for these tears that spill from my eyes, I would be undone!	200
DON PEDRO	My love, hold me again in your tender embrace.	
<i>DON PEDRO and COSTANZA embrace again</i>		
COSTANZA	Are you really in my arms again?	
DON PEDRO	But how much older! I cannot hide these white hairs— how do they seem to you? Who could admire them, really?	210
COSTANZA	I will tell you what I think.	
DON PEDRO	And what is that?	
COSTANZA	I saw them, my lord, and with every impression, they make my love more tender. I contemplate them modestly, admire them respectfully, gaze on them piously, and weep for them tenderly.	220
DON PEDRO	Most witty, my lady. But now you must look calmly upon this fine young man and embrace him as you did me.	
COSTANZA	Who is this? What is this I feel? Oh my!	
DON PEDRO	A chip off the old block, with your name engraved upon it.	230
COSTANZA	I see in him the very portrait of what I used to be.	

HIPÓLITA *kneels*

HIPÓLITA Give me your hand.

COSTANZA I will give you my soul, my daughter!
My dear daughter!

HIPÓLITA My mother and lady.

COSTANZA And why are you dressed like this?

DON PEDRO As soon as she was weaned,
I changed her name,
and thinking as a man, 240
she dressed as one too,
so as not to be encumbered
as she went about her way.

Like a trusty sword,
she never left my side.
She was raised at war—
she's seen battles, wounds, and slaughter.
She could teach others now
what she learned then.

The armor fits her 250
as though she were the Cid himself.⁴

She can handle a lance,
and fire a musket—
I swear she fights
and takes risks as I do,
if not with the same good sense,
then at least with more spirit.

She is unhappy, in truth,
to find herself a woman.
Such is the force of habit! 260

COSTANZA May God watch over her
a thousand years.

HIPÓLITA To serve you with them.

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

DON PEDRO Is that my Don Félix?

⁴ Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the great hero of Spanish medieval epic.

COSTANZA It is.

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

FÉLIX Let me kiss your hand, if not your feet. 270

FÉLIX *kneels*

DON PEDRO I give you my hand and my arms!

FÉLIX *stands and DON PEDRO embraces his son*

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

COSTANZA No, it's because I never let him wear a sword. 280
I kept him at my side,
for my own content,
in my chambers by night
and in my drawing-room by day.
To avoid any painful moments
and the risk of losing him,
my one consolation,
I never encouraged him
to put on a man's attire.
That long habit is the shackles 290
I placed on his feet,
though he never resented
staying put and not seeing the world.
Such is the force of habit!

DON PEDRO This is unheard of!
You always were a fearful woman.

COSTANZA I am a mother,
and I have learned.

DON PEDRO Don Félix will learn

	to conquer with courage this horrid habit that vanquishes valor. That tether on a gentleman is so offensive that before I even take off my spurs he must take it off and exchange it for proper dress. Quickly now, does he have any clothes?	300
COSTANZA	He does, but I do not allow him to wear them.	310
DON PEDRO	And put Hipólita in a long dress, and do up her hair. She can be your consolation in your chambers and your parlor. I will keep Don Félix always at my side to teach him courage, and I know he'll learn, for, as soon as he buckles on a sword, he'll change his tune. The house of Moncada does not allow for womanly men. And so, to the world's amazement, you'll make a woman of a man, and I, a man of a woman. It's cruel to keep a man in a damsel's long skirts. Go now, and what you take off him, put on her. I hope their habits will change along with their clothes.	320 330
HIPÓLITA	I will not change!	
COSTANZA	I will do as you say.	
DON PEDRO	May God keep you.	
HIPÓLITA	Some fate for the two of us!	

Vile fortune, what have you done? 340

FÉLIX I cannot bear to leave my mother.

DON PEDRO Who helped raise Félix?

TUTOR I did.

Exit COSTANZA, HIPÓLITA, FÉLIX

DON PEDRO Listen, you who raised him,
is my son's shrunken state
due to nature or nurture?
Is this what his mother has made him,
or is this who he is?
Is there courage in his breast
that bursts forth when least expected? 350
What passion consumes him?
What fears unnerve him?
What tastes inspire him?
What schemes does he hatch?
Tell me the truth.

TUTOR Sir, I served your father-in-law
until that wretched day,
or night rather,
that was the cause
of such misfortune. 360
I was the servant
who saw my lady
to her aunt's house,
and alerted the law.
Since then, she entrusts me
with her most precious business,
and I serve her with my soul and my life.
Since his most tender boyhood
I have served your son, too,
about whom I shall speak 380
the truth that you demand.
As a child, he showed signs
of a fiery character
and chivalrous spirit
to be envied by all.
But his loving mother,
in her womanly fear,
foreseeing potential dangers,

and fearing misfortunes,
 with pious diligence 390
 and misguided caution,
 corrected his actions,
 and vanquished his nature.
 When he leaned toward manly things,
 she distracted him with others,
 feminine and shameful.
 He would spend his days
 in the women's chambers
 passing the time,
 watching the young ladies at work 400
 and playing with the girls.
 When he found a pillow,
 he would fall on the couch
 and exhaust the pharmacy
 of tonics and cordials.
 His mother always hung around his neck
 with sweet caresses,
 spoiling him with gifts,
 and instilling fears in him.
 In winter the wind, 410
 in summer the sun he feared,
 and dew throughout the year.
 He never felt the wind or sun!
 He heard Mass at home,
 once in a while at church,
 if the weather was very mild.
 When he walked in the corridor
 of his very own house
 they'd cover his head
 as if he were sailing abroad. 420
 At any sound of sword fighting
 she would cling tenderly to her son
 and yell: "Oh God!
 They're stabbing each other in the street!"
 She would close every door
 and open to him her fearful bosom.
 If muskets rang out,
 she'd wrap him up,
 face and body,
 in her headdress, blouse, and skirt! 430
 If thunder rumbled,
 or lightning flashed,
 they trembled together
 under the altar in the chapel.

DON PEDRO	At least that is an honorable fear: to fear God is a virtue, as we know His justice. To fear men is cowardice.	
TUTOR	That is how he was raised, and when he had the chance to learn manly ways, she always stopped him. He was never allowed to carry even a practice sword, much less brandish pointed steel for combat. And so when he throws a stone, he throws like a girl, though he's strong enough to lodge it in an oak. She even takes table knives from him, for fear they'll cut him!	440 450
DON PEDRO	Good God, what a disgrace!	
TUTOR	And so these habits, so constant and prolonged, became second nature: he is very timid, he is shy, he is fearful . . .	
DON PEDRO	In short, a chicken. And a Moncada, by God! This is unheard of. His nature must be restored. I will fire him up, as my blood boils in his veins and his breast! His honor will be restored, for his is good blood, or I shall shed it myself!	460
<i>Enter GALVÁN, a servant</i>		
GALVÁN	All your people are here.	
TUTOR	Here comes your son dressed as a gentleman.	470

DON PEDRO I've missed you, Galván.

GALVÁN What I was missing
was a mule to ride on!

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

DON PEDRO He looks good.
He is of a good size,
although timid and ungainly.
You look well, my dear Félix,
with no shackles now!
Lengthen your stride a bit. 480

(FÉLIX lengthens his step awkwardly and ridiculously)

Step out with manly spirit.

FÉLIX I long to serve you in everything.

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

(FÉLIX places his thumbs in his waistband)

You look like a monk.
Stop that, stop that!
Your hands are in the way—
stand like a man. 490

(FÉLIX puts his feet together)

You're not standing right!

GALVÁN He looks more like a teapot
than a man.

DON PEDRO Keep the length of a crossbow
between your feet,
and never join them,
for if it's bad for horses,
it is no good for men.
Don your hat, and always remember

that knowing how to don it well
is an art unto itself. 500
That doesn't look right!
Never mind your ruff!
Place it firmly upon your head,
not lightly on your hair.

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

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

DON PEDRO And now you're upset too? 510

FÉLIX I feel insulted.

DON PEDRO Have you not figured out yet
that a man who is easily offended
seems a fool to all?

FÉLIX Forgive me for not tolerating such jibes.

TUTOR This is what happens when noblemen
are raised to sulk in corners.

Enter HIPÓLITA dressed as a woman and COSTANZA behind her, a SERVANT bringing her sword and dagger

HIPÓLITA I swear I cannot manage a single step.

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

COSTANZA Listen, wait.

HIPÓLITA How can anyone be even-headed 520
when teetering on something so flimsy?
How can a woman standing on this cork,
on the verge of falling at every moment,
keep herself from tumbling in the end?
I refuse to wear these shoes
this dress and this hairpiece—
useless concerns
and to such dubious ends.

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

of buckling you on again, 560
for it would be cruel,
dishonorable, disloyal
to take you up again
after I've placed a knitting needle
where you used to be.
And yet, how much more honor is there,
valiant sword,
in detecting an ambush
in your polished steel
than in gazing at braids 570
in the looking-glass.
Time is unjust—
being a man suited me so well,
and just as my disposition changed,
my gender should have changed too.
Oh my sword!
Banished from my side,
perhaps you could bend a little,
although you are made of steel,
and return where you used to be, 580
so close and well-girded.
Sword of my life,
heaven knows this hand never
drew you to your shame!
And if obedience did not now
force my hand,
no one could take you from it.
I would guard you and defend you.
Let him whom I obey
bear witness that I leave you 590
out of obedience and honor,
to my great sorrow,
but not for cowardice, no.

DON PEDRO *takes the sword*

DON PEDRO Enough, daughter,
that will do!
And now you, my son,
receive this sword
with the same spirit
that your sister showed
in granting it, 600
and listen to what is required
of a gentleman who wears this shining steel.

He who does not wear it
has fewer obligations,
but flies closer to the ground.
The sword, buckled at his side,
is, for the brave man,
a safeguard for his honor,
protection for his life,
and he must never yield it, 610
even when that life is in danger.
Even if it is inconvenient
to one's own life,
honor comes first!
To serve his Christian king,
and for his faith,
he must brandish it,
forever protesting among the heretics,
and offering to die for his faith,
never wavering nor insulting it. 620
It falls on us to honor, profess,
and use our sword to defend it.
You must not draw your sword
for light offenses,
but once drawn,
it must not return unbloodied.
A bloody sword is best, I always say:
it blushes red with pride
when it defeats the enemy.
Its greatest shame is to be naked, 630
when blood might cover it.
And if you must draw your sword
against a common man
because he arrogantly offends,
hand to hand and man to man,
then it's clear that a true gentleman
must show valor equal
to the nobility he sports.
For when common men
resist their betters, 640
they must kill or be killed,
or at least be set to flight.
So if at all possible,
the gentleman must avoid
grappling with the common man.
I could go on,
but I will tell you
all in good time.

DON PEDRO *buckles the sword on FÉLIX*

Now you buckle it on,
and when you go to Mass, 650
it shall be blessed,
as shall you.
Heaven will make you a man,
as I beg of it to do.
Come, my lady,
give him your hand
and your blessing.

FÉLIX *kisses the hands of DON PEDRO and COSTANZA*

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

DON PEDRO That will be necessary 660
if you are to have honor.

HIPÓLITA How I envy you, brother!

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

DON PEDRO You must get used to them.

FÉLIX I would like to tear them off. 670

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

DON PEDRO Only gallant lovers
worry too much about them, you'll see.
A careless elegance
is more befitting of men.
Your sword should hang at your side,
but toward the midpoint. 680
Yours is askew. It should go like this.

DON PEDRO *adjusts the sword*

That's how it goes.

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

DON PEDRO Wear it, and don't sulk.

COSTANZA Hipólita?

HIPÓLITA My lady!

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

690

HIPÓLITA *tries to put the shoes on without success*

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

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

. . . I will never get them on.

COSTANZA What are you doing, child?

DON PEDRO Nice job!

GALVÁN Was that a shoe?

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

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

700

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

COSTANZA A pretty sight.

HIPÓLITA I can't!
COSTANZA Don't you see . . .
GALVÁN Here she goes again.
COSTANZA . . . that feet are far more lewd
beneath a skirt?
You do it, Félix,
be a gentleman. 710
Help her here.

FÉLIX slips the shoes on her

FÉLIX Here we go.
DON PEDRO I am amazed
by the pair of them.
FÉLIX That looks nice!
GALVÁN If only he could draw his sword
as well as he fits a shoe!
DON PEDRO If only he could draw,
with his Urrea and Moncada blood!
COSTANZA Come, we must receive visitors 720
in my drawing-room now,
and we'll get a petticoat on you!
HIPÓLITA Petticoat be damned,
Jesus Chri—
COSTANZA My goodness!
I have never seen anything like this.
GALVÁN And she's two letters
from taking the Lord's name in vain!
DON PEDRO What is that noise?
(*To GALVÁN*) Go see. 730

GALVÁN exits

Hearing the sound of swords, COSTANZA shields FÉLIX

FÉLIX Those are swords.

COSTANZA Oh, my darling son!

HIPÓLITA Shall I go, too?

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

DON PEDRO Stay here, woman.

HIPÓLITA He has insulted me
with that name.

GALVÁN *returns and unsheathes his sword*

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

740

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

DON PEDRO *exits, putting his hand to his sword*

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

FÉLIX I'm flustered.

750

HIPÓLITA Get to it, or is that a knitting needle
you carry there?

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

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

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

FÉLIX My lady, come back!

COSTANZA I'm so afraid.

Exit all

SCENE 2

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

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

LEONOR Stop, please!

LUIS I will respect your white hairs. 760

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

LEONOR Wait, my lord!

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

Enter COSTANZA and FÉLIX, as HIPÓLITA is attacking LUIS

HIPÓLITA Measure your sword against mine 770
if you're so valiant with others!

COSTANZA holds DON PEDRO aside

COSTANZA Wait, daughter.

LEONOR *(Fainting in FÉLIX's arms)* I die! Oh Jesus!

FÉLIX My arms will catch you, my lady!

COSTANZA I cannot lose you again
so soon after your return!

DON PEDRO Doesn't our daughter fight well?

COSTANZA God keep her.

DON PEDRO She amazes me.

LUIS Stop, my lady—by God! 780
Do not kill me, I will surrender.
Although you strike me with your sword
it is your eyes that wound me—
you have the advantage over me.

HIPÓLITA You defend yourself well
without attacking at all,
and in this you show
that you are courageous and strong.
And so, I have no wish to kill you,
or embarrass myself. 790

LUIS Your beauty has already done me in—
I die the sweetest of deaths!

HIPÓLITA Leave sweetness aside—
I cannot bear it—
and fight without these courtesies!

DON PEDRO Leave me, people are coming.

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO

OTAVIO *(To COSTANZA)* My lady, what is this?

MARCELO separates the fighters

MARCELO Restrain yourselves, my lords.

HIPÓLITA Courtesy can be brave, too.

FÉLIX The sun itself 800
is not more beautiful!

LEONOR You outshine it, surely,
if it sets in your arms!

FÉLIX And it rises before my eyes.

LUIS	If you will hear my apologies, you will see that it is only my ill luck that deserves your anger.	
COSTANZA	My lord Don Luis, our own relative, who is well-known to this house, cannot be in the wrong. My lady Leonor?	810
LEONOR	Yes, my lady?	
FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> Oh, to gather her a thousand times over into my arms and my heart!	
LUIS	My sister and I were on our way here in a coach. The street was blocked by mules and men, so the driver asked them to move, as he usually does. They responded badly, as they usually do. I spoke to them politely and they, in turn, forced me to draw my sword. By God, if I had known that they were your servants, I would have shown this house the respect it deserves, by the crest that ennobles it and the presence of my lady, Doña Costanza, who commands me as she pleases. And I did not even know that my lord, Don Pedro de Moncada, whose very name is famous, was now here. I long to greet him, as my lord and friend.	820 830 840
DON PEDRO	I welcome your courteous words, Don Luis. I kiss your hands	

and welcome you to my arms.

LUIS Your kindness is too much.

DON PEDRO I am fond of you already,
for your gallantry and courage.

HIPÓLITA All of which he has, by God.

LUIS You, my lady, have vanquished me entirely, 850
and do yourself credit with your praise.

HIPÓLITA You flatter me with this surrender,
and try with me
what works with other women,
who are proud of their beauty,
and care nothing for being strong.

DON PEDRO This is Hipólita, my daughter.

LUIS Her courage well shows that.

LEONOR Give me your hands, my lady.

HIPÓLITA I must kiss yours. 860

FÉLIX *(Aside)* What great beauty!

OTAVIO I am pleased to meet you.
Give me your hands, my lord.

MARCELO And to me, as well,
for your fame and name
deserve my respects.

DON PEDRO You do me too much honor
with your courtesies.

COSTANZA Why are we are in the street?
Come in the house, if you please. 870
Leonor shall have
at least some water
for the fright that she had.

LEONOR I will gladly take it.

OTAVIO	We are all at your service.	
LUIS	<i>(Aside)</i> My soul is on fire, her honest spirit appeals to me.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> What do they search for, what do they want, those eyes that watch me so?	880
LEONOR	<i>(Aside)</i> Félix is looking at me again.	
FÉLIX	<i>(Aside)</i> This must be love that so delights and disturbs me.	
COSTANZA	Look, my lord, your son just about melts when he looks at Leonor.	
DON PEDRO	I pray to God it be so, for once in love, he will be truly brave.	

ACT II

SCENE 1

Street outside the church

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO

MARCELO This is a lovely church. 890

OTAVIO Great in its beauty
and devotion.

MARCELO Those ladies over there
are the living images of both.

OTAVIO And so many of them together!

MARCELO In Saint Francis
the human always becomes divine.

OTAVIO Have you been to Mass?

MARCELO It is early yet.

OTAVIO Well then three of us shall behold them,
for here comes Don Luis. 900

MARCELO He claims to love that lady
who lies somewhere
between Mars and Bellona.⁷

OTAVIO Is she beautiful?

Enter LUIS

LUIS What is it you say?
Who are you two talking about?

OTAVIO Your new love.

MARCELO It's clear you've fallen in love!

LUIS And by God I fell deeply! 910
I am pierced to the soul

⁷ Roman god and goddess of war.

by this youthful love.

MARCELO That old saying was made for you:
a lesson learned in blood
is not easily forgotten!

OTAVIO Her gentle thrusts
have made their mark.

LUIS And had they not been well parried,
they would have taken my life. 920
But her divine eyes bloodied me more
than that sword to which I surrendered
my entire soul.

OTAVIO Look who's getting out of that carriage.

LUIS Who?

OTAVIO Don Pedro and Doña Costanza.

LUIS My wishes come true!

MARCELO And your lady, too.
How she leaps down!
She must be angry.

OTAVIO What did she say? 930

MARCELO She cursed her shoes.

LUIS She doesn't know how to wear them yet.

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

DON PEDRO Those were the days, my lady,
when I would wait here
for you to arrive.

COSTANZA That may be,
but I prefer these days,
when I can freely take you
by the hand as my husband.

DON PEDRO That is true. 940
Félix, step lively!

FÉLIX I'm still off the mark.
I will teach myself
(*Aside*) so that you do not torment me so.

COSTANZA Do you wear your cloak now
as a cape, Hipólita?

HIPÓLITA I wasn't paying attention.

LUIS (*Aside*) I love her with all my soul!

DON PEDRO Must you two always be so much trouble!

They greet each other and HIPÓLITA makes as if to doff her hat. The family exits and the three men remain.

MARCELO Oh how dashing, by God, 950
she was about to take off her hat!

LUIS Her hands just go
where they are used to going.

OTAVIO Isn't it amazing?
Siblings so contrary—
it's incredible!

MARCELO It is remarkable to see
him so like a woman
and her unable to pull one off. 960
That sword doesn't really fit him,
nor the mantle her.

LUIS That's how strong
habit becomes after a long time.

OTAVIO It is powerfully strong!
More than popes or kings—
beyond laws
human or divine!

MARCELO It's remarkable!
They say that, on a whim,
a man wore a patch on one eye 970
for just one month,
and was blind in it forever after.

What can possibly resist
such a strange power,
if just the habit of not seeing
can take away one's sight?

OTAVIO Its force is beyond words:
is there anything more impossible
than to live without drink?
And yet a man with dropsy,⁸ 980
was so determined to be cured,
that he stopped drinking at all,
and now lives without it.

MARCELO Habit is a spell,
a charm!

LUIS In short,
it leaps at any chance,
and that's what makes it strong.

MARCELO What could be stranger
than how these two exchanged
such different natures? 990
These are superhuman effects,
far beyond our ken!

OTAVIO No one talks about anything
but the two siblings in this place.

MARCELO I swear, I've heard amazing stories about them!
They are legend here,
and Don Luis comes into it, too.

LUIS For which I thank my lucky stars!

MARCELO They all talk about the time 1000
we saw you fight with her.

LUIS She is like a very sword!

MARCELO She is so brawny,
that to show you her favor,
she'll cut you with her sword!

LUIS She knows how I thrust

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

and will look kindly upon me.

MARCELO

Are you so much in love?

LUIS

Where to begin?

I love and long for the good esteem
of Don Pedro de Moncada,
his noble line and his courage.

1010

And the good breeding,
the quality, the fame,
the reputation of Doña Costanza
all cast their spell on my breast.
And then, when I saw her bright as day,
I fell for a woman
who does not even know
how to be one!

1020

OTAVIO

That's true.

MARCELO

What do you think of Don Félix?

LUIS

Give him time—
although he was badly raised
and spoiled,
he is of such fine metal
that it will shine through when tempered.

OTAVIO

No more to say?

LUIS

No more for you to know.
I'm off, goodbye.

1030

Exit LUIS

OTAVIO

Goodbye.
(*To* MARCELO) Clearly you feel something,
to judge from how passionately you spoke.
You must have liked the strong woman, too!

MARCELO

I am as hot for her
as you are for Doña Leonor.

OTAVIO

She'll be here soon,
and I'm off to see her.
Be well.

MARCELO	Go, go. Love, everything in this world is love!	1040
---------	--	------

Exit all

SCENE 2

Enter COSTANZA and HIPÓLITA

COSTANZA	Your eyes wander too freely for an honest woman.
----------	---

HIPÓLITA	I was raised freely, but I look with no longing.
----------	---

COSTANZA	I believe it, and had not considered that. But an honest woman must be less obvious in how she looks around. She can see what she wants to see with a casual glance.	1050
----------	--	------

HIPÓLITA	I was raised in Flanders, where people are more frank, and you can trust the men. But I'll do as you say.
----------	--

COSTANZA	Flanders is a cold, cold land, daughter.
----------	--

HIPÓLITA	And so shall I be, for that same reason.
----------	---

COSTANZA	Oh, daughter, don't ever say "not me." For I have seen the remnants of much greater ice go up in flames. Don't trust your eyes— they are treacherous friends, they ruin your life, and wear out your soul. Their curiosity forces your hand, and their daring can kill. They are sweet traps into which we fall, dead by our own eyes.	1060 1070
----------	---	--

They are a woman's worst enemies!

HIPÓLITA You want me to treat them as traitors—
if that's what'll make you happy,
I won't look at all.

COSTANZA I'm not saying you shouldn't look,
just not quite so much—
you've been staring at Don Luis!

HIPÓLITA He looked so brave,
so courtly, and so honorable . . . 1080
I saw him break up the brawl so capably,
with such courage and force . . .
I saw him treat my father
with such noble courtesy . . .
I saw him hold off my sword,
and yet not attack . . .
And so I grew fond of him
and wanted to see more of him . . .
because courage is a magnet,
at least for me— 1090
but not, by God,
as a woman would want him!

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

HIPÓLITA Not in my case.

COSTANZA I pray God that it not be so.

HIPÓLITA How could it be,
when it has never been so? 1100
I always act on the best of intentions.

COSTANZA But purity of heart
is not enough in this world,
which judges by what it sees,
and that must be exemplary.
Sit here, and get on with your embroidery.
(*To a SERVANT*) Please, bring me a cushion.
(*To HIPÓLITA*) Sit right here.

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

HIPÓLITA I'll never do this properly.
Wouldn't a chair be better? 1110

COSTANZA Pull back your feet.

HIPÓLITA I curse whoever made me a woman.

COSTANZA You will learn
to look around more discreetly.

HIPÓLITA This is unbearable!

She spreads out her legs

COSTANZA Good Lord!

HIPÓLITA Why doesn't everyone
sit with a cushion?

COSTANZA That is our habit.

Enter FÉLIX and GALVÁN

GALVÁN Your father has ordered me to serve you,
and that I shall do. 1120

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

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

HIPÓLITA Oh, brother, I can't do this—
I was not born for it!
It is driving me crazy—
I can't stand it! 1130

FÉLIX It takes some skill.

HIPÓLITA Dull, dull, dull!

FÉLIX You're pulling on the wrong thread.

HIPÓLITA This is killing me.

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

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

GALVÁN You embroider exquisitely.

HIPÓLITA What are you doing?
For God’s sake! 1140

GALVÁN (To FÉLIX) You sit so elegantly!

HIPÓLITA Have you noticed?

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

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

COSTANZA That was uncalled for. 1150

HIPÓLITA Be strong.

GALVÁN What a pair!

FÉLIX I had no idea I was upsetting her.

HIPÓLITA If you had no idea,
turn then to serious things,
and then you’ll know
what I would do
if I were in your shoes
and not a woman.
My God, give me his life,
or give me death! 1160

COSTANZA Clearly I must try something else.

HIPÓLITA (To FÉLIX) I'm sorry.

FÉLIX And I'm grateful for your advice.

Enter the TUTOR and the MASTER OF ARMS

TUTOR The fencing master is here.

COSTANZA Sit down,
and control yourself from now on.

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

MASTER OF ARMS *pulls out fencing swords*

MASTER OF ARMS Are you ready for a lesson, my lord? 1170

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

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

FÉLIX *puts his foot out too far and overextends his arm*

Stretch out your arm,
not all the way, like so.
There are many stances, but this one is best. 1180

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

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

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

MASTER OF ARMS That is correct,

and the posture is excellent. 1190

HIPÓLITA Let us fight.

MASTER OF ARMS If that is your wish, my lady.

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

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

MASTER OF ARMS What do you mean?

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

Enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO Hipólita, what is this? 1200
You insist on trying to be a man
when you are woman?

HIPÓLITA I can't stand this, father.

DON PEDRO Give the sword to your brother.

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

DON PEDRO Show him how to be brave, Master.
Teach him to fight,
which is not the same as fencing
or playing around. 1210
No hanging back!
For God's sake, let him learn
from his own wounds
how to parry and feint!
Show him how to draw his sword with spirit,
to keep the rhythm of his footwork,
to thrust, then cut,
backhand, and stab.
And tell him when to use each one—
they'll come in handy 1220
once he has learned them.
If he has a well-steeled spirit,

these lessons will be enough
for any gentleman.
Go on, Master, begin.
But first, let's test his nature.
Duel with him, fight.
Félix, give the master a good blow.

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

FÉLIX I cannot control the sword.

COSTANZA Oh, my Lord, he's so clumsy. 1230

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

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

MASTER OF ARMS *whacks FÉLIX, who cries out*

FÉLIX Oh Jesus!

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

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

COSTANZA This is too much to bear!

HIPÓLITA With the sword returned to my hand,
I'll show you what you have to do,
and we'll see if the Master
can get away from these blows. 1240

MASTER OF ARMS Stop, my lady!

HIPÓLITA Strike better,
since you are so skilled.

GALVÁN His skill is not the issue here.

DON PEDRO Daughter, that is enough!

HIPÓLITA *halts her attacks*

GALVÁN The Master is looking lively now!

DON PEDRO And you, coward, are you not affronted? 1250
 Why do you shrink back?
 Why are you so surprised?
 Have you no guts?
 Don't you feel shame
 to see a woman outdo you?
 I am so . . .

COSTANZA Oh Lord, stop!

DON PEDRO Why so afraid?
 What cowardice has come over you?
 You are a Moncada! 1260
 Do you do these vile things to affront me?
 Do you not know what blood
 runs through your veins?
 Do you not know where and how
 our great house was founded,
 with its towering pillars
 that compete with the sun:
 Hugos, Gastones,
 Pedros, Guillenes, Ramones,
 pride of Spain itself? 1270
 And you tear down with your shame
 the house that I sustained!
 Read the annals of Aragon,⁹
 my son, and learn there
 who your ancestors were:
 the Moncadas and the Urreas.
 Raise your thoughts
 to their giant deeds,
 and they will warm your blood.
 Or, if you hold back 1280
 from a sense of Christian virtue,
 then find refuge in a convent.
 To lose my heir will pain me less
 than to see you like this.
 What do you have to say for yourself?

FÉLIX I want to be as brave
 as my noble ancestors,

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

and my soul is honorable, my lord.
 Courage spurs me on—
 it strikes at my very heart, 1290
 it makes my blood boil.
 I want to act on it,
 but my lack of experience
 trips me up.

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

DON PEDRO That is some consolation.

COSTANZA Oh, my dear boy!

DON PEDRO Stand aside, my lady.

COSTANZA Why? 1300

DON PEDRO Because this womanliness is contagious,
 and you've given it to him.
 (*Referring to HIPÓLITA*) Take that woman away . . .

GALVÁN That's not what I would call her, by God!

DON PEDRO . . . and teach her to be a coward.

HIPÓLITA That will be impossible.

DON PEDRO Neither of them should be one,
 by rights.

TUTOR If his father had raised him,
 he would have set a better example. 1310

DON PEDRO In order to make you brave,
 leaving honor aside,
 I will show you
 there's no point in cowardice.
 I'll prove it to you,
 so that you'll never cower.
 What, after all, do cowards gain?

GALVÁN Well, they live longer,
 or so the books say.

DON PEDRO	They live less.	1320
FÉLIX	Less?	
DON PEDRO	I will prove it.	
DON PEDRO	<i>pretends to attack</i>	
	Once you get your sword this close, I cannot even wound you without dying in the attempt. Even if it's dangerous to attack, not to attack is even more so— an opponent will kill you all the quicker if you hold back. And if a man flees—	1330
	which is shameful in a real man— who's to say his opponent won't run after him? And what if he catches him and wounds him then? Oh what shame to die from a wound in your back! And so, even if honor did not exist, cowardice would be a mistake.	
TUTOR	What more is there to say?	1340
GALVÁN	I disagree: running is not the same as fleeing.	
HIPÓLITA	Maybe for you, but for one who is noble, they are one and the same.	
DON PEDRO	My son, find your courage, or you threaten our honor.	
FÉLIX	Your words give me courage, my lord. I will do what I can, as soon as I can find my way.	1350
DON PEDRO	<i>(Aside)</i> I have an idea of how to make him lose his fear . . . <i>(To FÉLIX)</i> Son, would you join me as my sole companion?	

for you to lose your mind. 1380

OTAVIO I've tried everything
to restore my sanity.
Listen, she sings again!

MARCELO No warming up?

Enter LEONOR, singing at her window

LEONOR *(Singing)* Black eyes, sad eyes,
why so full of tears?
If the night is fine,
why then these fears?
The sun lights your days
though you outshine it quite. 1390
Why then do your sad eyes
turn to the night?
You'll tell me it's madness,
for such it must be,
to make your soul ask
what it knows instantly.
Knowing what it knows,
what could it possibly say?
Oh, voice of my soul,
cry by night, as you speak by day. 1400

MARCELO This is heavenly, by God.

OTAVIO The angels have stopped singing
to listen to her.

MARCELO Are you the one
of whom she sings?

OTAVIO Would that I were so lucky!

MARCELO Now they've closed the window.

OTAVIO My soul grieves!

INÉS, LEONOR's servant, comes to the window

INÉS *(Aside)* Now my lady has gone—
I must get rid of these fools. 1410
(Aloud) Goodbye, you silly suitors.

OTAVIO Wait, is that all you came for?

INÉS My lady calls.
(*To someone offstage*) I'll be right in!
(*Aloud*) My lady is waiting.

MARCELO How charming.

OTAVIO So witty.
People are coming, let's go.

Exit all

Enter DON PEDRO, GALVÁN, and another SERVANT

DON PEDRO I no longer know these streets.

GALVÁN Fabio lives on this one, 1420
and it's a dead end.

DON PEDRO Remember then,
both of you,
once Félix is alone,
watch his back.
Have you warned Fabio?

GALVÁN And how!
His two doors are open,
and the main one
leads to the street. 1430

DON PEDRO I'll go in that way,
and then come out in disguise
to find Don Félix.
If we are lucky,
I'll cure him of his fear.

Enter FÉLIX with sword and chainmail

FÉLIX God in Heaven!
The dark is terrifying!

DON PEDRO (*Aside to GALVÁN*) It's him, get back.

GALVÁN *hides*

(To FÉLIX) Son?

FÉLIX My lord? 1440

DON PEDRO Tonight I charge you with
guarding the entrance
to this street for me.

FÉLIX I would do that and more to serve you.

DON PEDRO *exits*

He's gone into that house—
I must confess my fright.
I've never been out at night,
and can't tell what's what.
If hell is rocky,
then this may well be hell, 1450

the cobbles pierce my very soles—
I am more used
to walking on soft carpets.
I stumble into corners
like a blind man,
my eyes unused to the dark.
To me, blind and afraid,
every man looks like he's carrying
a giant on each shoulder.
What is this now? 1460

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

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

FÉLIX Oh, Jesus! Father! Father!

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

Hearing the noise, LEONOR and INÉS appear at the window

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

FÉLIX How can I get out of here?

My back is up against the wall.
Is he going to kill me?
Fighting is the only solution!

1470

FÉLIX *begins to swing his sword*

DON PEDRO *(Aside)* My plan is working already.

DON PEDRO *retreats, running through a door*

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

LEONOR Don't follow him.

FÉLIX Who is that?

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

FÉLIX I recognize your voice.

LEONOR Are you Don Félix?

FÉLIX Yes, my lady.

LEONOR Are you hurt?

1480

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

LEONOR That is not a mortal wound.

Enter GALVÁN and a SERVANT

GALVÁN Let's get closer.

LEONOR People are coming, Félix.

FÉLIX I feel scared again.

Enter DON PEDRO

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

1490

DON PEDRO Have you crossed swords with someone?

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

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

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

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

DON PEDRO Did you lose your hat or your scabbard? 1500
You must get them back.

FÉLIX Here they are.

DON PEDRO A brave man leaves nothing behind.

LEONOR (*To INÉS*) The father is a great gentleman.
I admire his courage.

INÉS And the son?

LEONOR I am fond of him, too.

DON PEDRO Calm down.

FÉLIX Yes, my lord,
I am just thrilled. 1510

DON PEDRO How is that?

FÉLIX My lady has seen me
in this dangerous moment.

DON PEDRO That is an honorable sentiment.

FÉLIX I am honored to express it.

DON PEDRO If I can cure cowardice,
I will be famous among doctors.

Exit all

SCENE 4

Street outside LEONOR's window, a different day

Enter MARCELO and OTAVIO

OTAVIO So now everyone knows
 that Don Félix is Leonor's suitor.

MARCELO The two siblings could exchange roles. 1520

OTAVIO Love is not that simple.

MARCELO You're jealous.

OTAVIO Maybe. Aren't you?

MARCELO No more than I was.
 Fortune brought me
 jealousy and love all at once.
 First, I was jealous,
 then, in love.

OTAVIO That's true.

MARCELO And so, though things look bad for me, 1530
 it's nothing new and I can't complain.
 It's different for you.

OTAVIO My lady can't love one
 who is a man in name only.

MARCELO She might love a man who is a woman,
 as I love a woman who is a man.

OTAVIO Ours is the most perfect gender,
 and thus, the most desirable.

MARCELO In truth, love makes anything possible.

OTAVIO I swear I see them up there! 1540

LEONOR and HIPÓLITA come to the window

OTAVIO Doña Hipólita must be visiting Doña Leonor.

MARCELO Great, infinite beauty.

OTAVIO Her beauty makes me long
for what cannot be!

LEONOR (*To HIPÓLITA*) There are suitors in the street.

HIPÓLITA That's exactly where I'd like to be.

LEONOR Can you not reconcile yourself
to being a woman?

HIPÓLITA Even if I say nothing,
my dress speaks volumes—
it's torture! 1550

LEONOR How you exaggerate!
You're so full of jokes.

MARCELO Here comes the sun.

OTAVIO And what beautiful suns they are!

HIPÓLITA The dawn, the sun,
the moon, the stars—
don't they tire of such flattery, my lady?

LEONOR It is quite stale.

MARCELO Your voice rises to the heavens. 1560

LEONOR And sinks not to your level—
that's a new one.

HIPÓLITA It was well put.
Dashing even.

OTAVIO If you speak tenderly,
she'll never respond well.

MARCELO What can I do,
other than challenge her?

LEONOR	You seem more womanly when you look at my brother so tenderly.	1600
HIPÓLITA	If I look, it is only because his courage and honor have proven him worthy. I am grateful for your own courtesy in setting eyes on my brother.	
LUIS	So, gentlemen, what is going on here?	
MARCELO	Where there are ladies, one deals in love.	1610
FÉLIX	Well, if that's it, carry on.	
LUIS	You've got a good hand to play!	
OTAVIO	Our hand was fine without you two in the mix.	
FÉLIX	And do the ladies make a royal flush?	
LUIS	By God, we'd like such a hand. We stand to lose the most!	
LEONOR	And so you think you have us in hand?	
LUIS	It would be foolish to be so certain.	1620
HIPÓLITA	It's only because you're so brave.	
LUIS	You give me too much credit.	
FÉLIX	And I trusted my sister's courage.	
MARCELO	That may well be.	
OTAVIO	And if so, then what?	
FÉLIX	Well, if anyone is worthy, who better than me?	

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

LUIS Because its owner is waiting for it.

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

LUIS Not on my stairs they won't!

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

LUIS I don't grant it! 1660

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

LUIS Then I'll take it from you.

MARCELO Let's see you try.

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

MARCELO My sword will defend it!

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

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

Exeunt LUIS and MARCELO

HIPÓLITA Brother, come here!

LEONOR Oh, there goes my glove. 1670

The glove drops and FÉLIX takes it

FÉLIX This is my good fortune.

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

OTAVIO takes the glove from FÉLIX's hands

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

you would have deserved the pair,
but who needs gloves
when he has no use for his hands?
There will be no more tokens
between us, not mine, not yours,
nor anyone else's, by God!
What a great coward 1710
the one who ran from you last night
must have been!
If you had defended my glove,
you might have deserved my hand—
now, instead, I despise you
for this cowardice.
Here is a small token—
you need chicken feathers
to complete your act!

She gives him a feather from her hairpiece

Here, you can wear these. 1720
Although what you really need
is a less elegant bird
that's tastier to eat . . .

LEONOR *exits*

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

He goes to exit but DON PEDRO enters

DON PEDRO What should she wait for, you pansy?
Such shameful errors
cannot be undone!
I shall kill you myself.

FÉLIX Listen, I must get out of here, 1730
but I will return to restore your honor.

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

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

Exit all

SCENE 5

Room in COSTANZA's home

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

COSTANZA Has anyone ever seen such impudence?

HIPÓLITA It's actually courage.

COSTANZA Stop, daughter.

HIPÓLITA Let go, mother!

COSTANZA Come, hold her, you two.

HIPÓLITA Stand back, old man!

TUTOR You're too strong! 1740

GALVÁN All this for a cuff that fell off!

HIPÓLITA You want to take me,
 you little devil?

HIPÓLITA punches GALVÁN in the face

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

HIPÓLITA I need a sword!
 You're despicable!
 If you don't give me a sword,
 I'll take one myself!

HIPÓLITA takes a sword from a SERVANT

COSTANZA Daughter, I warn you, this is killing me! 1750

LEONOR enters

 Stop her, Leonor.

LEONOR Stop, my lady!

LUIS	<p>This, my lady, is the cuff that fell from your arm. Forgive me if it's blood-stained. In order to get it back, I slashed the hand that dared to steal it, and its red blood soiled the white cloth.</p>	1790
HIPÓLITA	<p>Had it lain in a lion's claws, in the very mouth of hell, or in its deepest pit, by God, I would have fetched it, just to put it in your hands again! Take it, it's yours.</p>	
HIPÓLITA	<p>I accept it, and give you a thousand thanks, a thousand praises. If I were the king, I would add this bloody cuff to your coat of arms!</p>	1800
LUIS	<p>I'd rather serve the one who reigns in my heart.</p>	
DON PEDRO	<p>Oh, how this courage shines forth! Why can't you take this example? Why isn't your soul moved by such honor? Why does it not burst out from you? By God, my son, unworthy of that name, you must cut off that hand with which he took the glove, or my hands will tear you to pieces!</p>	1810
FÉLIX	<p>Stop insulting me, father. I am in such a state that I will soon change your opinion of me. The insult I received, the jealousy, the pain of so many affronts at once have turned me into a lion. The shame that burns from deep within has sparked a fire inside me.</p>	1820

	<p>I will be another Martín Peláez,¹¹ who, ashamed of his cowardice when the Cid took his seat, later became a wonder. By our Maker, I swear I will be a divine scourge, and cover the sun with crimson clouds of blood. A thousand vipers have stung me, and I am all venom. Goodbye, father.</p>	1830
TUTOR	Stay, my lord!	
DON PEDRO	Note his courage, and wait for my instructions.	
COSTANZA	And you take courage, my lady.	
LEONOR	I will not hold him in my heart again until he returns in triumph.	1840
GALVÁN	You need not fear, and now he won't either!	
LUIS	I will stand by him, for I am yours.	
FÉLIX	No one follow me. Leave me alone.	
HIPÓLITA	That's more like it, by God— show some spirit, for I'm losing mine.	

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

ACT III

SCENE 1

Enter DON PEDRO and FÉLIX

DON PEDRO	Delaying until the right moment to exact revenge is no lack of courage. On the contrary, it makes it all the more satisfying. Your enemy has been away, and he hasn't shown his face.	1850
FÉLIX	He will assume I'm off my guard.	
DON PEDRO	He doesn't think you're brave.	
FÉLIX	What should I do? I would kill for a new reputation.	1860
DON PEDRO	The more passionate you feel about something, the worse your counsel, and so mine won't be reliable.	
FÉLIX	So who do you trust?	
DON PEDRO	There aren't many people you can count on in times like these. You might as well ring an alarm for the entire city as get all your relatives involved. There's sure to be some doubting old man or cowardly boy among them who will betray your confidence and alert the authorities to thwart your revenge. ¹² This vengeance, which touches on my honor, must go right.	1870
FÉLIX	Who did you call upon to assist us, my lord?	1880

¹² Duels were illegal at the time, though they nonetheless occurred frequently.

DON PEDRO Don Luis,
 who was with you when it happened,
 and therefore must stand with you.
 I also called a captain, a great soldier,
 who was in my battalion in Flanders.
 They'll give you good advice.

FÉLIX I will do as you say.

DON PEDRO Be guided by your honor,
 and if you want revenge,
 think of nothing else but the fact 1890
 that you have been affronted.
 You'll get cold feet
 if your mind starts to wander,
 and you'll never kill anyone
 if you're afraid to die.
 Show your opponent
 respect and courtesy—
 a man who speaks softly
 kills daringly.
 When you fight, 1900
 grab the enemy's sword
 and secure it first,
 then kill him,
 even if by holding it you cut your hand—
 it's worth losing a hand
 to save your life.
 When you're not very skilled,
 or not at all,
 you need a good trick,
 one that's not been tried too many times. 1910
 An unskilled man can't buy time.
 If the fight goes on too long,
 you're bound to be killed or overcome.
 When you're in such danger,
 you can't delay.
 You take your chances,
 betting everything on one move.
 But here come those we summoned.
 Calm down.

FÉLIX I will remember well 1920
 what you have taught me.

Enter LUIS and the CAPTAIN

CAPTAIN I am at your command.

DON PEDRO *(To the SERVANT)* You there, bring chairs.
(To the CAPTAIN and LUIS) You've come to restore my honor!

LUIS I come, my lord,
because this cause is mine
as much as anyone's.
Your son was at my side,
and it was my sister's glove
that was taken from him, 1930
and that I went to recover,
when you led me to expect
Don Félix would not seek revenge.

DON PEDRO We must decide how he is to be avenged.

LUIS He could kill his enemy
with a dagger by night,
or a club by day.

FÉLIX And will this restore
the reputation I have lost?

LUIS Surely one who is affronted 1940
can safely take revenge?

CAPTAIN Yes, but he was not affronted.
Not getting that glove was his own failing,
not an offense committed against him.
And if you're shamed through your own fault,
you must restore your reputation rather differently
than if another has offended you.
Therefore, he must regain that glove honorably,
with his own hands,
and with it, his reputation. 1950

LUIS You're right of course.

DON PEDRO Right on target.

FÉLIX Well then, when and how
shall this glove be recovered?

CAPTAIN The most gallant thing

would be to reclaim it
in the same place where you lost it,
so that the lady to whom it belongs
might witness the deed.

FÉLIX And if he's already lost it 1960
or given it away?

CAPTAIN Then you exact its price
with your brave hands—
it's worth a life.

DON PEDRO Take note, son:
how honor makes things dear!
It comes at a high price,
and you must not squander it.
Let us think this through:
it is not a good idea 1970
to reclaim it on the street,
for there's always someone around
trying to keep the peace
who will intervene for good or ill.
The law does what it must,
even when revenge is at stake.
If they get their way,
matters will stand as they do now
for Don Félix.
What is worse, 1980
he shall be publicly shamed,
rather than avenged.
No, if he is to reclaim the glove,
he should do so where he can take it,
triumph, kill, or die.

LUIS Let him summon his opponent to a duel,
and send a note to make him accept.

DON PEDRO I do not place much trust in notes.

CAPTAIN I will take the message to him,
and by rights, 1990
I should make him bring a second, too.
I will second Don Félix,
to make up for his inexperience.

DON PEDRO No, Captain, I insist,

if it comes to that,
it must be me.

LUIS And if not you,
it should be me.

FÉLIX You are all most kind,
but you cannot be suggesting 2000
that I avenge my affront
with borrowed courage.

DON PEDRO Well said.

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

FÉLIX I am at the ready. 2010

CAPTAIN A brave and discreet fellow,
when he finds his enemy,
takes him out to the fields
without letting on,
so that no one can get in the way—
then, in some remote place,
where no one can stop you,
you take the glove or his life.

DON PEDRO And so you will return with honor!
My well-born son, scion of a noble breast— 2020
I'd rather find out they've killed you
than that you've been defeated.
Come here. With this embrace,
I give you my blessing.

FÉLIX Your words infuse courage in my heart.

CAPTAIN What a father!

LUIS I am moved by their words.

DON PEDRO Oh, sacred honor, worth so much,
but so dearly purchased!

Goodbye, my son.

2030

FÉLIX Goodbye, father.

FÉLIX exits, DON PEDRO and the CAPTAIN talk as they walk offstage

DON PEDRO You are not as well known here, Captain . . .

CAPTAIN That is true.

DON PEDRO Forgive me, sir, you . . .

LUIS He is so preoccupied
that he leaves me behind.

DON PEDRO But listen here . . .

CAPTAIN Please.

DON PEDRO, FÉLIX, and the CAPTAIN exit stage completely

LUIS Seize your moment, and good luck!

SCENE 2

HIPÓLITA enters

HIPÓLITA Where am I going?
Where have they brought me? 2040

LUIS And who brings me such happiness?

HIPÓLITA What worries,
what fears ravage my heart?
Where is my former courage?
What has my heart done with it?
Tenderness in my breast?
I, afraid? I, anxious?
Could any change be greater?

LUIS Could any chance be sweeter? 2050

HIPÓLITA Love must be like lightning,
for it has struck in the strongest place.
Oh, Lord, it scorches my soul!

But, you? Here in this place?
I want to scream—
there are thieves in my house.

LUIS This is no thief,
 but one who searches,
 sweetly and selfishly,
 for the thief that robbed him, 2060
 in order to recover what he has lost.
 You are the thief, not me!

HIPÓLITA I robbed you? By God!
 And what have you lost?

LUIS You've taken my love and my life.
 Yet they're so much better off in your hands
 that it's no loss to me.

HIPÓLITA I thank you for the flattery.

LUIS I'm flattered that you know
 how to thank me. 2070

HIPÓLITA Then you think me such a fool
 that I would accept a compliment
 and then fail to show my gratitude?

LUIS I adore your soul for its divine reasoning.

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

LUIS I will be eternally and happily yours.

HIPÓLITA I was raised on the battlefield, 2080
 so you should know that,
 although I'm a woman,
 I have the resolve of a soldier.
 I'm loving, I'm loyal,
 but I'll warn you . . .

LUIS What's this you say?

HIPÓLITA . . . that I would be very sorry

if you should repay me poorly.

LUIS The heavens shall go dark,
 and the seas dry out 2090
 before I cease to adore
 your adorable extremes!

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

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

GALVÁN Won't you hear me out?

INÉS No.

HIPÓLITA Oh, Don Luis!
 How is it possible
 for me to be afraid?
 I'm in your debt 2100
 on account of my brother.

LUIS I owe you far more than that.

GALVÁN *(Aside)* They've changed their tune.
 As for me, I'll keep my eye on them.

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

LUIS *exits*

GALVÁN Go and give your message.
 The bird has fallen in the net,
 maybe I'll find revenge for my nose,
 which she split open 2110
 with one punch!

HIPÓLITA What did you say, Inés?

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

She gives HIPÓLITA a note

But you have already spoken to him.

HIPÓLITA I'm infinitely in his debt.

GALVÁN Ah, better and better!

HIPÓLITA And how has Doña Leonor been
since yesterday? 2120

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

HIPÓLITA Marcelo has a sister? 2130

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

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

GALVÁN (*Aside*) We're blushing now . . .
it must be jealousy. 2140

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

INÉS And how.

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

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

HIPÓLITA I mean that much to him?

INÉS	He is desperate for your love. (<i>Aside</i>) She seems flustered. (<i>Aloud</i>) So, my lady, what do you say?	2150
HIPÓLITA	You shall deliver my response.	
GALVÁN	(<i>Aside</i>) What an opportunity to avenge my nose!	
HIPÓLITA	Go, Inés, and tell your lady . . . but I don't know what to say. I'll tell you later.	
INÉS	I kiss your hands.	
INÉS	<i>exits</i>	
HIPÓLITA	Oh my! Why this anguish, this pain, this fear? Why should I care what came before, if it had nothing to do with me? Sometimes love returns between old lovers, but would a gentleman deceive me?	2160
GALVÁN	My lady, leave sadness aside, and prepare to dance!	
HIPÓLITA	Dance? Is there a wedding?	
GALVÁN	Don't you know that Don Luis has wed?	2170
HIPÓLITA	(<i>Aside</i>) This is poison to my ears!	
GALVÁN	Didn't he tell you when he was with you?	
HIPÓLITA	(<i>Aside</i>) Oh, false friend! (<i>Aloud</i>) So, is he married?	
GALVÁN	Indeed he is.	
HIPÓLITA	Who did he marry, Galván? (<i>Aside</i>) How could he dare?	

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

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Despicable gentleman! Wicked man! 2180

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

HIPÓLITA Which Doña Ana?

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

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Oh heavens!

GALVÁN They arranged it
so as to preserve their friendship.
Are you only finding out now?
He has received a million congratulations. 2190

HIPÓLITA Did you see him?

GALVÁN Yes, he is full of pleasure . . .

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Is this possible?

GALVÁN . . . at all the good wishes.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Oh, traitor!

GALVÁN His sister, Doña Leonor,
went to visit his wife.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Then it's true.

GALVÁN She's happy,
and as their friend,
you should be happy, too. 2200

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Is such wickedness possible?
How can I be so calm
in the midst of this storm?

GALVÁN (*Aside*) She took the bait.

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Is such betrayal possible?

My heart is dead,
my soul sticks in my throat.

GALVÁN That's it. Rage with jealousy.
That'll teach you 2210
to punch such honest noses!

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) Unjust fate, fair heavens,
how can I withstand this affront?

GALVÁN Your pleasure, my lady?

HIPÓLITA Leave me alone.

GALVÁN That takes care of her.
I've avenged my nose with my mouth.

GALVÁN *exits*

HIPÓLITA Am I dreaming?
Why did he seek my love,
ravishing my soul from my breast 2220
with such tender sorcery,
if he had other intentions,
other loves?
He's married?
By heaven, these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.
Was he not here just now,
claiming to serve me forever?
Why did he trick me
if he planned to affront me 2230
by abandoning me?
Honor and pleasure
mocked with unjust deceit—
and it all reflects on me!
Heavens, these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.
Had he not deceived me
with that sly, unfaithful soul,
I would still be in love
and take no offense, 2240
and love him all the more.
But when his deception
so clearly insults me,
what can I think?

Fair heavens, these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.
I must be insane.
How else could a man
dare to pierce my breast
and glimpse my very soul
only to reject me? 2250
Was it to boast that he had my favor?
What is this, then?
Good heavens above, these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.
Why wait? Why not kill him at once,
and rescue my honor from these straits?
I will tear out his soul
with my very hands,
or with my teeth! 2260
I am a lioness,
I burn with fever,
I roar for revenge!
Because these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.

HIPÓLITA *exits*

SCENE 3

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO with one arm bandaged

MARCELO I carried the cuff in this hand,
and I did not gather my cape
around my arm,
and so my bad fortune
led his pitiless sword. 2270
As he wounded me, I dropped mine.
Then many people arrived at once,
and gave him a chance to pick it up,
lucky devil!
I had to let him take it
while they arrested me
and took me to prison.
Meanwhile, he escaped—
so much greater is his good fortune.
I signed a truce, 2280
which makes the affront
that much worse.

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

LUIS *exits*

OTAVIO He's gone.
It's too bad he handed over
that chain for the note.
Ah, but his sister's beauty 2320
dispels my sadness,
oh beautiful sun before my eyes!

LEONOR *enters at the window*

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

OTAVIO *(Aside)* I'll talk to her—
a little license can be attractive. 2330
(Aloud) If my humility and respect
should make you listen to me now,
my lady, I would be obliged.

LEONOR Courtesy obliges me to listen.

OTAVIO My lady, I hold this token
in place of my soul,
since it brings, if not laurels,
then the palm of your hand.
I defended it bravely,
for the cause was yours, 2340
though I was too bold in doing so
without your permission.
I hope that, with my apologies,
I will deserve more favor than before,
when only circumstances
excused my actions.
And so that I might be known
for such great fortune,

please give me leave
to keep it in your name.

2350

The CAPTAIN and FÉLIX enter through different doors

CAPTAIN This corner gives the best view.

LEONOR That's Don Félix.

FÉLIX Oh, heavens!

OTAVIO No matter.

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

2360

OTAVIO How happy you make me!

FÉLIX *(Aside)* While I burn!

LEONOR *(Aside)* I will make him brave
by making him jealous.

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

2370

LEONOR Defend it in my name.

OTAVIO Whoever wants to take it from here . . .

He puts it in his hat

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

LEONOR Perfect.

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

LEONOR (Aside) He is furious—
the jealousy works,
it will make him brave. 2380

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

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

LEONOR What confidence!

CAPTAIN (Aside) What arrogance and patience!

FÉLIX (Aside) Still, a little prudence
will ensure my revenge.
(Aloud) Otavio? 2390

OTAVIO What do you want?

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

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

OTAVIO I am not a man who frightens easily.

LEONOR Félix!

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

LEONOR I am grateful to you. 2400

FÉLIX And you, ungrateful woman, have lost me.

LEONOR (Aside) What if he pretends to be offended,
but wants to avenge his honor?

FÉLIX Let us leave this place—
I wish to speak to you alone.

OTAVIO Here or anywhere else,
I will know how to respond.

FÉLIX It will be easier to draw my sword somewhere else,
as I have already unsheathed my courage.
Then I can demand the glove from you. 2410
Come, if you are as brave
as you are arrogant.

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

FÉLIX Come with me.

Exit FÉLIX and OTAVIO

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

LEONOR He challenged him,
that's all there is to it.
Well done! Heaven protect him! 2420
If a man cannot be brave
when he is jealous,
then there is no hope.

Exit the CAPTAIN and LEONOR

SCENE 4

Enter LUIS

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

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

A fine figure! What a gentleman!

HIPÓLITA (*Aside*) I am furious.

LUIS What are you looking for? 2430

	I would sacrifice myself to you. I give you my sword and my consent. I would rather die at your hand than see you so offended.	2500
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> Oh heavens! As jealousy dies away, my love is at the ready! I will pretend I am still angry and offended, for now I am as embarrassed as I was jealous before. <i>(Aloud)</i> I am not satisfied. Take up your sword.	2510
LUIS	<i>(Aside)</i> She's more embarrassed than angry, I can tell.	
HIPÓLITA	Defend yourself!	
LUIS	<i>(Aloud)</i> Now your eyes shine like rays of the sun instead of lightning bolts. <i>(Aside)</i> But how can I be so distracted when my glory is at hand?	
HIPÓLITA	Defend yourself now! Now!	2520
LUIS	Well, if you insist, but I am the one who is being challenged, so it is up to me to choose the place and the weapons— the weapons can be those we carry.	
HIPÓLITA	<i>(Aside)</i> He is clever, but he speaks as a lover, too. <i>(Aloud)</i> It seems fair, I agree to those terms.	
LUIS	And so I will wait for you behind that grove of trees.	2530
HIPÓLITA	Move along, and there you will see that I am a woman in name only.	

OTAVIO I'll be right behind you,
even though, by rights,
I should choose the spot, you can . . .

FÉLIX I certainly appreciate it,
but I'm looking for a secluded
and private place, 2570
so that no one bursts in on us,
and to keep my bashful maiden sword
from greater shame.

OTAVIO It must be bashful indeed . . .

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

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

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

OTAVIO That's pretty presumptuous 2580
for such a feeble enemy.

FÉLIX Enough.

OTAVIO What?

FÉLIX I said you're right.

They move offstage to fight. CAPTAIN watches the fight from the door, describing what he sees

CAPTAIN They've jumped over the walls.
I'll stay here and look through these cracks.
I'd gladly switch places with Don Félix
to keep him from being killed.
What fine form! What courage!
Honorable actions fearlessly performed! 2590
Now they've bared their chests
and drawn their swords.
Otavio holds firm,
but Félix leaps upon him.
Good god! What a blow!

My daughter is not at home, 2620
and I don't know what has happened to her.
I'll never be able to straighten her out!
But . . . there she is.
What's going on?
Look at her drag her feet!

Enter HIPÓLITA, dressed as a woman

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

COSTANZA Did you leave without my permission?
Is that honorable?
Why are you covering your face? 2630
Are you ashamed?

HIPÓLITA Oh, mother!

COSTANZA What has come over you?

HIPÓLITA I don't know.

COSTANZA Are you crying?

HIPÓLITA Yes, mother!
I've had a taste of peace,
and now as a woman,
I forget how to be brave in war.
Now muskets scare me, 2640
and I want nothing to do with swords,
unless their blades have been blunted.
Now I feel pain when pricked by a needle,
and I'm sure to faint if there's blood.
My heart is pure tenderness,
and my mouth sweet as honey.
My voice is weak and my heart, too.
I'm having palpitations,
I need medicine.

COSTANZA What's causing all this? 2650

HIPÓLITA I am afraid.

COSTANZA What's wrong with you?

and found myself locked
in his embrace.
We wrestled for a while,
both of us determined to win,
but dew on grass 2700
is as slippery as soap . . .
I slipped, stumbled,
and fell down at my enemy's feet.
And that was nothing,
but after I fell he—oh, mother—
he did what I could never have imagined.
He shook my soul,
transformed my entire being,
and he said:
“So that you can see 2710
that you're a woman, for you are.”
Well can I believe it!
And now all I can do is cry,
because he's gone and I love him,
and so I am indeed a woman.

Enter LEONOR

COSTANZA Daughter, here comes Leonor.

LEONOR Heavens above, what sorrows my cares bring!

COSTANZA A just vengeance, I imagine.

LEONOR Where is your son?

COSTANZA Heaven guard us! 2720

LEONOR What? Is he not here?

COSTANZA Do you know anything, my lady?

LEONOR I know something's not right.

COSTANZA The blood in my veins has turned to ice.

Enter DON PEDRO and GALVÁN

DON PEDRO Is the horse ready?

GALVÁN It is harnessed and at the door,

“My weapons are of the same mettle,
 for I am noble and true to myself!”
 Then their swords came out,
 quick as lightning.
 Otavio stood his ground,
 but Félix grabbed his sword, 2770
 and charged him so furiously and bravely
 that he pushed the blade
 away with his shoulder,
 and with the pommel,
 smashed him in the face.
 Otavio falls to the green grass,
 and his red blood turns emeralds into rubies!
 He lost his hat and glove,
 and stunned, having lost his sword and all,
 he called on Heaven, crying, 2780
 “Do not kill one who has surrendered!”
 with an altered voice in his bloody mouth.
 Don Félix left him alone,
 as merciful as he is well born.
 He had barely recovered his spoils
 when a noise made me look up.
 People were coming,
 and as I was waiting for the fight to end,
 and they were almost upon it,
 I confess I feared some treason. 2790
 So, fired up as I was,
 I took out my sword.
 It turns out to be the law,
 with a bunch of peasants
 ready to arrest Don Félix,
 but I jump in, in a fury, as is my way,
 and, with only six blows,
 I killed half a dozen of them,
 and the rest fled like rockets.
 Meanwhile Don Félix got away, 2800
 and I expect him any moment,
 in good health and with his honor restored.
 I’m not surprised I got here before him,
 for I am quicker and more daring.
 But here he comes. By heaven,
 he will make a fine gentleman—
 now he deserves his place
 in the House of Moncada.

HIPÓLITA

Don Luis is coming too.

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

LUIS I am happy to find you here. 2810

FÉLIX I owe my victory to your courage.

DON PEDRO Come now into my heart.

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

FÉLIX I come with honor.

TUTOR I must embrace you!

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

FÉLIX Here, my lady, is your glove, 2820
and even the hat where he kept it,
and where my jealousy lit.

FÉLIX gives LEONOR the hat and the glove

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

FÉLIX gives her the sword

 Receive it from my hand,
if your disdain will suffer it,
and forgive me if I lost it
in my clumsiness and confusion—
what slowed me down was
the force of habit! 2830

LEONOR I receive it with all my soul,
and set it in the heavens.
Forgive me for making you jealous—
I needed to brace your heart,
which was mine already.

DON PEDRO He who restores the glove
also deserves the hand.

LUIS	If my sister welcomes it, I am happy that it should be so.	
FÉLIX	Then my happiness is complete.	2840
COSTANZA	And Luis should give his to Hipólita, since, as I hear, he proved himself worthy of her in another challenge, and so should not avoid it.	
GALVÁN	I am to blame for that.	
HIPÓLITA	And I have forgiven you.	
FÉLIX	Great fortune . . . !	
LUIS	Great glory . . . !	
LEONOR	. . . is mine.	2850
HIPÓLITA	. . . as was mine.	
DON PEDRO	From their habits I restored my children to their very nature— a miracle, as one habit trumps another. And so ends our play, <i>The Force of Habit.</i>	