

FÉLIX LOPE DE VEGA Y CARPIO

THE WIDOW OF VALENCIA

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## **The *Comedia* in Context**

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

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

### *Comedia* at a Glance

The Spanish *comedia* developed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Madrid grew into a sophisticated imperial capital, the theater provided a space to perform the customs, concerns, desires, and anxieties of its citizens. Though the form was influenced by the Italian troupes that brought *commedia dell'arte* to Spain in the sixteenth century, the expansive

corpus of the Spanish *comedia* includes not only comic plays, but also histories, tragedies, and tragicomedies. The varied dramatic template of the *comedia* is as diverse as the contemporary social sphere it reflects.

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

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

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

*Comedias* offer a range of possibilities for the twenty-first-century reader, actor, and audience. The plays often envision the social ambitions and conflicts of the rapidly-growing

cities where they were performed, allowing a community to simultaneously witness and create a collective culture. In many *comedias*, the anonymity and wealth that the city affords allows the clever to transcend their social position, while wit, rather than force, frequently carries the day, creating an urban theater that itself performs urbanity. An important subset of *comedias* deal with topics from national history, exploring violence, state power, the role of the nobility, and religious and racial difference.

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

Among the many forms of passion and aspiration present in the *comedia*, female desire and agency are central. In contrast to its English counterpart, the Spanish stage permitted actresses to play female roles, thus giving playwrights the opportunity to develop a variety of characters for them. While actresses became famous, the powerful roles they played onstage

often portrayed the force of female desire. In Lope's *The Widow of Valencia*, for example, the beautiful young widow Leonarda brings a masked lover into her home so as not to reveal her identity and risk her reputation or independence.

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

### Remaking Plays in Our Time

In Lope's witty manifesto, the *New Art of Making Plays in Our Time*, he advises playwrights to stick to what works onstage, including plots of honor and love, strong subplots, and—whenever possible—cross-dressing. For Lope, the delight of the audience drives the process of composition, and there is little sense in a craft that does not entertain the public.

Lope's contemporaries followed this formula, developing dramas that simultaneously explore the dynamics of their society and produce spectacle. For this reason, early modern Hispanic drama remains an engaging, suspenseful, often comic—and new—art to audiences even four hundred years later.

The *Diversifying the Classics* project at UCLA, engaged in translation, adaptation, and outreach to promote the *comedia* tradition, aims to bring the entertaining spirit of Lope and his

contemporaries to our work. Rather than strictly adhering to the verse forms of the plays, we seek to render the power of their language in a modern idiom; rather than limiting the drama as a historical or cultural artifact, we hope to bring out what remains vibrant for our contemporary society. Given that these vital texts merit a place onstage, we have sought to facilitate production by carefully noting entrances, exits, and asides, and by adding locations for scenes whenever possible. Although we have translated every line, we assume directors will cut as appropriate for their own productions. We hope that actors, directors, and readers will translate our work further into new productions, bringing both the social inquiry and theatrical delight of the *comedia* to future generations of audiences.

### **A Note on the Playwright**

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

In his own time, Lope’s fame arose out of his prodigious literary talent as well as his colorful biography, for the playwright’s erotic life often left him on the wrong side of the law. After being rejected by the actress Elena Osorio in the 1580’s, Lope penned a series of satirical poems attacking her family, and was exiled from Madrid for the offense. Though Lope would go

on to take orders in 1614, affairs that defied early modern Spanish religious and legal codes continued to dominate his life. He was accused of a relationship with a widow, Antonia Trillo de Armenta, carried on a sixteen-year affair with the married Marta de Nevares, to whom he dedicated *The Widow of Valencia*, and left an unknown number of illegitimate children.

Despite the varied scandals of his life and his eventual position as secretary to the Duke of Sessa, Lope was a truly successful commercial playwright, who earned income as well as fame through his literary efforts. Today he is best remembered for the drama he came to define—the quick, witty *comedia* of the Spanish Golden Age. After Calderón’s *Life Is a Dream*, Lope’s *Fuenteovejuna* is perhaps the best-known *comedia* in the English-speaking world, and others such as *Peribañez* and *The Dog in the Manger* exemplify the well-constructed Lopean plot. Miguel de Cervantes, his contemporary, may not have meant it as a compliment when he called Lope a “monster of nature” (*monstruo de la naturaleza*), as the two masters were not on friendly terms. Yet Lope’s prodigious output was fundamental to defining the theater of the age that spanned his life. The monster of nature left us many gifts.



## **Introduction**

Robin Kello and Laura Muñoz

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

### The Plot

The play opens with Leonarda and her maid Julia discussing how she spends her life reading since her late husband Camilo's death. Julia wonders aloud about her mistress becoming a nun, yet although Leonarda admits that she finds the life of a widow to be a hard denial of her natural desires, she neither plans to become a nun nor to remarry. This refusal exasperates her uncle Lucencio, who arrives on the scene and attempts to impress upon her, once again, how much damage she will do to her reputation if she continues to hide away in her house refusing suitors. Leonarda will not budge, and the conversation ends with her strong denunciation of marriage.

Out on the street, Lisandro, Otón, and Valerio, three of Leonarda's most avid suitors, catch sight of each other, confessing that they are all courting the same woman. After comparing stories of "favours" Leonarda has granted them, the three suitors decide that each has an equal chance at winning her and agree not to get in each other's way.

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

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

The second act opens with an intrigued but nervous Camilo steeling himself for his first encounter with Leonarda. Though worried that it may be a trap, he is unable to resist the erotic possibility that awaits him. Surmounting his fear, he allows Urbán to lead him blindly through Valencia to Leonarda's house, the servant reassuring Camilo that he has no cause for worry, but a world of pleasure to gain. On their way they meet Otón, who lets them pass, but begins to

suspect that Leonarda may not be as chaste as she claims. He decides that he will spy on the widow to determine what, or whom, she may be hiding.

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

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

Later, as Camilo is recounting his amorous encounters in the dark to his servant Floro, Leonarda and Julia arrive by chance in the same gardens. Camilo flatters the widow, whom he doesn’t recognize, while admitting to her that he is in love with a lady he may touch but never see. Leonarda tests Camilo’s devotion by asking if there is another woman for whom Camilo would leave his lover, but he remains steadfast, pledging his devotion to his unknown lady. Later that evening, the three rejected suitors set upon Urbán, but the servant is saved by Camilo’s intervention.

The third act opens with Camilo arguing with Celia, his jilted former lover. Leonarda witnesses the scene, and asks Camilo if the woman with whom he was arguing is the same lady he loves by night. He responds by flattering the widow and admitting that he has grown tired of his nightly arrangement. Leonarda, jealous of herself, complains to Julia, “As if insulting me were not enough,/ he also wanted to woo me” (2315–2316).

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

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

When Camilo shines the light on her face, he is delighted to recognize his lover as the widow he sees by day. Leonarda is upset, however, and Lucencio, hearing her raised voice,

enters the room. Once discovered, Leonarda proposes marriage to Camilo. Lucencio calls for witnesses, and the servants and suitors, already in the house, bless the marriage. Urbán then follows by asking for Julia's hand. The deception bends toward revelation, the erotic energies toward the union of marriage, as the widow is once again wife. With the power of desire and irrepressible wit, Leonarda has orchestrated the events of the comedy, but Camilo is given its final words: "And with that, I say/ ends *The Widow of Valencia* (3111–3112).

#### "A Woman in Love": Female Agency and Desire

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick A. de Armas, "The Portrait of a Pious Widow: Francisco de Ribalta and Lope de Vega's *La viuda valenciana*," in *Shakespeare and the Spanish Comedia*, edited by Bárbara Mujica (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2013), 131–147.

as Friar Luis de León's 1583 *The Perfect Wife* tried to restrict widows, urging them to "take up a life of reflection and introspection" consisting of "solitude, prayer, penitence, and sobriety."<sup>2</sup>

When Lope imagines Leonarda reading that very manual in the play's first scene, or referencing moralists in her conversation with Lucencio, he is acknowledging their influence. Leonarda is not so easily contained, however: she defines home and church as zones of erotic chance, first becoming enamored of Camilo during mass, and then making her house the site of secret amorous encounters.

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Fink de Backer, *Widowhood in Early Modern Spain: Protectors, Proprietors, and Patrons* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17.

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

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

Lope is working from the tradition of the *mujer esquiva* (elusive woman) play, in which a disdainful widow must submit to a man in marriage. Much as the strong-willed Katherine must eventually submit to Petruchio in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, such plays present the restriction of the woman to a domestic role. Yet though the resolution of *The Widow of Valencia* could be said to tame Leonarda, Gabriela Carrión astutely suggests that she "is defeated only insofar as the shroud of privacy surrounding her affair with Camilo has been torn asunder,"—the ending is nonetheless her triumph.<sup>3</sup> The play neither entirely subverts nor entirely reinforces traditional gender roles; instead, it does both, and the resolution cannot erase what has been enacted and revealed on the path to it. *The Widow of Valencia* brings into relief the limitations of

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<sup>3</sup> Gabriela Carrión, *Staging Marriage in Early Modern Spain: Conjugal Doctrine in Lope, Cervantes, and Calderón* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2011), 115.

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

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

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



as everyone else around them pairs up into couples, the three are left, happily it seems, with each other.

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

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

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

nightly to pleasurable encounters with the widow. He even repays Urbán's earlier flattery with his own admiring portrait of the servant:

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

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

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

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

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<sup>4</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1992), 1.

instead brings her lady a glass in which she can see her own youth and beauty. Though Leonarda initially reacts to Julia with impatience, apparently focused on spiritual meditation, De Armas suggests that this substitution of mirror for painting foreshadows Leonarda's move "from Christian devotion to a more corporeal devotion,"<sup>5</sup> and from spiritual reflection to the recognition of physical beauty. Yet even as the play privileges sexual desire over Catholic moral codes, it explores the power of art, particularly visual art, as both representation of and origin of human sentiment.

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> De Armas, "Portrait of a Pious Widow," 137.

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

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

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

The city of Valencia, capital of the kingdom of the same name on the eastern shores of the Iberian Peninsula, was well known to Lope de Vega. The writing, staging, and publication of *The Widow of Valencia* resulted from the poet's second visit to the city as part of the royal retinue that accompanied Philip III to Valencia in 1599. For three months, the city celebrated the double

royal weddings of King Philip III to Margaret of Austria, as well as the *infanta* Isabel Clara Eugenia's marriage to Albert of Austria. The weddings drew all manner of poets and artists to the city, including Lope de Vega, who returned to the site of his previous exile as an official chronicler of events, writing poems and *comedias* amid the bustle and chaos of the celebrations. With local and international aristocracy in Valencia, multiple tournaments, poetic competitions, and street performances were held in honor of the monarch and the royal entourage. Lope participated in the celebrations, becoming Don Carnival for the festivities and reciting poetry written for the occasion:

He was dressed all in red like an Italian clown, with a long black cloak and a velvet cap  
[ . . . ] as the actors passed the royal palace, Lope addressed Philip and the Infanta Isabel,  
first in Italian, celebrating the double royal marriage and then reciting the beautiful ballad  
in Castilian, which lasted half an hour.<sup>6</sup>

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

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Goodwin, *Spain: The Centre of the World, 1519–1682* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 262.

thematic content) and a public performance of the poems would decide the winner, who often received an honorary title along with a monetary prize.<sup>7</sup> The ongoing theme for Otón, Lisandro, and Valerio is unattainable love, and their poetic form is the sonnet. In these highly poetic moments, the suitors not only vie for the affections of the elusive widow but also for the approval of the spectators, hoping that the claps and jeers of the audience will crown a winner. In a similar vein, the three also exchange ridiculous stories of “favors” granted them by the widow, becoming the buffoons of a carnival parade, to be laughed at by a knowing audience.

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

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

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

The scene quickly shifts with the appearance of someone they believe to be Urbán, as the

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<sup>7</sup> Lope de Vega himself participated in many of these poetic competitions, both as a poet and as a judge. A similar dynamic between multiple suitors appears in Lope’s *A Wild Night in Toledo* (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 2018). See Paul Cella and Adrián Collado, “Introduction.”

carnavalesque performance turns to violence on the dark street. Valerio, Lisandro, and Otón's scenes thus encompass Carnival in all its modes, from the high to the low, and remind the audience of the dangers lurking beneath the chaos and confusion of the festivities.

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

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

The plan she proposes could only be implemented during Carnival, when masked revelers are a common sight in the city and the search to satisfy carnal desires is at its peak. Aside from the physical masks that Leonarda and her servants don to obscure their faces, the astute widow also takes advantage of all the different guises available to a woman of her class and social standing to shield her true identity from Camilo. Before their first encounter, Camilo attempts to discover information about the mysterious woman propositioning him. Urbán's playful answer—she is

neither this, nor that—makes it clear that the young widow is taking full advantage of the confusion of Carnival, taking up all manner of disguises to fulfill her desires and protect her reputation. For Camilo, this mysterious woman is hidden behind many masks: during their encounters, she is the hunting falcon; in the light of day she is the goddess Diana; and on the streets of Valencia she is the “little widow” who seems to have a strange interest in him (2256). The game of masks transforms him as well, as the typically male pursuer becomes instead the prey.

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

At the turn of the seventeenth century Valencia was defined by its mercantile spirit and its connection to the Mediterranean. The city’s industries, including the growing printing industry and silk trade, were at their peak during this time, and the city functioned as a hub for commerce from all over the Mediterranean and Europe. The mercantile fervor of the city is so vibrant, in fact, that it breaks through Leonarda’s careful seclusion in Act I. Unable to resist the temptation of a salesman at the door, Leonarda allows two of her suitors, disguised as peddlers, to gain entry



into her home and woo her as they pitch their ‘wares.’ The scene reminds the audience that Valencia is a city of commerce, as the wares are the very same for which it was famous at the turn of the seventeenth century: printing, both of books and images, silk production for tapestries, and perfumes. In this scene, Valerio and Otón turn the act of courtship into a business transaction, hawking their love for Leonarda along with books of poetry and reproductions of paintings—and they are not the only ones to sell their love.

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

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

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

CAMILO           Fine jewels?  
LEONARDA       You there! Bring me those chains

and that charm, the Cupid one.  
Bring them here . . .  
CAMILO No. Don't do that,  
it will only upset me further.  
For I desire your eyes more  
than any jewels you could offer me.  
If you gave me those sapphires,  
or the rubies and pearls,  
of your mouth,  
I could give you so much more. (1453–1463)

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

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

The emphasis on courtship as the exchange of material goods for romantic favors is no accident. Just as Lope evokes royal festivities and the mercantile spirit of Valencia to play up the contemporary vision of this city as one of sumptuous excesses—both carnal and material—he relies on the city's reputation for prostitution and easy women to present an erotically charged vision of love. Valencia was home to one of the oldest and most prolific brothels in Spain, giving the city's men a reputation for being easygoing and the women for being easy. Contemporary

chronicler Henrique Cock noted during his 1585 visit to the city, “[The] women are the most lusty and lascivious of all Spain.”<sup>8</sup> Leonarda’s pursuit to satisfy her physical desires and Camilo’s willingness to accommodate reflect this reputation.

#### “A House So Rare”: Reimagining Domestic Space

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

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

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<sup>8</sup> Henrique Cock, *Relación del viaje hecho por Felipe II, en 1585, á Zaragoza, Barcelona y Valencia* (Madrid: Esteriotipia y Galv. de Aribau y Ca., 1876), 247.

gallant she desires. As Camilo says, “in this house of veils,/ the partridge is hooded/ while the falcon can see” (1408–1410). In her domestic space, Leonarda, with the assistance of her servants, manages the veils.

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

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

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<sup>9</sup> Baltasar Gracián, *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, edited by Emilio Blanco (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995), 129. The original Spanish text reads: "Ai suetos de solo fachata, como casas por acabar . . . tienen la entrada de palacio, y de choza la habitación."

lantern but also Lucencio's presence in the house topples Leonarda's structure of private liaisons. When witnesses are finally called for her engagement, Leonarda tells Urbán, "You might as well/ have brought the whole city!" and he responds, "They were almost at the door" (3077–3079). The fortress was always surrounded, and the forces of patriarchy would eventually be impossible to ward off. While merging the personal façade of the pious widow and physical façade of the home allows her to satisfy her desire, domestic space becomes again the site of marital union as the play concludes. Yet Leonarda, with seductive wit, has already illustrated for the audience how a house of mourning may easily become an arena for love.

#### Production History

The play has enjoyed several productions in Spain since the 1960s, with one in the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid in 1960 and two separate television adaptations with *Televisión Española* in 1975 and 1983. In 2008, the Teatro Rialto in Valencia reopened with a production of the play, probably the first staging in Valencia since 1599. Most recently, an adaptation of the play was produced by the Spanish television program "Estudio 1" for *Televisión Española*, airing first in 2010 and again in 2012.<sup>10</sup> With a runtime of 73 minutes, this version offers a fast-paced adaptation of the source material which heightens the eroticism of the original for a modern audience.

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<sup>10</sup> Directed by Carlos Sedes. "La viuda valenciana." *Estudio 1*. 2010 [La viuda valenciana](#).



## Pronunciation Key

Each vowel in Spanish has just one sound:

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

The underlined syllable in each word is the accented one.

LUCENCIO: LOO-SEHN-SEE-OH

LEONARDA: LEH-OH-NAHR-DAH

JULIA: HOO-LEE-AH

URBÁN: OOR-BAHN

CAMILO: CAH-MEE-LOH

FLORO: FLOH-ROH

CELIA: SEH-LEE-AH

OTON: OH-TOHN

VALERIO: VAH-LEH-REE-OH

LEANDRO: LEH-AHN-DROH

ROSANO: ROH-SAHN-NOH

VALENCIA: VAH-LEHN-SEE-AH

FRIAR LUIS: LOO-EES

SAN JUAN: SAHN HOO-AHN

REAL: REH-AHL

REALES: REH-AHL-EHS

DOBLON: DOH-BLOHN

SHEPHERD OF FÍLIDA: FEE-LEE-DAH

GÁLVEZ MONTALVO: GAHL-VEHS MOHN-TAHL-VOH

GALATEA: GAH-LAH-TEH-AH

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES: MEE-GEHL DEH SEHR-VAHN-TEHS

ESPINEL: EHS-PEE-NEHL

JULIO: HOO-LEE-OH

GUZMÁN: GOOS-MAHN

CARRANZA: CAH-RAHN-SAH

ERCINO: EHR-SEE-NOH

ZAIDÍA: SAH-EE-DEE-AH

CLARA: CLAH-RAH

### Dedicated to the Lady Marcia Leonarda<sup>11</sup>

When I found out that your grace had become a widow at such a young age that, although your husband might well deserve to be mourned, your youth might excuse you from doing so—for, as the proverb has it, the wise will seek what they lack rather than what they have lost—I decided to dedicate this play, whose title is *The Widow of Valencia*, to you. I do not do so maliciously, for it would be a grave fault to offer your grace such an unworthy example. My Leonarda was discreet (as are you, who share her name) in finding a remedy for her solitude without harm to her reputation. Just as the trick when swimming is knowing how to keep one's clothes dry, so it is with following desire while maintaining one's good name. It is best not to surrender your honor, but since your youth, beauty, spirit, and cleverness may fall prey to some idle flatterer, it may not be a bad thing to have read this fable. For in fencing, one does not consider it a wound when another is pierced, nor do we deem the unskilled strummer a musician. Many will be against such a pretty sermon—and pardon me the use of this overused term, *pretty*,<sup>12</sup> but Fernando de Herrera, pride of the Castilian language and its first Columbus, never scorned or failed to praise this word, as is clear in his *Comentos*.<sup>13</sup> But since you do not care about him or his prologues or me or even this comedy, let us return to my advice. For those who are green should follow that of their ripe elders, or they'll never give good advice themselves.

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

<sup>12</sup> *Linda* in the original Spanish.

<sup>13</sup> Fernando de Herrera (1534–1597): 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish poet known for his commentaries on the first and most famous of the Spanish Petrarchan poets, Garcilaso de la Vega (1501–1536).



Noblemen are too high for secret pleasures, while equals are unseemly so soon, even for marriage. Confer with your intimates, unless you would eschew intimacy. This is where *The Widow of Valencia* comes in, a mirror in which you may adjust your mantle more clearly than in any Venetian glass, and then you will think of me, as I dedicate it to you. My play is not entirely made up; it may not have occurred in so many words, but I have just added some touches to the basic story to make it more convincing, like women putting on make-up.

I am writing you and wondering whether you can see yourself, with those green eyes, full, dark brows and lashes, thick, abundant curled locks, a mouth that stirs anyone who watches it laugh, white hands, a shapely figure, and liberty of conscience where restraint is concerned. For Lady Death, like in a friar of the Order of Mercy, rescued you from Constantinople and the *bagnio*<sup>14</sup> of a man who was hairy from head to toe. I've heard it said that your late husband's mother was from Osuna or that when she conceived, she could think only of money in a chest.<sup>5</sup> And so her imaginings came true—let us not doubt the philosophers, who favor impressions on the spirit over common heritage—those were your husband's graces, to which one might add the basest intellect of any jealous fool who was always in the way and yet never indulged you as he should. People sometimes say, when they pity the unfortunate, “So-and-so is haunted by an ill shadow.” Well, no wife has ever had a worse shadow than him, not since there's been a sun in the sky, and it dismayed many to see you, beautiful as the sun, with such a shadow. Oh, welcome

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

<sup>5</sup> Lope's double joke here refers to the hairiness and miserliness of Nevares's deceased husband. The Andalusian town of Osuna was ostensibly named for its bears (“osos”). Aristotle (“the philosophers”) believed in the theory of maternal impressions: a mother's thoughts or experiences during pregnancy, especially at conception, would determine the nature of her child. Hence a mother who thought about money stowed away would give birth to a miser.

Death! What medicine could not fix, Death achieved in five days, with a belated purge, two premature bloodlettings, and a doctor more inclined to your freedom than to your husband's life. Your husband surely took his revenge on us all by leaving just the slightest doubt of whether he would die or live on. So strong was the desire to see him go, not because he would then be lacking—he was always lacking—but because having once imagined him gone, it would have driven us to despair to see him again.

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

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

<sup>16</sup> Spanish musician and poet of Lope's era, renowned for supposedly being the one to add a fifth string to the guitar.

<sup>17</sup> Elaborate platform shoes with cork soles, chopines or chapins were luxury footwear for women in the period.

which you can confirm in the looking-glass. Forgive my pen, for in my soul lies the most vivid portrait of your mind and heart. God be with your grace.

Your chaplain,<sup>18</sup> and affectionate servant,  
Lope de Vega Carpio

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<sup>18</sup> Lope had taken religious orders in 1614, making him a *capellán*, or chaplain.

## The Widow of Valencia

### Characters

LUCENCIO, *old man*

LEONARDA, *young widow*

JULIA, *her servant*

URBÁN, *young squire*

CAMILO, *suitor*

FLORO, *his servant*

CELIA, *lady*

OTÓN, *suitor*

VALERIO, *suitor*

LISANDRO, *suitor*

ROSANO, *courtier*

A SCRIBE

A SHERIFF

SERVANTS

ACT I

SCENE 1

[A room in LEONARDA's house]

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

LEONARDA           Celia! Julia! Can you not hear me?

JULIA                My lady . . .

LEONARDA           You fool—what are you up to?

JULIA                I am at your service.

LEONARDA           Save me from that Friar Luis.<sup>19</sup>                               5

JULIA                When I see the state you're in,  
I can tell you've never even come close  
to becoming a nun.  
When you spoke of that Friar Luis  
as I came in,   10  
I wondered where you'd put him.

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

JULIA                How poorly have I covered  
the faults that nature gave me!                               15  
Ugly as I am,  
and with no wit to boot!

LEONARDA           All women need is good sense,  
and an honest demeanor, Julia,  
for those who think they're sharp,                             20  
routinely miss the mark  
and risk falling, too.  
As for me, ever since I lost my Camilo,  
whom God now holds in his bosom,  
and whom He now supplants in my soul,                     25

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<sup>19</sup> Friar Luis de León (1523-1591) was a Spanish poet and theologian. His 1583 treatise, *The*

	I have decided not to remarry. I read for entertainment, not to be a learned woman or to get my degree in wit. For one whose good reputation encloses her in such silence as this can find no harm in books. Any wise book offers pleasant conversation: when it becomes tiresome, it conveniently falls quiet. It's a friend who secretly advises and reproaches. And when I read one and consider proper piety I discipline my wild imaginings.	25          30          35
JULIA	And what were you reading?	
LEONARDA	Books of devotion.	
JULIA	Who would not delight in a lady so lovely and so pious? See how the whole city speaks of your seclusion, your good sense and intelligence, your fame, honor, and honesty. They say you've ushered in a Golden Age, made Valencia into a new Rome, <sup>20</sup> and the past into the present. You embody all the goodness on this earth! You're an angel from heaven in your beauty and behavior. The young men are in such a state they dare not even look upon you. since you so elevate their thoughts.	40           45          50
LEONARDA	Let God be served in all things, dear Julia. Reputation is the spark, and the tinder catches so readily—	55

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<sup>20</sup> Reference to the virtue of Roman matrons (widows, among them), now embodied by Leonarda.

	I'd rather die than burn. <sup>21</sup>	
	I don't want to be renowned,	
	nor, like Artemisia, <sup>22</sup>	
	to feed on the cold ashes	60
	that death leaves underfoot,	
	nor, like that Roman matron,	
	to die because I renounce	
	my desire to look upon	
	a monster in the street, <sup>23</sup>	65
	nor to paint a silhouette	
	of the dearly departed,	
	and love it as though it were a man. <sup>24</sup>	
	I just want to be a woman	
	who deserves the name of widow,	70
	for I need no one at all.	
JULIA	So you will not wed again?	
LEONARDA	Jesus! Julia, don't say that word.	
	Men disgust me.	
	Don't ever mention them to me.	75
	Bring me the image	
	I bought for you from that painter.	
JULIA	For your devotions?	
	See, you are tempted already.	
LEONARDA	Hush, you fool.	80
	I just want to see it.	

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

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

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

<sup>24</sup> In his *Natural History* (79 A.D.), the Roman author Pliny the Elder held that paintings were first made by tracing the outline of a man's shadow. He also includes the story of a young woman who traced the shadow of her lover's face on a wall before his departure, and suggests the classical associations between shadows, death, and the human soul.

JULIA                   Then why did you pay  
so much for it?

LEONARDA            For its marvelous strokes.  
The seller assured me  
it was painted at court,  
by a famous Catalan.<sup>25</sup>   85

JULIA                    I'm off, then.

JULIA *exits*

LEONARDA            There's nothing to discuss,  
except how best to serve God.                                 90  
That is a good purpose in life,  
once you realize how short it is.  
It seems outrageous, in this day and age,  
for one so pursued to keep faith with a dead man,  
to hold love so true,   95  
that I should live that truth  
and a life of chastity.  
But glory lies in what is hard to do,  
and victory in resisting one's desires.  
Leave me now, my thoughts.                                     100  
That's quite enough.  
I shall not wed again.

SCENE 2

*Enter JULIA*

JULIA                    I couldn't find it.

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

JULIA                    Ah, here it is.   105

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

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<sup>25</sup> Francisco de Ribalta (1565-1628), a Catalan Baroque painter who worked in Madrid and later in Valencia. He is among the first Spanish followers of Caravaggio.



*Julia hands her a mirror*

(*Aloud*) What is this, you fool?  
A mirror, instead of the painting?  
Take it away. 110

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

LEONARDA Just put it over there. 115

SCENE 3

*Enter LUCENCIO, LEONARDA's uncle*

LUCENCIO Don't put it away!  
Thank God I got here in time  
to find you looking at yourself,  
you, who see no one.  
What miracle is it, niece,  
to find you like this? 120

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

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

LEONARDA (*Aside to JULIA*) Get out.

LUCENCIO Surely you'll defer  
to the grey hairs of an old man. 125

LEONARDA You will think I'm flighty,  
gazing here at a mirror,  
one of those women  
who runs here and there  
to gaze upon herself  
after she is already dressed—  
an even greater sin  
in the state I'm in. 130

LUCENCIO	The fuss you make over nothing at all! Is it wrong for a woman, in putting herself together, to check whether mantle or pins are where they should be? Who better to tell her if it looks good or not than this bit of glass?	135       140
LEONARDA	How you excuse my faults!	
LUCENCIO	I might, if you were one of those who hang a mirror by their window and when it seems they address their poor gallant below, it's all just for show: they're really just looking at themselves in the glass— how they speak, how they move. The poor fool below thinks it's all about him, yet it's all for the mirror, and the image therein. You're not one of those full of present devotion, who brings a mirror to mass for a quick glimpse in the glass, every time that she stands. Nor do you drink with your lips in a bow, so the color will stay where you placed it just so. I can't tell you how wrong it seems to an old man, yet it's practiced by all, the dainty and the ugly both. Look at yourself, and God keep you. And since I am here to see you, consider what you have seen there, and let me speak to you alone.	145       150       155       160       165       170
LEONARDA	Uncle, if this is about marriage,	

	do not speak of it or even mention it.	175
LUCENCIO	How can you be at once so clever and so stubborn? Do I not deserve your attention? Who has ever heard of an old man, and an honorable one at that, who is not heeded by all?	180
LEONARDA	<i>(Aside)</i> This is where I lose my resolve. <i>(Aloud)</i> When I know how much you love me, how can I let you go on in vain?	
LUCENCIO	Will you carry on like all those other women? Why so obstinate? Do you think that with this you'll secure your good repute? You'll destroy it instead.	185 190
	Since you're so very set, do tell how you plan to keep yourself in this fine state you're in, if you are not to wed? It's true you've three thousand a year, but I don't just mean having enough to live well— if you were lacking there, thank God I have more than enough— but to see you embark on a plan that could never end well!	195 200
	Where will you hide from envy and the common tongues, even if you never see the light of day? Though you open your door to sunrise, and close it by morning mass, though you never let the lynxes spy through an open window, though you let not an atom, nay, not the sun itself, enter a house so rare, both heaven and yawning hell, discreet on its own, yet renowned for you, though dragons and Argos himself	205 210

	guard your precious spoils—	215
	what difference will it make?	
	With a long tongue and eyes to match,	
	envy is a sly one, just you watch.	
	They will say you carry on	
	with a common slave,	220
	whom you keep in your house,	
	just like Princess Angelica, <sup>26</sup>	
	at once proud and low.	
	And once your reputation's on the line,	
	those who pursue you will waste no time	225
	imagining you with Jupiter as a swan,	
	or even a shower of gold. <sup>27</sup>	
	Wouldn't it be better, all told,	
	for you to wed and avoid it all?	
LEONARDA	You can accuse me of nothing,	230
	and unless you've something to add,	
	I've already heard you out.	
	Tell me, Lucencio,	
	should I risk sinfulness	
	for your sake?	235
	Would you want that for me,	
	when all the authorities agree	
	in condemning remarriage?	
	Isn't prudent and chaste widowhood	
	universally praised?	240
	Even jealous slander	
	cannot last for long.	
	The truth soon comes out,	
	and a good name rises,	
	like a phoenix <sup>28</sup> from the flames,	245
	to welcome a new day.	
	Who, I ask you, would want	

---

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

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

<sup>28</sup> Mythological bird that was reborn from its own ashes.

one of those candy-coated dandies,  
 in a rakish hat,  
 short feathers, new sashes, 250  
 shirt open just so,  
 and Italian linen—  
 nice and clean on the outside,  
 old and grimy on the inside.  
 Boots so tight they won't come off, 255  
 not for months at a time,  
 baggy stockings down below,  
 and a mustache out to here,  
 with toupees and pomade,  
 fake necklaces to impress with, 260  
 soft scented gloves—  
 a great one for sonnets and love letters.  
 With those immaculate hands  
 he'll snatch at three thousand a year,  
 ready to take his ease 265  
 between sheets of the finest silk.  
 Before a week's out,  
 he'll be off to find other women,  
 or return to old loves,  
 and so forsake mine. 270  
 He will come home late,  
 I will be jealous.  
 He'll throw my money around,  
 and then we will argue  
 about what he has and has not done. 275  
 I'll hide it and he'll give it away,  
 taking on debts in my name.  
 The police will come knocking,  
 there will be yelling and screaming.  
 Day and night, he'll stir up the house. 280  
 "Give me that dowry letter!"  
 "Release those funds—they're mine!"  
 "Sign this deed!" "I won't!"  
 "Is that so? You won't?"  
 I'll make you, you scoundrel, 285  
 if you keep this up!"  
 And the more I give in,  
 the more he'll grant me  
 such fine and noble titles  
 as Countess Kicked-and-Slappedintheface. 290

	I have said quite enough.	
LUCENCIO	Ipse dixit! <sup>29</sup> She has spoken.	
LEONARDA	The end may have been Latin, but the rest was in our common tongue. This is what I resolved the day he died, and were I manly enough, I would eat hot coals to consume my cold soul. <sup>30</sup>	295
LUCENCIO	Niece, that's it, then. From this day forth I'll scatter to the winds all those marriages I'd sought, or were proposed to me, including three I'd brought today, for you to think upon. I'll only ask, then, that we refrain from feeding all that gossip so vain about your tender age or mine. Watch yourself, since you remain all too free, and so very young. It's a stretch to say you'll live secure with so many years ahead of you. When in that mirror there you spy both your beauty and your youth, never forget that they lie— their advice is far from the truth. May God keep you at long last in your penance and your fast.	300  305  310  315
LEONARDA	<i>(Aside)</i> What an importunate old fool!	
LUCENCIO	<i>(Aside)</i> What an arrogant woman!	320

*Exeunt*

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<sup>29</sup> Latin expression that refers to a dogmatic and unproven statement.

<sup>30</sup> Reference to Portia Catonis, second wife of Marcus Junius Brutus, one of Caesar's assassins, who committed suicide by swallowing hot coals. Here, Leonarda threatens to emulate Portia's suicide.

SCENE 4

[On the street]

*Enter LISANDRO, suitor*

LISANDRO           The river breaks the hardest rock at last,  
                          tumbling it down in a current full strong.  
                          Both haughty pine and wrinkled olive long  
                          to yield humbly before the peasant's axe.  
                          The lofty palm to the African throng                   325  
                          grants the orient fruit that they would win.  
                          The ox to the yoke, the snake to the song  
                          of the enchanter must at last give in.  
                          The sculptor soon makes a figure appear                   330  
                          from hardest marble or frozen stone,  
                          thus giving shape to what before had none.  
                          Yet the harder that I try to come near  
                          that woman, delicate and appealing,  
                          the fiercer and harsher is her dealing.

SCENE 5

[On the street, where LISANDRO was]

*Enter VALERIO, suitor*

VALERIO            Down the mountain swift water comes tumbling,           335  
                          splashing from rock to rock with curious mirth,  
                          its crystal laugh turned now to dark mumbling,  
                          as it sinks by and by into the earth.  
                          My pain grows all the more at any boon,                   340  
                          consuming whatever had once been good,  
                          while hope entertains hope, as well hope should,  
                          foolishly glad to think that it might bloom.  
                          Love sees me die and is full satisfied.  
                          Time and works prove unequal to the task:  
                          like waves that break and rise again, they mask           345  
                          the ill until at last all good has died.  
                          It's over just as soon as it is born:  
                          hope fades not long after the breaking morn.

SCENE 6

[On the street, where LISANDRO and VALERIO were]

*Enter OTÓN, suitor*

OTÓN                    With tears and pleas the pilgrim secures  
the right to pass among barbarians rude—                    350  
a guide through mountains, fire to keep him warm,  
in Libya's harsh deserts water most pure.  
Savages offer him safe passage then:  
Arabia yields him bread, and Persia wine,  
peace among Arabs in Africa he finds.                    355  
Tears and joy often vie with each other:  
in his Moorish captor the captive at times  
finds pity among harsh chains and bars.  
Yet this asp, born of the hardest stones,  
will never once heed the echo, no,                    360  
of these my exhausted tears and moans.

VALERIO                Lisandro!

LISANDRO              Valerio!

VALERIO                Otón!

OTÓN                    Gentlemen!                    365

VALERIO                Love has conspired  
to bring us all here.

LISANDRO              It takes one to know one.  
Put your hats back on!  
You can speak of love                    370  
with your heads covered—  
it's not like being in Mass.

OTÓN                    I must warn you,  
this is the only fashion  
in which to hear this out.                    375  
For love's whims are such



	<p>that when you begin  to deal with its vexations  you need a clear head,  sharp eyes, your wits about you.</p>	380
	<p>Not because love seeks the truth—  it'd much rather avoid it—  but because you need  eyes wide open to take in  such an agreeable lie.</p>	385
LISANDRO	<p>I give you Otón,  clearly falling apart  with thoughts of that lovely widow.</p>	
OTÓN	<p>And you? Who could deny  she burns you up, and wears you thin?  Why, otherwise, would you rend  the gauzy veils of heaven,  in which astrologers shroud it,  to see what the stars portend?</p>	390
VALERIO	<p>This is jealousy, let it be noted.  It is for me to intervene  and put an end to this unpleasantness,  cutting it short.</p>	395
LISANDRO	<p>You're the one who will be cut short  if you seek remedy  in that flame that lies therein.  For oh, in Otón and me,  the soul in love  is a fluttering moth  that will surely die within.</p>	400  405
VALERIO	<p>I, for Leonarda?</p>	
LISANDRO	<p>You, indeed.  Do you think something so obvious  could possibly be kept secret?</p>	
OTÓN	<p>In short, all three of us  love the very same lady.</p>	410

VALERIO                    Given who she is,  
I see no harm in confessing,  
for it's true I have indeed  
given some thought to this marriage.                    415

LISANDRO                What a woman!

OTÓN                        She has no equal.

LISANDRO                My suit is Valerio's.

OTÓN                        And I seek the same.

VALERIO                    If you attempt what I attempt,                    420  
either I must offend you in taking it from you,  
or I must be offended if you take it from me.  
What shall we do?

OTÓN                        Rivalry and good intentions  
seldom dine together.                    425  
Yet it shall be so  
for that best serves everyone—  
unless someone here  
has been shown greater favor?

VALERIO                    I will not say that it was me,                    430  
although I'm not afraid to tell  
what favor she has shown me,  
as long as you give me your word  
you will also tell your part.

LISANDRO                I agree.                    435

OTÓN                        So do I.

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

OTÓN.                      Tell us, Valerio. What favor was that?                    440

VALERIO                    Here goes.



where unhappy lovers roam  
 on their long wake for a dead man's spoils,  
 on a dark night, a couple of thieves, 480  
 were spiriting away  
 some fine wine in its skin.  
 As those low-lives passed by  
 the widow's marble doors  
 —softer than the widow herself— 485  
 they used them as a hiding place.  
 The authorities, tipsy with excitement,  
 couldn't see where they had gone.  
 Since I was watching from afar,  
 hidden in a corner, 490  
 I quickly moved closer,  
 swift as the wind.  
 Once I reached that beloved door,  
 I glimpsed a dark shape,  
 with its cape and its sword, 495  
 addressing someone inside.  
 I moved in,  
 pulled my hat down over my face,  
 and said: "You, gentleman!",  
 throwing my cape over my shoulder. 500  
 Since he won't answer  
 I quickly pull out my dagger,  
 and stab him to the hilt.  
 Blood spurts all over me,  
 so I race home, 505  
 and hold my sleeve up to the light,  
 but it smells to high heaven.  
 So I take the lantern,  
 and return to the scene,  
 only to find spilled wine, 510  
 and the wine-skin sprawled out on the ground.<sup>32</sup>

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

VALERIO                Come on, Otón. Tell us of yours.

OTÓN                    Ah Cicero, where are you 515

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<sup>32</sup> Lisandro's confuses the wine-skin hidden by the thieves with a rival for Leonarda's affections.

when I require your eloquence?  
As the roosters here first crowed,  
with their coarse calls at dawn,  
soon to be answered by their country brethren,  
I paced up and down our widow's street, 520  
monitoring her window,  
and measuring my steps like clockwork.  
The sky was darker  
than a Portuguese in a cloak,  
so I mistook her window 525  
by a good two floors—  
a shoemaker lived in the one I chose.  
I carefully peered up to the house  
where, I thought, all my cares lay.  
I saw a white figure on the balcony, 530  
and believing it to be the widow,  
wooed her with these words:  
“Oh my Angel: your every garment  
is sacred to me, a slave to your love.”  
Gentlemen, no sooner had I spoken, 535  
when the good shoemaker,  
who was sitting outside in his shirt,  
grabbed a brick and said:  
“Are you flirting with my wife?  
You rascal! 540  
Come back by day,  
if you dare!”  
If I hadn't ducked,  
he would have splattered my brains  
across the brick like porridge. 545

VALERIO Truly, equal favors for all!  
But in the end, to speak seriously,  
and setting all jokes aside,  
don't you see that our fantasies  
can lead to no good? 550

OTÓN If I may give you some advice . . .

LISANDRO Yes?

OTÓN We must deal with this quarrel  
by not dealing with each other.

VALERIO                   Should we stop speaking to one another?                   555

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

LISANDRO                I'm off, then.

OTÓN                      Oh Leonarda, lovely and silent!

LISANDRO                Oh, most beautiful widow!   560

VALERIO                 Oh, most fierce and lovely creature!

*Exeunt*

## SCENE 7

[On the street, near a church]

*Enter LEONARDA and JULIA*

JULIA                    The heavens  
                                  have punished your foolishness.

LEONARDA              If only they had killed me!  
                                  More's the pity.   565

                                  And though I feel this way,  
                                  believe me when I say,  
                                  that clever old man<sup>33</sup>  
                                  must have cast a spell  
                                  to melt my icy resolve.   570

                                  It makes no sense otherwise,  
                                  that I would be here now,  
                                  seeking my own disgrace.

JULIA                    God forbid I should think that of him!  
                                  He is as unaware   575  
                                  of what has happened to you

---

<sup>33</sup> Leonarda is speaking about her uncle, Lucencio.

	as that cruel basilisk you looked upon. <sup>34</sup> Curse those eyes, which blinded you at first sight!	
LEONARDA	Let them look, Julia. No one such punish such eyes for looking at me.	580
JULIA	Oh, for goodness' sake! You've certainly got the itch now. Curse him!	585
LEONARDA	Don't say such things. May God keep him! What is it to you?	
JULIA	Ah, my lady! Where have your judgment and good sense gotten to now? What happened to that dignity, which you defended to the heavens, a mirror of chastity for your old uncle's sake? What of your coy refusal to even look at yourself in the glass?	590       600
LEONARDA	You're quite the preacher.	
JULIA	Hush now, don't get upset. Will this be a passing fever, or a permanent condition?	605
LEONARDA	My understanding is no match for my will.	
JULIA	You're forgetting memory. <sup>35</sup> Purge him out, and good riddance.	
LEONARDA	See what you do to me, Love!	610

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<sup>34</sup> Mythical snake-like creature that could kill by looking at its victims.

<sup>35</sup> A learned joke: Saint Augustine identified three faculties in the human soul: memory, understanding, and will. Since Leonarda has named two, Julia provides the third.

JULIA	Who in Valencia do you love so? What happened to that cold, cloistered, saintly woman?	
LEONARDA	Don't ever speak to me again, you fool. Say no more! None of this will matter if I'm fated to fall.	615
JULIA	And what shall I do with your books and your chapel. What would Friar Luis say? What of those lofty ideals?	620
LEONARDA	Oh women, how weak you are when tested! My icy resolve was unmatched, fair youth, before I set eyes on you! Yet I am not scared of death. I will not marry, no matter what the world thinks.	625
JULIA	I have a solution for you, my lady.	
LEONARDA	Have I not told you to keep quiet? Had I not raised you, I would slap you silly. You see me burning, you beast, and yet you mock my pain! I will find satisfaction without losing my honor and good name, and so put out this cruel flame.	630 635
JULIA	Anything's possible.	

## SCENE 8

[On the street]

*Enter URBÁN, young squire*



URBÁN                    Oh, thank God I found you!  
                              How much longer were you going to pray?  
                              Were you planning to stay                    640  
                              for Midnight Mass?  
                              I would not want to serve you  
                              during the holidays.

LEONARDA                Must we leave so quickly  
                              on such a sunny day?                         645

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

LEONARDA                Now I want some sun.

URBÁN                    So go get it, then.

JULIA                    (*Aside to URBÁN*) Leave her, she is not herself.                    650

URBÁN                    (*Aside to JULIA*) Why? Oh God!

LEONARDA                Go see if the coach is ready.

URBÁN                    Yes, my lady, I'll see to it.

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

URBÁN                    I was going to find the chariot of the sun,  
                              so we can get you some.                         655

## SCENE 9

[On the street]

*Enter CAMILO, a gentleman, and FLORO, his servant*

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

FLORO                    Don't tear it up,  
                              for old time's sake.                             660



with any who come and go.  
 Let her find a green young man  
 to drive mad with jealousy, 685  
 for I'm beyond all that,  
 and feel only pity for him.

URBÁN            (*Aside*) I didn't even bring  
 my inkwell and my quills.  
 (*Aloud*) Excuse me, gentleman! I'd like . . . 690

CAMILO            Speak up, what do you want?

URBÁN            To see if you'll be joining  
 the procession for the Jubilee.<sup>36</sup>

CAMILO            I'd like to, good man.  
 What contribution do you expect? 695

URBÁN            It's just one *real*.<sup>37</sup>

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

URBÁN            May God thank you for it.  
 Your name and address? 700

CAMILO            Camilo, and I live near San Juan parish.

URBÁN            Are you a nobleman?

CAMILO            Noble enough.

URBÁN            I need to write that down here.  
 And your good name, sir? 705

FLORO            Me? Floro.

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

---

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

<sup>37</sup> Pronounced *reh-ahl*.

CAMILO            May God be with you.

URBÁN *exits*

CAMILO            Now we are both in the procession.

FLORO             Will you pray?                                710

CAMILO            I will start today.  
Wait! Oh God, I gave the man a *doblón*<sup>38</sup>  
instead of two *reales*!

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

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

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

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

*Exeunt*

SCENE 11

[LEONARDA's house]

*Enter* LEONARDA, JULIA, *and* URBÁN

LEONARDA        Well done, Urbán!

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

LEONARDA        How clever to get                                725

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<sup>38</sup> A *doblón* (*doh-blohn*) was worth twenty *reales*.

their names and addresses on paper!  
So his name is Camilo?  
In that, too, he is like the deceased?<sup>39</sup>

URBÁN                    There's no doubt he's noble,  
though we've never heard of him.                    730  
After all, didn't he give me a *doblón*  
when a *real* would have done?

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

LEONARDA              Tell me, Julia,                    735  
what could one lack,  
whom nature grants such gifts?

URBÁN                    About those gifts . . .  
I swear I've never seen  
a finer looking man                    740  
since the day I was born.  
What a face, what elegance!  
What a neatly kept beard!  
Such generous hands!  
They looked like pure snow.                    745  
What a figure, what a well-turned leg!  
What charm, what cleverness!  
What an elegant way with a *doblón*!  
And how I swooned  
when I saw it gleaming!                    750

LEONARDA              I can no longer bear  
this unbearable flame—  
it is killing me.  
My dear friends,  
this may seem                    755  
like a great weakness on my part,  
but my heart trusts  
in your love and loyalty.  
You have served this house  
since my parents' time.                    760

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<sup>39</sup> Camilo was the name of Leonarda's late husband. It is also a reference to Saint Camillus, the patron saint of the sick.

I know how much you love me.  
Since I don't intend to marry,  
nor to become engaged,  
today you must find my remedy,  
today I entrust you with my life. 765  
My reputation is in your hands.

URBÁN            Is it your fear or your love  
                    that makes you doubt us now?  
By God, they'd never get a word out of me:  
not if they put me on the rack,<sup>40</sup> 770  
not if they tried  
to buy me off with gold!  
Trust Julia and me,  
and tell us what to do.

LEONARDA      You, Urbán, must be my remedy. 775  
                    Listen carefully.

URBÁN            I'm listening.

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

URBÁN            That's right. 780

LEONARDA      Well, if anything goes,  
                    then put on a costume and a mask,  
                    go find this gentleman  
                    and let on, Urbán,  
                    that a certain lady favors him, 785  
                    that she loves him dearly,  
                    and that he could have her  
                    if he waits for you tonight  
                    on this side of the Palace Bridge.  
If he agrees, 790  
                    you will fetch him there tonight.

URBÁN            Shall he see me  
                    and where you live?

---

<sup>40</sup> Early modern form of torture.

LEONARDA	No. You will wear a mask, you'll place a hood over his head, <sup>41</sup> and bring him thus to the house. We'll keep him in the dark, and when it's time for him to go, he must wear the hood again.	795
	Whom could he know that way? <sup>42</sup>	800
URBÁN	A well thought out plan, indeed! He'll yield like a tame falcon. <sup>43</sup> What am I waiting for? I'm off.	
URBÁN	<i>exits</i>	
LEONARDA	Don't be long.	805
URBÁN	I won't.	
JULIA	Whose idea was this?	
LEONARDA	It was Love, who has the wise at its feet.	
JULIA	I think someone is at the door.	810
LEONARDA	Go and see who it is.	
JULIA	<i>exits</i>	
LEONARDA	( <i>Aside</i> ) What won't a determined woman do for the sake of her pleasure? What torment could change her resolution? What flame, what noose, what sharp sword? What more daring giant reaches for the heavens? What more daring Hercules attempts the descent to hell?	815

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<sup>41</sup> In production, if blindfolding the actor seems preferable, this line can be changed.

<sup>42</sup> Pun on carnal knowledge.

<sup>43</sup> In falconry, hoods are used to train the birds and keep them calm.

That powerful boy<sup>44</sup>  
has melted my frozen heart with his love  
and vanquished my devotion to my first husband. 820  
I've been like a dammed up river  
that only now runs wild.  
I have been, in short, a woman.

## SCENE 12

*Enter JULIA*

JULIA                    There is someone here  
selling books and etchings. 825

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

JULIA                    He doesn't have a mask.

LEONARDA            We must keep up appearances.  
I am still pious. Let him in, 830  
and let's see what he wants,  
or if there is something we can buy.

## SCENE 13

[At LEONARDA's front door]

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

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

LEONARDA            He's been very merciful  
in not wishing one on me. 835

OTÓN                    Why, when you are so beautiful?

---

<sup>44</sup> *Giant*: mythological creature who defied the Olympian gods and tried to reach the heavens. *Hercules*: for his final labor, the mythological hero descends into hell to capture Cerberus, the three-headed guard-dog of the underworld. *Powerful boy*: Cupid, god of love.



LEONARDA	Show me what books you are selling.	
OTÓN	I have one here that you can have for a reasonable price. But it's all my story, and might be too much for you.	840
LEONARDA	<i>(Aside to JULIA)</i> How irresistible! I told you so, Julia. <i>(Aloud, pointing at a page)</i> Who is this?	845
OTÓN	That is the romance of <i>The Shepherd of Filida</i> . <sup>45</sup>	
LEONARDA	I know.	
OTÓN	Gálvez Montalvo was its great author. He died at sea as a Knight of San Juan, <sup>46</sup> while I drown in a deeper and much rougher sea.	850
LEONARDA	Are you a bookseller or a suitor?	
OTÓN	I couldn't say. Here's another romance, of cruel <i>Galatea</i> . If you want a fine book, then look no further. It's by Miguel de Cervantes, who lost a hand fighting at sea, while I lose . . . <sup>47</sup>	855       860
LEONARDA	<i>(Aside to JULIA)</i> Hush, Julia, calm down. <i>(Aloud)</i> What have you got to lose?	
OTÓN	. . . my soul and my life, for another Galatea,	

---

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

<sup>46</sup> The Catholic military order of the Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem.

<sup>47</sup> Cervantes was wounded at the naval battle of Lepanto, in 1571.

	one more cruel than Medea, <sup>48</sup> and less obliging.	865
LEONARDA	Who is this?	
OTÓN	Espinel, a brave poet. <sup>49</sup>	
LEONARDA	What is it about?	
OTÓN	It's just sonnets, but it has some nice lines, and some serious poetry, too. He loved until death, though he did not die of it, unlike me.	870
LEONARDA	So are you a suitor or a bookseller?	875
OTÓN	I couldn't say. Here you have a songbook, full of nonsense.	
LEONARDA	Don't deal in bad imprints.	
OTÓN	It's better imprinted in me . . .	880
LEONARDA	What?	
OTÓN	Eternal servitude, and love, and suffering!	
LEONARDA	Is this wooing or selling?	
OTÓN	I couldn't say.	885

#### SCENE 14

*Enter VALERIO, dressed as merchant, with prints*

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<sup>48</sup> In Greek mythology, the distraught princess Medea killed her children to punish her husband, Jason, for abandoning her.

<sup>49</sup> Vicente Gómez Martínez Espinel (1550-1624) was a Spanish priest, writer, and musician.

JULIA	Now the printseller is in the house.	
VALERIO	Prints, prints, get your fine prints!	
LEONARDA	<i>(Aside)</i> Either I am missing something, or this peddling is a set-up, for both these suitors, who came up with this ploy, took off their Carnival masks as they came into the house. Julia, is this appropriate, in my seclusion?	890       895
JULIA	<i>(Aside to LEONARDA)</i> I think there's something fishy here.	
LEONARDA	<i>(Aside)</i> I can see that. So many men in my house!	
VALERIO	<i>(Aside)</i> Otón got here first?	900
OTÓN	<i>(Aside)</i> Valerio is here, too?	
LEONARDA	What is it that you're selling, exactly?	
VALERIO	Can't you see? I offer you my heart.	
LEONARDA	Let me see, what is this print?	905
VALERIO	The beautiful <i>Adonis</i> , painted by Titian with divine strokes. Oh to be loved as he was! I die in despair, while he died in his lover's arms. This one, on my word, so fine and delicate, is the work of Raphael, and superbly engraved. And this one is Flemish,	910          915

and that one Italian.<sup>50</sup>

LEONARDA	These are hardly suitable for me. Do you have any religious images?	
VALERIO	Yes, here. Look at this, an exquisite print on marriage.	920
LEONARDA	Which I hope never to see.	
VALERIO	You are not impressed, yet, why not? Thousands await your "I do," and there might even be a certain gentleman nearby who is in love with you. I am Valerio, although I am in disguise now.	925      930
OTÓN	Since we are naming names, you have Otón at your service. I am rich and of noble birth, and madly in love with you.	
LEONARDA	Is there no one here who can buy you off? You there!	935
SCENE 15		
<i>Enter two servants</i>		
SERVANT 1 <sup>o</sup>	My lady . . .	
LEONARDA	Show the bookseller and the printseller out . . .	940
OTÓN	My lady, is it wrong to ask for what you owe us?	

---

<sup>50</sup> References to famous Renaissance painters, including Titian (1488-1576) and Raphael (1583-1520).



URBÁN	Camilo, this will be our little secret.	965
CAMILO	Shouldn't that lady trust me with her reputation, when she offers me her soul? Could I not serve her, talk to her, see her, hear her, and know her name?	970
URBÁN	Let's not talk about it. If you try to find out too much, all will be lost.	
CAMILO	I swear by my faith as a gentleman, you'll make me lose my mind. As God is my witness, had I enemies out there, I would suspect a trap, but no man is more beloved, nor has more friends in this town. I am glad you said at least I could come armed and carry my pistol, to this secluded love nest.	975       980
URBÁN	Bring one, bring a hundred. If you don't let curiosity get in the way of your skill, your valor, your good taste, and your will, you'll enjoy the finest this city has to offer.	985     990
CAMILO	What does it matter how beautiful she is, if I must enjoy her in the dark? I assume she is ugly.	
URBÁN	When you speak to her and touch her, a light will shine upon you. If she does not please or bores you, you need not come back.	995
CAMILO	My only complaint is having to cover up like this.	1000

URBÁN	Those are the rules. Need I say more?	
CAMILO	Must my head be covered?	
URBÁN	Yes, Camilo, from the moment you enter and until you come out.	1005
CAMILO	What a ruse, brilliant!	
URBÁN	You must accept these conditions.	
CAMILO	And where should I wait for you?	
URBÁN	Be at the bridge by the royal palace at three, and know that if you bring anyone else, I will not speak to you.	1010
CAMILO	<i>(Aside)</i> Do men not give up their country and their house to go see Italy and France? To reach the Portuguese Indies, do they not face the raging seas? Do they not leave their land to see foreign wars? Are there not thousands who, for the sake of a party, mingle with those they hate amid insufferable heat? Does the hunter not endure sun and ice to see a shy little rabbit emerge from its den? Or the fisherman for the sake of a fish on his hook? And I, young and proud, why am I so afraid of this charm? <i>(Aloud)</i> Go on then, I will be there.	 1015     1020     1025     1030
URBÁN	You'll be happy if you go.	

CAMILO	You will find me on the bridge at the agreed upon hour.	1035
URBÁN	And what a night you'll have with that angel!	
CAMILO	Enchanted, to say the least.	
URBÁN	She'll be expecting you. Goodbye.	1040
CAMILO	I am eager for your return.	
URBÁN	It will not be long.	
CAMILO	I shall find out what this is, if it costs me my life.	1045





What if I think I am embracing  
 a beautiful angel,  
 while I'm actually taking  
 a demon in my arms,  
 one who flies around at night, 1085  
 too ugly to show its face?  
 What if she is an old woman,  
 without eyelashes or eyebrows,  
 and a mouth full of fake teeth,  
 whose spells render me 1090  
 as meek as a sheep?  
 Or what if she is a wretch,  
 all pocked with the French pox,<sup>51</sup>  
 who would give me years of suffering  
 for the sake of one hour's pleasure? 1095  
 But there are people coming.

## SCENE 2

*Enter URBAN, wearing a mask and carrying a hood*

URBÁN                    There is a man standing by himself. Who goes there?  
 CAMILO                    Are you by chance that friend of mine?  
 URBÁN                    At your service.  
 CAMILO                    (*Aside*) How could any sane man be doing this? 1100  
 URBÁN                    Can anyone see us?  
 CAMILO                    The moon and the stars.  
 URBÁN                    Let them not shine upon us.  
                                   Oh, what a lovely angel awaits you!  
                                   You are a lucky man. 1105  
 CAMILO                    No doubt,  
                                   but whether she be ugly or beautiful,  
                                   loathsome or lovely,

---

<sup>51</sup> Syphilis.

	what difference does it make, if I am to enjoy her in the dark?	1110
URBÁN	What difference? What do you mean? Is it not better to feel a plump and perfect body, than to caress a skeleton, the very image of death? Beauty is like a fine scent, a natural quality that you know, see, and smell for the soft breath it exhales.	1115
CAMILO	Am I a doctor or a healer? Why should I care about scents? Pleasure comes through the eyes, the very act of seeing, knowing, and conversing with a lady, is what makes love desirable. A blind man, on the contrary, such as I will be with this lady, takes his pleasure like a beast.	1120  1125
URBÁN	I don't agree, for the blind man can only imagine a face, but if you're awake and look carefully, you'll see the real thing. Certain eyes shine like fire at such a moment. Won't four of them together see heaven and earth?	1130  1135
CAMILO	While others may just as well be dead. Is she young?	
URBÁN	You won't see her.	1140
CAMILO	Is she married, or a dubious maid? Or perhaps a widow instead?	
URBÁN	It depends. Sometimes she is married,	

sometimes a maid, 1145  
 and other times a widow.  
 She is neither married nor a maid,  
 nor a widow, nor dishonored and abandoned.

CAMILO Has she been wrapped  
 in tissue paper? 1150  
 Some lady you have,  
 if I follow you!  
 (*Aside*) There must be a trick.  
 What if it's a man,  
 and not a woman? 1155  
 Am I so pretty, then?  
 Oh, how I'd like  
 to pull off his mask,  
 though it might cost me the lady  
 who has cost me so little!  
 1160  
 But I am all ablaze now  
 with desire.  
 (*Aloud*) My friend,  
 let's go see this obscure lady.  
 I've never seen the like of her. 1165

URBÁN Put on your hood.

CAMILO Everyone will think  
 I'm crazy.

URBÁN Not at all.

CAMILO Sack cloth? 1170  
 Could you not at least have made it silk?

URBÁN *puts the hood on* CAMILO

Is it a long walk?

URBÁN Very long, yes.

CAMILO Now you'll take me to the river,  
 and throw me in to put out my fire. 1175



*Exeunt URBÁN and CAMILO*

OTÓN                    How wine changes men!  
And love, too,  
for this ungrateful widow.                    1205  
Can it be that she is  
so chaste and honest,  
an Artemisia of fidelity,  
and gives so many gentlemen  
that same “no” as an answer?  
It cannot be—there’s something amiss.                    1210  
I suspect the saintliness  
of her life is feigned,  
for saintliness usually  
looks pale and wan.  
But for a coddled widow                    1215  
who easily eats up  
three or four thousand in rent  
to spend the cold nights  
alone like a girl!  
What does it matter                    1220  
if she is locked up in her room,  
and they all think she is praying,  
when her steward gets her what she needs?  
Now, I won’t sleep,  
not in a hundred nights,                    1225  
I’ll spend them all  
on her street and at her door,  
and if someone wakes her,  
by God, he must die!  
Neither snow nor rain—                    1230  
though it rarely snows here—  
or lack of sleep shall stop me.  
I will be a stone at her doorstep,  
and freeze anyone who faces me,  
just like Medusa.<sup>52</sup>                    1235

**OTÓN** *exits*

---

<sup>52</sup> Mythological monster who turned to stone anyone she looked in the eye.

SCENE 4

[In LEONARDA's house]

*Enter LEONARDA in elegant clothing, and JULIA*

LEONARDA	Are the hangings and velvets all in their proper places?	
JULIA	They are perfect, my lady. Turn around and look at them.	
LEONARDA	Is that tapestry right for that sitting room?	1240
JULIA	It is fit for a viceroy, and even for the king.	
LEONARDA	And what a suitable story! It tells the loves of Jacob. <sup>53</sup>	1245
JULIA	Unlike your own swift glory, so quick to come. Jacob waited fourteen years for what you will have in an hour's time.	
LEONARDA	Pray to God that my good fortune not leave me now! What is taking Urbán so long? What should we do?	1250
JULIA	You can play a little.	
LEONARDA	He must not have liked the idea! I'm so wretched!	1255
JULIA	Don't make a scene. That would make no sense for such a strapping young man.	
LEONARDA	Maybe there is something womanish	1260

---

<sup>53</sup> Biblical son of Isaac, who labored fourteen years to marry his beloved Rachel.

about his beauty!  
And what Roland,<sup>54</sup> what knight,  
would agree to have his head covered  
to come here in the dark?

JULIA                    He is a noble gentleman,                    1265  
                                 a manly, handsome youth,  
                                 not like those namby-pambies.  
                                 Next to him, Achilles himself  
                                 would seem a low coward!  
                                 Didn't Leander<sup>55</sup> swim the gulf                    1270  
                                 a thousand times for the sake of love?

LEONARDA            Don't you know that's just a story?  
                                 And that was after they had seen each other, and spoken!  
                                 And up in that tower, away from the wind,  
                                 a single light was always lit,                    1275  
                                 while here he won't have one,  
                                 even inside the bedroom.  
                                 Say instead he is like that Roman,  
                                 who leapt into the pit,<sup>56</sup>  
                                 or the one who charged a bridge,<sup>57</sup>                    1280  
                                 or the one who burnt his hand,<sup>58</sup>  
                                 those I might believe.

JULIA                    I deserve a reward.

LEONARDA            I don't think so.

JULIA                    I'm waiting!                    1285

---

<sup>54</sup> Medieval knight, hero of the French *Song of Roland* and of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

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

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

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

<sup>58</sup> Gaius Mucius Scaevola, who set fire to his own right hand for being unable to assassinate the Etruscan king, Porsena.





and forgive your trespass.  
Give me a seat next to him.

CAMILO                      What a charming spell.

LEONARDA                 I will sit at your side, my lord.

CAMILO                      My God, how difficult to bear!    1310

This love in the dark sets my heart on fire,  
for I cannot see—  
like flint against steel,  
it has lit my desire.

Like a man in the shadows    1315

who strikes light,  
your voice has ignited my soul.

My ready heart  
was the kindling,  
and your lips the flint    1320

that struck the flame.

My soul is newly lit,  
though not to see you in the dark  
is like a cold wind that blows on it.

Let me see you,    1325

and not only in my mind's eye!

Who has ever heard  
of so much fire with no light!

If you don't trust me,  
let this go no further—    1330

for if this limbo leads not to bliss,  
then let it not lead to torment.

So that I might see you,  
do as great painters do,    1335

who, having painted the night,  
put in enough light to see it by.

I'm a gentleman,

and if I can talk to you face to face,

I am sure that my honorable ways  
will delight you twice over.    1340

This much you must grant me.

Give me your hand!

LEONARDA                 My hand? Here.

CAMILO                    At last!

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

URBÁN                    He's got a way with words.

JULIA                     (*Aside*) Such pretty talk.

LEONARDA                Well, on Camilo's life . . .

CAMILO                    That's my name, my lady.

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

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

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

CAMILO                    The hand might well be Esau's,<sup>59</sup>  
and the voice, I know not whose.

LEONARDA                Bring just enough light.

JULIA *exits*

URBÁN                    We'll shine some light on this now.

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

JULIA *enters*

JULIA                     Here's the lamp.

---

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

<sup>60</sup> Greek god of the sun.

CAMILO	What is going on? You are all wearing masks?	
LEONARDA	Keep your hands to yourself, sir. This is how it must be. If you try to see me, they'll tear you to pieces.	1365
CAMILO	They cannot touch me in the sanctuary of your arms. I fear them not, by God! I'm here, after all. I rein in my desires, because you order me to do so. Your body is so beautiful! And what fine garments! No wonder I have not been worthy of your trust. Stunning tapestries and brocades! Stunning paintings and art! Yet they hardly shine when your eyes are covered. Will no one here vouch for me Will you love me, yet not take me at my word?	1370 1375 1380 1385
LEONARDA	I entrust my soul to you. with your grace's pardon. Once your loyalty has been attested, we will allow you to visit this house in the light. Sit down, and don't get too excited.	1390
CAMILO	If I am not to see my prey, then tie on my hood and leash again, my friend. If I am to keep still, it would be better to have no eyes nor ears, for my senses fly after that which I can see. If you uncover the falcon and let him see his prey,	1395 1400

	<p>the end is certain,  and that heart will be his.  But here,  no sooner has he spotted her,  he is stripped of the freedom to fly. 1405  And not only that,  but in this house of veils,  the partridge is hooded  while the falcon can see. 1410  By God, my lady!  Can it be that you'll allow  me to hear you,  but not see you?</p>	
LEONARDA	<p>Now, now.  Fetch him some food  to temper his heart.</p>	1415
<i>JULIA exits to bring refreshments</i>		
CAMILO	<p>Food, by God?  How can I eat  when that same heart is on fire?  I've had enough of this house!  Am I not to see a single face?  How am I to trust  that the food you bring  is not poisoned? 1425</p>	1420
LEONARDA	<p>Trust the heart in my breast,  which has fallen for you.</p>	
CAMILO	<p>That will not do.  If you wore that hood to the shops,  no one would give you credit,  no matter how much bosom you showed. 1430  I am the shopkeeper here,  and you, that woman in a veil.  Why should I grant you life,  when I'm not allowed to see you? 1435</p>	1430
LEONARDA	<p>Camilo, don't be so put out  that I should veil myself this way,</p>	

	<p>for there are things about me, sir,  of which you are unaware.  I saw you,  and fell for you,  so that I couldn't resist this satisfaction.  This is the remedy I sought,  so that you could be here with me  without being able to tell anyone  who I am or where you've been.  If you think this means  that I do not trust you,  let there be no doubt  about my intentions.  I shall give you jewels  worth two thousand ducats.</p>	<p>1440</p> <p>1445</p> <p>1450</p>
CAMILO	Fine jewels?	
LEONARDA	<p>You there! Bring me those chains  and that charm, the Cupid one.  Bring them here . . .</p>	<p>1455</p>
CAMILO	<p>No. Don't do that.  It will only upset me further.  For I desire your eyes  more than any jewels you could offer.  If you gave me those sapphires,  or the rubies and pearls<sup>61</sup>  of your mouth,  I could give you so much more,  if only I could see them.  Know that I, too, have gold in my house.  Thank God, I'm not a poor man.</p>	<p>1460</p> <p>1465</p>
LEONARDA	<p>I wish you more than  what the Orient sends to Spain.  But take this ring as a token of my love.  Your hand will set it off.</p>	<p>1470</p>
CAMILO	<p>And yours is perfect for this one.  Please allow that white hand</p>	

---

<sup>61</sup> Camilo is referring to Leonarda's eyes, lips, and teeth.

to wear it in my name.

JULIA *enters, with refreshments*

JULIA                    Here are the refreshments.                    1475

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

LEONARDA                    You can't refuse,  
just one bite.                    1480  
I am an honest woman.

CAMILO                    Do you mean because of the poison?

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

CAMILO                    If you swear,                    1485  
then let a thousand deaths befall us.  
I will consume the poison  
as Alexander took his doctor's.<sup>62</sup>  
Where trust abounds,  
no harm can be done.                    1490

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

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

URBÁN                    (*Aside*) Don't think he's such a gem,  
he is just pretentious.  
(*Aloud*) I will fetch the drinks.                    1495

URBÁN *exits*

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

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

---

<sup>62</sup> Alexander the Great, having been told that his doctor was seeking to poison him, showed his trust by consuming the medicine his doctor had prepared.

CAMILO                    If this is how you carry on,  
you and your servants,                    1500  
how can you call to them  
without using their names?  
Let me give you false ones,  
so I can make sense of things.

URBÁN *enters with drinks*

URBÁN                    Drink.                    1505

CAMILO                    I shall drink later.

URBÁN                    Have something to drink.

JULIA                    (*Aside*) They're amused.

URBÁN                    (*Aside*) These sugar-coated youths,  
all syrupy sweet, drive me mad.                    1510  
Not even a nymph  
is so very particular.  
(*Aloud*) Drink.

CAMILO                    Give here, I will drink.

URBÁN                    (*Aside*) What a tiny, cautious sip!                    1515  
(*Aloud*) Tell me, did that do you any harm?

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

URBÁN                    (*Aside*) So coy now,  
and later he'll polish off a whole wine-skin.                    1520  
(*Aloud*) Here's to my lady,  
and here's to you, Camilo.  
And finally, Julia, here's to us both,  
for he who drinks well, loves well.

JULIA                    (*Aside to URBÁN*) Listen up or get out of here.                    1525  
He wants to give us names,  
so he can call for us.



URBÁN	( <i>Aside</i> ) I am listening. Here's to me.	
LEONARDA	What will you call me?	
CAMILO	You, I will call Diana, <sup>63</sup> for obvious reasons.	1530
LEONARDA	And what are those?	
CAMILO	Isn't she the moon? Does her light not shine?	
LEONARDA	Yes.	
CAMILO	Does she not darken and fade?	1535
URBÁN	( <i>Aside</i> ) Oh, that is good!	
JULIA	Take note.	
URBÁN	( <i>Aside</i> ) I am. Here's to me.	
CAMILO	I shall call you Iris, Diana's messenger, and you, Mercury. <sup>64</sup>	1540
LEONARDA	Could anyone find us better names?	
URBÁN	( <i>Aside</i> ) Me Mercury? Oh well. Wouldn't Bacchus <sup>65</sup> be better?	1545
JULIA	That's enough out of you!	
URBÁN	( <i>Aside</i> ) I am listening. And here's to me.	
LEONARDA	It's late. You should be going. All this talk...	

---

<sup>63</sup> In Roman mythology, Diana was the goddess of the hunt, the moon, and nature.

<sup>64</sup> *Iris* and *Mercury*: female and male messengers of the gods, respectively.

<sup>65</sup> Roman god of wine, theater, and fertility.

The night has flown, hasn't it? 1550

CAMILO So you won't take off your mask?

LEONARDA This won't be our last night together, Camilo.  
This is enough for now.  
You must leave the way you came in.  
(To URBÁN) Escort him to where you found him. 1555

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

CAMILO May I not embrace you before I go?

LEONARDA Why, yes.

CAMILO A fleeting pleasure.

URBÁN *tries to put the hood over CAMILO's head*

(To URBÁN) Careful! 1560

URBÁN Your neck is really long.

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

URBÁN They'll never get a decent chord out of you.  
God bless a good bass,  
that lasts and lasts! 1565  
Grab on tight to my waist.

CAMILO Farewell, lady Diana.

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

JULIA Yes, me too. 1570  
It's time to retire for the night.

*Exeunt LEONARDA and JULIA*

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

URBÁN Am I any better off?

This is the sick leading the blind.

SCENE 6

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

*They exit and VALERIO enters, dressed in evening attire*

VALERIO	Oh, suspicion!	1575
	You, who have driven even the sanest mad, and drawn up in the finest minds scenes more unlikely than those ever painted on a new-fangled stage, or drafted by an inspired bard.	1580
	Where are you taking me and my mad imagination, as I roam the streets while everyone sleeps? Even Ursa Major and its starry wagon have retired for the night, the six Pleiades <sup>66</sup> have started their descent,	1585
	as has their seventh sister, who rarely shows her face. And I, suspicion, hounded by you, burn not as stars do, no, but with the fire of the eternal abyss, through whose gaping mouth it blazes incessantly.	1590
	I hate to say it, but I can't shake the thought that this Leonarda, with all her pictures and books, has one in particular that she adores.	1600
	Night, if some man be in there, let dawn break to drive him out. Yet how will I spot him, when this house is like Thebes, with its hundred looming gates? <sup>67</sup>	1605
	People are coming! I'll take this side of the portico, and see where they are headed.	

---

<sup>66</sup> Conglomeration of stars, visible to the naked eye.

<sup>67</sup> In the *Iliad*, Homer describes Thebes as the city of the hundred gates.



LISANDRO

Widow, may God ever keep you thus!  
While you stand fetchingly at that window, 1635  
from now until the dawn!  
I'd like a word with you.  
That "I do" that you deny  
to your suitors one and all,  
what would it take to hear you call? 1640  
Young yet pure, happy and sad—  
I hate to see you a maiden once more.  
You are so cutting and sharp,  
even fools now think  
you must have a secret lover. 1645  
You lock yourself in your house,  
in order to deny it,  
yet what difference does it make,  
when you come and go to the village  
as easy as you please? 1650  
These empty fields,  
these orchards and gardens,  
may not open for Matins,<sup>69</sup>  
but they are open for love.  
No one believes, good widow, 1655  
that your heart has gone unclaimed.  
You look so sad,  
when you're not half bad-looking.  
I cannot believe that a woman,  
when she is young and rich, 1660  
or, indeed, any woman  
who, like you, is free,  
would not give herself over  
entirely to pleasure.  
Although you may say 1665  
you run from a second marriage  
like Angelica from the knights,  
I vow, I'll join a convent  
if you aren't actually in love!  
Oh! I've spoken too soon, 1670  
without realizing I'd be heard  
by these living shadows!  
Alas, dear wall, of course you have ears.  
Oh, such a mighty house!

---

<sup>69</sup> Prayers ending at dawn.

Giants prop up your doors, 1675  
your columns are girded.  
You have guards here for the night.  
And where there are so many guards,  
there must be a treasure to be had.  
If they are your support, 1680  
let us all buttress you up.  
Leaving is out of the question:  
make room, I'll get in the middle.

## SCENE 9

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

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

SHERIFF           Quite a take in that card game!

SCRIBE            And a nice pot, to boot! 1685

SHERIFF           This house has many secrets.  
They always hand out food,  
and there are women going in and out.  
I'll charge them with something to flush them out.  
There are people by that door. Who goes there? 1690  
Stop in the name of the King!

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

SHERIFF           Come closer, hoods off,  
so I can take a good look at you. 1695

VALERIO           Look here, we are gentlemen.

SHERIFF           I believe you,  
but I need to see you with my own eyes.  
People like to play tricks on us.  
So come over here . . . 1700

LISANDRO         Please, can we do this somewhere else?

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

OTÓN                I would rather not have.

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

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

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

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

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

OTÓN                We'll stay here.

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

*The SHERIFF exits*

## SCENE 10

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

LISANDRO          We're always running into each other!

VALERIO            Otón is quite the architect.                                        1720

OTÓN                What about Valerio?

LISANDRO          With such a huge gate,  
the three of us did all we could.  
But I had the upper hand.

VALERIO	Of course: you were in the middle.	1725
OTÓN	If the sheriff hadn't shown up, we would have sliced each other up.	
LISANDRO	I feel better knowing that we all acted a bit foolishly.	
OTÓN	That's not the right word for this lunacy. But aside from that, you were the biggest fool of all, to get between two men.	1730
LISANDRO	I'd get among a hundred, though they were all Rodamonts. <sup>70</sup>	1735
OTÓN	Look out for the lion!	
LISANDRO	I'm not kidding. I can crush trees and mountains just as Roland did. <sup>71</sup> But the height of idiocy was that stunt you pulled when you went in there to sell books, and Valerio to sell prints.	1740
OTÓN	So what? Didn't our disguises get us in the door?	1745
VALERIO	Hold on. I wasn't the only one who made a fool of myself. He dressed up as a peddler with a thousand rosaries, and couldn't get them to open the door.	1750

---

<sup>70</sup> Fearsome Saracen fighter in *Orlando Innamorato* and *Orlando Furioso*.

<sup>71</sup> In *Orlando Furioso*, Roland goes on a mad rampage when he discovers that his beloved Angelica has married Medoro.



OTÓN	Is that right? Well, let me congratulate him then.	
LISANDRO	If all is revealed now, then our game is up. Let us change our tune, and figure out who's the lucky one. That will give us something to talk about.	1755
OTÓN	If that's the case, then I shall say why I, Otón, came here tonight.	1760
VALERIO	Was it to find out for whom this door would open?	
OTÓN	That's exactly why I came.	1765
LISANDRO	I am quite certain, since that's why I came, too.	
VALERIO	As for me, what could it be, but to answer that same question, and cast myself in this jealous abyss?	1770
OTÓN	Now that we've each spoken let us affirm our friendship against the fierce cruelty of that cold ungrateful heart. We must see to her dishonor, and the loss of her reputation.	1775
LISANDRO	Well said, Oton! How shall we take revenge? Do you know what has occurred to me, and yet I dare not say?	1780
VALERIO	What?	
LISANDRO	I think this widow has a lover hidden in her house. Why else would she refuse to look outside,	1785









and caused her own sorrow.<sup>76</sup>

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

CAMILO                 I'll imitate Cupid,  
who loves without seeing.<sup>77</sup>

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

CAMILO                 Her man has such tricks                                 1915  
that I lose my bearings.  
I could be outside the gate  
and he'll tell me I'm inside.

FLORO                   Here comes a lady's coach.

*Enter LEONARDA and JULIA, with capes*

CAMILO                 And from it descends,                                     1920  
a beautiful widow.

FLORO                   The maid's not bad either.

LEONARDA              What a wonderful orchard.

JULIA                   It's lovely in all seasons.

LEONARDA              *(Aside to JULIA)* Julia, that's Camilo!                 1925

JULIA                   I saw him, too, my lady!

CAMILO                 I am at your service, ladies.

LEONARDA              *(Aside to JULIA)* Should I speak to him?

JULIA                   Do it.

---

<sup>76</sup> In Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, Psyche forever forsakes the god Cupid's love when she lights a lamp to see him.

<sup>77</sup> Cupid is often depicted as blindfolded, symbolizing that love is blind.

	The fields are deserted.	1930
LEONARDA	(To CAMILO) You're too kind.	
CAMILO	You deserve nothing less. You are like Apollo's own light. I invoke light, you see, for that is what I most desire, of all the things I see, though I do not see my love so clearly. In any case, light is the only thing the heavens have given earth that might match your beauty.	1935
LEONARDA	You're very fond of light for a man who is not blind.	1940
CAMILO	It comes from a certain lack, but I mustn't go on.	
LEONARDA	I understand: you mean love.	1945
CAMILO	And would you believe that my lady herself is like a radiant sun?	
LEONARDA	Surely you exaggerate.	
CAMILO	No, for she is Diana, so powerful and divine, that I see her not, but feel her everywhere.	1950
LEONARDA	Diana? Like the moon?	
CAMILO	The very same.	
LEONARDA	That's a shame. For a thousand look upon her, yet none can touch her.	1955
CAMILO	Yet I touch her without seeing her!	
LEONARDA	No doubt you must be mad.	

CAMILO	Truly, for I have touched her in the dark, and I have fallen in love.	1960
LEONARDA	And this moon, does she see you?	
CAMILO	She claims she does, and swears she sees me every day. Yet I never see her, by God!	1965
LEONARDA	If she sees you, there can be no doubt: she must be in love.	
CAMILO	I think she likes me.	
LEONARDA	That is plain to see. Would you leave her for any other woman?	1970
CAMILO	I am insulted that your lips could so doubt my devotion. I would not leave her for an angel of beauty or a worthy Roman maiden.	1975
LEONARDA	If you saw her, disillusion might change your mind.	
CAMILO	I need not worry about that, for I have felt her with these hands: her brow is high, and her nose, the foundation of a beautiful face, is flawless.	1980
	Her eyes are . . . pronounced, a sign of their loveliness. Her neck, her breast, everything else is pure perfection.	1985
	Her wit and intelligence need no explanation: to witness both is enough to make you lose your mind.	1990



A very Iris is her handmaiden,  
and Mercury her ambassador! 1995  
The world melts away  
when she sends them down for me.

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

CAMILO Nor have I ever seen anyone endure 2000  
the darkness they inflict upon me.  
And though my happiness  
is somewhat clouded by this cruelty,  
I love those shadows of mine more  
than others value the light. 2005

LEONARDA And what is your name?

CAMILO Camilo.

LEONARDA It's good to know the name  
of such an Amadís in love.<sup>78</sup>  
May you enjoy your Diana  
for many years. 2010

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

LEONARDA God be with you, dark suitor.

CAMILO May he give you a wealthy husband. 2015

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

JULIA I live all the way over by Zaidía.<sup>79</sup>  
You wouldn't want a lady so far away.

*Exeunt* LEONARDA and JULIA

---

<sup>78</sup> The hugely popular chivalric romance *Amadís de Gaula* (1508) famously involves secret assignments.

<sup>79</sup> Known today as Saïdia, this Valencian district is located north of Ciutat Vella (the Old City, today's city center).

SCENE 13

FLORO                    You carried on like old folks:                    2020  
                              “Nice weather we’re having! What a fine day!”  
                              Why did you not court her?  
                              She is a beautiful widow—  
                              a thousand men die for her love.

CAMILO                 You read my mind!                                    2025  
                              But my love is steadfast.  
                              I would not fall in love with her,  
                              or even one more beautiful,  
                              although she might fall for me.  
                              She is not worth two cents,                         2030  
                              nor anyone else you might name,  
                              for that would be to compare  
                              a queen with a slave.  
                              I tell you, mine is an angel,  
                              there can be no doubt.                                 2035

FLORO                    You thought the widow was that bad?

CAMILO                 So-so. She would do.

FLORO                    Well, she seemed fine to me.

CAMILO                 Oh, Floro, if you could see my lady,  
                              you would sing her praises instead!                         2040

FLORO                    I would take the widow.

SCENE 14

[On the street]

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

URBÁN                    Three men against one!

OTÓN                     Let the dog die!

URBÁN	Will you not tell me how I have offended you?	
VALERIO	Die!	2045
CAMILO	Stop, gentlemen, hold off! That's enough! Surely my presence here should make you observe the rules of courtesy. I am Camilo, a friend to all.	
FLORO	Get behind us.	2050
URBÁN	If they came at me one by one . . .	
OTÓN	He found a good second in you, Camilo, though he's a vile and shameless lackey.	
CAMILO	No more of this, on my life. If you're lucky, he won't have recognized you.	2055
VALERIO	As you wish.	
LISANDRO	We are at your service.	
CAMILO	I am much obliged.	
OTÓN	Let's go.	

*Exeunt OTON, LISANDRO, and VALERIO*

#### SCENE 15

CAMILO	Tell me, you devil, what did you do to those gentlemen?	2060
URBÁN	Good Camilo, I throw myself at your feet. I swear that neither in deed, word, nor thought did I ever offend them.	2065
CAMILO	Gentlemen would never gang up on a lone man with no provocation.	

That's impossible

URBÁN

That's true.

They may have been confused,  
and took me for another man.

2070

CAMILO

That must be it.

FLORO

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

CAMILO

Let's see him to his house, Floro.

URBÁN

The city gate is far enough.

2075

FLORO

You really owe my master, now.

URBÁN

*(Aside)* If I owe him, I have paid him well.



CELIA	<p>You, at my house?  You haven't been there in two months!  And yet somehow you think I'm so crazy  I would believe the words  of a heart so false!</p>	2105
	<p>No, my friend, once that heart gets away,  I will be left to chase the wind.</p>	2110
CAMILO	<p>By God, be careful with your hands!  You've torn my cloak.</p>	
CELIA	<p>I was after your heart,  where such cruelty lies.</p>	2115
CAMILO	<p>It was soft for you once,  and like wax to your will,  but some men would rather not  share the goods, you know.  Look out, they can see us!</p>	2120
CELIA	<p>He's afraid of being seen!  Hush now, don't make a fuss.  Just let a new lady fall for him,  if she hasn't already,  the new apple of his eye—  the first time they fight  over petty jealousies,  then she'll see what he's about.</p>	2125
CAMILO	<p>You want to drive me crazy.</p>	
CELIA	<p>No doubt he will tell her too:  "This woman is chasing me,  but I cannot stand the sight of her,  on your life and mine,  there is no reason for you to worry,  I will kiss your foot  in front of her."</p>	2130
		2135
CAMILO	<p>Would you stop this and leave me alone?  Were we not over?</p>	



LEONARDA	<p>This is what I deserve for my mad desire. I wish I didn't know you, just as you don't know me. 2160 Then I could enjoy you without seeing you, just as you don't see me. This is what you get when you trust in oaths, in words, and vows! 2165 They are but scraps of paper in the wind. To think he claimed to love no other woman in the world!</p>
JULIA	<p>And it is true, 2170 for he said that by night, and he loves her by day. Look, my lady, you won't keep the one you love, if you won't let him look at you . . . Love is born of sight, 2175 and touch alone won't do.</p>
LEONARDA	<p>What about hearing?</p>
JULIA	<p>That may do for the lover who is all talk. Some men will follow a voice 2180 hidden inside a cloak, and when they find an ugly woman, they say, "To the devil with her."</p>
CAMILO	<p>Tell me, what is it I owe you? I will do right by you. 2185</p>
CELIA	<p>First, the great faith I put in you, which is a novel thing with us. Second, my loyalty in not seeking pleasure elsewhere, and always matching my desires to yours. 2190 A thousand icy nights, spent waiting for you by my window, while an old woman scolded me— and—oh, my poor arms, my poor hair!—</p>



	and, in sum, never to have denied you anything you wanted.	2195
CAMILO	I've made up for all that and more by keeping you in fine style. You cost me a pretty penny, not to speak of the clothes.	2200
CELIA	That's a nice speech coming from a gentleman! I want nothing of yours. Let Floro come, and I'll give him back in gold anything I've had from you. Fine clothes those were! A sad little skirt with two miserable sashes, a wretched little petticoat . . .	2205 2210
	What strings of pearls you've decked me with! What chains you've hung about my neck! What rich tapestries, the best in Flanders! What a house you have built me, with its garden, its gate, its balcony! Even those who are but the dirt beneath my feet have more than I do. Given how you ignore me, I should have spent time with another— I might have had fewer complaints, at least, if not anything to gain. Was I so very poor, so wretched, so despised, when I let you in my house?	2215 2220 2225
LEONARDA	Do you see how riled up she is? If only I could hear what they are saying!	
JULIA	Would it not have been better to go home than to hope that no one will recognize you as they pass you on the street? Besides, it's getting dark.	2230
LEONARDA	That and my mantle	

means no one will see me.

JULIA                    I do believe you're jealous.  
I never would have imagined                    2235  
that a lady who enjoys  
such affairs in the dark  
would light up with jealousy.

CELIA                    What, me?

CAMILO                    Yes, you, Celia.                    2240  
Now you know where I stand.  
Leave me.

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

CAMILO                    You can cross yourself a thousand times over . . .                    2245

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

CELIA *exits*

CAMILO                    The facts are clear . . .

### SCENE 3

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

CAMILO                    Where has she gone?

LEONARDA                    (*Aside*) What do I say?                    2250

CAMILO                    Are these veiled ladies speaking to me?

LEONARDA                    We're not quite as shameless  
as that fool over there.  
Is she that Diana  
you mentioned in the orchard?                    2255

CAMILO                    (*Aside*) This little widow is dying

to play loose with me.  
(*Aloud*) Uncover yourselves,  
so you won't resemble her, either.

LEONARDA I'm glad to see that you hate 2260  
what you loved so recently.

CAMILO Those goddesses  
are just fantasies now.  
They are like nights without days,  
and lies made of truth. 2265  
They are dubious pleasures,  
and bland delicacies,  
a confusing masquerade,  
and waking dreams.  
They make one sneak 2270  
through gardens at night,  
pretending to see  
what remains unseen,  
counting and taking  
money in the dark. 2275  
If you will love me,  
we'll just let Diana sleep,  
for she is a night with no dawn,  
and much too fond of herself.  
She wants to be loved on faith alone, 2280  
as if she were heaven itself.  
Yet she is nothing but a sound,  
heard but not seen.

LEONARDA You must have seen her 2285  
and lost your illusions.

CAMILO It's because I haven't seen her  
that I want no more of this arrangement.  
If I could see her as I see you,  
and if she were as beautiful,  
no doubt I would love her. 2290

LEONARDA Truly?

CAMILO By God, yes!  
Because you're a pearl,

and soon enough I'll tire  
of being a slave to a lady, 2295  
who will not let me see her.  
Why should I waste my youth  
taxed with the burden  
of safeguarding her modesty,  
just because she feels like it? 2300  
If she is afraid of being exposed  
and defamed by the common people  
as other women are,  
if she values her reputation so dearly,  
let her post a giant by her door. 2305

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

CAMILO          So scornful so quickly?  
You dismiss me because 2310  
you think I'm fickle.

LEONARDA      Did you not hear me? Go.

CAMILO          I'm leaving, you intractable little widow.

CAMILO *exits*

#### SCENE 4

LEONARDA      Ah, traitor!  
As if insulting me were not enough, 2315  
he also wanted to woo me?

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

LEONARDA      He couldn't have said it better 2320  
if he'd known the truth.  
He left me speechless!  
I did not know what to say!

JULIA	It was a lofty sermon.	
LEONARDA	A shock like that overcomes all the senses. Tonight and no more! You'll see how I dismiss him for his good sense.	2325
JULIA	And what will you say to him about this?	2330
LEONARDA	Why would I bring it up? What fine nonsense!	
<i>Enter URBÁN</i>		
URBÁN	There is not a place in the city I have not looked. I have been home twice, hoping to find you there.	2335
LEONARDA	You were nowhere to be found on the one day I went out on foot. Tonight you must summon that suitor from the bridge.	2340
URBÁN	I will, right away.	
LEONARDA	Julia, you will see to the side door.	
URBÁN	Your uncle awaits you at home.	
LEONARDA	Wonderful! That's the icing on the cake!	2345
URBÁN	A stranger from Madrid is with him.	
LEONARDA	What brings him here?	
URBÁN	I don't know.	2350
LEONARDA	Lord, let me just make it	



LISANDRO	Don't let it weigh on you. No matter how dark the night, this door will never see a man pass through without getting his face slashed open. Here comes someone who looks like Valerio.	2380      2385
OTÓN	It's about time for him to get his sword.	
<i>Enter VALERIO</i>		
VALERIO	Just let him try to enter this street!	
OTÓN	A fitting response. No Gradasso, no Roland, <sup>81</sup> would guard the entrance as you two do.	2390
LISANDRO	Sit.	
OTÓN	Where?	
LISANDRO	Just on the ground, sit on your cape with your shield to the side.	2395
VALERIO	There is not much light From the moon tonight.	
OTÓN	It's veiled like the widow, surrounded by clouds. The storm is about to break.	2400
LISANDRO	If only we had a bearded witch in this city!	
VALERIO	What for?	2405
LISANDRO	So that she could make the widow	

---

<sup>81</sup> Two knights in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.





VALERIO	Oh, that's good!	2435
LISANDRO	I will start: Gentlemen, in these loves, and our fierce rivalry, Angelica and her suitors inhabit our fair city. Roland are you, you, the brave Sacripante. I, Ferragut, the Moor. But Angelica and Medore . . . <sup>83</sup> ah, the widow and her squire!	2440  2445
VALERIO	Most honorable squire Spain ever could yield, you have taken as yours a most burnished shield, adorned with your arms. I'd like to enhance it, so it comes to no harm with the finest medallion, in gold as bright as fire, ah, the widow and her squire!	2450  2455
OTÓN	There sits shining Gemini in the heights of heaven. Two figures form this sign: a man and a woman, their flesh intertwined. The stars I can't decipher, but, by God, in my mind, every night they conspire just like in that sign: ah, the widow and her squire!	2460  2465
VALERIO	Look! They've opened the door, and Urbán is coming out, with his hood up.	
OTÓN	Who?	

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<sup>83</sup> Sacripante and Ferragut are additional Saracen knights in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Angelica spurns Orlando and the other knights who pursue her to marry Medoro.



LEONARDA	Have a servant light the way for my uncle.	2485
JULIA	Rodulfo is bringing one now.	
LUCENCIO	Is that necessary?	
LEONARDA	Of course, my lord. And I'll have another servant escort you as well, with a sword.	2490
LUCENCIO	Who would want to hurt me?	
LEONARDA	I know you're loved by all.	
LUCENCIO	I'm pleased about that fellow, and he leaves well served.	
LEONARDA	I admit, uncle, I'm happy to make this marriage. I've been unkind to so many of our own, I hope I'll find forgiveness in loving a man from elsewhere.	2495
LUCENCIO	He's been fortunate. He'll be richly rewarded when he gets to Madrid.	2500
LEONARDA	Tell them to begin the preparations.	
JULIA	They have waited so long.	
LUCENCIO	God keep you.	2505
LEONARDA	May He go with you.	
LUCENCIO	<i>exits</i>	
JULIA	I was getting worried. There was someone at the side door. Who it was, I do not know.	



	<p>Camilo, upon seeing my face,  smiles and says: "Friend,  let's forget these games  and continue on, unmasked."  Then like the hounded deer  running through the hills,  swift as the wind,  I leave Camilo behind  and, by empty streets,  return exposed and ashamed,  to tell you of this sad turn.</p>	<p>2550</p> <p>2555</p>
LEONARDA	<p>No! Behind one misfortune,  a greater one follows! What will I do?</p>	
JULIA	<p>This is not the time  to forget who you are.  Now is when courage counts.</p>	<p>2560</p>
LEONARDA	<p>There is no courage amid such grief,  for heaven's wrath  cuts through steel and diamonds.  Any weakness will be noted  in someone like me.  But I think I can muster  a clever way out.  Urbán, for a few days,  you'll serve my cousin,  and make your way through Valencia,  never coming near me.  That way, when Camilo follows you,  he'll believe it's for her sake  that he comes and goes.</p>	<p>2565</p> <p>2570</p> <p>2575</p>
JULIA	<p>This is no small thing, what honor requires of you.</p>	
URBÁN	<p>So let's see: you'll dishonor your cousin?  Is that not a mad idea?</p>	
LEONARDA	<p>Urbán, for the sake of my honor,  all must be forgiven.  Let this stain fall on my cousin,  as long as my reputation shines.</p>	<p>2580</p>

URBÁN Don't you see this is an outrage?

LEONARDA That's reputation for you.  
 You push another man forward 2585  
 when you're threatened with a knife,  
 and let him take the blow  
 that was meant for you.  
 Just as your hand flies up  
 to defend your face, 2590  
 which is the nobler part,  
 surely there is nothing inhuman in this.  
 Go rest, and tomorrow,  
 you'll go with her to mass  
 at the Church of the Miracle. 2595

URBÁN You'll make your own miracle  
 with this Grecian plot.<sup>84</sup>  
 But tell me, who will go,  
 tomorrow, to fetch your beau?

LEONARDA Julia, in disguise, Urbán. 2600  
 She will dress as a man.

JULIA And if I run into trouble?

LEONARDA Your blind man will defend you.

JULIA He's the one I'm afraid of.

LEONARDA What? 2605

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

*Exeunt*

SCENE 9

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<sup>84</sup> Ancient Greeks had a reputation as tricksters, in part because of the Trojan horse, the treacherous gift that led to the fall of Troy.

[The next morning, in front of LISANDRO's house]

*Enter OTÓN and VALERIO*

VALERIO            They say he's getting up now.

OTÓN                He sleeps like a log,  
and the time it takes him to dress, Valerio,            2610  
is something to behold.

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

*Enter LISANDRO*

LISANDRO          On the contrary, I was up all night  
with the squire and the surgeon.                        2615

OTÓN                You're still buttoning up?

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

OTÓN                Enough. Was there anyone, you think,  
who might have recognized us?                        2620

LISANDRO          The street was deserted.

VALERIO            You gave it to him good!

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

LISANDRO          I think I got it all,                                        2625  
because the slashes I give  
run all the way to the neck.

OTÓN                Good God!

VALERIO            Amen.

OTÓN                That's what they say about Roland.                    2630  
Look out! Here comes Urbán.





LISANDRO	<i>(Aside to VALERIO)</i> There must be some wounded foreigner or servant around.	2655
OTÓN	Then, please, be on your way.	
LISANDRO	But wait.	
URBÁN	Anything else? I'm in a hurry.	
OTÓN	Tell us something about your lady.	2660
URBÁN	She is a Portia <sup>85</sup> by reputation.	
LISANDRO	Come here.	
URBÁN	The bells are ringing for Mass.	
URBÁN	<i>exits</i>	
VALERIO	He's gone, the scoundrel.	
OTÓN	If he's not there, then Leonarda must be alone.	2665
LISANDRO	Oh, such empty gossip! If he were her gallant, she would not spare him for an hour.	
VALERIO	That's how love is.	2670
LISANDRO	So whom did we honor with our affection last night? And not with the flat of the knife, but with the blade!	
VALERIO	The Roman Fabricious <sup>86</sup> could not have done it better.	2675

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<sup>85</sup> Roman model of female virtue. Portia, Brutus's wife, injured herself to test her courage.

<sup>86</sup> Gaius Fabricius Luscinus Monocularis was an ancient Roman magistrate from the third century BCE, praised as an example of integrity and virtue.

It's no use asking who he was,  
for he is no longer.

*He draws his sword*

LISANDRO I need to know.

OTÓN Blood will out. 2680

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

VALERIO I believe it, Lisandro.

OTÓN Where shall we go now?

VALERIO To the cathedral.

LISANDRO No, we should go to San Juan, instead. 2685

*Exeunt*

SCENE 11

[On the street]

*Enter CAMILO and FLORO*

FLORO Why are you crossing yourself so much?

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

FLORO Could you make that man out last night? 2690

CAMILO I saw him, Floro, as clear as I see you now.  
And I stared at him without blinking,  
memorizing his visage.  
I laid awake,  
contemplating his features, 2695  
etched in stone in my memory  
till sleep got hold of me at dawn.



	she had no neck to speak of, waddling like a goose, bow-legged and sluggish. I felt like pushing her, and throwing her to the ground, but I came to my senses, and retreated in my shame.	2735      2740
FLORO	These were the dangers you faced, sir? For this you risked eternal shame? If only you had followed my advice to tear a peephole in your hood, or made good use of your sword! No one would have killed or offended you. You fell for a rough bed covered with damask and fine linen, velvets and brocade! But what are you going to do now?	2745      2750
CAMILO	I'll get ink and paper at the nearest tavern, and I'll tell her what's what, and what I think of her. I'll give her a good tongue lashing. Tongues can be harsh, you know, all the more when she realizes she has been found out, and has lost the tender lad she tricked.	2755
FLORO	Didn't you tell me that you touched her, that she was young and spirited and fit, that she spoke with elegance and wit?	2760
CAMILO	Don't shame me, or blame me: I couldn't see. Urbán is with her now, at Mass. Give him this message I'm writing now, so he can give it to her.	2765
FLORO	A fine lady you've enjoyed!	
CAMILO	This is no time for jokes, Floro.	
FLORO	Oh, what a beautiful girl!	

CAMILO            Like a gem.

*Exeunt*

SCENE 12

[In LEONARDA's house]

*Enter LEONARDA and JULIA*

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

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

JULIA            And will you leave Valencia?            2775

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

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

LEONARDA        A woman in love  
                    unmakes any law.

JULIA            Yet if the secretary lives up            2790  
                    to what those letters promise,  
                    he'll easily rival Camilo.

LEONARDA        I'm sure he'll be his equal,  
                    but the bird in hand was good.



	whom you entice with spells, by pretending to be a tender young girl.	2825
	Today I saw your ancient face, your sooty brows, your grey hairs, your crooked nose, your dentures too, your hands like mortars through and through.	
	Then I came to my senses and said, full of shame: “Farewell, oh Circe.”	2830
	If you were to play instead Lancelot’s <sup>88</sup> aged maid, you might look young, in truth. Just fool another as you fooled me, and make him wear that hood,	2835
	you’ll be crowned as a witch soon enough.” <sup>89</sup>	
URBÁN	He breathes fire, but it’s all smoke.	
LEONARDA	I’ve brought this upon myself. His every word burns me, because I take it to heart.	2840
URBÁN	No woman can stand being called ugly. Are you ashamed?	
LEONARDA	Not for a moment.	
JULIA	Can there be any worse insult?	2845
URBÁN	What insult? He thinks your old cousin is the one who tricked him!	
LEONARDA	Fortunately love inspires me to come to my own defense. Camilo is being a fool. He felt how tender I was,	2850

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

<sup>89</sup> A pointed hood was placed on the head of convicted heretics or witches, to mark their infamy.

and now calls me a tough old bird.

URBÁN                    We should right this wrong at once,  
but talking won't do the trick.                    2855  
What do you propose?

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

URBÁN                    You'll be the one tricked instead.                    2860

*Exeunt*

### SCENE 13

[In CAMILO's house]

*Enter CAMILO and FLORO*

CAMILO                Really, Floro?

FLORO                   I knew you would not like it, my lord,  
and God knows how painful  
it is to let my mouth  
speak such shameful words.                    2865  
Ever since this morning,  
when you gave me the message  
to hand to the squire,  
I've been trying to tell you,  
though I could not find the words.                    2870  
I know I was wrong, sir,  
but someone so reasonable,  
and who has read so much,  
should know that the effects of love  
must always be excused.                    2875

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

FLORO                   When I saw you had rejected Celia, my lord,  
and that she was so helpless,



	I went to visit and comfort her.	2880
	Love descended upon me then, and I promised to marry her, as long as you agreed and gave permission.	
	She, with no hope of seeing you again, and flattered by the talk of marriage,	2885
	gave me her word and her oath. I pray you tell her that you agree to repay my services with such a favor.	
	My parents raised you, you know, and I've been your slave since the start.	2890
CAMILO	Floro, I would never resent your marrying Celia because she was mine, or because I'm jealous, or I wished things had ended otherwise.	
	No, it was only my love for you that made me want to find you a better match.	2895
	If this is your wish, I will not contradict you. If this is God's will, man should not interfere. Fetch Celia at her house, and I will talk to her.	
FLORO	She's closer than that, sir.	2900
CAMILO	What?	
FLORO	She's here. In my room.	
CAMILO	Go fetch her.	
FLORO	<i>goes to fetch her</i>	
CAMILO	What strange things blind love does! It drives me crazy for an old woman, while Floro marries my old flame. But that's just fine, you see: at least she won't chase after me.	2905
FLORO	<i>enters again, and CELIA</i>	
FLORO	Here is Celia, and your slave ( <i>pointing to himself</i> ).	2910









and then to vainly suppose  
he has happened on the truth.  
But you are inexperienced, it seems,  
and quite sure of yourself.  
And so you have proved yourself unwise 3025  
in word and in deed.  
Yet I want to forgive you,  
if only because I love you.

CAMILO            If I was wrong,  
I hope to excuse myself 3030  
but if there is no light,  
how can we see the truth?  
She who put on that show  
will try many others.

LEONARDA        Light is out of the question. 3035

CAMILO            That's that, then?

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

CAMILO            Well, neither is it just, my lady,  
to deceive a gentleman. 3040  
I have unfortunate news for you:  
I have a light, and I will see you.

*He uncovers the light*

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

LEONARDA        Oh no! 3045

CAMILO            At last my luck has changed.

LEONARDA        Is this how a gentleman behaves?

CAMILO            Move your hand away from your face.

LEONARDA        How could you be so cruel?

SCENE 17

*Enter LUCENCIO*

LUCENCIO           Leonarda, I came as soon as I heard your voice.           3050  
                          What's this? A man here,  
                          a man with a naked sword!

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

LUCENCIO           Get a light, call the others.           3055

*JULIA gets a torch*

LEONARDA           Sir, this is done now.  
                          Discretion is the better part of valor.  
                          This gentleman is Camilo,  
                          whom you know so well.  
                          He cares for me,           3060  
                          and I for him.  
                          And if he is willing,  
                          I want to be his wife.

LUCENCIO           If you both agree,  
                          I'll be glad to make it so.           3065  
                          Go easy, fearsome warrior,  
                          I knew you when you were this tall.

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

LUCENCIO           Go, Urbán, and call some witnesses.           3070

URBÁN              I will go as fast as I can.

*Exeunt CAMILO and URBÁN*

LUCENCIO           What is this?  
                          While I am home, my dear niece,  
                          you bring enemies into the house?  
                          Why did you have me write a letter,           3075

if this is what you were up to?

SCENE 18

*Enter URBÁN, OTÓN, LISANDRO, VALERIO and FLORO*

LEONARDA	You might as well have brought the whole city!	
URBÁN	They were almost at the door.	
LUCENCIO	A good choice! These are honorable gentleman. Now you can witness the betrothal of Camilo and Leonarda, who swear to marry each other.	3080
VALERIO	As well they should, noble as he is, and beautiful as she is. May God in heaven give you many good years, and shower you with treasure.	3085
FLORO	You and I are both married, my lord, on the very same day.	3090
LISANDRO	Such an honorable marriage makes me forget my own love. Instead of leaving for distant lands, you can stay here, to relish what you have, and so enjoy one another for many years to come.	3095
URBÁN	Won't you give Julia to me?	
LEONARDA	From now on she will be your wife.	3100
OTÓN	I've ended up a witness, although I was a suitor. I confess he is my better— you have chosen well.	



And so enjoy one another  
for many years to come. 3105

LISANDRO When is the wedding?

LUCENCIO Tomorrow.

VALERIO So soon?

LUCENCIO It is best that way. 3110

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