

Gambler's House

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This text is based on Vern Williamsen's edition of the autograph (Estudios de Hispanófila, 1975). It was originally prepared for a production of the play by students at Texas A & M University.

Characters: MARCELO, older man (45-50), father of ALEJANDRO (20 years) ROQUE, servant to Alejandro Don DIEGO, (20) a friend of Alejandro Don LUIS, (20) another friend CARLOS, (20) friend to Diego and Luis, and suitor to Angela GOMEZ, elderly servant to Angela's mother FABIAN, a servant to Marcelo DOMINGO, a servant to Don Diego ISABEL, (18) Alejandro's wife ANGELA, (18) a young woman MOTHER (38-40 years) of Angela

ACT I

*The scene is at Alejandro's home in Madrid. Enter MARCELO
and ALEJANDRO*

MARCELO: Alejandro, you are my only heir.

My property and honor are there
for you alone. I could claim love,

but words are not enough
to describe the way I feel.

5

My feeling for you is unique.

I didn't say that as well as I should...

You know I raised you as best I could
with good example and wise advice.

Still, you insistently spend your time
at cards and seeking sexual pleasure.

10

You have lost beyond all measure:

all your money, some that wasn't yours,
good women, loose women, even whores.

Cards and sex often have opposing effects,
but not in your case that I can detect.

15

In your battle to choose between these two,

like Alcides, you stand with one foot
 at sea and the other on land.
 I've tried a thousand different ways 20
 to cure those habits. Now let me say...
 I think I found a method at last
 to put an end to your sinful past
 by marrying you to my ward Isabel.
 Unlike you, she has done very well 25
 and learned the lessons I taught.
 In her beauty and behavior you ought
 find the evidence of her great virtue,
 the glory of a soul in bloom.
 You were married one week ago 30
 and, as a guest here in your home,
 I've seen you happy; but that, they say,
 lasts in a gambler's house a few sweet days.
 I am getting old and I have felt
 death encroaching on my doorstep... 35
 Already it seems I can taste the bite
 of his steadily advancing scythe.
 I beg you, son, let me die in peace!
 You know a man marries for eternity,
 I pray your happiness lasts as long. 40
 I hope to God nothing goes wrong
 now that I've retired to my own home.
 I was right, I'm sure, to give you control
 over the fortune you were to inherit.
 All I had is now yours, except the bit 45
 I need to live and rest in peace.
 Look to others for help, not to me,
 if you should lose what you have now.
 You have a wife and enough to allow
 you to live comfortably and do it well 50
 if you care for both as wisely as I expect.
 Your youthful errors must cease
 now that you've taken on mature duties.
 I say all this, even though I'm sure
 the present state of your affairs 55
 has given you reason to change your life,
 because good advice never goes awry.
 ALEJANDRO:I'll always be grateful to you, father,
 for your love, a thousand times over.
 I'm doubly bound by my love for Isabel. 60

No power known casts a greater spell.
 No game, no feminine wile, can ever free
 a prisoner bound as she binds me.
 I'm glad to hear your good advice;
 it proves you to be loving and kind. 65
 Children often complain of the nuisance
 that their parents speak of as prudence;
 but you can be sure, when it comes to me,
 that I've turned over a brand new leaf.
 Although at times they weren't heeded 70
 and, certainly, now they're not needed,
 I'll not complain of your admonitions.
 After all, they're meant for my salvation.

From off stage, we hear ROQUE and two musicians

ROQUE: To your health, you musicians, you!
 1ST MUS: In return, long life to you! Salud! 75
 ROQUE: If we only had a wedding every day...
 MARCELO: I see your friends are coming this way
 and your servants are having a good time.
 I'll leave now, son. I hope your life
 is long and happy. You have my blessing. 80

Exit MARCELO. Don DIEGO, Don LUIS, and CARLOS enter

DIEGO: This house still smells like a wedding.
 ALEJANDRO: Don Diego, Don Luis! It's been so long
 since you came to visit.
 LUIS: But it'd be wrong
 to come sooner and disturb the family.
 ALEJANDRO: Real friends like you never trouble me. 85
 Who's this?
 DIEGO: Carlos, he's a good friend now.
 ALEJANDRO: I'll make him mine as well. So, how...?
 LUIS: He introduced us to a woman from Seville...
 No woman, no! She's more like an angel.
 She and her mother have come to Madrid 90
 on a legal matter...some sort of bid.
 DIEGO: And you know all about girls from Seville!
 LUIS: As friends of Carlos, she let's us visit
 at her place in the afternoon where we flirt
 and play cards for drinks and dessert. 95

ALEJANDRO: Carlos, you must let me in on the fun!

CARLOS: I'll introduce you if you want to come.

ALEJANDRO: My house is yours, let yours be mine.

Enter the two musicians and ROQUE with glasses and a bottle

ROQUE: No man would marry if he were in his right mind!

DIEGO: Who's that? What's going on over there? 100

ALEJANDRO: It's just my man Roque and a rather odd pair
of musicians celebrating the wedding,
more with drinking than with singing.

LUIS: That's the right thing to do, though,
as long as the music isn't too foul. 105

If it is, let them drink. They can't do that
and sing at the same time.

ALEJANDRO: But they're so bad,
they positively stink!

ROQUE: Hey, you barflies!
Don't just sit there buzzing, make some noise.
You sing while I dance. Come, come on, boys! 110

ALEJANDRO: Step lively, you dolt!

ROQUE: Only my mouth is alive;
the rest of me seems dead enough tonight.

ALEJANDRO: What are you doing here?

ROQUE: We came to dance
at your wedding.

ALEJANDRO: Are your feet up to that?
Can they feel the beat? Are you ready? 115

LUIS: He is as long as the rhythm's not too steady.

ROQUE: Have you ever noticed dancers on the stage?

They dance and move, they express and indicate.

One big difference between us is obvious:
they only look like sots; we're... inebrious! 120

They seem to fall; they twist and trip in place;

they make their bodies fly across the stage.

A good dancer seems bewitched or insane.

There's no human action he can't imitate.

There's no emotion he won't make you feel. 125

I once saw a dance on a mathematical theme.

In Italy they dance a lively enough step

to cure the bite of a spider that's red.

And you'd better believe the man who said
tarantulas can also be found here in Spain. 130

ALEJANDRO:I'm glad you said that! I've heard complaints
that even here you can see dances performed
in the lascivious style that was once reformed.

ROQUE: Sing, you musical asses. My bones will move.

1ST MUS: We'll split a gut.

135

ROQUE: Well, see that you do.

They sing and ROQUE dances

MUSICIANS: "Any wedding makes a house come
alive,
but never mix water and wine.
Enjoy your life and your new bride,
the toast of the land and times.

Any wedding makes a house come alive,
but never mix water and wine."

ALEJANDRO:Stop! You're absolutely worthless tonight.

DIEGO: Your pleasure has filled them with wine.

I hope your wife will make you as happy.

May you never see the face of worry
nor the backside of endless pleasure.

140

Live in peace with your wife forever,
as long as old Priam, or older Nestor,
or even Egisto, or ancient Evander.

May the march of time slow its pace
and may you die with a smile on your face.

145

ALEJANDRO:Enough of that now. Bring me my things;
I'll be going out now to join my friends.

LUIS: We're glad that you decided to come along.

2ND MUS: If you get a new wife, we'll make a new song.

ALEJANDRO:That makes me hope my wife lives forever.

150

Exit the musicians and ROQUE

LUIS: God grant that your children equal in number
the stars in the sky or grains of desert sand,
flowers in the field or waves on the strand.

May your first be granted an oak-leaf crown
as reward for winning a mighty battle.

155

May the second, for scholarly renown,
wear on his head the symbolic laurel.

May God grant that one earn his fame

fighting in some Christian campaign,
and may still another serve his Lord
wearing the crimson of the Papal court. 160

Enter ROQUE dressed in cape and feathered hat

ALEJANDRO: The blessings you hear as a newlywed!

ROQUE puts his own ragged cape and hat on ALEJANDRO

ROQUE: These should make you feel well dressed
if you want to go out on the street.

LUIS: What are you doing, you silly beast? 165

ALEJANDRO: You sot, stop trying to make me look bad.

ROQUE: Now two of us here look quite mad.

ALEJANDRO: Do you mean I'm drunk?

ROQUE: No, but...

ALEJANDRO: What?

ROQUE: You're married. I've often thought:

Women can be compared to strong wine. 170

Either will drive a man out of his mind.

I once heard a man who was very wise
say that women and wine were comparable:
both get results: fearsome or laughable.

Have you ever noticed how wine so sweetly 175

crosses your lips and rolls over the tongue.

but once it reaches down in your belly,
it feels not only wicked but strong?

A newly married woman seems just as sweet,
giving pleasure and keeping the house neat, 180

she begins her new life tame as fine wine,
but then turns into the bane of your life.

Like any strong wine taken straight
she enters gently and full of grace 185

but quickly becomes head of the house
jumping on the back of her unlucky spouse.

There is one difference I can unveil,
a good wine only improves with age;

a woman as she ages only gets drier
and like an old stick belongs in the fire. 190

To the flames with her!..... But then again

there was once a quite mellifluous fellow
who claimed women were more like a bottle:

he'd rather have one that was new and clean.
So...I don't care if she's ugly or pretty. 195
Since wine and woman are really comparable,
I'll take one that lives in a bottle
and even then I want the first taste.

*Enter ISABEL and FABIAN. They bring clothing for
ALEJANDRO*

ISABEL: Where is he going in such great haste?
FABIAN: He wants to go out with some friends. 200
ISABEL: Are you going out?
ALEJANDRO: Yes I am, my pet,
if you give me permission to go.
I should accompany my friends, you know.
DIEGO: We only came here to serve you two.
ISABEL: And for my part, I'm here to serve you. 205

*ISABEL continues helping ALEJANDRO put on cape and sword,
getting ready to go out*

CARLOS: (What a divine creature! A real beauty! **Aside**
Angela may be an angel, but Isabel truly
ranks among the archangels of heaven.
I'm glad I came to see this vision.)
ISABEL: Alejandro, you ought to wear more finery 210
so people will know that you are married.
I want every woman to envy me my place.
Here, you wear this diamond necklace.
ALEJANDRO: How can I repay you?
ISABEL: I want people to say
there are women who love their men these days. 215
CARLOS: (What honor, charm, and self composure! **Aside**
I've never in my life seen anyone sweeter.)

ALEJANDRO and LUIS move to one side

ALEJANDRO: You've made me curious about this girl.
Angela?
LUIS: Soon enough, you'll get to see her.
ALEJANDRO: Is she easy to talk to or is she skittish? 220
Is she affected?

LUIS: Don't move too quickly
and you'll find she can make it easy.

ALEJANDRO: What about her mother?

LUIS: She's quite saintly.
She keeps an eagle eye on Angela while she reads
her devotions. You should know she's deaf.

225

ALEJANDRO: Now that's a handicap!

CARLOS: (How glorious I feel **Aside**
just seeing her! It makes my mind reel!
Looking at her is such a delight
I hope I'm able to control my eyes.)

Exit everyone but ISABEL and ROQUE

ISABEL: Roque, who are Alejandro's friends?

230

ROQUE: The usual! Just what you'd expect.

Close enough when things go well

but quickly gone when life's a hell.

Like swallows, they come in Spring

to eat our crumbs and let us hear them sing.

235

They fly from far across the sea

in search of Springtime's lively green

but, before December brings the biting cold,

they take their song and leave us alone.

In the sunshine, they are our shadow;

240

when darkness falls, they're quick to go.

They wax and wane along with the tides:

absent when they're out, when full they arrive.

These friends will lead him outdoors

to shuffle a deck or to deal with whores.

245

ISABEL: Roque, if you want to help...

ROQUE: What can I do?

ISABEL: See if you can get him to come home soon.

ROQUE: I'll try.

ISABEL: Follow him now; stay on his tail.

ROQUE: Like a good bloodhound I'll follow his trail.

Exit ISABEL and ROQUE. [The scene changes to Angela's house.] Enter ANGELA and her MOTHER who is carrying a book

MOTHER: Angela!

250

ANGELA: Yes, mother.

MOTHER: Pay attention now.

As your mother, I want you to know how
 to be happy and enjoy a full life.
 At this age you are in your flower and prime.
 Nature has endowed you with beauty
 not only of spirit but of earthly body. 255
 In spite of your merit, Dame Fortune
 has denied you her attentions.
 You have to learn to use your wits
 to supply the wealth you have missed.
 You must work diligently to replace 260
 what the stars decided was to be your fate.
 We have come to live near the court,
 a place best compared to a sea of sorts,
 where the industrious are free to fish,
 the lucky triumph and unfortunate perish. 265
 Your beauty is what you have for bait
 to hook any man who joins the chase.
 Lower your net now but you must remember
 the very first rule: you have to preserve
 your reputation for being chaste, 270
 virtuous and honest just to be safe.
 Hidden in the shadow of good repute
 you'll find the two words you pursue.
 It won't hurt to accept small gifts
 offered with grace and in good spirit. 275
 When a suitor comes calling, you must keep
 him unsure about what it is you feel.
 A pleasant appearance is enough to fool
 any who want you, but leave some room
 for him to hope. Keep him off balance. 280
 If a rich, young man, wounded by love
 seems to have fallen in with your plans
 carefully but deeply set your hook
 by mentioning marriage. If he backs away,
 let him go quickly. He'll return to play. 285
 You'll find that giving a cold shoulder
 will turn him off or make him bolder.
 But you can never fall in love yourself.
 If you do, things become more complex.
 Instead of keeping your own hand free, 290
 you are blinded to things you should see.
 There are many men who would like to catch
 some poor young girl in love's gentle trap

and leave her to suffer the consequence alone.
 As to that Carlos who's hanging around 295
 claiming that love and hope fill his soul,
 he hasn't a cent in this world. Watch out!
 Just the thought makes my blood run cold!
 Don't listen to him! Leave him alone!
 Love for a poor man is a treacherous thing. 300
 It's safer to listen to the Lorelei sing.
 As long as we live here, you should know
 that I'll fake being deaf and why that's so.
 There's no mystery. If a girl's mother
 carefully and zealously guards her daughter, 305
 and never allows the young men who approach
 like drones circling about a honeycomb
 to whisper sweet nothings into her ear,
 they claim before others with an open sneer,
 "That treacherous snake is just being sly. 310
 If she saw gold, she'd close her eyes."
 They tire of the game and then they stop.
 If a mother is easy and isn't shocked
 when they close in to say what they want,
 they cry, "Now that's a mother! What a sham! 315
 She ought to be wearing a witch's hat!"
 No matter what, her honor is forfeit
 if she gives them room to speculate
 about finding room in which to operate.
 As a deaf mother, I'll stay right here 320
 and smile, no matter what I hear.
 Let them talk, beg, suffer and die.
 I won't hear a thing. They'll think that I
 am busy with the prayers for that day.
 We hypocrites get our way in this blessed age. 325
 Occasionally, I'll look up from my book
 to give your suitors a sour look.
 There'll be no reason to attack my actions
 nor to give up on paying you attention.
 I'll fake deafness to all they say 330
 but whenever it seems appropriate,
 I'll hear enough of what is said
 to make me seem cautious and prudent.
 The world today is one big trap.
 Who doesn't lie or fabricate facts 335
 to suit his purpose or bring him profit?

Only those who do can ever get rich.
 Modest humility never wins you a prize.
 ANGELA: I've listened carefully to your advice
 but, Mother, the lesson you preach 340
 is so monstrous that the savage beasts
 in the forest know better than that.
 When you tell me to avoid love's trap,
 you ask me to go against nature.
 If Nature herself doesn't have the power 345
 to conquer the force of a love that's true,
 if love can tame the wildest brute,
 if pure, white doves show us how it's done
 robbing a mate's soul with beak and tongue,
 if turtle doves speak in the softest tones 350
 of love and jealousy, or mourn a lost love,
 how can a mere human avoid his fate?
 What, if not love, makes a nightingale
 sing of passion in his chromatic motet?
 In this world even inanimate objects 355
 are capable of expressing affection:
 the ivy climbs the ash for its protection
 and the opulent grape embraces the oak;
 joining their fronds, the palm trees bend
 to form their fruit the darkened recess. 360
 MOTHER: That's nothing but nonsense heard in a play.
 I'll forbid you to go to the theater again
 if it makes you so stupid and presumptuous.
 Love gold! Love your mother! Love the virtuous
 things in this world! 365

ANGELA: (I can't possibly **Aside**
 stop loving Carlos unless death stops me.)

Enter ALEJANDRO, Don LUIS, Don DIEGO and CARLOS

LUIS: You have been so nice and made us feel
 so much at home, that we felt free
 to let ourselves in when you didn't answer
 our knock at the door. 370

ANGELA: If you hadn't, sir,
 you'd have seemed ungrateful. Mother,
 and I, are at your service.

MOTHER: Haven't you heard:
 "The devil always comes knocking at your gate

to bring his help when you mention his name?"
 Angela and I were just talking about you. 375
 DIEGO: Just tell us what it is that we can do.
 MOTHER: I was arguing with her about this ring.
 The stone's a diamond and isn't a thing
 a young and innocent child should wear.
 It's a symbol only married women dare 380
 wear in public. I just this minute said
 that if you three came, I'd ask, instead,
 if you would like to play a game of cards,
 the ring going to the winner as his reward.
 Angela, show them the ring. 385

The MOTHER takes the ring from her

CARLOS: We'd be glad
 to play for any ring that was on her hand.
 ALEJANDRO: And I most of all!
 CARLOS: This is a friend
 who has decided to come join us men
 in serving you as best we can. Alejandro...
 ALEJANDRO: Pleased to meet you. 390
 MOTHER: His name is Leandro?
 He must be a lover with a name like that.
 ANGELA: It's Alejandro, not Leandro.
 MOTHER: Well, a man
 with that name should be generous to a fault.
 CARLOS: Bring on the cards!
 ANGELA: You, get the cards out.
 DIEGO: What value should we place on the ring? 395
 MOTHER: What can you offer for such a pretty thing?
 Whoever wins could name his own price.
 ANGELA: That's not what he asked.
 LUIS: Its value, since I...
 MOTHER: It cost... How much, Angela? Was it fourteen?
 DIEGO: Well then, we'll play at a value of fifteen. 400
 MOTHER: Fifty is plenty!
 DIEGO: (The deaf have ears **Aside**
 that only hear what they want to hear.)
 We said fifteen! **Aloud**
 MOTHER: Just as you please.
 ALEJANDRO: (Beautiful woman! What eyes, what teeth! **Aside**
 She has won my heart. How easy to fall 405

in love when we hear nature's call!
 I know I'm weak and not too smart
 but she could melt the hardest heart,
 not to mention one as soft as mine.
 Her loveliness could change the mind 410
 of a celibate and make him seek pleasure.
 When I think of what I could do with her...)
 CARLOS: (God help me for thinking this way, amen! **Aside**
 But I can't get her out of my mind.
 I thought Angela a creature from heaven 415
 but seeing her here before my eyes
 I have to admit that I was misled.
 Isabel is more so. Hers is the prize.
 My soul has been won by Isabel
 though she's at home and out of sight. 420
 God help me for thinking this way, amen!)

GOMEZ enters bringing cards with him.

GOMEZ: Gentlemen, the missal, so you can pray
 at the devil's mass. Just let me say
 I used to worship at that church, too
 until I had to give the demon his due 425
 and lost a thousand in one short week.
 DIEGO: The damage wasn't mortal, at least.
 LUIS: How'll we do this?
 CARLOS: Loser pays the cost.

They sit down at a card table to play

ALEJANDRO: I never win. My hands have always lost.
 DIEGO: If I win, it will be the first time. 430

*ANGELA and her MOTHER go off to the other side of the stage
and sit there*

MOTHER: Carlos is like a magnet for your eyes.
 Wake up, child, fear for your life.
 It is said that love is tender and weak
 in the beginning, like a young tree,
 but that once it grows large and potent, 435
 birds seek its shelter in the wildest tempest.
 It's still small. Pull it out by the roots.

ANGELA: Do you mean, mother, that I can't even look?

MOTHER: We older women know well what can result.

DIEGO: Three of a kind! 440

LUIS: A straight flush!

CARLOS: And here a full house!

ALEJANDRO: A pair of nines!

As usual, I have to pay every time
we play for something worth while.

MOTHER: Who won the ring?

LUIS: One whose only desire
is to return the brilliant prize to an owner 445
whose beauty glistens even brighter.

(How lucky I would be if this is a way **Aside**
for me to win her heart and mind today.)

Return the ring to its place on your finger.
When you took it off, the stone lost its luster. 450

ANGELA: But I couldn't!

MOTHER: Behave yourself, child.

Don't you see that you're being impolite?

It's the custom for gentlemen to return what they win.

You can't possibly refuse such a tempting gift.

Be good now! 455

ANGELA: Well, if that's the custom....

She takes it

ALEJANDRO: Ma'am, here's the price that we agreed on.

I hope it proves luckier for you than for me.

ANGELA: Alejandro, I'm sorry you lost your money.

Keep it, I have the ring.

MOTHER: Behave yourself, child.

Don't you see that you're being impolite? 460

It's the custom for gentlemen to pay their debts.

You can't possibly refuse this liberal bequest.

ANGELA: Well, if that's the custom...

She takes the money

DIEGO: (Now that makes me wish I'd lost one.) **Aside**

GOMEZ: Cards! 465

ALEJANDRO: Let's play!

GOMEZ: Ante up.

LUIS: Let's play.

GOMEZ: How do you want them?

DIEGO: Any old way.

MOTHER: Now pay attention to how it turns out.

Angela, watch how the play comes about,
and learn how a woman can get rich
though it may leave the loser out on a limb.

470

*The gentlemen settle into their game. The ladies take their seats on
the other side of the stage and leave a vacant chair between them,
and the MOTHER goes back to reading her book*

ANGELA: (I'm afraid Carlos's love has turned cool. **Aside**

I must find out if he thinks I'm a fool.

We women can be like that, you know:

sometimes timid and sometimes bold.

Sometimes we hate those that we love
and then we love those whom we loathe.)

475

Carlos!

CARLOS: Yes?

ANGELA: Sit in this chair, please do.

CARLOS: Thank you for asking me to sit here near you.

*CARLOS sits in the middle chair, as will the others who are called
later*

ANGELA: Carlos, you've been so cool towards me.

I'm upset by that change, as you see.

480

I used to see the love in your eyes;

now I can't. Is it something that I

have done, or is there someone else?

CARLOS: What are you up to now, my pet?

Since I first began to love you, truly

485

I've been the one who has had to worry

about your fidelity. You've kept me in doubt.

How can you doubt my love for you now?

The MOTHER speaks as if she were commenting on the book

MOTHER: Stupid girl! Why not take the advice

of your parents and teacher, the lights

490

that should guide your way? Why persist

in chasing a love that's impoverished?

Find the real wealth of a good life;

find a man who'll make you his wife.

To ANGELA and CARLOS

What a fine book! What lessons it contains! 495

I'll have to turn the corner on this page.

CARLOS: Who is that your mother is talking to?

ANGELA: When she sees something she thinks is good,
something not to be missed, she reads it aloud.

CARLOS: What if she heard....? 500

ANGELA: She'd kill me here and now.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, be my guards!

ALEJANDRO: Weren't you paying attention to your cards?

CARLOS: Alejandro must have won a hand at last!

ANGELA: Just who is he?

CARLOS: A friend, a man
who's married to a woman from heaven. 505

ANGELA: That's it!

That's why you're behaving like this.

"A woman from heaven!" Every word you say

is just so much talk. You have changed!

You don't love me any more. I know it's true.

CARLOS: There's nobody I care for more than you. 510

LUIS: A hit!

CARLOS: I don't love anybody more!

DIEGO: More!

LUIS: And another!

CARLOS: You're being a terror!

When you say love,...

ALEJANDRO: You stopped!

CARLOS: Just how
has my love for you changed? Tell me now.
ALEJANDRO: Give me another! 515

ANGELA: Didn't you hear
what they said? Well, that's my answer.

CARLOS: If the game means more to you than I do,

I'll take my hand over there away from you

so I won't have to hear more of your nonsense.

With your permission, I'll leave your presence. 520

CARLOS gets up and goes to play

MOTHER: I hope that's the end of that!

ANGELA: Next time,
I'll try to do better.

ALEJANDRO: These cards of mine
have given me nothing! My money is gone.

GOMEZ: Well, we can play for whatever you have on.

Don LUIS leaves the game with a gold chain that he has won

MOTHER: Don Luis won that game! Wake up, child! 525

Oh, Don Luis, come and sit for a while.

We worried so about how you were doing
but it seems, after all, you weren't losing.

LUIS: (I've loved Angela since giving her the ring. **Aside**
To make a man fall in love there's nothing 530
works faster than giving a girl a gift
unless it's for her to show jealousy for him.
I've been asked to sit with them here.
Maybe she is interested in me, the dear.)

Don LUIS sits between the women

ANGELA: As I watched you play, I was so upset 535

at the thought you might lose the bet
that I set this ring and money aside
in case you might need them tonight.

LUIS: Instead, I've won this.

ANGELA: It's very pretty!

LUIS: Since we first met and I saw your beauty 540
I've wanted to offer you all I own,
along with myself.

The MOTHER talks as if she were commenting on her reading

MOTHER: A good point! So!
Girl, don't let this chance pass you by!

LUIS: I've never known true love until now, so I... 545
I was meant for you from the day I was born.

ANGELA: What? You've never been in love before?

MOTHER: You missed the point! Pay attention!
Get back to business. What's his intention?

LUIS: That book seems to have quite an effect. 550
She reads with such expression!

ANGELA: Do you expect

me to believe that a man with your experience,
one so generous and with such fine bearing,
has never before felt love ripping and tearing
at his heart? How can I refuse such a swain,
especially one who offered his golden chain 555
after having given me this diamond ring?
MOTHER: That's the point you should be making!
LUIS: If you are worth it, why shouldn't I?

***ROQUE enters and, standing on something, puts himself into
position to watch them play***

ROQUE: (I followed Alejandro here this time
sticking to his trail like the hound I am. 560
It was easy enough to find his track
now that they've been bleeding him again.
There he is playing with might and main
his back to wall and his sword unsheathed.
He's wearing the diamond necklace, I see 565
and it's his turn to deal. His suit is clubs.
Oh, oh! Those are spades! Now that's a dud!
Dig deeper into the pile! Don't do that!
Don't let him win. Now that you've got a jack,
keep it in the hole. Spit in his face! 570
Good God! He just dealt that guy an ace!)
Troy has certainly gone down to defeat.

He speak this last line aloud

DIEGO: Who's that?
ALEJANDRO: You ass, why are you following
me?
You bring bad luck when you watch me play.
ROQUE: Who brings it when I'm not in on the game? 575
GOMEZ: What's that clown doing here?
ROQUE: You're a real card!
GOMEZ: Call me an ass and a joker as your reward
if I show in any way that you've upset me.
ROQUE: A good fifth is one way we can make peace.
GOMEZ: I'd be only too glad to take you up on that! 580
Gentlemen, you have the cards till I get back.

Exit GOMEZ and ROQUE

ANGELA: Well, at last it seems you told the truth.
You say it's fate and I agree with you
when in comes to love. As a sign
that I am yours, I would like to buy 585
a necklace exactly like that golden chain
to remind me that I am your humble slave.

The MOTHER speaks as if commenting upon her reading

MOTHER: How nice!
LUIS: If I gave you this to be that sign,
I could be quite certain that you were mine.
ANGELA: I'll gladly wear it, but you'll have to see 590
my mother doesn't find out or she'll kill me!
MOTHER: (With kindness.) **Aside**
LUIS: For the first time ever,
a slave is putting a chain on his master.

He gives her the chain, getting up as if he were going to rejoin the game

ANGELA: He who gives is the master. Isn't that clear?
My mother must not see what's going on here. 595
Why not pretend more interest in the game?
LUIS: I've heard say that "Love, like an open flame,
is hard to cover up." This is my lucky day:
I won the diamond, gold, and your love and faith.

He gets up and goes back to the game and don DIEGO leaves the table with Alejandro's diamond necklace

ANGELA: Look, Mother, I got it! 600
ALEJANDRO: Not so quick!
God damn it if that not some vile trick!
Leaving a game just after you have won!
DIEGO: I'd like to leave as a winner, just once.
CARLOS: We'll go ahead and play without you, then.

The MOTHER and ANGELA speak aside

MOTHER: It seems Don Diego just won the necklace. 605
That's a prize worth having!

ANGELA: I'll do it!
I'll play a couple more little tricks.

The MOTHER speaks now to Don DIEGO

MOTHER: I've read two chapters that were interesting,
but this one seems even more fascinating,
pleasant but puzzling at the same time. 610
Don Diego, come entertain Angela for a while.

Don DIEGO sits between them as the others have

DIEGO: All the gods are smiling at me today.
It seems that everything is going my way.
First, Lady Luck let me win this,
now you've honored me by asking me to sit 615
here with you.

ANGELA: I was disturbed and anxious.
You'll never know how I feared you would lose.
DIEGO: You were upset about whether I won or I lost?
You were worried about me?

ANGELA: Don't take it wrong,
but I said to my mother, "If Don Diego loses 620
I want to give him all of these jewels
so he can get even and not hate me."
But God in His kindness sent me relief.

DIEGO: (She's hinting now for a piece of the lot. **Aside**
I wonder if these few coins from the pot 625
will do.) Your prayers made me thrive,
and God once declared that we pay tithes,
so please accept this purse from me.

ANGELA: Did you think I wanted part of the pot?
Don Diego, I only live to care for you! 630
You can't think much of me. Don't be fooled.
I've always been good. My mother, you see,
is the only one ever to have been jealous of me.
Love is all I have, all I will accept.

But heaven knows how much I want to present 635
you with all I have, even that secret treasure
to make your rich, not with gold but pleasure.

DIEGO: Angela, such an offer has only one answer.
Brand me now! I'm your slave forever.
But, before I forget to show my gratitude, 640

I want to give your mother this. Ma'am, you...

MOTHER: What's that?

DIEGO: Pardon me, ma'am, please
take this purse.

MOTHER: Take what? Never! Not me!

ANGELA: Don't you see that you're being impolite?

It's the custom for gentlemen, as their right,
to make gifts when they've won a game.

645

MOTHER: Well, if that's the custom...

She takes it

ALEJANDRO: For shame,
you damned old witch! You lying thief!
Damn your black heart, you one-eyed queen!
Every time you show up, I lose the hand!

650

MOTHER: (What a shock! I thought that man **Aside**
was talking to me.)

ANGELA: What will you do now,
you apprentice lover, take the necklace around
to someone else and say you got it for her?

DIEGO: I don't have another woman, I swear.

655

ANGELA: If that's the truth, a girl who could say
she loves you ought to be happy and gay.

Her mother reads the following aloud

MOTHER: "Diligence conquers all. A mountain peak
is made of rock, yet the claws of a beast
eventually scratch it away to nothing."

660

You should read this book. What fine things
it has to say! What lessons to teach

ANGELA: That necklace is more a woman's piece
than something a man should wear.

Some woman will pretend to love you
and you, you innocent child --generous too--
will think of it as something you won
at cards and give it away as a proof of love.

665

She'll be in your debt, you'll have a "lady,"
and I'll be alone. Don Diego, as for me ,

670

I wish that I never came to live in Madrid.

DIEGO: It is not a thing I could easily give
someone else too freely or quickly.

ANGELA: But it cost you nothing, really,
and you are the soul of generosity. 675

MOTHER: "I can't believe this is happening!"

DIEGO: It's yours. I hope, as you can see,
you and the diamonds are happy together.

ANGELA: How coldly you said that! I could never
accept a present given in that spirit. 680

But please, for your own good, do one thing.

Give me your word, swear on your life,
to save it for the one who'll be your wife.

DIEGO: I promise.

ANGELA: You are too soft and malleable.

I'll take it now to keep with my valuables. 685

Then you won't have it to give away,
to back a bet, or hide in some dark place
where it will languish for lack of light.

DIEGO: (This is my lucky day. She all mine.) **Aside** **She goes**
about the business of taking the necklace from him

ANGELA: Until you marry, I'll guard this piece. 690

The stones will be an altar of memories.

May the lady who gives you her heart
reflect its value, if only in part.

DIEGO: If you love me as you say you do,
the necklace is certainly safe with you. 695

ANGELA: You can be sure of that.

MOTHER: (He should be sure!) **Aside**

LUIS: You can't bet with words unless they're secured.

ALEJANDRO: My word's better than that of some I could name.

LUIS: You're so angry you can't see straight.

ALEJANDRO: Whether I'm angry or not, my word alone
is worth more than everything you own. 700

If you don't agree, you're a real fool!

***ALEJANDRO leaves the game having lost the decoration from
around his shoulder. He exits***

CARLOS: All I win is a ribbon to decorate my suit!

LUIS: Ladies, your house is a place sacred to me.

I can't use my sword here. Pardon me, please. 705

I'll be right back.

CARLOS: What's going on?

You two have no reason to fight.

Don LUIS leaves, following ALEJANDRO

ANGELA: Wait, Carlos.

Don Diego is his best friend. Let him go.

Hurry and follow them, please, Don Diego.

DIEGO: Losing so much may give Alejandro an excuse.

710

Don DIEGO leaves

ANGELA: Isn't his wife the one so attractive to you?

CARLOS: You're making a mistake. Why insist
on going back over all that again?

ANGELA: I can see how your heart must yearn
to have the ribbon others have spurned.

715

It belonged to the husband of that "heavenly woman."

CARLOS: You're just jealous!

ANGELA: (No, greedy.) **Aside** CARLOS throws
the ribbon on the floor and leaves

CARLOS: That's what I think that ribbon is worth!

That and all the gold in the world!

ANGELA: Carlos, listen...

MOTHER: Now, things seem right to me.

*The MOTHER picks up the ribbon while ANGELA calls after
CARLOS*

ANGELA: Stop, listen...

720

MOTHER: Girl, how stupid can you be?

Leave him alone!

ANGELA: You gave me your word...

MOTHER: You're crazy!

ANGELA: How awful!

MOTHER: How ignorant you are!

*The two women leave. [The scene changes back to Alejandro's
house]. ALEJANDRO and ROQUE enter*

ALEJANDRO: Did they follow us?

ROQUE: Nobody's come this way,
and we are almost home. What a day!

ALEJANDRO: Roque, have you ever seen such luck? 725
Why do I want insist on gambling so much?

ROQUE: You inherited it from the inventor of cards,
from old Vilhán himself.
Any gambler, no matter how smart,
--in this I know I'm correct-- 730
undoubtedly is the most obstinate brute
that ever brayed at night.
Was there ever a monkey who fell into a pool,
--just imagine his plight--
so big and deep that he might drown 735
would go near water again?
Was there ever a mule who stepped into a hole,
that made him stumble or trip,
would ever again pass that same way
unless he watched his feet? 740
Was there ever an ass who carelessly ate
poisonous oleander leaves
and suffered revolutions deep in his gut
would taste that plant again?
Was there ever a fox, any sly old cuss, 745
who sneaked in among the hens,
to be scared stiff by some alert farmer
would dare return to the coop?
The dumbest beast learns from one misadventure
but a gambler's the real fool. 750
ALEJANDRO: You're right, but I'm so obstinate
that all I hate is leaving the game.
ROQUE: Well, go on back and play.
ALEJANDRO: How can I
if I have nothing left to bet tonight?
ROQUE: If, instead of just making a face, 755
you had taken a role in some play,
you'd at least have the costume left
as something of value you could bet.
You're like the fresh water sailor
who came home to his family and girl, 760
stamping about and gaily dressed,
shouting, "To war, to war," as he left.
How proud and glorious it all seemed.
The battle was lost and he was wiped clean
so he sneaked quietly back into town. 765

When they asked him what had gone on,
he answered softly, "I was away at war."
That just what you have done. Good Lord!
You left home all covered with jewels,
pretty as Narcissus or the lover Virenus, 770
dressed in starched collar and lace cuffs,
your diamonds reflecting the daytime sun.
How proudly you shouted "To games and dames!"
Now you return having lost at the game.
When they ask you what you have done, 775
you can shyly whisper, "I gambled and lost."
ALEJANDRO: That's enough, Roque, I'm not made of stone.

ISABEL enters

ROQUE: Here comes your wife.
ALEJANDRO: Who is more alone
or feels more ashamed than I do now?
ISABEL: Not a word for me when you enter the house? 780
Why so quiet? Are you feeling all right?
Why are looking so sad?
ALEJANDRO: Really, I am fine.
ISABEL: Are you sure?
ALEJANDRO: I'm as well as ever.
ISABEL: Alejandro, you look like death warmed over.
Tell me what happened to upset you so. 785
ALEJANDRO: I lost your diamonds and all my gold.
ISABEL: It's not that important. Don't be upset.
Believe me, I have some valuables left.

ISABEL speaks to ROQUE

Go and bring my jewel case here to me.

Exit ROQUE

Alejandro, return to the game, if you please. 790
I want you to be happy, no matter the cost.
ALEJANDRO: Your love and generosity have me at a loss,
Isabel. Your kindness is a real consolation
in this time of sadness and desperation.
ISABEL: I'm not Midas and don't have his wealth 795
but all I have is yours, my love as well.

ALEJANDRO: Live and love me forever, dear Isabel.

Enter ROQUE with the jewel case

ISABEL: Take these buckles and the diamond brooch,
and these pins as bright as my love for you.

This belt, too, and anything else you see.

800

ALEJANDRO: Every man in the world should envy me.

ROQUE and ALEJANDRO speak off to one side

ROQUE: How can you accept those things from your wife?

ALEJANDRO: Once the bug bites, you're a gambler for life.

ROQUE: (Is there any moral law a gambler won't defy?) **Aside**

ALEJANDRO: Take this brooch to Angela and tell her I,

805

even though I gambled and lost at her house,

still feel attracted to her beauty now

and I'm sorry for having left so rudely.

ROQUE: (I can't believe this!) **Aside**

ALEJANDRO: And say it was truly
a pleasure to have lost in her presence.

810

Tell her this reflects her beauty.

ROQUE: (Nonsense!) **Aside**

ALEJANDRO: And don't let Isabel see what I gave you.

ALEJANDRO speaks to ISABEL

Goodbye. I'll be back in an hour or two.

I can hardly wait to return to you. Indeed,

I feel lucky to know how much you love me.

815

Exit ALEJANDRO

ISABEL: Was what I just did --tell me the truth, Roque--
a sign of true love or sheer stupidity?

ROQUE: An asinine blunder worthy of any jenny
who ever made one in pasture or field.

ISABEL: But I want him to be happy.

820

ROQUE: Is that any reason
to give your jewels to a gambler in season?

ISABEL: I did it for love.

ROQUE: Well, I saved half

the spilled milk. Keep this brooch, ma'am,
but don't let him know I returned it to you.
It could well cost me my life if he knew.

825

Exit ROQUE

ISABEL: One happy sailor sets sail in his craft
seeking his fortune on a peaceful sea
in spite of waves and winds blowing free
he returns to port with triumphal flags aloft.
Another dares to brave the mighty ocean
but immediately feels the rigor of the main
and goes to his death below billowed waves.
Marriage is like that for every woman.
She has peace and love while Fortune reigns
but, when Fate demands payment on account,
she finds help neither in virtue nor beauty.
I don't know what my fate is to be
but they say that in a gambler's house
happiness lasts but a few sweet days.

830

835

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Enter ALEJANDRO and ROQUE [at ALEJANDRO's house]

ALEJANDRO: Will the stars who have decided my fate
ever pity the wreck they have made,
destroying my temper and fortune?
Oh, heaven above, so lovely yet angry,
if you can change the face of the moon,
why do you never smile graciously on me?
You, inconstant Fortune, are responsible
for my bad luck, an affliction as eternal
as you and all your random evils.
Even the devil created no worse trouble
when he invented three diabolical ways
to destroy a man in this modern age:
duels with which to shatter his honor;
powerful explosives to take his life;
and the worst of all Hell's terrors,

840

845

850

cards that steal his wealth and time. 855

ROQUE: Why play cards if you know you'll lose
and end up crying like Jeremiah? You...

ALEJANDRO: I'll never gamble again as long as I live.

ROQUE: I'm reminded of a thief who made a promise:

Caught after spending his life in crime, 860
he was sentenced to lose his life.

He had climbed the stairs up to the gallows;
the hangman was set and ready to go.

The thief lifted his eyes above the ledge
and finally made the following pledge: 865

"Dear God in Heaven, Light of the World,
deliver me now and you have my word,
I'll never steal again from poor or rich,
nothing at all, as long as I live."

Well, sir, this story fits your situation. 870

You're ready, after all this preparation,
to take the pledge because nothing is left
you can use to gamble.

ALEJANDRO: After all you said,

Roque, there is at least one consolation.

ROQUE: What's that? 875

ALEJANDRO: That angel I found in heaven.

What did she say to you about the brooch?

Tell me again. Was she cool toward you
or did she seem pleased with the gift?

Isn't she beautiful?

ROQUE: That's the trick!

There's the cure for your problem: 880
something I learned from a vet.

He said if you put two piles of hay,
one on each side of a burro,

he would have such beastly taste
he couldn't decide which way to go 885

and wouldn't take a bite of either.

That's how we can relieve your itch.

We'll give you a chair as a place to sit,
a whore on one side and cards on the other

and, being inclined to one and the other, 890

you won't be able to fix upon either

nor to choose between Narcissus and Vilhán.

ALEJANDRO: Damn your wit, but you do make me laugh.

ROQUE: You can't blame me for being a clown!
 If I'm so stupid, why laugh just now? 895
 ALEJANDRO: Tell me about Angela. What did she say?
 ROQUE: I must be Cupid as well as your page.
 I gave her the brooch, which she accepted
 very courteously, and then she said
 that she hoped you'd protect her name 900
 and that the only reason she would take
 the gift was the great love she felt.
 She said that until now she'd never met
 a man more to her taste and pleasure;
 she said her love was a secret treasure 905
 because of what her mother might think.
 When she's there, she won't say a thing;
 she'll pretend to be angry with you now
 if you come back to gamble at her house.
 That was her sentence just as she put it. 910
 (May God forgive me for telling this fib!) **Aside**
 ALEJANDRO: Well, I'm lucky in one thing, at least,
 and that's enough to make me happy.
 My luck can't be as bad as it seems.
 Until today she had never met me 915
 and already she says she loves me truly!
 I'm worried I upset her by taking my leave
 in a manner that was so angry and hasty.
 ROQUE: Couldn't it be instead that you seemed
 too confident and overly carefree? 920
 ALEJANDRO: I have a letter ready here for her.
 I hoped that would make me feel better.
 I want you to take it to her now.
 ROQUE: (Lies keep growing! Just notice how! **Aside**
 But I have to protect him from himself.) 925

ALEJANDRO gives ROQUE the letter

ALEJANDRO: Roque, you will find Isabel's new dress
 hidden up stairs. It's all there is left
 that has any value out of all my wealth.
 Get it out of the house without being seen
 and take it with this to that modern Daphne, 930
 Angela, who is even more beautiful,
 more cruel, and much more unattainable.
 ROQUE: (Have you ever seen a dumber lout? **Aside**

I'd never be able to sneak that out
and I'd certainly never take it to her.) 935

ALEJANDRO: And don't come back without an answer.

ROQUE: I'll bring one back. (But between us, **Aside**
one designed by my home-grown genius.)

ROQUE exits

ALEJANDRO: Cupid, from now on, I worship at your temple.
I swear to you that my love has no equal. 940

Gambling may, indeed, have made me prodigious
but blind Love has miraculously made me generous.

ISABEL enters

ISABEL: Alejandro, you must take care of yourself
or you will wind up losing your health,
and that is what is important to me. 945

Eating at odd hours, too little sleep,
and staying out until late at night.
That's no way to manage your life,
a life on which my happiness depends.
That's what upsets me, not that you left
me alone to worry what will become of me. 950
Your wish is my command. I'll always be...

ALEJANDRO: Angel, tell me, why are you so disturbed?

ISABEL: So I'm an Angel? Is that what I heard?
It's pretty bad when the angel who lives
in your heart appears openly on your lips. 955
But, even then, if there's a place for me,
I accept the situation because, you see,
your heart's large enough for two to dwell.

ALEJANDRO: Did it upset you to be called an angel? 960

ISABEL: You must think I'm an agent for punishment
since it seems I give you no enjoyment.

ALEJANDRO: Stop your trying to make me angry.

Bring me some food. I'm very hungry.

ISABEL: There's nothing here that's fit to eat. 965

ALEJANDRO: Why not?

ISABEL: You took the money, jewelry,
silverware, and all the valuables with you.

ALEJANDRO: Ungrateful woman! Pretending, as you do,
that you love me! By Almighty God,

I swear I'll bring this to a stop! 970

ALEJANDRO puts his hand on his dagger

ISABEL: What can I do? You took every last bit!

ALEJANDRO: Get out there and hustle for it!

(Is there anything a gambler won't say **Aside**
if he really wants to get his way?)

ISABEL: So you have a dagger? Great God above! 975
You call that honor? You call that love?

ALEJANDRO exits

Oh, glorious shining lights
dwelling in the heavenly heights,
hear, if you will, my complaint,
the troubles that make me cry 980
tears enough to replace the rain:
jealousy, neglect, deceit and disdain.

Oh, beautiful moon above,
you of the everchanging face,
hear the pitiful voice of love, 985
a simple woman, a turtle dove,
suffering with an ungrateful mate
who in just a month has lost his faith.

MARCELO enters but remains at the door listening to ISABEL

Miserable and deceived am I,
a innocent bird who tried to fly. 990

My escape from the trap has failed.

I'm in prison and the term is life.

Instead of hearing love's sweet strains,
there's only the dirge of tears and pain.

The wind's made stronger by my sighs, 995
my tears enhance the sea, my love the fire,
and the earth moans with my sorrow and pain.

No one has suffered as much as I.

I will all I have to the grave's domain:
the pale bones and cold ashes of my remains. 1000

MARCELO: Isabel darling, light of my life,
wipe the tears from your pretty face.

Dawn alone should weep that way.

Let the sunbeams shine from your eyes.
 Only clouds should bring the rain, 1005
 not the stars that shine with love.
 Dry those pools reflecting heaven above
 and tell me what makes your heart ache.
 ISABEL: It's Alejandro, sir. He's makes me suffer
 by carrying on with some woman or other. 1010
 He gambled away the money, the silver
 the jewelry, and the clothing we had,
 and mistreats me so I think he's mad.
 He asked me for food we didn't have
 and threatened me with his dagger. 1015
 He doesn't care that I'm dying of hunger.
 Then he ordered me to go hustle for it!
 How could he say anything so evil,
 or be so vile as to give that order?
 How could a man, even one without honor, 1020
 say it unless he had already surrendered
 soul and body to a wasted and wanton life
 willingly living with a whore for a wife?
 Even then, he'd cover up the sordid offense.
 MARCELO: Don't cry about the lack of good sense, 1025
 or prodigal passions of that ingrate.
 The Phoenix will be meat for your plate,
 and it's feathers will adorn your cap.
 My wealth is yours. So that is that.
 I have plenty of jewels and money left. 1030
 I'll become King Midas for you, my pet.
 All you have lost will be restored.
 My mountains are filled with gold;
 my lagoons are replete with pearls.
 The month of May with its jeweled birds 1035
 sipping nectar from the sweetest flowers,
 its silver lilies, its rubied roses,
 will have no finer adornment than you.
 Not even the peacock whose plumes
 outdo the king's rich crown, 1040
 the envy of every bird around
 for its eyes of emerald green,
 is more beautiful than you will be.

MARCELO gives ISABEL a purse

Take this and prepare him a meal.
Be sure to act like you were pleased. 1045
Wear your best jewels and a new gown,
but never, never, let him find out
they came from me. The barbarities
he said to you will give me the means
now, to make him mend his ways. 1050
Fear that his honor has been debased
will prevail and bring him to heel.
Just leave all explanations to me.

ROQUE enters carrying a dress

ROQUE: Madam, won't you please take this gown
and put it where it will never be found. 1055
MARCELO: Were you supposed to take that to him
to sell and gamble with what it would bring?
ROQUE: That is what he had asked me to do.
There's another thing to tell you, too:
I feel bad about the diamond necklace 1060
he lost playing in last night's game.
I'll do my best to bring it home.
It was your favorite piece, I know.

To ISABEL

MARCELO: Roque is one servant you can trust.

To ROQUE

We have to cure this prodigal's lusts, 1065
Roque, will you help me do that?
ROQUE: And bring him home? I hope we can.
I'd like a taste of the fatted calf.

***MARCELO, ROQUE, AND ISABEL exit. CARLOS and
DOMINGO enter***

CARLOS: Neither Don Diego nor Don Luis were there.
DOMINGO: They've left, but I don't know for where. 1070
CARLOS: They could be at Don Pedro's house.
Go see if there's a game there now.
No! I think I'll go see for myself.

DOMINGO: Then I'll wait for you here, instead.

CARLOS exits. Don DIEGO and Don LUIS enter

DIEGO: If Alejandro's there at Don Pedro's, 1075
you'll have something to say, I know.

LUIS: I certainly will, but he didn't go so far
that I feel a need to do more than talk.

DIEGO: Why don't we go visit Angela, then?

LUIS: It's still early for that. Instead, 1080
if there's a game going on at this time
maybe we could play for a while.

To DOMINGO

DIEGO: Is Carlos here?

DOMINGO: He's out looking for you.

ROQUE enters

ROQUE: (I'm out of breath from running, whew! **Aside**
But I saw don Diego coming this way.) 1085

Please sir, I have something to say.

DIEGO: What is it, Roque?

ROQUE: Marcelo sent me
for the diamond necklace as you see.
It holds special meaning for him, so...
he'll pay its value in silver or gold. 1090

DIEGO: As soon as I won it, I gave it to a lady
for safe keeping. It would seem grossly
impolite to ask for its return so soon.
In a few days I'd be very happy to do
as he asks. 1095

LUIS and DIEGO exit

ROQUE: (He already gave it away! **Aside**
Well I hope to die right here and today
if that lady¹ from Seville hasn't tricked
him, too! She is the one who has it!
I'll wait here for Alejandro to come out
so I can give him that letter now. 1100
I can say it's from "someone who cares.")

DOMINGO: By any chance, sir, is your master in there

ROQUE: That, or watching the game.

Where are you from?

DOMINGO: Seville. Domingo's my name.

ROQUE: Is your master a gambler, too?

DOMINGO: As you see.

Here I am, waiting for him to leave.

1105

And my money's burning a hole in my pocket.

ROQUE: We could play now if you're ready to lose it.

As a gambler's servant should, you know,

I have a deck with me, ready to go.

DOMINGO: Let the devil go back to Hell! Tell me,

1110

ROQUE: This cape will serve as our carpet

since there is no table.

DOMINGO: Can we sit on it?

ROQUE: I like to be comfortable when I play.

Sword, watch my hat.

DOMINGO: What's our game?

ROQUE: Straight twenty-one.

1115

DOMINGO: Cut for the deal!

ROQUE: A queen!

DOMINGO: A king! The deck belongs to me!

Be brave now!

ROQUE: You, too! I'll bet four.

DOMINGO: Virgin of Guadalupe, make this team work.

An ace and a seven!

ROQUE: Ace and a ten!

DOMINGO: You got me, you fool!

1120

ROQUE: You go to Hell!

Join the devil!

DOMINGO: Your bet this time?

ROQUE: Another four.

DOMINGO: I got a jack and a nine!

Get along dogies!

ROQUE: A four and two eights!

Great Jupiter's ghost!

*ROQUE bends over the cape picking up the money that's lying in
plain sight*

DOMINGO: I lost again!

ROQUE: Will you try once more?

1125

DOMINGO: I'll try!

ROQUE: Double or nothing!

DOMINGO: A seven and a five!

Give me another!

ROQUE: A queen! The pot is mine!

DOMINGO: I lost again!

ROQUE: (If I can keep winning **Aside**
as easily as Alejandro keeps losing...)

DOMINGO: Until I win a hand, I've got the deal!

1130

ROQUE: I'll bet another eight!

DOMINGO: A king and a three!

And here comes Philip with his mighty sword!

ROQUE: The devil made me do it, the pot's my reward!

DOMINGO: God damn it! No cuckold wearing horns
ever had luck that was any worse!

1135

*DOMINGO throws the deck of cards behind ROQUE who gets up
to gather the deck. In the meanwhile, DOMINGO picks up the
cape, the sword, and the money and exits quickly*

ROQUE: All that because you lost some money?

All right, I'll pick them up, but really,
next time the loser has to do so.

Play with a pro and you have to know
how to lose, sure as the sun rises and sets.

1140

Bet fast, bet a lot, and hedge your bets.

You Sevillian dog, you Andalusian bastard!

DOMINGO goes in and out looking for him

You drunken flunky, you mulescratcher,
you useless shoveler of horse manure!

You've left me here, naked as a jaybird!

1145

Hey, my hat, my money, my cape and sword!

Damn it, he cleaned me out. Good Lord!

ALEJANDRO enters

ALEJANDRO: There is neither fortune or fate,
good or bad, in this day and age.

God has certainly judged me harshly
to ruin my life so completely.

1150

Deserved or not, both good and evil
are bestowed according to God's will.

I lost all I had gambling at cards
and pawned my word for even more. 1155
The earth should open its gaping maw
and swallow me whole. Roque! What?
What are you doing without your cape?

ROQUE pretends to be playing a ball game

ROQUE: Come on there! Just one more game!
One on one! Where's the ball, now? 1160
Let's play. There you are. Foul!
That's no foul! The goal is over here!
It's mine! Give it to me! Watch your rear!
Oh, you chicken! Get it! Get it!

ROQUE pretends to blow up the ball

Chis, chis, chis! Now it's full. Chis! 1165
Play ball! That's good! I got fifteen.
You didn't either! You're at thirteen!
Hey, eggplant head, I got it past you!
Up your mother! I did get it through!
ALEJANDRO: Roque, are you drunk or are you crazy? 1170
ROQUE: I think I'm a little bit of each.
ALEJANDRO: Tell me what you think you're doing.
ROQUE: See for yourself, we're here playing.
ALEJANDRO: Where's your cape?

ROQUE: It's too much weight.
Have you ever seen anyone play a game 1175
wearing a hat or a cape at the same time?
ALEJANDRO: Tell me, Roque, and don't try to lie,
what you are doing without your things?
ROQUE: I went to sleep out here, and I think
somebody stole them. 1180

ALEJANDRO: Is that a fact
or just a trick?

ROQUE: (A nasty one, at that!) **Aside**
ALEJANDRO: Were you napping here on the street?
Did you do what I asked you to do for me?
ROQUE: I did what you asked me to do first.
ALEJANDRO: Did you bring me an answer from her? 1185
ROQUE: That I did!

ALEJANDRO: I'm sorry that I've been left

with nothing, not a jewel, not a cent.
I don't dare visit Angela without them;
I was so much better off when we first met.
What would she think of me now? 1190

ROQUE: Well, I know
a way around that.

ALEJANDRO: Give me her note.

ROQUE: Listen to me first. Once upon a time,
while committing some kind of minor crime
a certain vixen fell into a wicked trap
a farmer had set. It closed with a snap! 1195

She wiggled loose but left her tail behind
and there she was, as sad and out of her mind
as any old boozier, when the wily fox, her king
called for everyone to come to a meeting
to discuss some important business or other. 1200

Everyone met in the council chamber,
and to cover up she stayed in her seat
and made a motion that all should be freed
from the bother of carrying their tails
because all they're good for is carrying hair 1205
and as a handle by which to be caught.

She said what was needed was a new law
to save many lives, as it surely would,
ordering that everyone's tail be removed.

At this point the wise old king decreed, 1210
"Stand up, please, we'd all like to see
if you still have yours where it ought to be."

She stood and the whole court laughed.
Now you convince your friends like that:
They should leave their finery at home 1215

because all it's good for, as you know,
is for betting on cards or giving away.
I'll call the servants together to say
that we should give up our capes and hats.
We'd all look like king's men doing that. 1220

ALEJANDRO: Always the joker!

ROQUE: And you always sad!

ALEJANDRO: Give me the note you say you have
and see if there's a bite to eat at home.
I haven't eaten today.

ROQUE: Here's the note,
an arrow of gold taken from Cupid's quiver. 1225

ROQUE exits

ALEJANDRO: The seal on this letter makes me shiver
with anticipation. Stand and deliver!

ALEJANDRO reads the letter

"Sir: Your discourtesy has left me greatly upset
since, although my love for you is great, you show no
respect for my command. You have not kept your word. 1230
How callous you are! I'm particularly upset by your
lack of good sense. When all I asked was that you not
gamble any more, couldn't you obey?"

Oh, oh! She knows that I've been gambling.
But that's proof that she loves me indeed! 1235
I'll have to visit her this afternoon.

ROQUE enters

ROQUE: Don Alejandro, I have good news!
The house is in shape for a wedding!
Linens as white as snow are covering
tables decorated with so many flowers 1240
you'd think we'd had April showers.
Roasted partridges, a capon and a peacock
all attacked my nose with their aroma.
There was wine cooling in mountain ice,
enough to give everyone the best advice. 1245
And what to me was even more shocking,
a pile of money, seemingly forgotten,
lying there in open sight on the buffet,
money my mistress too quickly put away.
ALEJANDRO: Is she mad at me? 1250

ROQUE: She seemed to be happy,
without a trace of anger or animosity
--she must keep them occupied elsewhere--.
I never saw her look prettier or more fair.
ALEJANDRO: I wonder where she borrowed the money.
ROQUE: Well, not from your father! Today he told me, 1255
"Be sure to warn my son to preserve his wealth.
He has all I had to give. Nothing is left.

ALEJANDRO: Let's eat then. It seems Fortune's goodness never leaves anyone completely helpless.

ROQUE exits

A terrible thought has come to my mind: 1260
My lack of good fortune is undeniable fact.
Fantasy and Illusion stop in your tracks!
Stay locked up in my soul, deep inside,
you imagined evil, you groundless worry,
you incongruous shadow, whatever you may be. 1265
Don't pass my lips nor reach outside,
don't war on my thoughts so vengefully.
Can Isabel be aggrieved and still be happy?
Can my house be rich and poor at one time?
How can Isabel pay for food and flowers 1270
if no friend or relative has come around?
I wish God would take me back in time.
Why did I say that to her when I was mad?
Fantasy and Illusion stop in your tracks!
She refused me food for once in her life 1275
saying there was nothing left in the house.
I told her to go out and hustle it now.
If she's the image of a perfect wife,
a Lucretia, a Portia, a Penelope in truth,
where is the fault in what she could do? 1280
Never in the deepest silence of night
should any man think a thing like that!
Fantasy and Illusion stop in your tracks!

ROQUE and FABIAN enter

ROQUE: Are you coming to eat?

ALEJANDRO: I'm on my way.

ALEJANDRO exits

ROQUE: I wanted to ask if you can help me today 1285
in a matter we must keep confidential.

FABIAN: For good or bad?

ROQUE: It's not at all evil.

FABIAN: All right!

ROQUE: Can you fake being a constable?

FABIAN: If it's important, I'm really quite able.

ROQUE and FABIAN exit. The MOTHER and GOMEZ enter

GOMEZ: Marcelo Gentile is waiting at the door
for permission to enter. 1290

MOTHER: What's he here for?
Who is he?

GOMEZ: I wish I had the money he has!
As to why he's here I can't tell you that.
He's neither young or old, he is Genoese,
and as wise and proper as he seems to be. 1295
MOTHER: Let him enter in wealth and in health!
(He must have come to make arrangements **Aside**
for a marriage to Angela, the angel.)

MARCELO enters

MARCELO: (I'll pretend to be as stupid as I'm able **Aside**
and still manage to use this woman now
to keep Alejandro out of this house.) 1300
GOMEZ: She's hard of hearing, so speak up to her.
MARCELO: I am here to serve you.

MOTHER: The same to you, sir.

They sit down

MARCELO: We who are aging with the passage of time
and feel our approaching twilight 1305
do all we can to ensure our peace and comfort.
But, before I say why I came to your door,
perhaps I'd better tell you just who I am.
MOTHER: (This talk smells of matrimony, at that.) **Aside**
MARCELO: I thank God for my honor and wealth... 1310
MOTHER: I know all about that.

MARCELO: Very well, then,
I can skip the preliminaries I had readied
and tell you that now I want to be freed
from doing what I can about domestic chores
since other matters need my attention more. 1315
I am but a simple man, as you can see,
and my age is not an obstacle...

MOTHER: (So he **Aside**

thinks that's it. Well, Angela's young
 and a spirited filly for that old stud.)
 MARCELO: ...and now I'm looking to marry again 1320
 so I can enjoy what time I have left.
 I do have a son, but I've taken care of him
 already giving him what he should inherit.
 I have a million or so left, so I'm rich.
 Why should I delay a comfortable marriage? 1325
 MOTHER: (My! Isn't that a nice round amount? **Aside**
 I hope that I can convince her now
 that it's for her own good to accept.
 If she were his wife, we'd both live well.
 MARCELO: After learning all I could about you 1330
 I decided to come see what you would do.
 I didn't want to use a marriage broker
 so I came myself to make the offer.
 I beg you, please...
 MOTHER: (A wonderful man! **Aside**
 I will convince her...if only I can!) 1335
 MARCELO: As I was saying, I beg you, please,
 madam, would you be willing to marry me?
 MOTHER: (Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Is this a dream?) **Aside**
 Did you just say you wanted to marry me?
 MARCELO: Of course! Your age, wisdom and virtue 1340
 are all that I desire.
 MOTHER: (If this is true, **Aside**
 what I have done has earned God's reward.
 Hypocrisy seems to have taken me far.
 But I'm not so old and do keep myself up.)
 If you'll have me, sir, I'm yours to command. 1345
 My obedience and gratitude are yours on demand.
 MARCELO: Now that you have agreed to be mine,
 there is one thing I'll ask at this time:
 Don't let young men come to this house
 to visit and gamble as they have up to now. 1350
 Neighbors are known to have evil minds
 behind the witnesses we call their eyes.
 I am not a jealous man, but I am asking
 you to bar your door until after the wedding,
 a welcome event that should take place soon. 1355
 MOTHER: This is a convent, starting this afternoon.
 (Maybe I should let him know I'm not deaf, **Apart**
 but then again that can wait until I see

how it all ends.)

MARCELO: Now that you've assured me
of my good fortune, may I please leave? 1360

I promise to return to visit you soon.

MOTHER: I'm your willing servant, as is your due.

MARCELO: (You could be my grandmother, for all I care!

Aside

The old witch is as batty as any march hare!

The things a loving father won't do every time 1365
they are needed to correct a wayward child!)

MARCELO exits

MOTHER: I'm about to burst with pleasure and desire!

Angela! I'm so happy my heart is on fire!

ANGELA enters

Angela, just listen...!

ANGELA: You're sure in a hurry!

MOTHER: Not too much of a hurry, as you'll see shortly, 1370
for the fabulous wedding about to take place.

There'll be no more visitors after today.

This is a Carmelite convent now. No, no!

Don't worry, we're just taking a new road.

ANGELA: What are you telling me? 1375

MOTHER: I'm getting married!

ANGELA: To whom?

MOTHER: To a million in gold, as you'll see.

To a wealthy man who is doubly gentle.

ANGELA: Is he very old?

MOTHER: He's only in his forties.

ANGELA: Given our ages, if things are in proportion, 1380
I should be able to marry half a million.

FABIAN enters carries a constable's mace

FABIAN: Is anybody home here?

ANGELA: Who wants to know?

FABIAN: A public servant.

ANGELA: The police? Oh, no!

Dear God, not here!

FABIAN: Why such indignation?
MOTHER: Isn't that enough to ruin the reputation
of the most chaste and decent woman? 1385
FABIAN: Diego Osorio has sent me with a warrant
claiming he won a necklace in this place
and left it your hands to keep it safe.
ANGELA: He's a liar!

FABIAN: Ladies! That just isn't so!
He left the diamonds here as you well know. 1390
Open up your chests, trunks and sleeves.
He sent me to search everywhere I knew how.
A hundred diamonds, he said. I want them now!
There's no good reason for a lady to refuse.

ROQUE looks in at the door

ROQUE: (Don't let those two upset you, you fool!) **Aside** 1395
ANGELA: I promised to give them to him directly.
FABIAN: I can be trusted!

MOTHER: The royal constabulary?
FABIAN: I'm telling the truth. I am well known.
If I have to call for help, you must know
that you'll have even more to explain. 1400
MOTHER: That's true. Don't add fire to the flame.
Give him the necklace and I promise you
you'll have a richer and finer jewel
from your new stepfather in a few days.
As my loving husband he'll do as I say. 1405
Get this man and his mace¹ away from me.
I don't want him seen by Marcelo Gentile.
ANGELA: First, tell me your name.

FABIAN: (Isn't she smart?) **Aside**
They usually call me Constable "Sharpe".
ROQUE: (Good God! No constable would use that name **Aside** 1410
here at the court, nor anywhere in Spain.)

ROQUE exits

FABIAN: How is it possible you never heard my name?
ANGELA: I'll get it for you.
FABIAN: So justice prevails.
ANGELA: And you ask Don Diego, how he could dare.
Tell him his rudeness was too much to bear. 1415

There was no need to send a constable.
Doing things this way was really barbarous.

*ANGELA removes the necklace from her sleeve and gives it to
FABIAN*

FABIAN: He was afraid of something more insidious.

FABIAN exits

MOTHER: That foul, rude, tricky rogue, Don Diego!
Sending a constable! Wouldn't you know? 1420
That could turn you off of men forever!
Wasn't it a lucky thing that your mother
found a loving, faithful, and wealthy man?
ANGELA: My diamonds are gone forever for all that!

MOTHER: Now, don't you see that it's a good thing 1425
to keep the men away for the time being?
Look what happens when you accept a gift.
But think how much worse it could have been!
ANGELA: That stupid constable has finally left
not even looking back to see how we felt. 1430

ALEJANDRO enters carrying a piece of paper

ALEJANDRO:(My love and my own domestic problems **Aside**
have brought me to this heaven on earth,
this paradise of brightness and happiness.)
Pardon me, ladies for coming right in,
but love makes one do quite daring things. 1435
ANGELA: You might as well not have come, sir,
because this house of ours is no longer
a place where men can come to play games.
ALEJANDRO:(She's still mad about what I did today.) **Aside**
ANGELA: Especially someone who has been so rude. 1440
Go gamble elsewhere. I'm tired of you.
ALEJANDRO:(She just repeated what was in her note.) **Aside**
Madam...

ANGELA: Don't give me excuses, you dolt.
ALEJANDRO: (She won't talk with me about it here **Aside**
because her mother might be able to hear.) 1445
ANGELA: I can't say how angry I am with you!

I don't know if you are a king or a rook!

ALEJANDRO:(That's me and Roque! That's truly sharp!) **Aside**

I know you're right in being so harsh,
 but I'll be unhappy if you won't listen 1450
 to my excuses. There were good reasons.
 It was only once, and I will obey you now.

ANGELA: And I will forgive you, if you know how,
 to understand what it was I just said.

ALEJANDRO:(That's her way, I'm willing to bet, **Aside** 1455
 of getting around her mother.) I'll never
 disobey you again. As far as I'm concerned,
 your word is law. You can be sure of that.
 I swear I'll obey if you forget the past.

ANGELA: Well, do it now. 1460

ALEJANDRO: Your command is my pleasure.

To ANGELA

MOTHER: He said he'd obey. Why is he still here?
 Such trouble from someone we hardly know!
 Why can't he understand we want him to go?
 ANGELA: I have never met a man more dense than he.

To ALEJANDRO

What did I say? Didn't you understand me? 1465

ALEJANDRO:I understood you as well as you do yourself,
 but since your mother doesn't hear so well,
 just listen to me for a minute now, please.

ANGELA: You said you heard me. How stupid can you be?
 Didn't I tell you what I want you to do? 1470
 Haven't I made my wishes plain to you?
 Why are you still completely unmovable?

ALEJANDRO:(There, she's telling me not to gamble. **Aside**
 How discreet! Now that's real love!)

ANGELA: You didn't get it yet? Good God above! 1475
 What a jewel!

ALEJANDRO: (What an intelligent way **Aside**
 to thank me for the brooch I sent her today!)
 It can't compare to my desire for you.

The ladies talk between themselves

ANGELA: Have you ever seen such a stubborn fool?
MOTHER: He's so crazy he ought to dress as a clown.

1480

To ALEJANDRO

ANGELA: What happened to your colored outfit now?
ALEJANDRO:(She's thanking me for the dress I sent.)
ANGELA: Now, can you stop being so insistent?
Get out! What? You still don't understand?
If you need an interpreter, call your man.
ALEJANDRO:(Now she wants me to send Roque to her **Aside**
so she can write of her love in a letter.
A note is often interpreter to an affair.)
MOTHER: (Damn that fool! Is he still there?) **Aside**
ALEJANDRO:Goodbye my angel, my delightful sunlight,
my stormy sea. (She's mine all right! **Aside**
Those who've seen me lose when I bet
at cards will never call me unlucky again!)

1485

1490

ALEJANDRO exits

MOTHER: Well! He's finally gone for better or worse.
ANGELA: He caught me when I was already disturbed.
I can't forget how Don Diego treated me.
MOTHER: That vile creature, that low life heel!
ANGELA: What was the constable's name?
MOTHER: Sharpe.

1495

Don LUIS and Don DIEGO enter

DIEGO: Coming here at this time is a little hard.
If you'll keep the secret I'll tell you why.
LUIS: I will, cross my heart and hope to die.
DIEGO: You know that Angela, as is plain to see,
is head over heels in love with me.
LUIS: Then why are you afraid of coming here?
DIEGO: She's a little angry with me now, I fear.
A constable I know was escorting a woman
when I stopped to ask him what she had done
out on the street in front of this house,
just then, Angela came out looking around.
She has to have seen me asking about her
and will certainly be jealous and concerned.

1500

1505

1510

LUIS: (Has the world ever seen a bigger dope? **Aside**
She loves me, not him, as we all know.)

The two men approach the ladies

DIEGO: Just like the water that heads to sea
after running its violent course, 1515
just like the stone that drops to the ground
returning to its home here on earth,
just like the fireworks that fly to heaven
seeking their place in the fiery sphere,
Don Diego returns to this glorious house, 1520
source of the peace that enlivens his heart,
the place where his soul seems to come alive,
and his eyes emit bright, burning sparks.
ANGELA: They must have freed the demons of Hell,
in all of Purgatory not one is left. 1525
I'm so furious now I'm about to explode.
You creature with neither heart nor soul,
how dare you come to see me this way
especially after doing what you did today?

To Don LUIS

DIEGO: Didn't I tell you what she would say? 1530
ANGELA: If heaven gave you any brains at all
you'd realize what you did was wrong:
repaying my love with a lack of faith.
I've always been honest, for heaven's sake!
Did you think that I would leave you flat? 1535
Did you really need a constable for that?
DIEGO: Just listen to what it was that happened.
ANGELA: I don't want to know.
DIEGO: Angela, please listen.
The constable...
ANGELA: There's no excuse. Fine!
I'm glad I found out about you in time. 1540
From now on I will only believe in myself.
It's clear enough that men have no respect
for a woman at all.
LUIS: (Did I have to come here **Aside**
to listen to this? But something's queer!
Not even a bitch would use that tone.) 1545

ANGELA: How angry I am with you, God only knows!
Did you really think I'd take your pride?

To Don LUIS

DIEGO: That's what got her upset, all right!

ANGELA: How could you possibly place a higher value
or desire more deeply that pretty "jewel" 1550
the constable took than on my love and honor?

To Don LUIS

DIEGO: She saw that whore he was taking prisoner
and thinks she has something to do with me.

ANGELA: You can't love me much, it's plain to see.
Trust is the way a true love is measured. 1555

DIEGO: I love you, Angela, more than any treasure.

I adore this place beyond all good sense.

I bask in the sunshine of your presence.

Please understand I did nothing wrong.

I came to tell you it wasn't my fault. 1560

LUIS: (I'm a fool to listen. I'd better go.) **Aside**

ANGELA: Get out of here right now, Don Diego.

Never come near me again. Go on home!

There you can take care of that jewel

the constable will have delivered to you. 1565

Your being here only makes the hurt worse.

To Don LUIS

DIEGO: She won't let me explain chapter or verse.

What a way of showing her love for me!

Who wouldn't be enchanted as I have been

with such rare frankness in a beautiful woman? 1570

Who wouldn't adore such a lovely rage,

the anger that fills her eyes with faith?

To Doña ANGELA

That constable wasn't working for me, anyhow,

he was taking the "jewel" to the courthouse.

ANGELA: Well, what do I care about where he went? 1575

It's your lack of trust in me that I resent.

LUIS: (How fickle can a woman be?) **Aside**

MOTHER: Angela's right!

Get out of here now! Your behavior's a fright!

To Don LUIS

DIEGO: Even her saintly mother, is angry with me.

Calm them down if you can, Don Luis.

1580

I'll wait for you on the street outside.

To the ladies

I'm sorry you won't listen. Ladies, good night.

Don LUIS exits with a bow

MOTHER: We've had a rain of clowns and fools all day.

To Don LUIS

ANGELA: What do you think? What do you have to say?

LUIS: You quickly destroyed my tower of dreams.

1585

By God, I wish I had done as well as he,

so I could hear you talk like that to me.

I swear to heaven, I wish I had done more

and ripped from that fickle breast of yours

that which has cost me so many tears.

1590

Don Diego was being too polite, I fear,

despite the fact that you called him rude.

But here in Madrid pretty women abound

and there are plenty of constables around.

Some day soon I will do just as he has done

1595

and what was mine will return to its home.

To her MOTHER

ANGELA: What's going on here? What does he mean?

I'm completely confused.

MOTHER: It seems to me,

he said right out he wants his necklace back.

These are two sly dogs we've got on our track.

1600

They've smelled out what it is we've done

and thus the constables and the beastly fun.

Didn't you understand his threat just now?
Don't let it become the talk of the town.
Give it to him.

1605

To Don LUIS

ANGELA: You repulsive, slimy worm!
Like any arrogant, nameless brat
you presume the love and honor of a man.
Here's the necklace, take it and go.
I won't take gifts from dimwitted dolts
who lower themselves to behave this way.

1610

ANGELA throws the necklace at him and exits

MOTHER: And don't you ever come back here again!

The MOTHER exits

LUIS: How changeable they are! I wonder what
made them so angry, for no reason at all?
Well, if she loves Don Diego as it seems
and wants to show that she despises me,
things, after all, didn't turn out so bad;
I did get that expensive necklace back.

1615

Don LUIS exits. ALEJANDRO enters dressed for the evening out

ALEJANDRO: May the peaceful dark of the night
hide and protect me as I fight
to calm my worries about my honor
at home and my love for another.
What pain can be found in Hell itself
equal to the torment of seeing Isabel
happy at home and loaded with money?
Now that's a new problem for me!
I can't ask her what is going on;
I'm afraid I know what she's done.
As I argue here with myself, I say:
Why should I wonder that a chaste
and faithful woman should be happy
despite the fact her husband is angry
if she knows how a wife should behave?

1620

1625

1630

Why shouldn't she still have money today
if she kept some hidden or put away? 1635
And, if all of that is really true,
why do I torture myself as I do?
My reason insists it's all imagination,
my soul responds it's pure deception,
and my fear then warns me to leave it alone. 1640
The truth could harm me more than I know.

ROQUE enters

ROQUE: Is that you, sir?

ALEJANDRO: Yes, Roque, it's me.

ROQUE: What are you doing out here on the street?

ALEJANDRO: I feel happier here than I do at home.

ALEJANDRO is constantly sad and thoughtful

ROQUE: Did you see Doña Angela yet? Did you go? 1645

ALEJANDRO: Earlier this evening.

ROQUE: What did she say?

ALEJANDRO: The brooch and dress received her praise,
and then she gave me a message for you.

ROQUE: (Either he's being deliberately obtuse, **Aside**
losing his mind, or he's stupid, indeed.) 1650

CARLOS enters dressed for the night out

CARLOS: Has anyone ever had a more futile chase
that the one that is keeping me awake?

It's no use for me to love Isabel, I know,
still I come to stand beneath her window.

My soul should speak and tell its secrets. 1655

There is no cure in maintaining silence.

There is no way known a doctor can heal
an illness the patient refuses to reveal.

CARLOS stops to look at the windows

ALEJANDRO: A man has stopped there beneath our balcony.
See? 1660

ROQUE: I do.

ALEJANDRO: Do you know who he could be?

ROQUE: What am I, a cat that sees in the dark?

ALEJANDRO:(Don't let my imagination add new sparks **Aside**
to the troubled flames.) Take a look.

CARLOS sighs

CARLOS: Oh!

ALEJANDRO: God, what a sigh!

1665

CARLOS exits

ROQUE: He's on the loose,
or else he's given it up for the night.

ALEJANDRO:Go see if it's anyone you recognize.

ROQUE follows after CARLOS

I'll conquer my fear by believing in her.
A good wife is something a man must honor
with loyalty and confidence in her faith
in order to preserve his own honored state.

1670

MARCELO and FABIAN enter wrapped in their capes

MARCELO: Just now my servants have told me
Alejandro was here, on the street.

FABIAN: There he is.

MARCELO: Don't let him see you.

ALEJANDRO:Here comes someone. No, there are two,
and they stopped to stare at my house.

1675

For heaven's sake, what's going on now?

I'm being struck by bolts of lightning;
these aren't just the arrows of jealousy

I'm willing to bet they, too, will sigh.

1680

If they do, my reason tells me why.

They are envious of me, but then what about
the honor dwelling in this house?

FABIAN whistles

FABIAN: Pst! Pst!

ALEJANDRO: Good God, he's whistling instead!
The burning fury of suspicion has been fed.

1685

The fire is roaring! My heart is in flames.
I should follow them, but no... I'll wait.
An occasion may arise that's better by far.
Roque may know who those two men are.

***MARCELO and FABIAN leave. As they do so they run into
ROQUE***

ROQUE: Do I know you, sir? 1690
MARCELO: Don't say a thing.
ALEJANDRO: Is that you, Roque?
ROQUE: Yes, I'm coming.
ALEJANDRO: Who was the first man? What's the word?
ROQUE: The man from Seville, Carlos de Villamayor.
ALEJANDRO: Evidently, my worries were not in vain.
And the two who just left, who were they? 1695
ROQUE: An Italian Count who's been hanging around.
ALEJANDRO: Very soon now, he's going to find out
what the honor of a Spaniard is worth.
ROQUE: (How quick he is to believe the worst! **Aside**
I'll either tell the truth or laugh out loud. 1700
Bite your lips or he'll find out.)

***MARCELO enters from a different door, speaking to someone
inside***

MARCELO: I want to see how the children are doing.
I'll be right back.
ROQUE: Your father's coming.
ALEJANDRO: Is that you, sir?
MARCELO: Is that Alejandro?

ALEJANDRO sighs

ALEJANDRO: Oh, my honor is lost! 1705
MARCELO: What's wrong, son?
ALEJANDRO: Either I'm going mad or about to die
and it's all my fault. That I can't deny.
I've been blind to how I was behaving.
Your prodigal son has come home, returning
to stand before you, to kneel at your feet. 1710
Thinking of what I have done, makes me weep.
My eyes are flowing red with bloody tears

but my actions can't be undone, I fear.
 I'm sorry, yes, about losing the wealth
 but that doesn't equal the pain I've felt 1715
 for having gambled against your advice.
 I lost everything I had but, even worse,
 I seem to have lost my honor as well. Sir,
 you warned me that that could happen, too.
 In spite of what you said I should do, 1720
 I treated Isabel badly. Still, it seems
 that she's not upset, she's even happy.
 What's worse, I just saw her wearing gems,
 and prettier than ever in a brand new dress.
 MARCELO: (That's it! Take the bit in your teeth. **Aside** 1725
 Learn what happens when a man gets married.)
 ALEJANDRO: I asked her where she got these things,
 nervously blushing, she answered, saying,
 "I went out and hustled to get them."
 I swear that my hair stood up on end! 1730
 And, just now, some people were passing by
 and making signals to someone inside.
 It's all my fault! I did it to myself.
 MARCELO: There, there, son. Your good sense
 should tell you: if you have a wife, 1735
 give her an inch and she'll take a mile.
 A real man should treat his wife well,
 show her love, shower her with presents,
 spend time at home, and forget his vices.
 A woman is not an animal a man entices 1740
 by begging and then leaving her alone.
 Pay attention now, and see how it's done.
 I'll watch Isabel, but you must agree
 to do nothing without first telling me.
 Although it may seem that I'm already old, 1745
 I'll see grandchildren your age, I hope.
 But remember that happiness, as they say,
 lives in a gambler's house very few days.

MARCELO exits

ALEJANDRO: Oh, you spawn of love, you tyrant rulers!
 Envy, rage, torture, and confusion! 1750
 You murderers of merit and meditation!
 Hellish vanity, mistrust, and disorder!

You, who are the human soul's masters,
 you spurs to suffering and temptation!
 War between man's will and comprehension! 1755
 Jealousy and imagination, insane advisors!
 Blind suspicions and frenetic fantasies!
 Eternal presumption, illusion, and shadow!
 Ever varying desires and riotous worries!
 Nocturnal chaos, Fortune's calamitous blow! 1760
 You imaginary evil and despotic jealousies!
 Bring death to me here or disillusion me now!

END OF ACT II

ACT III

CARLOS and ANGELA enter

ANGELA: You can't love me as much as I love you,
 Carlos. For you I stopped telling the truth.
 For you I gave up my life in Seville. 1765
 And for you I came to live in Madrid.
 I happily gave my soul as your prisoner
 and have willingly disobeyed the mother
 who only wanted to keep me safe,
 to live in peace, and guard my good name. 1770
 As you know I have loved you well,
 --very well--, and there is no time left.
 It's getting hard to cover up these days
 since my love became an open blaze.
 Mother hoped I'd find a man who was rich 1775
 but money was not important to me,
 you were a Midas whose very touch
 made love out of all I could see.
 Is there anything better than true love?
 Any wealth greater than pure love's gold? 1780
 Any eternity longer than a lovers passion?
 Any stone firmer than Cupid's attraction?
 CARLOS: My attraction to you is so immense
 that not loving you would make no sense.
 It would either mean you show no affection 1785
 or that I show alack of real perception.
 And since the merit openly expressed

on your beautiful face is ample evidence,
it stands to reason I lack common sense
unless I love you as much as you love me. 1790
Have you ever seen greater equality
between a man and the object of his fancy
than that found in my doting adoration
and your corresponding affection?
What king or prince has greater wealth 1795
or finer fortune than I have felt
as I see your hair compete in beauty
with the sun's rays in all their glory,
behold the pearly treasure of your teeth,
feel your lips like burning rubies, 1800
or tend that garden of marvelous fire,
where I pluck the fruit of my desire.

ALEJANDRO enters and stands at the door

ALEJANDRO:(I am here because she returned my love **Aside**
not because there's room for love or fun
when a man's heart is full of trouble. 1805
I come to show her that I am grateful
for her affection and to see once again
the miracle of true love in a woman.)

ANGELA gives her hand to CARLOS

ANGELA: Here, be my husband, not my lover,
I can't refuse my hand any longer. 1810

ANGELA and CARLOS hold hands (as a symbol of their love and intended marriage)

CARLOS: This is, indeed, a sovereign honor!
I am and will be yours forever.
ALEJANDRO:(Any man who lives long enough **Aside**
learns the meaning of truth and stuff!
Experience is the mother of disillusion. 1815
I can't believe I saw that action!
But why should it shock me to see
such behavior here when I believe
the same thing is happening at home?
Here and there, as God only knows, 1820

misfortune rules my life without end.
God damn any man trusting cards or women!)

To CARLOS

ANGELA: You go and ask my mother's indulgence.
She has just arranged a rich engagement,
and maybe that's all that she needs 1825
to give us her permission to marry.
CARLOS: I'll go right now to see her and ask.

CARLOS exits

ALEJANDRO:(A man who'd keep quiet in the face of that
Aside
has no brains at all! I'll get revenge
through her for my own domestic problems. 1830
She'll soon about my honor when I...)
You ingrate, you siren, you Lorelei
whose beauty and songs lead us to die!
You vicious viper, you snake in the grass
slinking along the pretty primrose path, 1835
forming venom from false, flattering words!
You basilisk waiting on a foreign shore
to vomit anger from your cheating eyes
on those as attracted to your beauty as I!

CARLOS returns and stands listening at the door

You basilisk, you viper, you siren, I say, 1840
attracting every man you meet on the way
by means of the senses you manage so well
through the marvels he sees, hears, and smells
among the flowers, on the shore, and at sea,
what did I done, --tell me, please,-- 1845
that you should desire to so deceive me?
What did Carlos do, to feel your deceit?
ANGELA: Jesus! What a shock! Who are you?
What do you want? What did I do?
Where did you come from? What's your name? 1850
How did I offend you? Are you insane?
ALEJANDRO:I must have been out of my head, indeed,
when your voice was deceiving me,

when I first saw and fell for your beauty,
 when your love was something I believed. 1855
 The loss of that love awakened me, and you,
 you evil serpent, not only made the wound
 but gave me the cure. When I arrived,
 I was mad, but in leaving I feel fine.
 ANGELA: Get out of here now, you demon from Hell! 1860
 I don't understand a word you have said.
 ALEJANDRO: All that's left are the ashes and embers
 of what was once the brightest fire.
 It wasn't extinguished by mere jealousy;
 like lightning, our love passed quickly 1865
 leaving me in the dark before it was born.
 Your fickleness didn't cause my mad words.
 I spoke them in a desire for vengeance
 when I witnessed your evil intentions.
 You deliberately tried to make a fool of me; 1870
 your pretense of love for me was mere deceit.
 Like a siren you sang an attractive song,
 but I'm leaving now. I listened too long.

ALEJANDRO exits

ANGELA: How crazy can you get? God in heaven!
 How could you allow this to happen? 1875

CARLOS comes out

CARLOS: So you think a miserable lover is mad?
 You are a false, pitiless woman at that!
 Your soul knows no fear of a vengeful God;
 your heart doesn't know the meaning of love;
 your tongue doesn't speak a word of truth. 1880
 What can you offer as an acceptable excuse?
 How can you deny this? The evidence proves
 that one of us has been played for a fool.
 You've been cheating, on Alejandro or on me.
 That's plain enough for anyone to see. 1885
 Well, if I'm the one who has been fooled,
 I'll have no part of a marriage to you.
 If I am the one you love, I also refuse
 because you're faithless. The woman who
 managed to turn Alejandro into a fool, 1890

won't have a chance to deceive me, too.

ANGELA: Listen!

CARLOS: Among the things Alejandro said
--and he was right-- was that you're a siren.
I'm not stopping to hear your song.

CARLOS exits

ANGELA: Where in Hell did that idiot come from?
He ripped from my breast what little peace
and contentment I had, the love God gave me.
This Alejandro is certainly not generous!
He's brought only misfortune to my house.

1895

GOMEZ and her MOTHER enter

MOTHER: What has you upset?

1900

ANGELA: How could this happen?
Mother, that tiresome fool came back again,
and acted more irksome and crazier than ever.
MOTHER: Alejandro?

ANGELA: That's the one.

MOTHER: Who is Alejandro?

GOMEZ: You know! Your fiance's son.

MOTHER: Marcelo's?

GOMEZ: That's the one. He lost a lot of money here.
ANGELA: That must what's making him act so queer.
GOMEZ: Here comes Marcelo now.

1905

MOTHER: You get inside.

ANGELA: Why shouldn't he see me? Why should I hide?

MOTHER: There's a good old saying that explains why:

A horse, especially one that is older now,
won't eat straw if there's green grass around.

1910

ANGELA exits

Get me a book, Gómez.

GOMEZ: Which?

MOTHER: Who cares?

It doesn't matter since it's only there
for appearance. You know I don't read.

MARCELO and ROQUE enter

ROQUE: I told you I saw him leave just now. 1915

MARCELO: That gives me an excuse to bawl her out.

ROQUE: You act like this is your house already.

MARCELO: That's what she thinks, as you will see.

GOMEZ gives the MOTHER a book

ROQUE: You're the first Cupid I ever knew
that grew up to be as old as you. 1920

MARCELO: So, this is the way you spend your time?

Do you read books to occupy your mind?

MOTHER: I spend an hour a day with my books.

MARCELO: What are you reading?

To ROQUE

You take a look.

MOTHER: Luis de León's work, **The Perfect Wife**. 1925

ROQUE: (Women are such treacherous creatures! **Aside**

I saw one the other day at St. Mary's
with some old women with soured features
reading from her prayer book, apparently.

She was making all the right gestures,
genuflecting and crossing herself daintily,
as if she were concentrating on the lecture. 1930

A little later I saw her learning the ABC
with the help of an very friendly priest.)

***MARCELO and the MOTHER sit down with ROQUE standing
behind the chairs***

MARCELO: Why didn't you keep your promise to me? 1935

Why was Alejandro here? Tell me, please.

And that Don Diego, what did he want?

The neighbors will have reason to talk.

You must guard your reputation for virtue.

MOTHER: Your son is a pest, and that's the truth! 1940

He keeps coming here without being asked,
to give us a hard time. He makes me mad!

ROQUE and MARCELO speak softly to each other

ROQUE: Is the old lady very deaf?

MARCELO: Very much so.

ROQUE: What do you want with a woman that old?

MARCELO: The crack-brained hag actually believes

1945

I love her and that we are to be married.

MOTHER: (Oh, oh! I heard that and it really smells.) **Aside**

ROQUE: You'd better be awfully nice to her then.

To the MOTHER

MARCELO: What you have done is reason for me

to be as jealous as any lover would be.

1950

To MARCELO

ROQUE: The old woman took the bait. How dense!

Go, you woman with no fifth sense,

bathe in the Jordan to cure your ears.

While you're at it, lose a hundred years.

MOTHER: (For that, you two are going to pay me!) **AsideFrom**

1955

where he is standing ROQUE looks at the book she is reading

ROQUE: God in heaven! She's reading **Don Quijote!**

MARCELO: What a sly fox! I'm beginning to wonder

if she can tell one letter from another.

ROQUE: I could give her a lesson if you like.

See here, Bee-ay spells Ba, dear child!

1960

MOTHER: (I heard that! How does he dare **Aside**

stand and look over my shoulder there?)

To the MOTHER

MARCELO: If I seem jealous, you've given me cause.

My son was here gambling, and lost a lot.

MOTHER: (That's why he's playing tricks on me! **Aside**

1965

He wants to reform his son, it seems.

He'll pay for that, just wait and see!)

Since the last time you visited me

you have been the center of my life.

I am here to serve you as is your right.

1970

To MARCELO

ROQUE: If her reason for living is you alone
we have discovered the land of the old.

MOTHER: What are you two whispering about?
You haven't been talking about me now?

MARCELO: Gossip about people is not my style.
I'd never talk about someone I idolize.

1975

To MARCELO

ROQUE: Have you changed religions? I want to know.
Is that why you adore this bag of bones!

MOTHER: (I heard him say that! God help him now! **Aside**
That did it! You two better look out!)

1980

ROQUE: Why don't you ask her to set the date?

MARCELO: It's hard to believe my desire's so great.

My heart's afire! My soul's been ignited
by thinking of marriage. I'm so excited!

MOTHER: In spite of what the gossips may say,
we ought to be married right away.

1985

(You can be sure I wasn't true to myself **Aside**
if I didn't turn their trick on them.)

MARCELO: Let's set the date as soon as we can,
on condition my son never comes here again.

1990

MOTHER: (See how he keeps coming back to that!) **Aside**
Indeed, sir, we should do as you have said.

But before we go even one step further,

I think you should meet Angela, my daughter.

Come out her, child! Say, "How do you do?"

1995

Your stepfather-to-be wants to meet you.

MARCELO: I think I may have seen her here earlier.

To MARCELO

ROQUE: So you're stuck with a ready-made daughter?
What kind of glue has she been using?

ANGELA enters

ANGELA: What is it Mother? Were you just calling?

2000

MOTHER: Angela, I want you to meet your new father.

ANGELA: How do you do? Meeting you is a pleasure.

MARCELO: I hope you enjoy your youth forever.
 The man who gets you will have a treasure!
 You're an angel in beauty as well as name! 2005
 ANGELA: You flatter me, sir.
 MOTHER: (There goes the bait! **Aside**
 He'll have reason enough, if he takes it,
 to remember these ladies from Seville!)
 MARCELO: (Cupid himself gave her that complexion **Aside**
 mixing snow and roses, lilies and carnation! 2010
 Without a stitch to wear, one could thrive
 in the comfortable warmth of her sunlike eyes.
 She's as beautiful as the gardens of spring.)
 Tell me the truth, Roque, what do you think?
 ROQUE: She's as pretty as the girl of my dreams. 2015
 MARCELO: Is she really as beautiful as she seems?
 MOTHER: (There he comes! If only he falls into it, **Aside**
 my pretty, young net is ready for him.
 I'm going to get him and get him good.)
 What do you think of Angela, sir? 2020
 MARCELO: She's as beautiful as a tree in bloom.
 Cupid himself would fall in love with her.

MARCELO and the MOTHER go off to one side together

MOTHER: Marcelo, can I speak to you here alone?
 Let's speak in private... I am getting old.
 You know that I've lost my hearing, 2025
 and my age is such I don't think
 I am able to give you all you hope for.
 Angela is good-looking, deserves the honor,
 and there's not an evil bone in her body.
 She behaves virtuously and modestly. 2030
 Why don't you marry her instead of me?
 I admire and respect you as you can see
 and will thank God for making you as happy
 as you will make her.
 MARCELO: (I have never seen, **Aside**
 in all my years, a finer or more rare beauty. 2035
 Having her as a wife would rejuvenate me
 as surely as a bath in Jordan's waters.
 Love can strike like lightning's furor,
 violently smashing a cold, hard stone.
 How quickly the glory of a beautiful woman 2040

can bring even a mature man to ruin.
But then I'm rich and I really want her.
In my golden years she'll bring me pleasure.
They can gossip about me all they want.)
Madam, I accept. I'll be your son-in-law. 2045
MOTHER: Don't you want to know about her qualities
or more about her?

MARCELO: I know enough already.
MOTHER: Well, that's fine but let's keep it quiet
and not tell anyone for a little while.
I don't want to upset another young man 2050
who has already come to ask for her hand.
You could give your Power of Attorney
to a friend so you can marry her by proxy.
Then you come take your wife home quietly
and save the cost of a large, public wedding. 2055
MARCELO: That sounds like a good idea to me.
I'll make a note of her name and identity,
so the papers can all be drawn up properly.

MARCELO takes out a notebook and writes down the information

MOTHER: (Hook line and sinker, he took the bait! **Aside**
Our names are the same. Now he'll pay!) 2060
MARCELO: Her name is Angela, what?
MOTHER: De Heredia!
(Her name is Mendoza, just like her father. **Aside**
What a plot this would be for a play!)
MARCELO: And, tell me, what was her father's name?
MOTHER: Don Andrés de Heredia. (That's my father.) **Aside** 2065
MARCELO: And her mother?
MOTHER: (I'll name **my** mother.) **Aside**
Inés de Soria. I thought you knew that.
MARCELO: I just asked to be sure and get it exact.
MOTHER: (Now you're going to learn not to fool **Aside**
a woman who knows exactly what to do.) 2070
MARCELO: I think that's all that I need right now.
I'll have the Power of Attorney made out
and send a friend and a notary very soon.
MOTHER: Just knowing that you know what to do
makes me feel secure about this marriage. 2075
MARCELO: I promise you, madam, you won't be sorry.
MOTHER: There's really no need for such a pledge

to someone you have already made happy.

MARCELO: Why shouldn't I if you were the source
of the shining star I am waiting for?

2080

Let's go, Roque.

ROQUE: Do I dare ask now
what it was that you were writing down?

MARCELO: I'll tell you all about it later on.

MARCELO and ROQUE leave with a bow to ANGELA

MOTHER: Experience certainly leads one to wisdom,
the crucible in which one tries the truth.

2085

This city is confusing, too full of fools!

The men are phantoms, hollow statues:

not one of them has any real substance.

There's nothing real here, only appearance.

ANGELA: Mother! You are going to marry one now!

2090

MOTHER: You'd better learn, real women know how
to repulse the tricks men try to play!

The MOTHER exits

ANGELA: Sweet Cupid, if it's true what they say,
bring Carlos back to me in a peaceful state.

Use the arrow of peace to calm his anger.

2095

GOMEZ enters

GOMEZ: I managed to persuade him to return.
But that was work!

ANGELA: I'll make it up to you.

CARLOS enters and GOMEZ exits

CARLOS: I came because I had nothing better to do.

ANGELA: Any man who thinks he is truly enamored
doesn't know the meaning of the word
if he doesn't respect the one he adores.

2100

In general, his respect is the source
of a willing disbelief in mere appearance.
Respect is what makes him take the chance
to use his eyes and ears and find the truth.

2105

Any overly zealous lover, such as you,

lays himself open to quarrels and jealousy.
Alejandro was mad about losing his money.
CARLOS: Do you really expect me not to believe
what I saw with my own eyes? Now really! 2110
That's the trouble with you women today!
You insist on denying the light of day.
You obstinately demand the right to rebel
since you always expect to win in the end.

Don DIEGO enters

DIEGO: (I wonder if love has calmed the anger **Aside** 2115
I saw shooting from her eyes like daggers.
But they say the anger of a woman in love
is like a cloud in the summer skies above:
one shot of lightning, a little thunder,
and a bit of rain before it blows over. 2120

Don DIEGO sees CARLOS and ANGELA

Look over there! How fickle can she be?
How faithless? But they haven't seen me.
I'm glad that they left the door open.)
ANGELA: Haven't I managed to convince you yet? 2125
CARLOS: Well, I guess I can take you at your word.
ANGELA: You can hold me in your arms as a reward.

ANGELA and CARLOS embrace

DIEGO: (How could I be such a stupid ass **Aside**
as to believe a woman who'd do that?)
ANGELA: That's enough! Now go talk to my mother.
She might not say "no" as she did earlier. 2130

CARLOS exits

DIEGO: So you got even with me for having made
you jealous, you slithering Libyan snake!
Indeed, now I can see the poison you hid
behind those alluring, carnation lips.

CARLOS returns to stand at the door

Did ever a more treacherous crocodile 2135
 cry false tears into the River Nile
 as he plotted the cruelest of his tricks?
 Wasn't it yesterday I heard from your lips
 complaints about my love? Wasn't it here
 I saw your eyes fill with love and tears? 2140
 And I find you today embracing another!
 I sense here your disdain and anger!
 I can't complain of your being fickle
 because, by nature, women are changeable;
 but I do have a right to complain, as a man 2145
 who remembers that it was you who began...
 ANGELA: What Devil from Hell persecutes me now?
 The Tower of Babel has nothing on this house!
 Did Valencia's insane asylum let you escape?
 Or did the Tavera Hospital ignore your state 2150
 and turn a violent maniac like you loose?
 Fortune, I can't take any more from you!
 DIEGO: Can you excuse or deny that embrace?
 Didn't I see that it was you who gave
 your beautiful, faithless arms to Carlos? 2155
 What's worse, you begged him to do so!
 ANGELA: What do you care you ignorant boor?
 Don't you know the meaning of manners
 or the rules of proper behavior?
 DIEGO: I suppose you'll claim you only did that 2160
 to get even since you can't deny the facts.
 ANGELA: Get our of here now! How did you get in?
 Wasn't the door locked?
 DIEGO: Well, I'm free again!
 So I'll go away now and leave you two
 to lampoon and ridicule my love for you. 2165
 Just be sure you send me without delay
 the souvenir I gave you to hold and keep safe.
 ANGELA: What are you talking about, you monster?
 DIEGO: (There, now she knows what I think of her **Aside**
 since I asked her to return my necklace.) 2170

DIEGO exits

ANGELA: What dark mystery is behind all this?
 Thank God he left.

CARLOS: Twice, Angela? Twice?

The same thing happening again tonight?
 Is this what you asked me to come and see?
 Wasn't once enough for you? It was for me! 2175
 I suppose you'll say Don Diego is mad, too,
 having lost his money like that other fool?
 Wasn't that what you said about Alejandro?
 Or, were you just inventing a cruel joke?
 Or, is this the way you operate your trap, 2180
 trying anything to make me jealous, perhaps?

CARLOS turns to go and ANGELA grabs at his cape

ANGELA: Look, Carlos, Don Diego seems to think
 he's in love, but I only...
 CARLOS: ...want to fool me!
 "Wasn't it yesterday I heard from your lips
 complaints about my love? Wasn't it here 2185
 I saw your eyes fill with love and tears?
 And I find you today embracing another!
 I sense here your disdain and anger!"
 Isn't that what he said? He must have reason
 to hope if he hasn't already taken possession. 2190

CARLOS rips his cape from her hand and exits

ANGELA: Won't you listen to my explanations?
 Is this an end to my expectations?
 I'm driven out of my mind with sorrow.
 I'm ready to stop living as of tomorrow.

ANGELA exits. MARCELO, ALBERTO, and a NOTARY enter

MARCELO: The papers are made out just as I ordered 2195
 they are signed and ready to be delivered.
 You ought to know that the only reason
 I'm getting married is because of my son.
 He's a little wild about cards and women
 and this is the only way I can help him. 2200
 Maybe he'll calm down a bit when he sees
 his inheritance disappear once I'm married.
 ALBERTO: But, Marcelo, you are still young enough
 to marry without anyone thinking it odd.
 MARCELO: Alberto, you just be sure to keep control; 2205

remember you're only a groom by proxy.
 Although the mother does dress as a widow,
 she's still quite young and somewhat pretty.
 So don't make a mistake whatever you do!
 You should easily recognize the daughter who, 2210
 you will see, is beautiful as the rising sun.
 ALBERTO: I think I'm prepared to get the job done.
 Let's get going!
 MARCELO: And keep your mouths shut!
 NOTARY: That we know how to do!

ALBERTO and the NOTARY exit

MARCELO: What wonderful luck!

ALEJANDRO enters

ALEJANDRO: My troubled mind has given birth **Aside** 2215
 to a horrible monster at last.
 I have to admit that I am the true father
 of these terrible problems I have.
 If only I could leave for a place overseas
 and forget the trouble I've caused, 2220
 forget what I owe and be completely free
 of the doubts that give me pause.
 MARCELO: Alejandro, son, what's wrong with you?
 ALEJANDRO: I just found some things in Isabel's room
 that shouldn't be there: jewelry and a dress, 2225
 and a diamond necklace that was in her desk.
 Have they replaced my honor? Do you know?
 I'm afraid everyone will think I'm cuckold!
 MARCELO: This is a matter we must investigate.
 Son, such a thought is exceedingly grave, 2230
 but don't say a word until we know more.
 You take this money and keep it in store
 to cover the expenses you'll probably have.

MARCELO gives ALEJANDRO a purse

I must say this news has made me very sad.
 (I hope to find out, by this experiment, **Aside** 2235
 if his unhappiness will make him forget
 about gambling and sowing more wild oats.

I certainly can't do more unless I know.)

MARCELO exits

ALEJANDRO: Come out into the open, Truth, come out!
Let me see what has happened! 2240
Roque didn't give it to Angela. The lout!
He may have given it to Isabel!
But no! That can't possibly be the truth
after what Angela said to me.
And the diamond necklace was there, too! 2245
Isabel had it! Could it be?
Diego won it, and may be willing to tell.
He may give me the answer.
I must find out if my honor is truly dead
or if my worries are over. 2250

ROQUE enters

ROQUE: A message came for you from Don Pedro.
ALEJANDRO: What's he want?
ROQUE: He wants you to know
there's a rich game going on at his house
if you want to go and even things out.
ALEJANDRO: Satan, begone! Your tempting devil, Roque! 2255
How can you even mention gambling to me
now that my despair has made me repent?
ROQUE: (When he has money he hasn't yet spent, **Aside**
how can this idiot ignore a good game?
Damn it all! He must have changed!) 2260
ALEJANDRO: Come here, Roque. Tell me the truth.
ROQUE: What about?
ALEJANDRO: About that diamond brooch.
Did you give it to Angela? Tell me now.
ROQUE: Have you gone mad? Is there any doubt?
When you saw her, as you told me yourself, 2265
she thanked you for both the pin and dress.
ALEJANDRO: That she did! All right, you can go.
ROQUE: (He must have seen the brooch at home. **Aside**
His worries made him change his ways.)

ROQUE exits

ALEJANDRO: Oh, good God in heaven! What can I say? 2270
I just realized what must have happened.
Don Diego sent the necklace as a present!
There's no other way it could possibly be!
He won her heart. The thought is killing me!

ROQUE enters

ROQUE: Sir! 2275
ALEJANDRO: Has another message for me
arrived?
ROQUE: Doña Angela has asked that you pass by.
ALEJANDRO: Satan, begone! Stop being a tempting demon!
I don't give a damn about gambling or women.
No man as stupid as I should be a gambler
and I certainly have no more use for her. 2280
ROQUE: (This seems to be going pretty well, now.) **Aside**
And here comes Don Diego looking around.

Don DIEGO enters and ROQUE exits

ALEJANDRO: (He will know if I've been condemned **Aside**
or if my grievous errors can be forgiven.
My future hangs on his lips for good or evil.) 2285
DIEGO: Alejandro, I am here on important business.
ALEJANDRO: (He may want to make my dishonor clear.) **Aside**
That's the reason that I am waiting here.
DIEGO: You have always been my very best friend,
the only one in whom I have confidence. 2290
ALEJANDRO: (The time has come!) **Aside**
DIEGO: I need you tonight
as my second in duel I must fight
with a man who has hurt me deeply.
ALEJANDRO: I'd be happy to help. Who can that be?
DIEGO: It's Carlos de Villamayor. 2295
ALEJANDRO: (Now I see! **Aside**
As my friend he wants revenge for me!
What a true friend he turned out to be!)
DIEGO: I was in love with Angela and had some hope
but now she has promised to marry Carlos.
I'd be willing to bet that she gave him 2300
all the things she took from us as gifts.
The necklace you lost and that I won

is proof enough she's been up to no good.
She couldn't get it from me for her own,
but she accepted it from me as a loan.
I'll get it from her before it gets dark;
then we'll go find that Andalusian bastard.
ALEJANDRO: Well, I'll be waiting for you right here
on the street.

2305

DIEGO: I'll see you soon, never fear!

DIEGO exits

ALEJANDRO: That's all the proof I could ever need.
Last night Carlos was out in the street
openly sighing and staring at the house,
and all day long he's been hanging around.
Angela is in love with him. That's plain.
I saw that myself, for goodness sake!
She may have given him those as gifts,
the necklace, brooch, and other things.
Now they are here and Isabel has them.
How right people are when they claim
that happiness lives but a few sweet days
in a gambler's house, a place full of hurt,
sadness, grief, worry and open dishonor.

2310

2315

2320

ISABEL enters

ISABEL: Like the sick man who is glad to see
the resplendent light of each new dawn,
like the road-worn wanderer who's happy
to find refreshing shade on an open lawn,
I am pleased to find you here with me
despite the cloud hiding your rising sun.
Not once have I seen a smile on your lips;
don't let your mood be our love's eclipse.
ALEJANDRO: Like the sick man who is sorely vexed
by the dark of night when the sun had gone,
like the traveler who is tired and upset,
suffering the heat of summer's midday sun,
I am bothered, whenever you speak to me,
by your pretended love and fawning flattery.
ISABEL: Where nectar is found by a solicitous bee
a spider hunts the venom that's fatal.

2325

2330

2335

Is the flower at fault if the evil you see
 is in the heart and not on the petal? 2340
 My love is simple but it makes me happy.
 Fault yourself if you feel miserable.
 The mistake is yours, --good heaven above!--
 Don't blame me, my words or my love.
 ALEJANDRO: What a common conceit! How ignorant! 2345
 What a stupid and boring argument!
 You haven't made me feel one bit better.
 ISABEL: Tell me, if you can, what is the matter?
 If the effects can be so easily seen,
 come right out and say what you mean. 2350
 ALEJANDRO: At its source the river that now permits
 sea-going vessels to float freely on it
 was only a spring, asleep in a meadow.
 My hurt and pain have just been born.
 If they live, they will certainly grow. 2355
 You in there!

ROQUE: Sir?

ALEJANDRO: Close the door!

(The door was open to my misfortune; **Aside**
 it must be shut now to let nothing in.
 So the pain I keep inside can come out.
 Honor and Love, let's have a short truce). 2360
 Isabel, it's hard for be to be calm now
 because I esteem your honor and virtue,
 but in the face of what I have seen,
 my heart and mind are battling my soul.
 The controversy's important as it can be, 2365
 and peace will come from your lips alone.
 Life and death are yours to choose.
 Give me your life or tell me the truth.
 ISABEL: If you want the facts, as you have stated,
 why do you demand them with rigorous threats? 2370
 Can a truly righteous person be persuaded
 to tell the truth by warnings of death?
 Go ahead, my love, and simply ask me.
 You want the truth? I'll give it gladly.

ALEJANDRO takes ISABEL by the arm

ALEJANDRO: Where did you get the necklace and brooch 2375
 after I, unfortunately, lost the jewels?

ISABEL: No woman as obedient and faithful as I
would ever answer a question that blind
and ignorant, one that should never...

ISABEL breaks out of his grip angrily as MARCELO answers

You faithless philanderer, ask your father! 2380
MARCELO: Children, children what's going on here?
ALEJANDRO:I'm trying to break the grip of fear,
her deranged cruelty and painful deceit.

MARCELO takes ALEJANDRO to one side

MARCELO: If I can explain what you have seen,
calm your fears, and end your jealousy, 2385
Alejandro, what will you promise me?
ALEJANDRO:I really love her, she's so beautiful,
even if I have called her ungrateful.
Although I can't promise anything valuable,
I swear that I'll never again gamble. 2390
May the heavens deny me their shining light;
may I be refused the fruits of the earth;
may springs turn their living water to ice;
and the sun forbid me its comforting warmth;
may my torments equal those of Tantalus; 2395
may my sleep be disturbed by an evil succubus,
fantastic horrors and insomniac nightmares;
may my desires find only withered flowers
where they hoped to reap fruited bowers;
may the Lord condemn me to waste my youth 2400
fighting overseas battles that serve no use,
or rambling wherever my fate may take me,
if ever in the future I drop my guard
to chase another woman, even momentarily,
or wager a cent at a game of cards. 2405
MARCELO: A saint once said he wanted to see Hell,
to learn the meaning of eternal torment,
from a safe distance. He saw it in a dream,
and died from fear thinking it was real.
I tried to let you feel a cuckold's torture, 2410
brought on by your delirious, insane nature.
A man who refuses to honor and love his wife
will,as a result, inevitably suffer the like.

Your servant returned the brooch and the dress.
 By some sly trick he got the necklace for Isabel. 2415
 It was I who was outside during the night
 making you jealous with my signs and sighs.
 ALEJANDRO: Good God in heaven above! I am lucky indeed!
 It means little when a lover suffers jealousy
 because it signals discomfort, not dishonor. 2420
 But just imagining the distress and lack of honor
 jealousy causes in the case of a married man,
 even when it's an illusion, hurts like hell.
 Is it possible for you to pardon me, Isabel,
 for believing what I thought I saw today? 2425

ALEJANDRO gets on his knees

A man who is jealous feels love not hate.
 I had my doubts but never really believed
 that you could have been unfaithful to me.
 Our human senses are subject to error.
 ISABEL: Get up! I didn't hear you speak those words, 2430
 nor have I seen you on your knees before me.
 ALEJANDRO: How saintly! What proof of your nobility!
 ISABEL: I'm only the woman who has always loved you.
 ALEJANDRO: I swear that I'll always adore you, too.

ROQUE speaks to ALEJANDRO

ROQUE: What will you bet that I take the blame 2435
 and become the target in this game?
 ALEJANDRO: No you won't. I know what you're worth.
 MARCELO: Well, I have news of my upcoming pleasure
 and want to invite you to a feast tonight.
 I need, even at my age and stage in life, 2440
 some pleasure at home and a little peace.
 I'm getting married despite how it seems.
 If that disturbs you, pardon me please.
 ALEJANDRO: Instead, I'm glad to see you so happy.
 ISABEL: And I promise to respect and love your wife. 2445
 ALEJANDRO: Who is she?
 MARCELO: She's young and pretty! All right?
 ROQUE: (Why not admit marrying the deaf, old dame! **Aside**
 Eating raisins instead of fresh grapes!)

They all exit. ANGELA and her MOTHER enter

MOTHER: Why are you sad now? Is it about Carlos?
Don't be silly. You should let the man go. 2450
It's clear you haven't taken my advice
about him but, after all, it is your life,
miserable, poor, sad, and lonely as it may be.
You really ought to take an example from me.
I'm not as pretty and I am of a certain age 2455
but I've managed to make a rich marriage.
ANGELA: Oh, damn your eagerness to be wealthy!
Because of it I have to suffer and worry
about the attention I paid to Don Diego
in exchange for his diamonds and gold. 2460
Now Carlos, overcome with jealousy
called me fickle and false here today,
and there is some truth to what he says.
MOTHER: You should be a widow if you want to weep.
Angela, you put on these widow's weeds. 2465
I'm getting tired of them and would like
to look younger than I do. You ought to try
being a widow like me for just one day.
Maybe that experience is all it would take
to make you so happy you won't want to marry. 2470
ANGELA: Are you trying to play games with me?
I'm not in the mood for fun and games.
MOTHER: You'd look beautiful in this. Your face
would look like a rose hiding in the snow.

The MOTHER takes off her wimple and puts it on ANGELA

ANGELA: I might as well be wearing these weeds 2475
Carlos is as good as dead to me.
I will do what I can in the meantime
to learn how he feels.

The MOTHER remarks about the wimple

MOTHER: Now that's nice!

GOMEZ enters

GOMEZ: A Notary is here.

MOTHER: (Now the fun begins!) **Aside**
ANGELA: I'd better get rid of this thing, quick! 2480
MOTHER: There's no time. There's nothing you can do.
Don't worry about it, they don't know you.

ALBERTO and the NOTARY enter

ALBERTO: I have been sent to your house, ladies,
as the Attorney for Don Marcelo Gentile.
This gentleman is a Notary. You know why... 2485
MOTHER: (Only one of us knows all. That is I.) **Aside**
ALBERTO: I take it that you're to be his bride.

The NOTARY and ALBERTO speak to one side

NOTARY: The widow seems far prettier to my eyes.
I would swear that she's the younger.
ALBERTO: She may be a stepmother rather than mother. 2490
It seems funny to me too, but Marcelo
did order us not to marry him to the widow.
I think he'd be better off if we did.
NOTARY: The other one is an angel, too good for him!
ALBERTO: It seems that love is a matter of tastes. 2495
NOTARY: Well, let's get this over with right away.
Angela de Heredia. Is that your name?
MOTHER: It is.
NOTARY: Who was your father?
MOTHER: Don Andrés.
NOTARY: Your mother?
MOTHER: Inés de Soria.
ALBERTO: In the name
of Marcelo Gentile, I give you my hand. 2500
MOTHER: I accept by pledging my word and my hand.
NOTARY: May the two of you live in peace forever.
I will sign here and the wedding is over.
ALBERTO: I'll go take Marcelo the happy news.

ALBERTO and the NOTARY exit

MOTHER: And I'll wait here until you do. 2505
(I pray to God he takes it well.) **Aside** ANGELA removes the
wimple

ANGELA: Now you take this away, please Gomez.
I was so ashamed.

GOMEZ: I heard someone say
that at weddings everything is disguised.
I'm glad I found out it's true here today. 2510

With things going so well at this time,
I may have a chance of finding a wife.

MOTHER: Gomez, I may have been married, all right,
but when it comes to you, there is no hope.

GOMEZ: Between your age and mine, as you know, 2515
there isn't even three hours difference.

CARLOS enters

CARLOS: Out on the street I just heard it said
that fickle woman Angela had been wed.
Although I have been greatly offended,
still I burn with adoration for you. 2520

Did you marry Marcelo? Is it true?
Tell me now, are you out of your mind?
Marry a man whose hair has been dyed,
turned to silver by the wings of time?

MOTHER: Easy, easy! You're talking about me. 2525

ANGELA: My mother is the one who got married.
Now look here, Carlos...

CARLOS: Oh! Pardon me.

Don DIEGO and Don LUIS enter

DIEGO: I came to get my diamond necklace back.
No swindling skirt can fool me like that
or win me over with flattery and lies. 2530

LUIS: Since our little talk, I know you're right.
We know now that she got my golden chain
using the same trick she used to fool you.

MOTHER: They seem glued to us by some evil fate;
I sure am getting tired of seeing these two. 2535

***MARCELO, ISABEL, ALEJANDRO, ALBERTO, ROQUE, and
FABIO enter***

GOMEZ: Once they get wind of a wedding feast
everyone in town shows up, it seems.

ROQUE: Make room for the bridegroom. Make way!
MOTHER: (Here we go! May God preserve me today!)
AsideALBERTO speaks aside to MARCELO

ALBERTO: In my opinion the widow is far prettier. 2540
So, tell me why you didn't choose her.
MARCELO: How can you say a thing like that? Why,
dawn itself is no prettier than my bride!
ROQUE: I have something to say, are you listening?
If you want to have music at the wedding, 2545
you'd better send for trumpets and bells
to make sure that the bride can hear them.
ALEJANDRO: Angela married my father? He is lucky!
Imagine having her beauty for company!
ISABEL: They say she didn't even have a dowry! 2550

MARCELO speaks with ANGELA

MARCELO: Has any captain ever come safely home
after being battered by the stormy sea
happier than I, now that I have come
into the presence of your eyes that gleam
making the sun's rays seem like shadows, 2555
darkening the stars that adorn the night?
ANGELA: It isn't right you should praise me so.
Speaking to mother first, would be polite.
MARCELO: Your wisdom pleases me. You are right.
(What a polite wife I have married!) **Aside** 2560
ANGELA: (He will be a nice stepfather, it seems.) **Aside**
MARCELO: Madam, your permission, your agreement,
and your blessing have made my life perfect.
MOTHER: I am here to obey your every call.
MARCELO: (Now that's an agreeable mother-in-law!) **Aside** 2565
Because you are the master of this house,
it is only right that you should allow
Angela to give her hand now in marriage.
ANGELA: I accept the offer, and it's about time.
Here's my hand, Carlos, if you'll be mine. 2570
MARCELO: "Here's my hand, Carlos"? What do you mean?
ANGELA: That's my husband's name, don't you see?
MARCELO: What's this, Alberto?
ALBERTO: I guess that's that.

She's still single and looking for a man.

MARCELO: "Single"?

2575

ALBERTO: She's neither married nor a nun.

ROQUE: (This wedding is certainly cheap enough! **Aside**
We're getting two for the price of one!)

MARCELO: How confusing this is. Are we in Babylon?

ALBERTO: If it was Angela you wanted to marry,
why are you now so surprised and angry?

2580

ANGELA: Sir, Angela de Heredia is your wife.

My name's Mendoza. My mother's your bride.

MARCELO: Even in Ethiopia there's no magic that black!

MOTHER: Calm down, sir. You mustn't talk like that!

You don't want all this to be made public.

2585

You asked me first, and I didn't lie about it.

I am your wife.

MARCELO: Is Angela your name, too?

CARLOS: Certainly. Everyone knows that. Even I do.

ROQUE: Well, the marriage is void and null.

MOTHER: Why?

2590

ROQUE: Because your hearing is dull,
you couldn't hear what was happening.

MARCELO: That's a way out, Roque, good thinking!

MOTHER: What makes you think I'm that big a fool?

I can hear better than any one of you.

ROQUE: Let's have a test, you crazy old hag.

2595

MOTHER: You're the one who's crazy. Take that!

ROQUE: I have to admit she heard that time.

(Another test but in a softer tone!) **Aside**

Madam Oldage married our gallant knight!

MOTHER: You're lying, you scullery maid's mop!

2600

If Marcelo isn't too old for marriage,

I've got a way to go before I'm his age.

ROQUE: Did you say she was deaf? No beast

of the forest hears better than she.

MARCELO: Well, if she's not deaf, that's good.

2605

Angela de Heredia I am your groom.

Once a man's fate has been decided,

no force on earth is able to oppose it.

DIEGO: It's my turn! Doña Angela, keep your vow

and return my diamond necklace to me now.

2610

ANGELA: What necklace do you mean? What's that?

DIEGO: I said I'm asking you to give it back.

ANGELA: But the constable took it from me already.

You know that as you admitted to me.
Why ask me for it now? 2615
FABIAN: Now it's my turn!
DIEGO: What constable? When? Can't you remember?
What's the confusion?
ANGELA: There he is, now!
Mr. Sharpe, you're here in the nick of time.
Didn't I give you the necklace? So how...?
ALEJANDRO: Now it's my turn! I have the diamonds, 2620
and will happily pay for them.
DIEGO: That's done!
ALEJANDRO: It's time we brought the play to an end
now that the gambler has met his fate.
ROQUE: Forgive us our faults, most gracious guests.
Enjoy yourselves now and let heaven wait. 2625
PRAISE GOD, THE PLAY'S AT AN END

. "Gambler's House." Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, 2026.
<https://www.comedias.org/obras/gamblers-house/>