

Love's True Lies

(La verdad sospechosa)

Juan Ruiz de Alarcón

translated by Kenneth Stackhouse

This text is based on LA VERDAD SOSPECHOSA (LOVE'S TRUE LIES) as translated for performance at El Chamizal National Memorial by Kenneth Stackhouse in 1994. The text was generously provided to this facility by the translator and was transcribed into HTML by Vern Williamsen in the summer of 1997.

Dramatis Personnae:

- DON GARCÍA, a student from Salamanca
- DON JUAN DE SOSA, a recent graduate from Salamanca living in Madrid
- DON FÉLIX, a friend of Don Juan who also lives in Madrid
- DON BELTRÁN, Don García's father, a nobleman, 60 years old
- DON SANCHO, Jacinta's uncle, 40 or 50 years old
- DON JUAN DE LUNA, Lucretia's father, about 70 years old
- TRISTÁN, a comic figure, servant to García and Beltrán
- An ATTORNEY, García's tutor and Beltrán's attorney
- CAMINO, a servant in Sancho's house
- JACINTA, a very pretty woman, 18 or 20 years old
- LUCRETIA, a pretty young woman, perhaps 25 years old
- ISABEL, Jacinta's maid, 16 or 17 years old and extremely pretty
- A SERVANT
- A PAGE
- Two horses (if possible)

The play takes place at various places in seventeenth-century Madrid: in the living room of Don Beltrán's house, on the street in front of a jewelry store, in the living room with an *estrado* of Don Sancho's house, outdoors in a park, in the street under the balcony of Lucretia's house, in the patio of Lucretia's house,

and in the cloisters of a convent with access through a window to a chapel of the cathedral.

ACT I

Scene i

A room in Don Beltrán's house. Don García, dressed as a student, enters, accompanied by an older man, an attorney. Both are wearing large riding capes and riding boots. Through another door Don Beltrán and Tristán enter.

Don Beltrán: It's good to see you home again, my son.

Don García: (García embraces him.)

It's good to see you, dad.

Don Beltrán: And your journey?

Don García: The heat and lack of rain were awful, sir.

If I had not been coming home, I think
I never could have made so long a ride.

Don Beltrán: Well! Then you must go in and rest a while.

Good Lord! Just look how you have grown! You left
Here just a child....! Tristán!! Come here!

5

Tristán: Yes, sir!

Don Beltrán: I want you to look out for him, alright?

You know Madrid, and he has just arrived.
So show him everything he needs to see.

Tristán: Don't worry. He will see the things he should.

Don Beltrán: But you are not his guardian, just his guide.

Don García: And friend...that is how it's got to be.

(Exit.)

Tristán: Whatever you may want is fine with me.

(Exit.)

Scene ii

Don Beltrán and his attorney.

Don Beltrán Now let me greet you as I should have done.

(He moves to embrace him.)

Attorney: I really do not understand why you...

(He starts to kneel.)

Don Beltrán: Oh, please. Stand up. Tell me about your trip.

Attorney: The journey went just fine. And I am pleased

With your son, García. I enjoyed travelling

With him and I will miss his company.

10

Don Beltrán: I'm just glad he saw the need to come.

And thank you! You know, you never fail to show

Your gratitude and your advice is good.

So let me show my gratitude to you.

I managed to obtain your nomination

To the board of regents. I also tried to get

You a seat on city council but I failed.

15

Attorney: I always knew that you could make it happen.

Don Beltrán: You knew I would do everything I could.

But I've only helped you take the first step up:

On your own you will achieve your final goal.

Attorney: I am most grateful. Thank you, very much.

Don Beltrán: Dont' go. Since I am now responsible

For García, there is something I must know.

Attorney: And what is that?

Don Beltrán: Tell me, truthfully.

I used to say, "García, study law." 20
He is my youngest son, and law can be
The best way to succeed here in Madrid.
But since my oldest son, Gabriel, has died,
Everything has changed. García must
Live here. He cannot enter a profession. 25
Instead, he must meet other men his age.
Our customs dictate we must give the king
Trustworthy men to serve him in his court.
García is, I think, just such a man
And needs no one to tell him what to do. 30
He is my responsibility for now.
He is my son and though he has not yet
Achieved his place in other men's eyes,
No one can say that he is not as good
As any man his age. But you are his tutor. 35
So tell me what you think of him. Don't lie.
What kind of man is he? What does he like
To do? Who are his friends? How do they spend
Their time? What are his weaknesses? Tell me.
Has he developed habits he must change? 40

(In response to the attorney's uncomfortable silence:)

Oh, do not think that you will make me mad
By telling me his weaknesses. There must
Be something in him that is not perfect.
Let's just say I won't be pleased to learn
His faults, but knowing them will be of use 45
To me. Nothing could please me more, I swear.
Just show me that you care about García.
You must disappoint me, for his sake.
It is better that I know now than be surprised

When some problem comes up which I cannot resolve.

50

Attorney: There is no need to justify yourself.

My duty is to tell you everything.

If a trainer brought the owner's horse and failed

To tell him how the horse behaved or how

It holds the bit, or runs, its stride or gait,

The trainer would cheat the man and hurt the horse.

55

It is always right to tell a man the truth.

We take our medicine. And damn the taste!

Your son, García, is a gentleman.

In every way, he manifests those traits

Which earn respect for all your family:

60

He is generous, brave, and will be wise, someday.

He believes in God and yet is tolerant.

He **is** a little quick to act, and impatient.

And the passions which at times overpower most men

Need not concern you greatly. I'm sure time

65

Will help him bring them under his control.

I only find one flaw in him, just one;

Believe me, I have tried to set it right.

Don Beltrán: Will it hurt his reputation in Madrid?

Attorney: It could.

Don Beltrán: What is it?

Attorney: He doesn't always tell

The truth.

Don Beltrán: Good Lord! What an ugly flaw

In a man whose whole career depends on trust!

70

Attorney: I do believe that, whether it's his nature

Or just a habit he acquired, in time,

Since your approval means so much to him,

He will overcome this one bad trait.

Don Beltrán: Well, I think a tree that does not grow up straight

Will never change when it is fully grown.

Attorney: But there at school, in Salamanca, sir,

They are just boys who want to have some fun. 75
They play all kinds of tricks. They do whatever
They want. They think the maddest pranks are best.
Youth has a lot to learn, and a lot to teach.
But here, in Madrid, where honor is the rule,
I am very sure that he will change his ways. 80

Don Beltrán: It almost makes me laugh to see how little

You know about the life we lead at court.
You think that here no one will tell you lies?
Although García's tales may be extreme,
He will meet people here who everyday
Will tell a thousand lies far worse than his. 85
There are many here, well-respected men
Whose lies impoverish and ruin us.
And lies are even worse in those whom we
Depend upon to give us good advice.

(The attorney reacts to the insult.)

I'm sorry. Do not think that I am angry. 90
I attacked as though it were your fault.
What you said about García hurts.
If he were blind with love or with desire,
If he spent the night out gambling,
If he were quarrelsome, always in a fight, 95
If he had married badly, or even died,
It would not matter half as much as knowing
That he lies!! What an ugly trait!!
I cannot stand a man who tells me lies!
How could he be so different from me? 100
Well, there is only one thing I can do:
Get him married before they find him out.
...I am most grateful for your help. I am!
So when do you begin your journey home?

Attorney: As soon as I can leave.

Don Beltrán: Why don't you stay

And rest a while and see what life is like
Here in Madrid?

105

Attorney: That would be wonderful,

But I have work to do.

Don Beltrán: I understand:

Men hungry for power wish that they could fly.
Good-luck!

(Exit.)

Attorney: God bless you, sir.... I never thought

The things I said would give him such a shock.
It seems the truth brings pain to the wise;
And for them, the pain always multiplies.

110

(Exit.)

Scene iii

AT THE SILVERSMITH'S SHOP

Don García enters, very formally dressed, accompanied by Tristán.

Don García: You really think these clothes look good on me?

Tristán: You look absolutely great! The man who styled

These Dutch lace ruffs deserves to win a prize.
No face looks unattractive framed in collars
Of starched lace! I know a man whose girl
Found him attractive...as long as he wore one.
But she lost all interest when he took it off.
Evidently, she saw his neck was scarred,
His nose looked larger than it did before,
And his ears looked huge, while his jaw looked weak.

115

120

Without his ruff, his mother wouldn't know him.

Don García: For those and other reasons these pinwheels ought

To be against the law. They have to be
Imported from abroad. They've become so popular,
They've upset the balance in foreign trade!
A simple Walloon collar, once in style, 125
Would look as good, would be more comfortable
And would cost a great deal less. Besides, a man
Would not have to walk around like a stick,
Afraid he might unravel all these laces.

Tristán: I know someone whose girl gave him the go

And he turned her down, because he did not want 130
To have to take his collar off! Ha!
But you're right. I think a Walloon collar is best.
But no one wants to be the first to wear them.

Don García: Let's not discuss the politics of style.

Tell me about the women of Madrid.

Tristán: You escaped the sin of vanity and fall

Prey to the flesh?! You really think that someone 135
Not up on world affairs should dive into
A love affair, as if it were that easy?

Don García: Not easy, just a lot more fun, I guess.

Tristán: Are you that young and inexperienced?

Don García: Just another guy like all the rest.

Tristán: Then you have come to the right place, my friend.

Madrid never rests because of love.
The stars that shine at night are fewer than
The pretty girls you'll see here every day. 140
And like the stars, the women here at court
Have many virtues, many vices, and live

In different spheres, depending on their size,
 Their influence, their brilliance and their hue.
 Now, I have nothing bad to say about a lady. 145
 Like the angels, no one would even dare
 To think of coming close to them in thought
 In word or deed. But I will tell you what
 I know about the ones like fallen stars,
 Who live on earth and are human **and** divine. 150
 First, there are those pretty married women
 Whom you could speak to, if they were discreet.
 I call them planets because they shine the most.
 These women like the generosity
 Of foreigners. Their husbands know it, too. 155
 Their men are always gone on some assignment
 Leaving Spain for Italy or America.
 But these women often tell you lies.
 Some pretend that they have husbands just
 To live their lives completely free from men's Control. 160
 There are also some just passing through
 Whose lovely daughters have always just arrived.
 The daughters are like fixed stars; the mothers
 Always wander freely. And women now
 Are wearing wigs! Their friends would like to, too. 165
 I would never speak to them, if I were you.
 Others are chasing men without much luck.
 I call these last the dullest stars, but in
 A pinch you might turn to one to find
 Your way. The chasers are not stars, of course. 170
 They are like comets and have the strangest light
 And no one ever knows just where they live!
 They seem to appear at dawn, demanding money,
 And promising disaster, disappear.
 The young girls go out, often as they can. 175
 They are like star dust and never stay for long.
 If you decide to try to catch a star,
 REMEMBER: they are terribly unfaithful,
 Even when you promise them great gifts.
 You know, Virgo is the only sign for love,
 While the signs for infidelity are three: 180
 Aries, Capricorn, and Taurus. And they
 Are governed not by love, by faith or trust,
 BUT BY TWO POINTED HORNS: money and money.

Don García: So you think you know the meaning of the stars?

Tristán: While I was working for some politicians,

I did, in fact, employ astrology.

Don García: You have been at court before?

Tristán: Yes, I have.

Don García: Then tell me. How did your career progress?

Tristán: I made no money and had no luck at all....

But one could not expect a better life
Than to serve the man I now am honored to....

185

Don García: Well, that is quite enough. But look how soft

Those hands are! Over there! What light shines in
Those eyes! Her glances are two arrows, love
And death.

Tristán: That lady in the carriage, there?

Don García: Who else could I be looking at? Look. There.

Tristán: Those fantasies about the chariot

Of Phaeton, with its fiery, burning rays
Of gold turned blinding pink at break of day
Would suit her perfectly, don't you think?

190

Don García: That is the first Phaeton I have ever seen.

Tristán: You act as if you've never seen a girl.

Don García: Well, she is the first one I have seen from heaven.

She has to be an angel come to earth.

Tristán: Oh, you will see so many lovely girls

That you will not be able to decide.
At least...I could never concentrate on
Only one. I leave the girl I have
To chase a different pretty face.

195

Don García: Have you ever seen such eyes? Look how they shine!

Tristán: Your eyes make things look bigger than they are.

Don García: Is there a chance you know her name?

Tristán: What?!

How could you even think a girl like that
Would talk to a serving man they call Tristán.

Don García: Well, I will meet that girl no matter what.

Tristán, go follow her and tell me where
She lives.

200

Tristán: No need. She has decided to

Stop here and go into this store.

Don García: Then I

Will go in, too. They do these things at court,
Don't they?

Tristán: Of course. But just remember what

I said, that money opens every door.

Don García: I have some here... at least I think I do.

Tristán: Then, attack! Since you have money on your side!

Now you will see if I have lied to you!
But would you look at that! The girl who just
Got out behind her, sir, looks like the sun,

205

If your girl is the dawn, the morning star.

Don García: *She's pretty, too.*

Tristán: *Wow! Look at their maid!!*

Don García: *Their carriage is like Cupid's bow and shoots*

A string of arrows, each more lovely than
The last. That does it! I am going in.

210

Tristán: *Remember what I said.*

Don García: *What did you say?*

Tristán: *That when you like a girl, just spend, spend,
spend!*

Don García: *I hope I get the chance!*

Tristán: *While you're inside*
I'll have the driver tell me who they are.

Don García: *You really think that he would tell you that.*

Tristán: *Have you ever known a chauffeur who would not talk?*

Scene iv

Jacinta, Lucretia, Isabel, *wearing lace mantillas. Jacinta slips and
García gives her his hand to help her stand up.*

Jacinta: *My goodness!*

Don García: *Take my hand. Here, let me help.*

And I will be Atlantis bearing heaven.

Jacinta: Atlantis you must be since you have won

The chance to touch me.

Don García: Winning just a chance

Is nothing. But the right to do so is 215
What I would like to have. Could I presume
To boast that I have touched the beauty who
Has set my soul on fire, when it was chance
And not a favor you desired as well?
I **did** hold heaven in my hand, but not 220
Because I rose to it. It fell to me.

Jacinta: And why would you desire to have that right?

Don García: To win a just reward.

Jacinta: To win the prize

And not have even played? What else is that
But pure beginner's luck?

Don García: You're right, of course.

Jacinta: Then why should you complain if you have won

The prize by luck although you did not try?

Don García: Because all favor and disfavor obtain

Their worth from one's intentions, nothing else. 225
You must conclude, therefore, that I have won
No favor from your hand or from your heart--
But I would have won, had you allowed me to.
And so you must permit me to regret
That though I touched your arm, a joy in fact, 230
Your heart, your will, have played no part in what
Might seem a favor to anothers' eyes.

Jacinta: But since I did not know what your will was,

Your claim to see some flaw in **my** desire

Is totally unfounded and without cause.

Scene v

Tristán and the others.

Tristán: (Aside) The coachmen did his job, just like he said.

I now know who they are and where they live.

235

Don García: You mean you never knew how I have felt,

For all this time?

Jacinta: How could I, since until

Today I've never seen you anywhere
Before?

Don García: You mean the year or so that I

Have spent beside myself with love for you
Has been to no avail?

240

Tristán: (Aside) What year? I know

He just arrived at court a day ago!

Jacinta: Well, really! I can swear I've never seen

You in my life before today.

Don García: When I

Arrived from the Americas, I knew
I did the right thing coming here because
The first thing that I saw was heaven,... you.
I knew that you were all my soul could ask,
But you could not have known, because I never
Had the chance to tell you what I feel.

245

Jacinta: You say

You are American?

Don García: And rich, since I

Met you, far richer than the silver mines
Of Potosí.

250

Tristán: (Aside) He is American??!!

Jacinta: Then you must be as stingy as they say.

Don García: Well, love makes even stingy men buy gifts.

Jacinta: If you are telling me the truth, that means

Today will be another birthday for me?

Don García: If only money could express how much

I care for you, I would spend it all on you.

That's something I can do. But gold cannot

EXPRESS MY FEELINGS: Maybe nothing can.

So allow me. Let me buy you something to show

I care.

255

Jacinta: (Aside) This man is not from here. I know.

(To Lucretia) Lucretia, tell me what you think of this

American who seems so generous?

Lucretia: Jacinta, you appear to like him, and...

He is deserving that you should.

Don García: If you

See anything displayed among these jewels,

Please, take it, anything at all you like.

260

Tristán: (To García) But, sir! But, that is going too far!

Don García: I'm lost,

Tristán.

Isabel: (To Lucretia and Jacinta.) Don Juan is coming! There!!

Jacinta: Good sir,

I thank you for your offer.

Don García: You understand

I will be quite offended if you refuse.

Jacinta: And you are quite mistaken, sir, to think

I could accept more than the thought.

Don García: But then

I will have failed to win your gratitude.

265

Jacinta: You did win my attention. I let you speak

To me.

Don García: And I am grateful and respect

That fact.

Jacinta: Good-bye.

Don García: Good-bye? Will you accept

My love for you?

Jacinta: Your feelings are your own.

The young women leave.

Scene vi

Don García: Tristán, go follow them.

Tristán: If you are still

Upset because you do not know the address

Of the girl who "sets your soul on fire with love,"
Calm down! I found out where she lives.

270

Don García: Then let's

Not follow them. If we are too eager,
She may just think my motives are not good.

Tristán: The coachman said her name is "de Luna,"

Lucretia de Luna, the prettier of the two,
The one he likes. The other girl who came
With her...he knows her address, not her name.

275

Don García: If Lucretia is the prettier of the two,

That's all I need to know. She is the one
I love, the one who, like the sun, leaves all
The stars behind, the one who won against
The rest and blinds me with her brilliant light.

280

Tristán: I thought the one who did not speak was far

The prettiest one.

Don García: You have good taste!

Tristán: Of course!

But my vote doesn't count because I think
That any girl who does not talk too much
Is pretty, especially if she doesn't speak.
But what if we are wrong? What if we ask
The coachmen where her friend lives, too, and then
He might remember the other girl's name as well.

285

Don García: And where does this Lucretia de Luna live?

Tristán: If I remember well, the Victoria quarter

Is what he said.

Don García: Lucretia's name is perfect:

"De Luna".... Her eyes outshine the moon and stars.

Scene vii

Enter Don Juan and Félix. Tristán and García remain.

Don Juan: (To Félix) A dinner and music, too? What luck!

Don García: Well, look who's here! My friend Don Juan de Sosa!

Tristán: And so it is.

Don Juan: (To Félix) Who is the lucky one

Who took her out?

290

Don Félix: I am sure you will

Soon learn his name.

Don Juan: I can not stand to think

Another man arranged to have a dinner
Outdoors at night and on the river! He had
An orchestra to play for them as well?
That's not the girl who said I was the only
One she really cared about.

295

Don García: Don Juan!

Don Juan: And who are you?

Don García: How can you say you do

Not remember your old friend, Don García.

Don Juan: It's just that I had never thought to see you in

Madrid ... and dressed so well!

Don García: Of course, I must

Look very different than I did in class
At Salamanca.

300

Don Juan: Much more elegant!

You're wearing clothes made for a gentleman!
Much better than those robes we students wore!

Don García: I agree!

Don Juan: Well, welcome, then!

Don García: (To Félix) And how are you,

My friend?

Don Félix: Quite happy, after seeing you.

It's really good to see you once again.

Don García: As always, count on me as on a friend.

Now tell me, what were you discussing when
We found you here? And what are you two doing
In Madrid these days?

305

Don Juan: We just found out about

A dinner someone gave last night down at
The river. And, they had an orchestra!

Don García: A dinner and with music, good Don Juan?

Last night?

310

Don Juan: Why, yes.

Don García: Something grand? A feast?

Don Juan: Well, that is what they said.

Don García: And that the girl

Was very beautiful, besides?

Don Juan: They say

She was.

Don García: Well, good!!

Don Juan: I don't know what you mean.

Don García: I mean, it makes me very glad to know

You think the girl I entertained last night

Is pretty, and the dinner a success.

You were, of course, referring to my girl

And to the party I arranged for her?

315

Don Juan: Can I assume there was, let's say, "a wedding"?

Don García: We spent the night, doing nothing else.

Tristán: (Aside) A girl? What party?! He has just arrived!

Don Juan: Well, now, how could you know someone to give

A party for? You found a girl that fast?!

Don García: I have been here for a while...about

A month.

Tristán: (Aside) He got here yesterday, I swear.

He has something up his sleeve.

Don Juan: How could

You have, and I know nothing of it. For...

I would have come to see you right away.

320

Don García: I kept my presence in Madrid a secret.

Don Juan: I guess that makes it clear why I did not

Know you were here. The party really was
That good?

Don García: The best the river ever saw.

Don Juan: (Aside) This is really getting me. (Aloud:) You had

The dinner at Sotillo grove?

Don García: You talk

As if you knew the place yourself, Don Juan.

325

Don Juan: I am not completely ignorant of it,

Although I really do not know it well
At all. They told me things, but I am still
Somewhat confused. Perhaps you will explain
Something. Call it a gentleman's wish to know
The truth, or idle curiosity.

330

(Aside) Or maybe I am just a little jealous.

***Don Félix: (Aside to Don Juan) Just look how your new rival
unknowingly***

Has come to tell you your own dream of heaven!

Don García: Well, listen to me, if you want to know.

Don Juan: (Quickly)Anything you have to say is fine.

Don García: Among the shadowy, leafy oaks,

As darkness starts to fall,
A lovely table draped in white
Holds plates,...the aromas call.,

335

So well prepared, Neapolitan style,
But abundant as in Spain,
Napkins starched like little birds
Like beasts from Africa's plain.

Four serving trays stacked very high

Are placed on every side,
With silver, gold and porcelains, 340
A noble lady's pride.

The lowest limbs of all the trees
Are trimmed to build six booths.
Four orchestras are hidden inside,
Two stalls conceal the food.

My lady then arrives by coach,
No woman lovelier, 345
As soft as evening breezes, low,
The river laughs with her.

Her steps turn lawns to emeralds,
And change the streams to glass.
Her walk transforms the sands to pearls,
The fireworks soar and pass. 350

From night to day within the grove,
They bring sun fire to earth.
Before the sulphur leaves the grove,
The torches add their mirth.

Some hidden woodwinds play nearby,
Joined by a bowed guitar,
The flutes provide more harmony, 355
The sweetest sound, by far.

The fourth, green leavéd booth conceals
Guitars and harps which play,
Accompanied by singers,...two,
I think, were there, today.

The dinner is twelve courses long,
Not counting the deserts, 360
With twenty kinds of pastry, since
Some chocolate never hurts.

The fruits and drinks are served in bowls
Sculptured out of ice,
There's so much snow, the river thinks
We've had winter twice. 365

We slowly savour every flavor,
Flowers perfume the night.
And the herbal incense makes Madrid
Believe it has taken flight

To the Sabine fields of Italy.
The torso of a man
Sculpted in diamonds represents 370
My lady's cruel ban

Of every caress I offer her.
Golden barbs he hurls
Instead of willow or wicker picks,
At her smile of lovely pearls.

The music from the booths flows on.
This night will never end, 375
Unless Apollo, in his envy,
Brings dawn to break again.

Don Juan: That description is so good that I would rather
Have heard you tell it than see it for myself.

Tristán: (Aside) Good God! How can he make things up so fast?
His lies about the dinner are far better
Than the truth itself! 380

Don Juan: (To Don Félix) I'm really feeling angry!

Don Félix: The things the other people said about
Last night are different from what he said.

Don Juan: The party was at the same time and place.
I don't really think the details count.

Don García: And you were saying?

Don Juan: Just that the party must
Have been the greatest there has ever been...
Since Alexander ruled in ancient Greece.

Don García: Oh, it was just a childish, little thing
I put together in about a day. 385
If there had been the time to really try,

I could have thrown a party you would not
Forget, a Grecian or a Roman feast,
Astonishing to people everywhere.

Don Félix: (Aside to Don Juan) Jacinta is the girl you saw today,

The one who left Lucretia's coach, then fell.

390

***Don Juan: (Aside to Don Félix) I swear García's eyes were
watching her.***

Don Félix: (To Juan) He is quite restless and appears to be

Preoccupied as well.

Don Juan: (To Félix) I know my worst

Suspensions will be confirmed. *(Pause)*

Don Juan and Don García: (In unison) Good- bye; take care!

Don Félix: You two are aiming much too high, I swear!

Exeunt Don Juan and Don Félix.

Scene viii

Don García and Tristán.

Tristán: I never saw a woman say good-bye

With such conviction and so certain that
She was right.

Don García: She is my heaven, after all,

The cause and end of everything I do.
She draws me after her and I cannot
Hold back.

395

Tristán: Be patient, then. Do not allow

Your feelings to run unchecked! If she finds out
You love her, you will never get your way.
Pretend you do not care and then you'll win. 400
The devil and most women are the same:
They do not care for souls that they have caught,
Nor will they try to have or tempt them, no.
For once they know they have you, you are through!
They only want the ones who might escape. 405

Don García: That, no doubt, is true, but I cannot

Control myself.

Tristán: Until you know some more

About her, do not give yourself away.
Appearances can lead a man to throw
Himself into the mud. At first, it always
Looks as though the swamp is a well-kept lawn. 410

Don García: Then, find out everything you can.

Tristán: Do not

Concern yourself. Just leave it all to me.
How could you tell so many awful lies?
If I could understand your thinking, then
I might be able to provide some help.
To be caught in a lie would mean dishonor! 415
You said you were American. Now, why?!

Don García: Tristán, the truth is, foreigners have much

More luck with women, Americans the most.
The people here think they are all quite rich.

Tristán: I understand what you are doing, but...

I think you made a big mistake. You know
They will find out just who you really are. 420

Don García: Well, by the time they do, I will have made

My way through the front door into their house,

If not into their hearts. When that occurs,
I will explain it all to them... somehow....

Tristán: I suppose that will have to do for now.

But how do you explain that other thing?
About arriving here a month ago?
You came from Salamanca yesterday!
Tell me why you told them something else.

425

Don García: You know how people think. Important men

Remain secluded for a month or so
On their estates outside the city, or
In their apartments here in town, to rest.

430

Tristán: Well, I will grant you that. But tell me, then,

Why did you make that story up about
That dinner "just for two... the river...last night?"

Don García: Because I just can't stand it when someone

Attempts to make me jealous, bragging of
Something they said or did. A gentleman
Should never feel impressed or amazed.
Astonishment reveals stupidity
And envy is a low, vile sentiment.
You do not know how great I always feel
When some loud, boasting fellow comes along
And tries to tell me something that he did,
And I can stop him dead, there, in his tracks.
I'll always tell some lie to put him down.
And then he will not dare to brag to me.
He leaves and chokes on news he can't repeat.

435

440

Tristán: That is a clever trick, but dangerous.

You will become a legend in Madrid
When people hear what you have learned to do.

445

Don García: Well, is a man who lives unheard, unseen,

With no accomplishments except to add
Another life to mankind's growing numbers,

Much different from the animals? True fame
 Is no mean trick. Who cares how it is done? 450
 I hope they talk about me everywhere...
 At least...I hope I give them cause to talk.
 Why, there was once a man who burned Ephesus
 Because he wanted to be known. That's why
 I do the things I do; it's what *I* like, 455
 The only reason *I* know of. So what?

Tristán: Ambition, or your idea of it, has lead

You to a childish way of thinking, so
 Be sure you keep your ideas to yourself.

Scene ix

***A room in Don Sancho's house. Jacinta and Isabel with mantillas.
 Don Beltrán and Don Sancho are present.***

***Jacinta: (To Beltrán) And to what do we owe the honor of your
 presence?***

Don Beltrán: Our families have been friends for many years.

You should not be surprised that I am here.

Jacinta: Well, I am overwhelmed! You honor us.

(To Sancho) Forgive my being late; had I been told

That we had such a guest as this, I would 460
 Have left the silversmith's immediately,
 ...where I had taken some jewelry for repair.

Don Beltrán: The fact that you have taken jewelry there

Should be a sign to you, my dear, which means
 That I have to come to talk to you of marriage!
 Your uncle Sancho has agreed that we 465
 Should change our friendship into family ties.
 Your uncle also says it's only fair
 To ask what you would think of this idea.
 I trust you have no reason to object?

You know my family well, you also know 470
 Our income. The only thing we need to know,
 I think, is whether you would find García
 A man whom you could love. And even though
 He arrived in Madrid just yesterday
 And on the road from Salamanca he 475
 Was burned a little by the sun, I'll have
 To bring him here. Oh, I am almost sure
 That you will like him, from his head down to
 His feet. So when may he come talk to you?

Jacinta: There is no doubt that I do stand to gain,

Marrying him, as you propose. But no. 480
 I should say "yes." You know I do respect
 Your family. And I am truly honored.
 But it would look to everyone like I
 Was just another foolish woman who
 Did not take marriage very seriously. 485
 All women should have much more self-respect.
 Or even worse, they might think that I
 Was in a hurry to find a husband! But...
 If you want me to see him..., well, you know
 That all he has to do is walk along 490
 The street. Bring him by and nothing will
 Be lost. However, what if it should happen,
 As it often does, that you and I
 Agree and then the wedding not take place?
 What good would come of that? What would people 495
 Think if I did let him come see me, and
 I wanted to marry him and he refused?

Don Beltrán: I must admit...I think...that you are right.

I swear, if you two were to marry, then
 I would envy his good luck for having found
 A woman who is as smart as she is lovely. 500

Don Sancho: (*Ironically*) The girl you see here is a paragon
 Of prudent understanding!

Don Beltrán: Now I see

Why you have so much confidence in her!
 This afternoon, García and myself

Will ride on horseback, right along this street.

505

Jacinta: And I will hide upstairs behind the blinds.

Don Beltrán: Jacinta, look him over well. Tonight,

I will return to hear what you decide.

Jacinta: So soon?!

Don Beltrán: Do not look so surprised. Though I

Have come here with desire, I'm now a man

In love. Good-bye, for now.

Jacinta: Good-bye?!

*Don Beltrán: (He leaves and Sancho starts to follow him.) And
where*

Are you off to?

Don Sancho: To talk to you, of course.

Don Beltrán: For just a moment, then.

Don Sancho: Just come with me

Into the hall, if you would be so kind.

510

Don Sancho and Don Beltrán exeunt.

Scene x

Isabel: Can you believe the hurry he is in?

Jacinta: What he proposes is to my advantage,

And I am actually more eager than he is.

But I love someone else. You know him, too.

Don Juan has not been given his commission
In the military order he prefers.
The delays have made me stop and reconsider. 515
Perhaps I really ought to change my mind.
But since I love him very, very much,
I've never given up on his success.
And yet I'm frightened, Isabel, because
I think I'll have to marry someone else! 520

Isabel: And I had come to think that you broke up

With your Don Juan! You never refuse to listen
When other men stop to talk to you.

Jacinta: I told you why, Isabel! I can not

Marry Juan unless he gets his post!
I think he **never** will! I have no choice.
In order not to die of loneliness 525
I'll have to find some other entertainment.
It can't be right to die just to prove
That one is true to what can never be.
I think I could still find someone to give
My heart and soul some rest, without regret. 530

Isabel: I'm sure that time will bring you someone who

Deserves that kind of love. I bet you saw
Someone today whom you could learn to like.
The American, I mean.

Jacinta: Do you want me

To tell you what I think? Beltrán's good son
Had better not be as handsome as that man, 535
Or our wedding will take place immediately!

Isabel: This afternoon, you'll have the chance to see

Him ride along your street, accompanied
By Don Beltrán.

Jacinta: But I will only see

His face and how he rides a horse! I must...

I have to hear him speak, then I can judge
His heart, his mind.

540

Isabel: Then, speak to him, of course.

Jacinta: Don Juan would be quite angry if he heard

I'd spoken to another man. I'd lose
My only chance..., unless I knew for sure
I'd found another man who'd marry me!

Isabel: Then find a way! Time waits for no one, you know.

And you must make your choice. The way things are,
Don Juan is like the gardner's dog. He will
Not let you pick in peace. If you would like,
You could just speak to Beltrán's son. And Juan
Would never know! A trick like that should be
Quite easy for a woman such as you.
Any other girl would find it easy!

545

550

Jacinta: You've made me think about what really counts.

Lucretia is my friend. She could invite
Don Juan to visit her in secret, and...
Then I could be there, too, at her window.
That way I'd have a chance to speak to him.

555

Isabel: Who but you could think of such a thing!

Jacinta: Go tell Lucretia what I plan to do.

Isabel: I will!

Jacinta: Tell her delay means certain failure!

Scene xi

Don Juan who meets Isabel on leaving. Jacinta.

Don Juan: Please. Let me see Jacinta, Isabel.

Isabel: Well, for just one little minute. Sancho will

Be leaving soon for dinner.

Don Juan: Jacinta, listen.

Since you have left me, I am lost for sure.

Jacinta: You must be crazy!

Don Juan: Who would not be, when

You do the things you do.

Jacinta: Control yourself,

And speak more softly, please! My uncle is
Inside!

560

Don Juan: What do you care about your uncle?

I suppose you cared when you went out last night
To a party at the river?

Jacinta: What do you mean?

Just what are you implying?

Don Juan: When a girl has spent

The night with someone else, she seldom cares
What her old uncle might come to think of it.

565

Jacinta: Me? Spend the night with someone else? Look here.

If that were even true, you still would have
No right to talk to me like that. Besides,
I think you are just making up some story.

Don Juan: I know the dinner at the river was

GARCÍA'S PLAN: the fireworks when your coach
Arrived; the torches lighting up the grove

At midnight; silver plated service, and 570
 Four salvers with fine crystal and, four tents
 With singers and musicians. I know it all.
 And you were still there, at the river, when
 The sun came up. You said you were my friend.
 Tell me now that I am crazy, that 575
 I have no right to speak to you this way,
 When your foolishness and insults all demand
 An explanation.

Jacinta: How dare you speak that way!

Don Juan: And do not think that you can lie to me.

You had best not talk at all, because the truth 580
 Is now well known and there is no excuse
 For what you did. You lied! You really hurt me.
 Do not deny that I have lost your love.
 Do not deny you've had a change of heart.
 Do not insult me by not telling me the truth! *(Pause)*
 Although you might deny what I have heard, 585
 You can't deny something I have seen!
 What about his father? He was here!
 Just tell me what he told you, will you? You
 Stayed out all night with his son and then
 You spent the day with his father? You can't 590
 Deny something I have seen. Don't lie
 Just to give me some false hope. I know
 Your heart has changed and you are holding back
 The truth. But do not think that you can ever
 Be happy. You are too cruel for happiness. 595
 Jealousy will burn you like hot coals,
 And the one who won your love will lose you, too.

Jacinta: Are you in your right mind?

Don Juan: How could I be,

Since I have lost your love and still love you.

Don Juan starts to leave.

Jacinta: Come back and listen to the truth. You have

To understand that they have lied to you!

Don Juan: Your uncle has come in. So I must leave.

Jacinta: My uncle is not here. So hear me out.

I know that you will completely understand.

600

Don Juan: Only if you say you'll marry me.

Jacinta: Uncle!! You're here somewhere.... But where?

End of Act I.

ACT III

Scene 1

TRISTÁN: But that's him now! He's coming right this way!

DON GARCÍA: I don't believe it.

TRISTÁN: Neither do I! How could
You lie to your own secretary! **(Aside)** And I
Believed him, knowing that he lies! I swear
He makes his stories up so well that he
Could fool...well, anyone!

605

DON GARCÍA: There's only one
Way to explain it. A spell, they used a spell
To cure him.

TRISTÁN: They cured a wound that spilled his
brains
And with some magic spell?

DON GARCÍA: Why not? I know
A spell they used in Salamanca where
They grafted back an arm some man had lost.
And he was better in about a week!

610

TRISTÁN: Go on.

DON GARCÍA: I saw it all, with these two eyes.

TRISTÁN: Now that is just about enough.

DON GARCÍA: I swear,
On my life, that what I'm telling you is true.

615

TRISTÁN: I think he's lost it. He's deceived himself! **Aside**

(To García).

If you will teach that spell to me, I'll never
Ask for anything again. I'll work
For free.

DON GARCÍA: The words are in Hebrew, I'm afraid,
And unless you know that language, you could not
Pronounce it well.

620

TRISTÁN: And you know Hebrew?!

DON GARCÍA: Yes,
And ten other languages as well, my friend.

TRISTÁN: Ten tongues are not enough for all your lies. **Aside**
And you, a man of reason and of truth! **Aloud**
I don't believe he knows what truth is, now, **Aside**
Since everything he says is obviously a pack of lies.

625

DON BELTRÁN: Can you tell me anything? **(To don Juan)**

DON JUAN DE SOSA: Why, yes.
No one by that name lives in Salamanca,
And I'm sure.

DON BELTRÁN: **(Aside)** Obviously, García lied.
I'd best not let on that I know. **(Aloud)** Oh, yes,
I hear congratulations are in order.
You have been chosen to receive a trust
From the Knights of Calatrava. Is that so?

630

Don Juan Believe me, sir, that I am in your debt
For ever, no matter what good fortune comes
My way. Will you excuse me now? I must
Go thank those men you see there waiting for me.
I cannot see you home. Excuse me, please.

635

(Exit.)

Scene ix

Beltrán, García and Tristán.

DON BELTRÁN: Good Lord, I think that my son's lies have caused

Aside

My friends to distrust me! How could he lie 640
Right to my face when I was reprimanding him
For that very thing? How could I have believed
What he was saying, knowing that he lies?
He lied to me when I was warning him!
No judge expects a thief to steal from him. 645

To García.

TRISTÁN: You really think you ought to speak to him?

DON GARCÍA: He is my father. Yes, Tristán.

TRISTÁN: Good luck.

DON GARCÍA: Oh, Dad...

DON BELTRÁN: How dare you speak to me! I'm not
Your father. You are not like me at all.
Get out of my sight. I swear, if I were younger... 650

TRISTÁN: The sea is stormy. Wait a little while. **To García**

DON BELTRÁN: What have I done? Do I deserve this? Well?
How could the Lord give me a son so different
From myself. I love the truth. I keep my word.
I protect our family's honor. My Gabriel 655
Is gone, and in the prime of his youth. He brought
Me joy. He brought us honor. You, what have
You brought with you petty, childish vice of lying?
I swear, if I did not believe in....

DON GARCÍA: What **Aside**
Is going on? I do not understand. 660

TRISTÁN: Get out of here. You'd better leave right now!

DON BELTRÁN: You'd better leave, Tristán. But no, come back.
Perhaps if he sees that you know what he
Has done, his shame will have more influence
On him than his respect for me. The shame 665

May not correct his ways. But maybe it
Will be some kind of punishment for him.
So tell me, worthless little man, just what
You get from telling all these lies? And why?
How could you lie to me as well? You led 670
Me to believe that you had married while
You lived in Salamanca. Was your purpose
To discredit me as well? Now how can I
Look all those people in the eye whom I
Had told you married Sancha de Herrera? 675
There is no Sancha de Herrera!! You made
A liar out of me. The only way
I see to regain my friends' trust in me
Is to tell them that you lied. But that would make

ME OUT AS SOMETHING WORSE: a man who betrays
His family by broadcasting their faults. 680
If you were so in love, you did not have
To lie to me. I am your father and
I'm not so old that I don't know how hot
The flame of love can burn. I never made
Cruel threats to force you to be anything 685
But human. I do know what being a young
Man means. I am your father, after all.

DON GARCÍA: Well, since you are, and since you know what love
is,
You have to understand. I lied to you
Because I couldn't obey your wish for me 690
To marry Jacinta. It was not a crime.
It was just a plain mistake, stupidity,
And not my fault or wish to do you harm.
And since you know I lied, let me explain
The cause. I think that we can make it right. 695
Lucretia, the daughter of Don Juan de Luna,
Is the girl I love. You know her family well.
They have no other children and all we need
Is your consent. You only need to say
The rumor I was married is not true. 700

DON BELTRÁN: You won't fool me a second time, my boy.
You think that I'll believe you when I know
You lie?

DON GARCÍA: Of course I don't. But actions always

Speak louder than words. Tristán can explain it all.
He knows what I've been going through. Ask him. 705
You do trust him, don't you? Tristán, explain.

TRISTÁN: Sir, everything he says is true.

BELTRÁN: Have you
No shame? You have to have your secretary
Vouch for you? I'll have to speak to Juan
De Luna. I'll ask if you can marry his daughter Lucretia. 710
At least, she'll be the only one deceived
By you from here on out. But first, I must
Write friends in Salamanca. I still am not
Convinced you have not lied. I knew the truth
Before I spoke to you, but since you said 715
That what I knew is actually the truth,
I can't be certain any more...because

You said it's true. Do you understand?

(Exit.)

DON GARCÍA: Well, that was not too bad.

TRISTÁN: What do you mean?
I thought for sure that you were going to need
To use that magic spell, or beg and plead! 720

(Exeunt.)

Scene x

*A sitting room in Juan de Luna's house with a window opening
onto the garden patio. Don Juan de Luna and Don Sancho.*

DON JUAN: It looks as if the night is turning cold.

DON SANCHO: Good friend, Don Juan de Luna, at my age,
It's much too cold to ride out to the river.

DON JUAN: Then we shall have them serve us in the garden!
It's warmer there and we'll enjoy our dinner. 725

DON SANCHO: Now that is an idea! There are warmer nights
To ride along the Manzanares' banks.

The cold is not the best thing for one's health.

DON JUAN: Lucretia, tell your lovely guest that we
Are going to have our dinner, here at home.

730

DON SANCHO: Your daughter is so pretty, an angel, yes.
I hope she has the life she so deserves.

DON JUAN: Besides her beauty and intelligence,
She values goodness, more than life itself.

Scene xi

Don Juan, Don Sancho and a servant.

SERVANT: Don Juan de Sosa is at the door and asks
If he may see you, sir.

735

DON SANCHO: At this late hour?

DON JUAN: It must be quite important.

DON SANCHO: Ask him in.

(Exit servant.)

Scene xii

*Don Juan de Sosa with a large document. Don Juan de Luna and
Don Sancho.*

DON JUAN DE SOSA: Without this charter, I would not have dared
Appear before you, sir, but now that I
Have got my appointment, impatience got the upper
Hand and I have come to claim my prize.
The Calatrava Order honored me;
And if you honor your promise, I will see
My victory complete.

740

DON SANCHO: Had you delayed
In telling me, I would have been upset.
I am delighted! I must go and tell
Jacinta. Please excuse us. She's not dressed
For this occasion!

745

(Exit.)

DON JUAN DE LUNA: I knew it would come
through!
For Heaven helps the truth prevail at last.
It may take time in coming, but it always does.

750

Scene xiii

Don García, Don Beltrán, Tristán, Don Juan de Luna, Don Juan de Sosa.

DON BELTRÁN: But this is not the time to speak to him,
Since they have guests and we must speak alone.

DON GARCÍA: But Juan de Sosa can tell them the truth
About my life in Salamanca, whether
Or not I got married there.

755

DON BELTRÁN: You need
A witness, that's for sure. How embarrassing.
You talk to Sosa; I will talk to Luna.

JUAN DE LUNA: My friend! Don Beltrán!

DON BELTRÁN: Don Juan, my friend!

JUAN DE LUNA: You're out quite late this evening, aren't you?

DON BELTRÁN: Of course, because I am in love, my friend.

760

JUAN DE LUNA: And who's the lucky girl?

DON BELTRÁN: You must forgive
My calling on you late at night like this.
The door was open, we are friends, they let
Me come right in, without asking permission.

JUAN DE LUNA: No need for explanations. I am quite
Concerned, however, wondering what is wrong.
You never call on friends this late at night.

765

DON BELTRÁN: Well, let me tell you, over here, my reasons.

(They move away from the others.) [Don García speaks with Don Juan de Sosa].

DON GARCÍA: Yes, envy can suppress the truth, for a while,

But it will always triumph in the end. 770
Believe me when I say how pleased I am
To learn of your appointment.

JUAN DE SOSA: Why, thank you!.

DON GARCÍA: Enjoy your honors. You have earned them fairly.

JUAN DE LUNA: What you've proposed will make Lucretia happy.
I can't believe that this is really happening. 775
It's almost like a dream come true.

García,
With Juan de Sosa's leave, I'll have a word
With you.

(They move away.)

Your father, Don Beltrán, has said
You want to marry my Lucretia. 780

DON GARCÍA: My life,
My soul, my honor and my happiness
Are in her hands.

JUAN DE LUNA: On her behalf, I offer
You my hand on it. For she and I both know
How much we have to gain. I've heard her say
So many things. You make us proud, young man. 785

DON GARCÍA: You've made me happy, more than words can say.

Scene xiv

*Don Sancho enters with Jacinta and Lucretia. García, Beltrán,
Juan de Sosa and Juan de Luna.*

(To Jacinta)

LUCRETIA: At last, you've reached your goal, after so long.

(To Lucretia)

JACINTA: I can't be happy, 'til you have reached yours.

(To García)

JUAN DE LUNA: She's coming in, oblivious, with Jacinta.
She looks too disheveled, not ready for
Her wedding day! Let me be first to tell
Her the good news.

790

(He moves away to address Lucretia.) [Beltrán speaks to García]

DON BELTRÁN: Here comes Don Sancho! What
Am I to say to him?

DON GARCÍA: An error caused
By love is easy to forgive.

[Lucretia is speaking to don Juan de Luna]

LUCRETIA: Then he
Was never married there in Salamanca?!

795

JUAN DE LUNA: He made that up to keep his father from
Asking him to marry some other girl.

LUCRETIA: Then I agree to marry him. Of course!

Sancho Now, gentlemen, behold your brides! They say
They're honored, happy, and they love you, too.

800

DON GARCÍA: Let my actions prove the truth of all I've said!

(Both García and Juan de Sosa move to take Jacinta's hand.)

DON JUAN DE SOSA: Ho, there! Where do you think you're going?

DON GARCÍA: Lucretia, what is this?

DON BELTRÁN: What's happening?!!

To Jacinta

DON GARCÍA: Lucretia, you're the only one I love.

DON BELTRÁN: He can't be trying to play another trick!!

805

DON GARCÍA: I know I got your name all wrong, but I
Would know you any where. For you're the one
I love, the one I asked to marry me.

LUCRETIA: And what about this letter, then? It's written
By your hand and signed. Is it a lie, also?

810

(She takes out his letter.)

You surely can't go back on what it says.

DON BELTRÁN: He would not dare to put me through that again!

DON JUAN DE SOSA: Jacinta, if you'll just give me your hand,
You'll end all this confusion, once and for all.

DON SANCHE: Jacinta, give your hand to Juan de Sosa. 815

JACINTA: I'm yours, Don Juan, as I have always been.

DON GARCÍA: I've lost my hope for happiness. **Aside**

DON BELTRÁN: If you
Refuse to marry Lucretia de Luna, you'll never
Live in Spain again, or anywhere, I swear!!

JUAN DE LUNA: I gave my hand to you on her behalf, 820
And if you break your word to me, you might
As well give up all hope of living here.

TRISTÁN: It's all your fault, you know. If you had told
The truth and from the start, Jacinta would
Be yours by now. There's nothing to be done. 825
Forgive them. Then, give your hand to her.
After all, Lucretia's not too bad, is she?

DON GARCÍA: I suppose I have to do what's only fair.

TRISTÁN: And I suppose we all now see the light:
A liar, though he tells the truth, is never right. 830

END OF THE COMEDIA

. "Love's True Lies." Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, 2026.
<https://www.comedias.org/obras/loves-true-lies/>