

The Phantom Lady

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by Pedro Calderón de la Barca

(1629)

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Dramatis personae:

Manuel, recently come to Madrid to seek his fortune at court

Juan, his friend, and owner of the house in Madrid

Luis, brother of Juan

Cosme, servant of Manuel

Rodrigo, servant of Luis

Angela, a young widow, sister of Luis and Juan

Beatriz, her cousin

Isabel, maid of Angela

Servants

Act I

[A street in Madrid]

Manuel

Here we arrive in this magnificent city of Madrid, and miss the celebrations on the occasion of the baptism of the new prince by just one hour.

Cosme

Such things happen, for good or ill, for want of an hour: If Pyramus had gone to the fountain an hour earlier he would not have found Thisbe dead or the mulberries turned purple with her blood. You know, the great poets say that the tragedy was written with mulberry juice. If Tarquin had not arrived an hour late, he would have found Lucretia safe and sound. (Of course, playwrights would not have gone from theater to theater trying to find out if she was raped or not.) If Hero had spent an hour thinking and deciding on the best thing to do, she would not have thrown herself from the tower, that's for sure (in which case, no playwright would have had his greatest triumph writing her into his most famous play, and no actress would have chewed up the scenery

playing her). Since we have missed the party by just one hour, let us not waste another before we find our destination. As the story goes, if one arrives late, he must remain outside the gate. Besides, I am dying to see this friend who is waiting for you as though you were a proper gentleman, without knowing how or why such good fortune has come to us. After all, even though we are not competitors in a tournament, it is he who supports us.

51 Manuel

Don Juan de Toledo, Cosme, is the man whom I most dearly call friend. Our friendship rivals the great ones celebrated across the centuries. We studied together, then, passing from letters to arms, we were comrades together in war. In the Piedmont War, when the Duke of Feria made me a captain, I gave my flag to him. He was my lieutenant, Cosme, and suffered a deep wound in the fray; I cared for him in my own bed. He owes his life to me, second only to God. I have forgiven minor debts because it is unseemly to mention them among nobles. For that reason repayment of a favor is depicted as a rich woman with her back turned, meaning that once one has done something nice, discretion requires one to forget about it. Thus Juan, grateful for my friendship and my help, seeing that his Majesty has called me to court to reward my service, has invited me today to stay in his house. It is the least he could do. Although he wrote to me in Burgos, giving his address, I most certainly did not want to ask directions from his neighbors. That is why I left the mules and the baggage at the inn and came on foot to find his house. Then I saw the decorations and the finery and, when I found out the occasion, I hoped to see the celebration, if only by accident. But we arrived an hour too late....

Enter Angela and Isabel, veiled.

Angela

If you are a gentleman, as your appearance would indicate you to be, please help a poor woman who must rely on your sense of duty. Honor and life itself are at stake. That gentleman must not know who I am. I pray you, prevent him from following me. Upon your life, rescue a lady from certain misfortune and dishonor. It might be that one day.... *[She starts to leave.]* Good-bye! I am undone. *[Exit]*

Cosme

Was that a lady or a whirlwind?

Manuel

What a turn of events!

Cosme

What do you plan to do?

Manuel

You need to ask? How could my nobility fail to come to her aid and prevent her misfortune and her dishonor? The man must surely be her husband.

Cosme

What are you thinking?

Manuel

I shall detain him by some trick. Of course, if that is to no avail, I shall have to resort to force even though I may have to invent an excuse.

Cosme

If you are looking for a trick, wait... I think I have something here. This letter of introduction from a friend should do.

Enter Luis and Rodrigo, his servant.

Luis

I have to meet her, if only because she goes to such lengths to avoid me.

Rodrigo.

Follow her and you will know who she is.

Cosme approaches; Manuel withdraws.

Cosme

Sir, although I am embarrassed to approach you, might your worship please do me a great favor and read me this letter.

Luis

I am in too much of a hurry. I have no time for such things.

Cosme

Well, if you need a little, I have plenty for both of us.

Luis

Leave me alone.

Manuel

(Aside) (This street is entirely too straight; they are still in sight.)

Cosme

I beseech you, Sir.

Luis

Good God, you are irritating. I shall thrash you soundly if you do me much....

Cosme

For that reason, I'll just do you a little.

Luis

I have no more patience for you. Get away!

[He pushes Cosme.]

Manuel

(Aside) (I must intervene. Let valor finish what caution began.) *[He approaches Luis.]*

Sir, this servant is mine, and I do not know how he must have offended you for you to mistreat him so.

Luis

I do not respond to those who doubt or complain about my actions. Good day.

161 Manuel

You may be quite certain that if I required satisfaction, I should not leave without it, despite your arrogance. My asking how he has offended you, so that I may punish him for his error, deserves more courtesy. Since courtly manners demand it, please do not disparage it, even when a stranger should come to teach it to you who have the obligation, as nobles at court, to know it.

Luis

Who dares think that I lack courtesy?

Manuel

Silence your tongue; let your sword speak.

[They draw swords.]

Luis

You speak well.

Cosme

Good God! They're going to fight!.

Rodrigo

[To Cosme] Draw your sword.

Cosme

Oh, no! It's a virgin. Without express permission, it's not allowed to show its face.

Enter Beatriz restraining Juan, accompaniment

Juan

Let go, Beatriz.

Beatriz

You must not go.

Juan

But the fight is with my brother.

Beatriz

Oh, wretched fortune.

Juan

I am here to help.

184 Luis

Juan, wait. Rather than helping me, you are making me look like a coward. This stranger needs no help; he even has a servant. Please go, for God's sake. As a nobleman, I can do my own fighting, and even more so with an adversary of such skill and grace. Now please leave.

Manuel

I am taken by your charm and gentle manner. But if you still have the slightest quarrel with me, I shall meet you at your convenience.

Luis

Agreed.

Manuel

Agreed.

Juan

I cannot believe my eyes and ears. Manuel!

Manuel

Juan!

Juan

My soul is in turmoil and cannot decide what to do. My brother and my friend, which is the same thing, ready to fight? I cannot believe it. I must know the cause.

Luis

Then listen: This gentlemen intervened on behalf of his servant, a fool who provoked me to speak harshly to him. This is the result.

213 Juan

Since that is all it is, please allow me to welcome our guest with a warm embrace. This gentleman is Manuel, the houseguest we have been expecting. Luis, I want you two, who have demonstrated equal valor, to be friends. Shake hands.

Manuel

Before I do, because I have witnessed his courage and skill, I am bound by honor to offer my service to Luis.

Luis

I consider myself your friend, and lament that I did not recognize you. Your valor should have been enough to identify you.

Manuel

Yours leaves mine humiliated. See? You have wounded my hand.

Luis

A thousand times over do I wish the wound were mine!

Cosme

What a courteous fight!

Juan

Wound? Come, we shall have it bandaged. Luis, you stay here and see Beatriz to her carriage. You can give her our apology. Come, Manuel, to my house, which is also your house, where you may get treatment.

Manuel

But it is nothing.

Juan

Come along.

Manuel (*Aside*)

How sad that Madrid should receive me thus with blood!

Luis (*Aside*)

How sad that I was unable to find out who that woman was!

Cosme

How nice that things turned out well for my master, unlike Don Quixote when he tried to save a maiden!

Exeunt Manuel, Juan and Cosme. Luis approaches Beatriz, who is standing off to one side.

Luis

The storm has passed. Once again, madam, allow me to restore to bloom the flower of your beauty that an accident has caused to wither.

Beatriz

Where is Juan?

Luis

He asks your forgiveness, but necessary obligations have called him away, as well as the desire to care for the health of an injured friend.

Beatriz

Oh my! I am undone! Is Juan injured?

Luis

Madam, it is not Juan. I could not possibly remain here so calmly if my brother were wounded. Be not afraid; it is not right, since he is not injured, that between the two of us you should suffer and I should be in pain. I say in pain because I see you so captivated by an imagined ill and it hurts me all the more.

Beatriz

My dear Luis, you know how much I appreciate your attentions; I know they are heartfelt and sincere. But I cannot repay them. Only fate can alter love and it suffers no entreaties. If what is most scarce is today most cherished at court, hold in esteem the truth, for it is indeed a rare commodity.

Luis

Go in peace. *[Exit Beatriz with her maid.]* There is nothing, Rodrigo, that turns out well for me. If I see a well-born lady and wish to meet her, a fool and a fight interrupt me. I do not know which is worse, for if I fight, my brother arrives and my enemy is his friend. If my brother leaves his lady in my keeping, she rejects my sincere overtures. A veiled lady flees from me, a fool torments me, a stranger wants to kill me, a brother brings him home as a guest in our house, and another lady spurns me. Things couldn't get much worse.

Rodrigo

I think I know which of all your woes troubles you most.

Luis

How could you know?

Rodrigo

The one you feel most strongly is your jealousy of your brother and the beautiful Beatriz.

Luis

You are quite mistaken.

Rodrigo

Then what is it?

Luis

If I speak truthfully, and I feel I can trust only you, what causes me most alarm is that my brother casually invites a handsome young man to our house, knowing that in it there is also our sister, a young widow, as you know, who lives so cloistered that the sun scarcely knows where she lives. Beatriz is the only person who visits her.

330 Rodrigo

I know that her husband was a port administrator with a modest salary, and that he died owing the crown a tidy sum, and that she came to court in secret to see to his affairs in private. This excuses your brother. If you consider that as a widow no one is allowed to visit her, and even though your guest is Manuel, no one is to know that such a woman is imprisoned in your house, what harm can come from having him there? Especially since, as a result of considerable care and thought, the door to his room opens directly onto the street. The old door to the rest of the house has been closed up, and in front of it has been placed a cupboard with mirrored doors designed in such a way that no one would suspect that there is a passageway behind it. In this way you all suspicion is removed with the door closed, yet it still allows one to be able to open it again.

Luis

You think this gives me a sense of security? The very fact fills me with dread. What you are telling me is that nothing stands in defense of Angela's honor except a few mirrored panes of glass, which can easily be broken with one blow.

Exeunt.

[Angela's room]

Enter Angela and Isabel.

Angela

Isabel, hand me that scarf. What a miserable life! I must live in a shroud, dead to the world as a result of my enormous misfortune.

Isabel

Take it quickly. If your brother should come and have the slightest suspicion, at least your appearance should

not give you away. He must not see you dressed as you were at court this morning.

379 Angela

God help me! I am dying entombed by these four walls. The sun hardly knows of my existence. But my woes can be neither contained nor cured in the course of a single day. Even the inconstant moon, who learns her fickleness from me, cannot say that she has seen me weeping in misery. In effect, I have lived my life in a cage, completely without freedom, only because I was widowed by a husband and now as good as married to two brothers. That it should be a crime to leave this house, to go where people are, where there are plays and gossip and important events! Just to walk about the streets in disguise, causing no dishonor, flouting no authority! Oh cruel stars! Oh wretched fortune!

Isabel

Madam, there is no doubt that your zealous brothers are concerned for your well-being. You are, after all, a widow, young, beautiful, and intelligent. Your status is the one that leads to the most problems with love. Even more so today, when men at court frequently entertain their perfumed “widows”! My God! When I see perfumed hussies gallivanting around town pretending to be so virtuous, so saintly, so modest, so circumspect. All they really care about is showing off their new dresses. Take away their finery and pious gestures and they become as flighty as a ball of paper on the wind, talking to all the young men they meet. But let us leave this discussion for another time. How is it we have not mentioned the stranger who came to the rescue of your honor, the one who presented himself today as your savior?

Angela

You have read my soul by speaking of him. The thought of him has me quite unnerved, not on his account but on mine. Afterwards, when I heard the sound of knives, I thought — and these are just fantasies, Isabel — that he might take my misery so much to heart that he would draw his sword in my defense. I was foolish to implicate him in such a fashion, but a woman in turmoil, what is she to think or do?

Isabel

I do not know if he stopped him; I only know that your brother followed us no more.

Angela

Wait, listen!

Enter Luis.

Luis

Angela!

Angela

Dear brother! What brings you here in such a state? What has happened? What is wrong?

Luis

A terrible burden, a question of honor.

Angela

(Aside) Oh no! Doubtlessly Luis recognized me!

Luis

And I am most worried that our honor is in danger.

Angela

Has someone caused you to feel uneasy?

Luis

How strange! Here in your presence, Angela, I feel that same uneasy feeling as before.

Isabel

(Aside) Another shock?

Angela

But Luis, how can I cause you displeasure? You know....

Luis

You are the cause. Seeing you....

Angela

Oh my!

Luis

Angela, our brother has so little esteem for you...

Angela

That must be it!

Luis

...that he heaps new troubles on top of those that brought you here. I was right to turn the anger I feel for our brother against our guest. Without recognizing him, I wounded him prophetically.

Angela

Do tell.

Luis

I went to the Palace Square on foot. It was full of coaches and gentlemen. I went over to a group of friends who were happily enthralled talking to a veiled lady. They all celebrated her wit and praised her intelligence and humor. From the moment I arrived, she spoke not a word. One gentleman even asked her why she fell silent when I joined the group. Her actions made me most uncomfortable. I looked to see if I knew her, but I could not make out her face. She wrapped her veil more tightly around her to hide her identity and protect herself. Because I could not see her face, I was determined to follow her. As she walked, she kept turning around to see if I was behind her. Her nervousness piqued my interest all the more. We were walking along in this manner when a man, the servant of our guest, stopped me so that I might read a letter for him. I answered that I was in a great hurry. I believe he stopped me on purpose because I saw the lady speak to him in passing. He was so insistent. I said something or other to him and our guest, looking all menacing and military, came to his defense. To make a long story short, we drew swords, but that is all. It could have been much worse.

515 Angela

What an evil woman to have put you in such a situation! Oh, these conniving women! I should assume that she did not know who you were, and that she only did what she did because you were following her. I have told you repeatedly, if you will remember, that you should not go chasing after these silly women who know only how to cause the ruin of men.

Luis

What have you been doing this afternoon?

Angela

I have been here, at home, passing the hours weeping.

Luis

Have you seen our brother?

Angela

He has not been here since this morning.

Luis

I simply cannot tolerate his inattention.

Angela

Think no more of it. Sometimes it is best to suffer in silence. He is our older brother, and we live off his fortune.

Luis

Well, if you are not upset, then neither am I. I was only worried about you. Since you think that he and I can mend our friendship, I shall go see him and perhaps even engage in some diversion with him.

Exit Luis.

Isabel

In light of this cruel shock, my lady, what have you to say about what is going on in our own house? The one who defended your life today is now a wounded guest in your home?

Angela

I suspected as much, Isabel, when I heard my brother's account of the incident and when I saw that our guest was wounded. But I could not bring myself to believe it. What an extraordinary coincidence that a man should come to Madrid, that a woman should immediately ask him to defend her life, that one brother should wound him and another should give him shelter. This is all too much! Although it may be true, I shall not believe it until I see it with my own eyes.

Isabel

If you are determined to discover the truth, I know how you can see him, and even more, if you wish.

Angela

You are mad. How, if his room is so far from my own?

Isabel

There is a way to get from one room to the other. Do not be alarmed.

Angela

Not because I want to see him, but only because I am just generally curious, tell me, how? I hear you, but I do not believe you.

Isabel

Have you not heard that your brother had a cupboard built over the door?

Angela

I think I understand your plan. You want us to make a hole in a plank of the cupboard so that we can see into his room?

Isabel

Oh, it's much better than that.

Angela

Go on.

Isabel

Your brother closed up and covered over the door that was here and that led to the garden, but he also wanted a way to be able to open the door again at a later time. He had built a movable cupboard. Even though it is

covered with mirrors, it slides open and shut quite easily. I know it well because once I was cleaning the cupboard and had placed a ladder against it. It started moving under my weight little by little until we all fell: me, the ladder, and the cupboard. I left the cupboard in such a state that, by moving it, anyone can pass through the door.

Angela

Before I prove the truth of your words, I need to know more. If I want to go to the other room, and have moved the cupboard, can it be moved from the other side as well?

Isabel

Of course. What makes it even better is that I have set two nails that are easy to remove, but only those who know to remove them can move the cupboard.

Angela

Tell the servant who brings him candles and linens to let you know if and when our guest leaves the house. If I am right, his wound will not require him to stay in bed.

Isabel

My God! Will you actually go?

Angela

I have a foolish desire to know if he is the one who saved my life. If I have caused him concern and he has even spilled his blood for me, Isabel, it is right that I see after his wound. I hope to return the favor, but I must be certain that I shall not be found out. Let us go; I want to see this cupboard. If I can pass from one room to the other, I shall take care, without his realizing it, to repay his kindness.

Isabel

This is going to be an adventure! What if he figures it out?

Angela

He will not. A man whose strength I assume to be equal to his nobility and discretion since he proved his worth to me in my first meeting with him, a man who is valiant and daring, bold and gallant, a man so richly endowed is not going to cause me to reveal my secret. It would be a notable waste for such a noble man to tell all he knows to anyone who passes by.

Exeunt.

[Manuel's room]

Enter Juan, Manuel and a servant with a candle.

Juan

Get some rest, for God's sake.

Manuel

This wound is nothing, Juan. Honestly, it is unseemly for me to pay it any mind at all.

Juan

I thank my stars that it is nothing worse than that, for I could never be consoled if my happiness in seeing you came at the cost of having you indisposed in my house and seeing you with your hand wounded, not by me, but by my brother.

Manuel

He is a worthy gentleman. I am envious of his ability with a sword and his noble style, and I hope to be a good friend to him and his servant.

Enter Luis and a servant with a covered basket with a sheathed sword inside.

Luis

Sir, I am your humble servant, and I hope to demonstrate the pain I feel by dedicating my life to you. So that the instrument that caused your wound not remain in my power, since it can no longer serve me nor please me, I shall send it from me much as one would an unworthy servant who causes his master some displeasure. This, Sir, is the sword that wounded you. I offer it to you and ask you to forgive it, if it is at all blameworthy. With it, take your revenge against me and against it.

Manuel

You are most noble and discreet; I am won over. I accept the sword so that it may show me how to be valiant. I intend to live confident from this day forward, for who would not feel safe with your sword at his side? Of it alone was I afraid.

Juan

Since Luis has showed me how to treat a guest properly, I hope you will receive another gift from me.

Manuel

I can never hope to repay such generosity. You seem to be competing to shower me with honor.

Enter Cosme, laden with baggage

697 Cosme

May two hundred thousand demons give testimony of their infernal fury and turn against me two hundred thousand snakes who might seize me and send me on my way to the great beyond if I would not rather live in peace in Galicia or Asturias than in this city and this court.

Manuel

What?

Cosme

Porter reporting for duty.

Juan

What are you talking about?

Cosme

Just what I said. The one who gives passage to his enemy is a traitor.

Luis

What enemy? Wait.

Cosme

The water from one fountain or another.

Manuel

Water upsets you?

Cosme

Here I am, lost beneath this mountain of baggage, when of course I trip against the foot of a fountain and end up filthy. These things are not fit to bring indoors.

Manuel

Get out of here, you're drunk.

Cosme

If I were drunk, I wouldn't be so angry at the water. I read in a book that fountains sometimes have their water transformed into other things. It wouldn't be so bad to see a fountain have its water turned into wine.

Manuel

If he gets started, he will not finish in a year.

Juan

He has an odd sense of humor.

Luis

I would like to know something. If you can read, since you mentioned a book, why did you stop me at such an inopportune moment to read a letter?

Cosme

Well, I know how to read from books, but not from letters.

Luis

What an answer!

Manuel

Please pay him no mind, for the love of God. You will come to know him and see that he is a joker.

Cosme

I hope to make my jokes famous. You are welcome to them.

Manuel

If it is not too late, I should like to pay a visit, one of some importance to me.

Juan

I hope to see you again for dinner.

Manuel

Cosme, don't get anything dirty with the mud from that baggage when you open it and take out my clothing.

Cosme

Good grief!

Juan

If you wish to lock your room, here is the key. I have a master key because I frequently come home late, after two, but you may be sure that this is the only key and that there is no other door. If you leave it in the lock, the servants will come daily to clean.

Exeunt Luis, Juan, and Manuel

752 Cosme

Where are you, my little fortune? I want to see you first of all and determine how much we have pilfered along the way. People in roadside inns do not look after every little thing as carefully as they do in private houses. There is a greater opportunity for benefit by putting my hand, not on my heart, but in another's purse.

(He opens a suitcase and pulls out a purse.)

Here it is! Safe and sound. Just this morning it was a maiden and now, look, it's quite pregnant. Let's have a count. No, that's not necessary. After all, it's not as though I have just sold my master some sheep and need to figure the amount down to the last coin. What I have is what I have. Well, then. His suitcase is over there. I need to take out clothes in case he goes to bed soon. He ordered me to do that, but just because he ordered it, do I

have to do it quickly? Just because he ordered it doesn't mean I have to do it at all, for I am a servant. I could just as easily go out to a local tavern for a bit. Would you like that, Cosme? Why yes! Then let's go, because our wishes come before our masters'.

Exit. The cupboard moves and from behind it emerge Angela and Isabel.

Isabel

Rodrigo said the room was empty; the guest and your brothers left.

Angela

I would have done this just to have this adventure!

Isabel

You see that there is no trouble getting from one room to the other.

Angela

All the troubles I envisioned, Isabel, were groundless. We met no resistance at all. The door opens and closes easily and no one is the wiser.

Isabel

Why have we come?

Angela

Just to have a look and come right back. For two women to create some mischief they only have to think about it. We are here just because we happened to speak of it a couple of times. I am determined, if in fact this gentleman is the one who risked his personal safety for me, to repay his attention.

Isabel

Here is the gift your brother gave him, and a sword on a desk.

Angela

Come here. They brought my writing desk here?

Isabel

Yes. They thought he might like to write a message, or read a book.

Angela

There are two suitcases on the floor.

Isabel

Open, too! Shall we see what is in them?

Angela

Yes. It is foolish, but I want to see what clothing and other finery he has.

Isabel

He's a soldier and a pretender at court. I doubt he has much to look at.

They take the things out of the suitcases as they talk about them, and strew them about the room

Angela

What's this?

Isabel

Sheets of paper.

Angela

From a woman?

Isabel

No, madam. Just bound documents. They are quite heavy.

Angela

Well, if they were from a woman, they would be more lightweight. Do not waste your time on them.

Isabel

There is some underwear.

Angela

Does it smell good?

Isabel

Yes, it smells clean.

Angela

That is the best perfume.

Isabel

It has all three qualities: thin, white, and soft. Madam, what is this leather case full of various instruments?

Angela

Let me see. This thing looks like dentist's pliers. These are tweezers, that is a curling iron for his hair and here is

another one for his moustache.

Isabel

Here is a brush and comb. This man comes prepared. I wouldn't be surprised to find shoe trees!

Angela

Why?

Isabel

Because here they are.

Angela

Is there more?

Isabel

Yes, my lady, a second pouch full of letters.

Angela

Let me see. These are from a woman, and there is more than letters. Here is a portrait!

Isabel

That fascinates you?

Angela

Just seeing beauty, even painted, is a pleasure.

Isabel

It seems that finding it has troubled you.

Angela

How foolish you are. Look no further.

Isabel

What are you thinking?

Angela

I shall leave him a note. Take this portrait.

She starts writing.

862 Isabel

Meanwhile, I'm going to check out the servant's bag. This is money: coins, but of little value. In a world where doubloons are king, these are peasants. I think I'll play a little trick. I'm going to take the lackey's money and leave in its place some coals. You may wonder where I'll get coals, but remember, this is winter and there is a brazier in the room.

Angela

There! All done! Where should I leave this letter so that our guest will find it but my brother will not?

Isabel

Here, underneath the bedspread. When he turns it down, he cannot help but find it, but no one else will see it.

Angela

Good idea! Put it there and pick these things up.

Isabel

Look! They are turning the lock!

Angela

Leave all this, then. We must hide. Come, Isabel.

892 Isabel

May the cupboard protect me!

Exeunt through the cupboard, which appears as it did at first. Enter Cosme.

Cosme

Now that I have taken care of myself I am more of a mind to do my master's bidding—and I won't even charge him extra! But wait! Who has been in our room tossing our things about? Christ's blood! Our nice little room with our nice little possessions... now it all looks like a Turkish bazaar! Who is here? There is no one, by God, or if there is someone, he does not wish to answer. Fine. Don't answer me. I am proud to say I don't much care for talkers. Whatever it may be, to tell the truth, I am trembling like a leaf. On the other hand, if the intruder leaves me my money, let him make his mischief a thousand times a thousand. But what's this? God's wounds! My money converted into coals? Here now, little spirit! Whoever you were and are, turn your money into anything you desire, but the money I steal... why?

Enter Juan, Luis and Manuel.

Juan

Why are you shouting?

Luis

What's wrong?

Manuel

What has happened? Speak!

Cosme

A pretty situation this! Why did you invite us to stay here in a room already occupied by a ghost? I was absent for just a second, and I returned to discover the clothing as you see it, strewn about. It looks like a clearance sale!

Juan

Is anything missing?

Cosme

Nothing. Just the money that I had in this purse. It was mine, and now it has been turned into coals.

Luis

I see. This is another one of your jokes.

Manuel

What a cold and graceless deception.

Juan.

How evil and impertinent.

Cosme

It is no joke. For the love of God.

Manuel

Quiet. This is so like you.

Cosme

That's true, although I am also accustomed to being sane from time to time.

Juan

I'll take my leave, Manuel. Have a good night, and may the spirit of the house watch over you. And do advise your servant that we expect more of his wit in the future. (*Exit.*)

950 Luis

It is not for nothing that you are as valiant as you are if you have to spend all your waking moments solving the disputes and problems created by this fool. (*Exit.*)

Manuel

You see how they treat me because of you? Everyone thinks me a madman because I put up with you. Wherever I go, a thousand misfortunes befall me on your account.

Cosme

We are now alone; there is no reason to deceive you. You cannot finesse a card trick with only two players. May two thousand devils take me if it is not true that when I left, someone or something entered and created this mess.

Manuel

You just want me to forgive you. Pick up these things you have strewn about and get ready for bed.

Cosme

Sir, may I end up a galley slave....

Manuel

Enough! Hush, or, as God is my witness, I'll break your head open! (*Exit into the alcove.*)

Cosme

It's bad enough that I should have gone through such a trauma, but now I have to put back everything in these suitcases. Good heavens! May my money come back from the dead just as it will on Judgment Day!

Manuel returns with a sheet of paper.

Manuel

A light, Cosme.

Cosme

What is it, sir? Have you perhaps discovered someone else in the house?

Manuel

I went to get ready for bed, Cosme, and I discovered under my bedspread this sealed note. The address on the envelope has me fascinated.

Cosme.

Who is it for?

Manuel

Me, but the strange manner of its words has me entranced.

Cosme

What does it say?

Manuel

(Reads.) "Let no one open me, for I belong only to Manuel."

Cosme

God Almighty! And you didn't believe me! Do not open it, I beseech you, without first exorcising its evil.

Manuel

Cosme, what has me transfixed is its novelty, not its fearfulness. He who admires something cannot fear it.

(Reads.) "Your well-being has me preoccupied, since I was the cause of your misfortune. Appreciative but worried, I beseech you to tell me how you are and to call on me. There will be occasion for both if you leave your answer where you found this note. Be warned that secrecy is paramount, because the day that one of your friends discovers this, my life and my honor will be forfeit."

Cosme

How strange!

Manuel

Strange?

Cosme

You don't find this strange?

Manuel

Not at all. This actually clears up a few mysteries.

Cosme

How?

Manuel

It is quite clear that the veiled lady who was fleeing Luis so blindly and so desperately, was his lady, Cosme. She cannot be his wife because he is unmarried. And since this is quite certain, how difficult is it to imagine that his lady should have access to her beloved's house?

Cosme

That's all very well and good, but it doesn't calm my nerves. Let's say she is his lady and the encounter happened as you say. But how was she able, from her position on the sidewalk, to know what was going to happen in order to have this note prepared and waiting for you on your bed?

Manuel

After our meeting, she could have given it to a servant.

Cosme

Even if she had done that, how did a servant get in here to place it? No one entered the entire time I was in here.

Manuel

It could have happened earlier.

Cosme

Of course. But finding the suitcases and our clothing cast about here and there, not to mention the note, leads me to suspect something more.

Manuel

See if the windows are locked.

Cosme

Locked, and with iron grates on the outside.

Manuel

You leave me with greater doubts and a thousand suspicions.

Cosme

What about?

Manuel

I do not know how to explain them.

Cosme

And now, what are you to do?

Manuel

I intend to write an answer to this note in order to find out the truth of the situation. I shall use a style that conceals any astonishment or fear on my part. I have no doubt, since paper is involved, that we shall have occasion to see who brings it and takes it away.

Cosme

And should we not tell our hosts?

Manuel

No. I do not wish to cause the slightest problem for this woman, since she trusted her honor to me.

Cosme

Then you prefer to dishonor the man you consider to be her beloved?

Manuel

No, not that either. Without causing her any problem I can still carry out my plan.

Cosme

No, sir. There is more here than you know of, and every moment my suspicion grows.

Manuel

How so?

Cosme

You see that papers come and go around here with no visible way in or out. How do you suppose that happens?

Manuel

There exists some trick or artifice for entering and leaving, for opening and closing, somewhere in the room. I may lose my mind if I do not figure out how this happens, Cosme, but I shall never believe it is a supernatural phenomenon.

Cosme

Are there no spirits?

Manuel

No one has seen them.

Cosme

Ghosts?

Manuel

Just fantasies.

Cosme

Witches?

Manuel

Hardly.

Cosme

Demons?

Manuel

Please.

Cosme

Imps?

Manuel

No.

Cosme

Enchantresses?

Manuel

Neither.

Cosme

Magicians?

Manuel

Foolishness.

Cosme

Necromancers?

Manuel

Ridiculous.

Cosme

Sorceresses?

Manuel

What madness.

Cosme

I know, by God, now I've got you! Devils?

Manuel

Not that I know of.

Cosme

Are there souls in purgatory?

Manuel

That fall in love with me? Is there greater lunacy? Leave me alone; I am tired.

Cosme

So, what have you decided?

Manuel

To be attentive, day and night; to be exceedingly cautious. I base my discovery of the truth on this. There is no need to resort to spirits or sorceresses.

Cosme

Well, I do assume that some demon is involved. And it appears that he can come and go, bring things and take them, all in a puff of smoke.

To Act II

The Phantom Lady

by Pedro Calderón de la Barca

(1629)

Translation by Matthew D. Stroud

Act II

[Angela's room]

Enter Angela, Beatriz, and Isabel

Beatriz

What extraordinary tales!

Angela

You have not even heard the most remarkable part! Where were we?

Beatriz

You had just passed through the cupboard into their room. It is difficult to imagine that it was so easy to open the cupboard, write him a note, and find the answer the following day.

Angela

I tell you honestly, I have never seen such a courtly and gallant style, mixing the humorous with the astonishing, imitating knights errant to whom such adventures were commonplace. This, Beatriz, is the letter. I hope you like it.

(Reads.) “Most beauteous damsel, in whatever way you may have been aggrieved by this, your faithful servant, may you lessen his hardships by your ample piety. Pray make known to me the identity of the evil malefactor or pagan conjurer who imprisons you in this enchantment, such that, now that my earlier wounds have healed, I might present myself as your defender in single and terrible combat, even though I may perish in the pursuit. Life is no better than death, if a knight have not honor. May the giver of light hold you safe and forget me not. The Knight of the Phantom Lady.”

Beatriz

My heavens! What a style, with the language of enchantment and adventure!

Angela

I waited for this note with the greatest fear and doubt, but when I found in him a willingness to proceed, I decided to continue in the same fashion. By way of answer, I sent...

Beatriz

Wait, go no further. Your brother Juan is coming.

Angela

He comes no doubt to express his pleasure at your visit, Beatriz. As a faithful suitor, he welcomes you to his house.

Beatriz

I am not unhappy about that, if truth be told.

Enter Juan.

Juan

Every cloud has a silver lining, according to the old adage. In this case it is quite true, for the clouds of your troubles have given rise to a silver lining for me. Lovely Beatriz, I have discovered that a problem that you have with your father has brought you, without joy or pleasure, to our house. I deeply regret that my happiness in seeing you should come at the expense of your ill fortune. It is not right that I should be so elated because of your misery. But love today produces various effects: unhappiness for you, ecstasy for me. It's just like the snake that has not only venom but also the antidote to treat it. You are most welcome here. Although your stay may be short, it's always a joy to see the sun accompanied by an angel.

Beatriz

You have so thoroughly confused your welcome with your regrets that I know not how to respond. It is true I come because of my father. You were to blame. Although he does not know it was you, he does know that I spoke with someone from the balcony last night. While he gets over his rage, he wishes me to spend time with my cousin, taking refuge in the great confidence he has in her. This alone shall I tell you; let this suffice. I, too, can find good in ill. Love causes contradictory effects in me as well. Just as the sun, when it sends forth its beautiful rays, causes one flower to bloom and another to wither, so too does love wound my heart at the same

time that I most happy to find myself in your house, which has always been like a glittering diamond, outshining the sun, a worthy setting for an angel.

Angela

How clearly one sees the riches you two take from love. By merely standing near you, I too receive a windfall of affection.

Juan

Do you know what I think, Angela? Just to avenge the problems that my houseguest has caused you, you cunningly invited a houseguest of your own, one sure to cause me no end of grief.

Angela

You speak truly, but I have done so only so that you may shower her with gifts.

Juan

I am exceedingly pleased with your punishment. (*He starts to leave.*)

Beatriz

What are you doing, Juan? Where are you going?

Juan

Beatriz, to serve you. Only the obligation to serve you could make me leave.

Angela

Let him go.

Juan

Until we meet again. (*Exit.*)

Angela

If he thinks he caused me troubles with his houseguest, he is quite right. But they will be no less than the troubles he creates for himself because of you. I hope to use our guest to take away all our troubles. That way, guest for guest, we shall be even.

Beatriz

I still want to know more about your guest!

1218 Angela

To make a long story short, notes, both mine and his, came and went. His were so remarkable, I've never seen such a hodgepodge of truth and lies.

Beatriz

And in the end, what does he make of the situation?

Angela

He believes that I must be Luis's lady since I was hiding from him but I have the key to his house.

Beatriz

There is only one more problem I see.

Angela

What is that?

Beatriz

How is it possible that this gentleman, seeing that someone is bringing and taking away papers, has not spied you or, worse, caught you red-handed?

Angela

That is not so hard to explain. At the door to his room I station a servant who lets me know who enters and who leaves. Thus, Isabel does not go through the cupboard until I know that no one is in the room. That poor servant has spent an entire day watching, all in vain. Oh! But while I'm thinking of Isabel, would you mind taking her this basket. It's just about time.

Beatriz

One more doubt: How is it possible that you praise this gentleman as so intelligent when he has not been able to figure out the secret of the cupboard?

Angela

Surely you've heard of the egg, that more than one genius tried to stand on its end, and along came a simple man who gave it just one tap and it stood right up? The greatest problems are just that until they are solved. If one knows the trick, everything is easy.

Beatriz

Another question.

Angela

What?

Beatriz

What do you hope to gain by such tomfoolery?

Angela

I'm not sure. I should say I would like to appear grateful for his help, but unfortunately I have become a bit jealous of a portrait of a lady that he has with him. I am of a mind to enter and seize it at the first opportunity. I know not how else to say that I am determined to enter so that he may see me and speak to me.

Beatriz

And recognize you for who you are?

Angela

May the saints protect me! I should say not! A friend would not commit such treason to a guest. Just the thought that I am his host's lady makes his writing to me timid, courtly, confused, and cowardly. I certainly do not wish to make the situation worse.

Beatriz

Then how is he to see you?

Angela

Listen, and I shall tell you the most astonishing plan by which I run no risk of being caught in his room. He will come here, but he will not know how.

Isabel

Add another brother to the mix. Here comes Luis.

Angela

I'll tell you later.

Beatriz

How fickle are the fortunes of love! How curious that heaven should in equal measure throw up such obstacles. The same desire pleases one and annoys the other. Let us go. I do not want Luis to speak to me here.

She begins to exit; Luis enters.

Luis

Why are you leaving?

Beatriz

Because you entered.

Luis

The most beautiful, the purest light ever captured from the sun flees because I enter? Am I the dark of night? May your beauty forgive me if I tarry here, bold and discourteous, to beseech a favor from you that you will not grant. Knowing of your cruelty, my desire cannot hope that even the smallest courtesy may be well received. I

realize that my foolish love finds not one atom of hope in your disdain. But in the face of such rejection, I must persist in loving you. You shall give me greater glory, even when you offer me more tribulation, for as much as you detest me, that much more shall I love you. If this makes you unhappy, that the two of us should end up sharing a single love, then, between the extremes of passion and despair, learn to love or teach me to hate. You will teach me cruelty; I shall teach you generosity. You will teach me bitterness; I shall teach you sweetness. You, disdain; I, love. You, indifference; I, the firmest faith. For it is better, and gives greater glory to love that you should be indifferent for the both of us than that I should love for the both of us.

Beatriz

Your complaints are so sweet that, although I should like to be swayed by your troubles, I cannot just because you speak them.

Luis

You treat me so badly, from you have I learned the language of despair.

Beatriz

It is good that you continue, for in such a manner will your eloquent disdain cure your impertinent disposition.
(*She begins to leave; Luis stops her.*)

Luis

You have your revenge, now let us both suffer.

Beatriz

I cannot listen to you more. For God's sake, cousin, stop him. (*Exit.*)

Angela

You have so little valor that you should want to hear and see such a thing?

Luis

Oh, Angela! What am I to do?

Angela

Forget Beatriz. To love someone who hates you is not love but death.

Exit Angela with Isabel.

Luis

How can I forget her if I still suffer? That is the problem. Tell her to do me a small favor, and I shall forget her with great appreciation. Even the most prudent, the wisest man gives words to his feelings, but I cannot abandon her in my misery. If one can forget a favor more easily, it is because a favor does not sting with the same intensity as an insult.

Luis leaves the room and enters a patio, where he runs into Rodrigo.

Rodrigo

What's going on with you?

Luis

I have no idea.

Rodrigo

You look so sad. Will you not tell me the cause?

Luis

I spoke with Beatriz.

Rodrigo

Say no more. I can see in your face how it went. But, where is she? I have not seen her.

Luis

The vixen is a houseguest of my sister for a few days, just so that my problems with guests will be complete. Every day it seems my brother or my sister conspires against me to bring someone else to our house. Whoever they bring, it is bad for me. Manuel..., you know the story. Now with Beatriz, the heavens have decided to bring jealousy into the house as well.

Rodrigo

Careful! Manuel might hear you; here he comes.

Enter Manuel.

Manuel (*Aside*)

Am I, alone in all the world, the target of such prodigious misfortune? What shall I do to extract myself from these deceptions? How shall I find out once and for all whether this woman is Luis's lady, and how she has had the wit and the ability to carry out such intrigues?

Luis

Manuel.

Manuel

Luis.

Luis

Where are you coming from in such a good mood?

Manuel

The palace.

Luis

I should have known better than to ask a pretender at court about his goings and comings. The palace is clearly the center of your universe.

Manuel

If I only went to court, I would be in less of a hurry. But my affairs have taken on a certain urgency. His Majesty has left this afternoon for the palace at Escorial, and now it is of the utmost importance that I follow him.

Luis

If I can be of any assistance, you know that you may count on me.

Manuel

I thank you greatly for all you have done for me.

Luis

It is not just a courtesy, I assure you.

Manuel

I see you wish me well in my pursuits.

Luis

So true... (*Aside*) (...and the sooner you leave the better.)

Manuel

But it is not right to take a gentleman such as yourself away from his affairs. I know for a fact that there is something, or someone, of importance to you here. It would be most unfair to take you away.

Luis

Had you overheard my conversation with Rodrigo, you might think differently.

Manuel

Am I mistaken?

Luis

Quite so. Although it is true that I weep on account of the cruelty of a great beauty, her disdain for me causes me as much torment as her favors.

Manuel

Are you in such despair?

Luis

I love a great beauty, but without luck or hope of success.

Manuel

Are you joking?

Luis

I would to heaven that I were. But I was born under such an unlucky star that this beauty flees from me as the veil of night hurries from the lovely light of day, in whose rays I burn. Would you like to know how extreme my misfortune is? Just so that I might not be able to follow her, someone stopped me and kept me from her. Tell me if anyone has worse luck than mine. Most men use go-betweens to help them spend time with their ladies. She uses go-betweens to avoid me.

Exeunt Luis and Rodrigo

Manuel

What more does he need to declare? A woman who fled from his sight? Another person who interrupted him and kept him from her? He is clearly talking about her and me. At least I have solved part of the puzzle. I now see that she is not his lady, because he would not be so miserable without her if she lived in his own house. But this makes the enigma even greater. If she is not his lady and if she does not live in his house, how then does she write to me? One doubt dies and another is born. What shall I do? This is a confusion of confusions. God protect us from women.

Enter Cosme.

Cosme

Sir, what has happened to our spook? Have you by any chance seen him around here? As long as I know he is not in our room, I'm happy.

Manuel

Quiet.

Cosme

But I have so much to do in our room, and I can't enter.

Manuel

Why not?

Cosme

I'm afraid.

Manuel

A man should be afraid?

Cosme

No, he shouldn't be, but here I am anyway, and for good reason, too.

Manuel

Please stop your witty remarks, and bring a light, because I have to get ready and write some letters. Tonight I leave Madrid.

Cosme.

That's interesting. Sounds to me like you're afraid too.

Manuel

I have told you before that I pay no attention to you. I have other things on my mind, and here you are just wasting my time. When I say good-bye to Juan, fetch a lamp. (*Exit.*)

Cosme

Indeed I shall, and I'll shed some light on the ghost, too, and not a moment too soon. There's bound to be a match around here. I'll just light up that lamp over there. I'm really on top of things now, if only I could stop shaking with fear.

Exit.

[Manuel's room]

Enter Isabel through the cupboard with a covered basket.

Isabel

They are all out of the house, according to the servant. I have to put this basket of clean linens in the designated place. Heavens! It's so dark tonight that I'm afraid of my own presence. My God, I'm trembling, and I must be the first spirit ever who swears to God! I cannot find the desk. But what's this? With my mind in a turmoil and my heart full of fear, I've lost my bearing in this room. I have no idea where I am. Where is the table? What am I to do? Oh, no! If I am not able to get out and they find me here, the whole elaborate plan will fall apart. I am greatly afraid, and even more now that I hear someone opening the door. The game is over. I can neither hide nor find my way out.

Enter Cosme with a lamp.

Cosme

Oh, spirit, my master, if perhaps my pleas do not fall on the deaf ears of a high-born spook, I humbly beseech

you not to remember me in your enchantments. I ask you this for four reasons. (*Cosme walks around the stage with Isabel hiding from him by following behind him.*) First, I know why; second, you know why; third, everyone knows why; fourth, here's a poem I just remembered:

Ghost lady, ghost lady,
please have pity upon me!
I am just a young lad,
and hope that safe I'll be.

Isabel (*Aside*)

Now with the light I can reconnoiter the room. He still hasn't seen me. If I put the light out I know I can escape while he tries to relight it. He may hear some noise, but at least he won't see me. At this point, I'll take what I can get.

Cosme

Fear has made me a pretty good poet!

Isabel (*Aside*)

Here we go!

Isabel strikes Cosme and extinguishes the candle.

Cosme

My God, she's killed me. Call a priest! Confession!

Isabel

Now's my chance to escape!

Isabel begins to leave when Manuel enters.

Manuel

What is going on here? Cosme, what are you doing here in the darkness?

Cosme

The spirit has killed us both: the light with a puff of air, me with a crushing blow!

Manuel

Your fear causes you to imagine things.

Cosme

Then my imagination will be the death of me!

Isabel (*Aside*)

Oh, if only I could find the door!

Manuel

Who is there?!

Isabel bumps into Manuel; he ends grabs the basket of linens.

Isabel (*Aside*)

This is going from bad to worse. Now I run into his master.

Manuel

Cosme, go get a light. I have the intruder in my grasp.

Cosme

Don't let him go!

Manuel

I won't, but hurry!

Exit Cosme.

Isabel (*Aside*)

He took my basket; well, he can have it. There's the cupboard! At last!

Exit Isabel; Manuel is left holding the basket.

Manuel

Whoever you are, be still until there is light. If not, by heaven, I shall have to run you through with my dagger. But, there is nothing here but something lightweight, something with linens in it. What on earth? My God, I have never been so confused!

Enter Cosme with a light.

1611 Cosme

Let's see this phantom in the light! But, where is he? Didn't you have him captive? What happened? Where is he? Sir, what in the devil is going on?

Manuel

I cannot answer. He left me these linens, then fled.

Cosme

And what do you make of this situation? You just now said that you had him in control, and he vanished!

Manuel

I must admit that that person, who enters and leaves with extraordinary guile and cunning, was in fact captured here tonight. But, in order to escape, he blew out your light, left me with this basket, and fled.

Cosme

How?

Manuel

Through the door.

Cosme

You are driving me mad. I saw him in the dying light of my candle.

Manuel

What did he look like?

Cosme

He was a little, bitty monk, wearing a great big hood. That's why I think our spook must be a Capuchin friar.

Manuel

The things fear drives one to! Bring the light. Let's see what our little friar left us. Here, hold this basket.

Cosme

You want me to hold this basket from hell?

Manuel

Just be quiet and hold it.

Cosme

My hands are dirty, Sir, from the candle wax. I'll surly soil the fine linen that covers it. Perhaps you should put it on the floor!

Manuel

It's fresh linens... and a note! Let's see if our friar is discreet:

(Reads) "In the brief time that you have lived in this house, no one has yet brought you fresh linens. As they are made ready, they will be brought to you. Regarding your supposition about your friend, since you are sure that I am Luis's lady, I can assure you that not only am I not his lady, but that I cannot be. I leave the rest for when we meet, which will be soon. God be with you."

Well, at least the spirit is a Christian, since he speaks of God!

Cosme

You see? A religious spirit!

Manuel

It's getting late. Collect all these suitcases and cushions, and put these papers with them (*He gives him some papers*). They are the reason we are here at court. But first I intend to send an answer to our spirit.

Cosme puts the papers on a chair; Manuel writes.

Cosme

I'll put them right here so that I won't forget them and they'll be right at hand. But I have to rest a moment. Tell me one thing: do you believe in ghosts?

Manuel

What foolishness!

Cosme

Foolishness? You yourself can see the effects. You're sitting there with a letter that came to you out of nowhere, and still you doubt? Fine, if that makes you happy. As for me, I'm a believer; I've suffered the most,

Manuel

How so?

Cosme

Just look at us. If they rifle through our clothing, you laugh at the intrusion, but I have to repack everything, which is no small job. If they leave you papers, you're impressed by the wit. Me, they leave coats and take my money. If they bring you sweets, you're as pleased as a father to accept them. I get nothing, and I'm hungry as a wolf. They give you fine shirts and handkerchiefs of linen. I get nothing but scary surprises. We both came to this room at about the same time, but you get a basket of clean linens, smelling as sweet as springtime. I get a slap in the face, a blow so hard and strong that I practically spit up my brains. All the pleasure and the profit go to you; the pain and suffering are all mine. The ghost treats you with kid gloves; I get the brass knuckles. So just let me believe what I will. There is nothing more painful to watch than a man who won't believe what's happening right before his eyes.

Manuel

Just pack the suitcases, so we may go. I shall wait for you in Juan's room

Cosme

What is there to pack? Everyone dresses in black, just as you are already. All you need is a black cloak.

Manuel

Leave the room locked and take the key with you. If I need the key, Juan has another one. I hate to leave in such confusion, not knowing the truth of the matter. But the honor of my estate and my chances at court take precedence over an idle curiosity. Indeed, honor trumps everything else.

Exeunt.

[Angela's room]

Enter Angela, Beatriz, and Isabel.

Angela

It happened just like that?

Isabel

I saw the whole artifice going up in flames. If he had seen me, it would have been necessary to confess everything. As it turned out, I was able to escape in the manner I just related.

Angela

Amazing!

Beatriz

It is simply incredible to think that you could give a man a basket of linens without his seeing you!

Angela

If after all this I am able to arrange for him to see me as we planned, I have no doubt that he will surely lose his mind.

Beatriz

Even the most serious person would be astonished by these goings-on, Angela. You want to call him to a place without telling him where so that he can find himself with a beautiful lady, rich and famous, without knowing who she is or where she is from. Then, cloaked and blind, he is to be led away to stew in his confusion. This is what comes out of that head of yours? I am in awe!

Angela

Everything is just as you said. But since you are here with me, tonight will not be the night of our meeting.

Beatriz

I can keep the secret of your love!

Angela

No, cousin, that's not the reason. With you in our house, and with my brothers buzzing about you hopelessly in love, idolizing the very ground you walk on, it would be entirely too risky. I'll have to wait until they leave.

Enter Luis, who eavesdrops from the side of the stage.

Luis (*Aside*)

Good God! Who can suppress his desires? Who can rein in his thoughts, control his tongue, and imprison his feelings? Since I am beside myself, surely I cannot. But let me try to conquer my passion. I shall just watch from here.

Beatriz

Let me tell you how to get rid of them but still let me be present. I would hate to miss the conclusion of this marvelous adventure.

Angela

Do tell me!

Luis (*Aside*)

What are these two scheming? My heart is in my throat with anticipation.

Beatriz

We shall both say that my father has sent for me, and we shall make a great show of my leaving, but secretly I shall hide in the house and no one will know I am here.

Luis (*Aside*)

Heavens, what is this that threatens the honor of this house?

Beatriz

Under the cover of secrecy, I shall be able to see what happens.

1791 Luis (*Aside*)

Oh, cruel fortune!

Beatriz

I look so forward to it!

Angela

But what do we say in order to bring you out of hiding?

Beatriz

I am shocked you would ask! No doubt we can think of something later!

Luis (*Aside*)

No doubt. That I should have to listen to this! The torment and suffering surpass all limits.

Beatriz

This way, in secret and with no witnesses, I shall see you fulfill your love. With me hidden and the household unsuspecting, he will have no trouble passing from his room to yours.

Luis (*Aside*)

It is easy to infer her intention. What a coward I am! I am undone! Would that I had never listened! My fortunate brother deserves Beatriz more. But what jealousy! She prefers to offer herself to him and thus quench both their desires. Thus she arranges for him to pass from his room to hers without anyone noticing. I can scarcely contain my anger! And so that no one might be a witness they succeed in making real my suspicions. My enemies want to keep the secret from me! By God, if that is the way it is, I shall not allow it. The next time that she is hidden, hoping for another meeting, I shall keep close watch over the entire house until I find her. The fires of jealousy that consume me allow for no alternative. Placing obstacles in their way is the last refuge of the jealous man. Holy saints protect me! Consumed by love, I'm dying of jealousy. (*Exit.*)

Angela

Everything is set up. Tomorrow we shall announce your departure.

Enter Juan.

Juan

Angela! And the lovely Beatriz!

Beatriz

Just the man we were hoping to see.

Juan

If my absence causes you to enjoy my presence even more, then may you miss me more often, madam. I am suspicious, no, envious, of my own good luck. It is simply not possible that I deserve your affection. Envious and envied, I fall into such a sweet abyss that I both envy and pity myself.

Beatriz

It would not be right to contradict such sweet arguments, Juan, from one who has put off seeing me for so long as to have forgotten me. Is there any doubt that you were engaged in your own amusements? It must be so, for you profess both to envy and pity your good fortune, while at the same time you cast aside the beauty that gives you such pleasure. Your clear and convincing syllogism proves your pity and your envy.

Juan

If it would not offend both you and me, Beatriz, I would tell you that I have been with my guest, Manuel, who has left us tonight.

Angela

Really?

Juan

You are surprised, sister?

Angela

A pleasure startles as much as a displeasure.

Juan

I regret that your heart's desire has not been fulfilled; he will return tomorrow.

Angela

(Aside.) (A vain hope is revived.) I was not afraid on account of his leaving. His comings and goings are always inopportune.

Juan

I did not think that you were. It is just that you and Luis show nothing but displeasure at the visit of this friend that causes me such pleasure.

1871 Angela

I do not know how to answer you, although I feel as though I must. I think I should retire from your game of love. Three's company, and you have made of me a go-between, when love is most enjoyable when played as a two-handed game, one on one. Isabel, come with me. *(Aside)* (This very night shall we retrieve the portrait. We shall have more time and fewer interruptions. Bring me a light and show me where to hide. A man who writes me letters has no business possessing the portrait of another lady. The insult!)

Exeunt Angela and Isabel.

Beatriz

I do not believe that I owe you such kindness.

Juan

I shall prove the strength of my commitment—which is substantial—with words.

Beatriz

Please do.

Juan

Listen, my love. Beautiful Beatriz, my faith is so certain, my love so steadfast, my affection so extraordinary, that even if I did not wish to love you, against my own will and desire would I love you still. My life now

depends upon yours so much that if I could forget you, I would, just so that I might fall in love with you all over again. Would that I could experience again the happy, mad rush of new love. He who loves a woman only when he cannot forget her, does not oblige her to love him in return, since without the possibility of choice determined by free will, it cannot be called love. Yet I cannot possibly get your beauty out of my mind, Beatriz, and I am left to despair that the stars swell with pride at the victory of your love over my free will.

Beatriz

If choices were due to free will, and forces to the influence of the stars, she who lives not subject to fortune would have a stronger will than mine. I cannot trust your kindness since my faith, which can overcome impossible obstacles, would deny that it were my own if my will were not accompanied by it. During that brief instant spent in forgetting you so that I might fall in love with you again, my heart would feel my life slipping away. I am delighted to have no part in putting you out of my mind since I could not love you while I tried to forget you.

Exeunt.

[The street outside Juan's house]

Enter Manuel, chasing Cosme, who is trying to flee.

1917 Manuel

For God's sake, if I had seen...

Cosme

That's why you look.

Manuel

...that your incompetence was going to dishonor me, to make a fool of me!

Cosme

You know that I have served you well. Things happen, even to good Catholic servants!

Manuel

You are hopeless. The one thing that mattered most to me, the one thing I entrusted to your safe-keeping, is the one thing that you forgot.

Cosme

That's why I forgot it, because it was so important to me. If it weren't so important, why would I bother to forget it? I swear, I was so careful to collect all those papers and set them aside. It was my care and attention that caused you all this misery. If I hadn't set them aside, I would have gathered them up with the rest.

Manuel

At least you remembered them... when we were half-way there!

Cosme

I was very worried. I knew something was wrong. I thought it was probably nothing until I remembered that I forgot the papers.

Manuel

Tell the groom to wait with the horses. I do not wish to make a noisy entrance, waking up the entire household that is surely asleep. Entering is no problem, since I have the key. I should be able to retrieve my papers without troubling a soul.

Cosme

I already told the groom to wait. But look, sir, it's a real mistake to try to find those papers without light. There's just no way to keep from making noise. If we can't find a candle or a lamp, how shall we see?

Manuel

Is there no end to the problems you cause? What, now you want me to call out and wake the whole house? Do you not realize that you are to blame for all this? Where exactly did you leave the papers?

Cosme

That's no problem. I know exactly where I left them once we get in the room. I can find them in the dark.

Manuel

Go on in.

Cosme

What I don't know is what that spook may have done with them. So far nothing I have set down has been in the same place when I went back for it.

Manuel

If they are not there, then we shall ask for a light. Until we know for sure, it is better to move quickly and, above all, quietly. I would hate to disturb our gracious hosts.

Exeunt.

[Manuel's room]

Angela and Isabel enter through the cupboard.

Angela

Isabel, the house is now asleep and everything is as it should be. Our guest has left, so now is the time to retrieve the portrait he had the very first time I saw him.

Isabel

Enter quietly. Be very careful.

Angela

Go back through and lock the door to my room. In order not to create a stir, I shall not move until you get back..

Isabel

Wait right here.

Exit Isabel, who closes the cupboard. Enter Manuel and Cosme.

Cosme

It's open.

Manuel

Walk softly. If they hear us, it will cause quite a scandal.

Cosme

I hope you believe me now when I tell you I'm afraid. The ghost could at least have brought us a light.

Angela (*Aside*)

Good thing I brought this lantern under my cloak so that no one could see it.

With Angela on one side of the room and Manuel and Cosme on the other, Angela brings out a lantern that she had hidden under her cloak.

Cosme

This is the most accommodating goblin I've ever heard tell of. Look how quickly it brings us a light! You'll notice that the ghost likes you... he produces a light when you need it. When I had one, he snuffed it out.

Manuel

Good heavens! This is unnatural and quite extraordinary. To have produced a light so quickly is not human.

Cosme

You see? I told you you'd end up believing me.

Manuel

I am frozen with fear. We must go back.

Cosme

At least now we know you're mortal since you finally showed fear.

Angela (*Aside*)

Here is the table, covered with papers.

Cosme

The ghost is going toward the table.

Manuel

My God, I both doubt and believe what my eyes perceive.

Cosme

Look! It's guiding us exactly to the things we are looking for. I wish we could see who's carrying the light.

Angela removes the candle from the lantern and puts it in a candle holder on the table. She takes a chair and sits with her back to the two men.

Angela (*Aside*)

I shall place the light here so I might see the desk.

Manuel

Wait. I can see everything by the light of that candle. I have never in my life seen a lady so beautiful. My heavens! What is this that to my eyes appears? Her charms are like the hydra: each one gives rise to a thousand more. What shall I do?

Cosme

She's moving slowly. She's drawing up a chair.

Manuel

She is the very image of the rarest beauty that the brush of the Almighty has ever produced.

Cosme

True enough. She is His creation.

Manuel

Her eyes shine more brightly than lamplight.

Cosme

No doubt because her eyes are the stars in Lucifer's sky.

Manuel

Her tresses are rays of the sun.

Cosme

She probably stole them from it.

Manuel

Each curl is a star.

Cosme

If you say so. Just remember, supernatural forces brought her here.

Manuel

I have never seen such loveliness.

Cosme

You wouldn't say that if you could see her feet. They say that you can tell the devil by his feet.

Manuel

She is a beautiful angel, a paragon of splendor.

Cosme

Still, I'd like to take a gander at those hooves.

Manuel

Wait. What is she doing with my papers?

Cosme

My guess is that she wants to see the very ones we have come back for. That way we will have less to do. She is a very accommodating spirit.

Manuel

Heaven help me! I know not what to do! I have never before felt like such a coward.

Cosme

Boy, I have!

Manuel

My feet are imprisoned in chains of ice. My every breath is like a dagger in my chest and a rope around my neck. But why am I afraid? By God, I must attempt to break free of this enchantment.

(He approaches Angela and grabs her.)

Angel, demon, or woman! You shall not escape my grasp this time.

Angela (*Aside*)

(Oh, unhappy me! He had not really left the house. He has the advantage here.)

Cosme

In the name of God (who brings the devil to his knees), tell us...

Angela (*Aside*)

(I must continue my deception.)

Cosme

...who are you, and what do you want from us?

Angela

Most generous Manuel Enríquez, for whom great good fortune lies in wait, touch me not, approach me not, or you will lose the greatest gift that heaven has in store for you. Fate has decreed that you should receive a great reward. I wrote to you this afternoon, in my last letter, and told you that we should see each other soon, and so it has come to pass. I have fulfilled my promise, since you see me here now in the most human form that I can manage. So go now, leave me here in peace. The time is not yet right for you to know and understand the truth of my situation. All will be revealed tomorrow. But you must tell no one of our meeting lest you lose the greatest blessing imaginable. Go in peace.

Cosme

Since she invites us so peaceably, what are we waiting for?

Manuel

(*Aside*) (God in heaven! I have had enough of fearing empty shadows! Since my courage will not stand for any more confusion, I must clear up the mystery.) Woman, whoever you may be, I shall never believe that you are anything else. But by God I shall know who you are, how you have entered here, for what end, everything! And I shall have the truth long before tomorrow. Woman or devil, I must persist. If you are a devil, your threats no longer daunt me. But of course I know by your form that you are not a devil but a woman.

Cosme

Is there a difference?

Angela

Touch me not, or you will lose a great deal. play

Cosme

The devil's right. She's not a harp or a lute or a drum that will respond to your touch.

Manuel

I shall see now by my sword whether or not you are a spirit. Even if should wound you, it should not hurt you.

Angela

No! Hold your sword, restrain your bloodthirsty arm. It is not right that you should kill a wretched woman. I confess that that is what I am. Although love is a crime, I do not deserve dying miserably just for loving well. Sully not with my blood the brilliant steel of your sword.

Manuel

Who are you?

Angela

I must tell you. I cannot fulfill this love, this desire, this truth, and this faith, as I hoped. But we are in danger of death if they see us or hear us. There is much more to me than you see here. Thus it is necessary, in order to remove what obstacles may be, to lock that door, sir, and the outer door as well, so that no one passing by may see our light.

Manuel

Light the candle, Cosme, and let's close these doors. You see that she is a woman and not a ghost?

Cosme

Just as I said all along.

Exeunt Manuel and Cosme.

Angela

Heavens! Now I am locked in this room. I suppose I shall have to tell him the truth since Isabel has left me here alone and the guest has caught me.

Isabel enters through the cupboard.

Isabel

Psst! Madam! Your brother is asking for you.

Angela

What luck! Open the other side of the cupboard. Ah, my love, you will have to live with your doubts a bit longer.

Exeunt, closing the cupboard as they leave. Enter Manuel and Cosme.

Manuel

The doors are locked, madam. You may proceed. What? What the devil? Where is she?

Cosme

How should I know?

Manuel

Do you think she is in the alcove? Go take a look.

Cosme

It would be a great dishonor for me to walk in front of you.

Manuel

Then I shall go. Give me the candle.

(He takes the candle.)

Cosme

All right!

Manuel

How cruel is my fortune.

Cosme

Well, we know she didn't leave by the doors.

Manuel

How could she have disappeared?

Cosme

Beats me. You see? Just as I told you: she is a devil, not a woman.

Manuel

I shall search this room from top to bottom until I find out if perhaps behind a painting there is a crack in a wall, or perhaps the carpets conceal a cellar. I shall even search the ceiling.

Cosme

The only thing I see is that cupboard.

Manuel

That cannot be it, since it is all made of glass. Help me look at everything else.

Cosme

I'm no snoop.

Manuel

No longer do I believe she is supernatural. She was afraid to die.

Cosme

But how do you explain that she predicted that we would return tonight and see her?

Manuel

She appeared as a shadow illuminated by a fantastic light, but, like all things human, she was able to be seen and touched. Like a mortal she feared me, like a woman she sought me out, like an illusion she deceived me, like a spirit she escaped me. If I think about this matter too much, by God, I shall not know what to doubt or what to believe.

Cosme

I do.

Manuel

What?

Cosme

That woman is the devil; there's nothing unusual about that. If a woman can be a devil day in and day out, why should we be surprised that on this occasion the devil should appear as a woman?

Exeunt.

To Act III

The Phantom Lady

by Pedro Calderón de la Barca

(1629)

Translation by Matthew D. Stroud

Act III

[Angela's room]

Enter Manuel in the dark, guided by Isabel, who leads him into a closet or inner room.

Isabel

Wait here. Madam will see you shortly.

She leaves, closing the door.

Manuel

What a turn of events! Did she close the door? Yes. Whose misfortune can equal mine? Scarcely had I returned from El Escorial when this celestial apparition, this remarkable enchantment, brought me light only to leave me in the deepest darkness of doubt. She left me another letter, in which she declares so sweetly: (*Reads*) "If you dare to come see me, it must be tonight, and without the servant who accompanies you. Two men will await you in the cemetery of Saint Sebastian — this is the strange part! — with a sedan chair. And she did not lie. I followed her instructions, and tried so hard to figure out what was going on that I went half mad. Finally I discovered a portal full of horror, darkness, and fear. Alone and without any light at all, I went through it. There I found a woman, at least it looked and sounded like a woman. Feeling her way in the darkness, she guided me from room to room without speaking, hearing, or seeing. But now I see light through a door jamb. Love, you have fulfilled your desire.. (*Looking into the main part of Angela's room.*) I see the lady and await an adventure. What an enchanted house! What lovely ladies! What a sumptuous room! What riches! What beauty!

Enter all the ladies with napkins, sweets, and water, making gestures of great reverence. Enter Angela, very richly dressed.

Angela

(*To Beatriz.*) (Since you are hiding here in our house but my brothers assume that you have gone home, your worries are unfounded. Once you are back home, you will have nothing to fear.)

Beatriz

(*To Angela.*) (What is my role to be?)

Angela

(*To Beatriz.*) (For the moment, that of my servant. Later, alone, we shall see what happens.)

(*To Manuel.*) Are you unhappy to see me?

Manuel

No, madam. He who awaits the dawn knows well that his joy lies just beyond the cold, dark night. In like manner do I rejoice in my moment of darkness. The longer the wait, the greater the satisfaction at daybreak. Yet it was not necessary for me to endure the dark of night to be awed by the brilliance of your beauty. You shine with such magnificence, that it is not possible for you to be eclipsed by shadow or night. You are the day that dawns without need of any other sun. Flee the night, madam; greet the birds that welcome the light that first illuminates the sky, turning ebony to cobalt to aquamarine. Next comes the golden dawn, inflaming the sky with its delicate rays of light. The sun appears, the sun that alone can brighten, gild, and burn. First light follows night; the contact makes the rosy glow seem all the brighter. Dawn seeks to build on the first rays of light. The sun, singular divinity, challenges the dawn, and you, the sun. Thus I repeat that it was not necessary for me to endure the cold, dark night to revel in your shining splendor that, even at this hour, rivals the sun at mid-day.

Angela

Although I should appreciate such a pretty speech, I must complain, and not in vain, about such flattering excess. Since this is not heaven, or a sphere against whose noble burning the wind tires itself but rather a simple house, your exaggerations make me most suspicious. Likewise, I am not light, for I lack the laughter of pure

joy; I am not dawn, as you can tell by my tears of grief; I am not the sun, since I shed no light on the truth I adore. Indeed, I know not what I am. I only know that I am not light or dawn or sun, for today neither do I shine nor laugh nor weep. I pray you, Manuel, tell them that I am and have been a woman whom you alone drive to such extremes.

Manuel

It must not amount to very much, since although I came to see you here, I could argue that I have more to regret, my lady, than to rejoice. You have offended me greatly, madam.

Angela

Offended you?

Manuel

Yes, since you will not trust me with who you are.

2366 Angela

I ask you only that you not ask me that. I cannot tell you. If you wish to come speak to me, it must on condition that you not know nor can you ask. I offer myself to you today as an enigma, for neither am I what I appear to be, nor do I appear to be what I am. While I am veiled, you may see me and I may see you. But if you come just to find out who I am, and are successful, you will no longer wish to love me even though my feelings for you will not have changed. When death is the artist, one cannot always be sure of the portrait. Something may have one form in one light and quite another in a different light. Love, the painter, brings two lights into harmony, which is what you have in me. Today you see me in this light; that is why you seek me. When you see me again in another light, perhaps you may hate me. What is important for me today is that that I swear that I am not Luis's lady. You may put aside that suspicion once and for all.

Manuel

Then, madam, what moved you to disguise yourself and hide from him?

Angela

I could be a noble woman with much to lose should Luis recognize me.

Manuel

Can you tell me at least how you are able to enter my room?

Angela

That, too, must wait for another time, for the same reasons.

Beatriz

(*Aside*) (That's my cue.) The water and sweets have arrived, your excellency, if you would wish...

The ladies approach with the napkins, glasses, and trays of sweets.

Angela

What impertinence! Fool, who is “your excellency”? Do you hope thus to deceive our guest, causing him to believe that I am great lady?

Beatriz

Madam...

Manuel (*Aside*)

(That’s one question answered. I have always thought her to be a great lady who, because of her rank and status, disguised herself, and kept her secret bought with gold.)

Offstage Juan calls and the women stir.

Juan (*Within*)

Open up! Open this door!

Angela

Heavens! What is that noise?

Isabel

We’re sunk!

Beatriz

I am frozen with fright.

Manuel (*Aside*)

(Is there no end to my bad luck? Heaven help me!)

Angela

My lord, it is my husband.

Manuel

What should I do?

Angela

You must hide ... at once! Isabel, lead him away and hide him in the room you know of... you understand.

Isabel

Come quickly. (*She exits.*)

Juan (*Within*)

Will you not open this door?

Manuel

May heaven help me! My life and my honor depend upon a fortuitous exit. (*Exit.*)

Juan (*Within*)

By God, I'll break it down!

Angela

Beatriz, you hide over there, and make sure he doesn't see you. [*Enter Juan.*] What do you want in my room at this hour? What brings you to disturb us like this?

Juan

You answer my questions first. What dress is that?

Angela

You usually see me in mourning, full of grief and despair. I only hoped to cheer myself a bit with these clothes.

Juan

I do not doubt it. Women can easily solve their problems with jewels or a new frock, even if in your case I find it a bit unseemly.

Angela

Why should you care what I wear in the privacy of my own room?

Juan

Tell me, did Beatriz return home?

Angela

Just so. Her father has changed his mind and decided to forgive her.

Juan

I did not care to know more. I merely wanted to find out if I might see her and speak to her tonight. I shall leave, but remember, that dress does not suit you. (*Exit.*)

Angela

Good-bye... and good riddance.

(*Beatriz comes out of hiding.*)

Close the door, Beatriz.

Beatriz

We came out of this fright rather well. Your brother is going to look for me.

Angela

Until the house has settled down, and Manuel returns from his room to see me, let us hide here in this niche so that we might be harder to find.

Beatriz

If this turns out well, you deserve to be called the Phantom Lady.

Exeunt.

[Manuel's room]

Enter Manuel and Isabel through the cupboard.

2479 Isabel

You must remain here, and make no noise that might attract attention.

Manuel

I shall be as still as a statue.

Isabel (*Aside.*)

(I hope I can get this thing closed well. I'm so nervous.) (*Exit.*)

Manuel

Oh, how much one risks when one dares enter into a game in which he does not know and cannot imagine the losses that await him, the misfortunes that are in store! Here I am in the house of a most noble gentleman, so far away from my home, confronted by a thousand cruel surprises. But what is this? It appears that someone is opening a door. Yes, people are entering.

Enter Cosme.

Cosme

Thank God that I was able to come back freely and fearlessly into my room, even though I have no light. Then again, if the ghost has my master, what would he want from me? (*He bumps into Manuel.*) Uh oh! More trouble. Who goes there? Who are you?

Manuel

Hold your tongue, I tell you, whoever you are, if you do not wish to die pummeled by my fists.

Cosme

You have my word on it. I won't speak any more than a poor relation in the house of a rich man.

Manuel

(*Aside.*) (This must be a servant who has happened into this room. I can find out from him where I am.) Tell me, what house is this, and who is its owner?

Cosme

Sir, this house and its owner both belong to the devil, may he take me. Here lives a lady whom they call the Phantom Lady, who is a demon in the shape of a woman.

Manuel

And who are you?

Cosme

I am a servant or valet, an underling, a lackey who suffers these enchantments without knowing why.

Manuel

And who is your master?

Cosme

He's a madman, impertinent, foolish, idiotic, and wretched, who has lost his mind over a lady.

Manuel

And his name?

Cosme

Manuel Enríquez.

Manuel

My God!

Cosme

I am called Cosme Catiboratos. At your service.

Manuel

Cosme, you?! I am your master. How have you come here? Tell me, have you been following me from the cemetery? Did you enter with me and hide in this room as well?

Cosme

What a clever game you play. Tell me, how did you end up here? Didn't you go off by yourself at their instruction, ever so brave and noble? So how have you returned so quickly? And how did you get into this room since I have the key?

Manuel

What room is this?

Cosme

Either yours or the devil's.

Manuel

By God, you are lying. Just now I was far from here, in a very different house.

Cosme

It must be the work of the goblin, because I'm telling you the gospel truth.

Manuel

You are trying to drive me mad.

Cosme

What else can I say to make you believe me? Go through that door and you'll see where we are.

Manuel

Good idea. I shall return immediately. *(Exit.)*

Cosme

Ladies and Gentlemen, shall we ever find out way out of this confusion?

Enter Isabel through the cupboard.

Isabel

(Aside.) (Juan has left again. I have to retrieve Manuel before he figures out what's going on.) Psst! Psst!

Cosme

Things are getting worse. These pssts are downright psscary.

Isabel

My lord has now retired.

Cosme *(Aside)*

(What lord?)

Enter Manuel.

Manuel

Indeed, this is my room.

Cosme

Is that you?

Isabel

(To Cosme) (Yes, it is I. Come with me quickly.)

Manuel

You are quite right.

Isabel

(To Cosme) (Do not be afraid. There is nothing to fear.)

Cosme

Sir, the ghost is taking me away!

Isabel leads Cosme out through the cupboard.

Manuel

Shall we never know the source of this intrigue? Answer me! What a fool you are. Cosme! Cosme? My God, there is nothing here but walls. Was I not just now talking with him? Was he not here? I shall surely lose my mind completely, and for good reason. At least, since someone else is sure to enter here, I can find out how. I shall hide in this alcove and wait attentively until I can discover who is the lovely Phantom Lady.

He hides.

[Angela's room]

Enter Angela, Beatriz, and a servant, one with a candle, another with some boxes, and a third with a glass of water.

Angela

Since my brother has left the house to look for you, and since Isabel has taken Manuel to her room, everything is ready. Let him find the entire scene set when he arrives. Places, everyone.

Beatriz

I have never seen such a deception in my entire life.

Angela

Is he coming?

Servant

Yes, I hear footsteps.

Enter Isabel, leading Cosme by the hand.

2604 Cosme

God help me! Where am I going? This isn't funny any more. But wait. Now I see all these beautiful ladies? Who am I? Lancelot? Am I little old Cosme or King Arthur?

Isabel

Here he is. What's this? Sir!

Cosme

(Aside.) (Now I am sure I am bewitched. My soul hangs by a thread.)

Angela

Isabel, what is this?

Isabel

(To her mistress.) (My lady, when I went back for Manuel, in the same room where I left him, I found his servant.)

Beatriz

What a clumsy error!

Isabel

It was dark!

Angela

Alas! The trick has now been revealed.

Beatriz

(To Angela.) (Maybe not just yet.) Cosme.

Cosme

Guinevere.

Beatriz

Come here, sit by me.

Cosme

I'm fine here, thank you very much.

Angela

Please, do not be afraid.

Cosme

Afraid, a man of my courage?

Angela

Then come here, won't you?

Cosme approaches them.

2626 Cosme

(Aside.) (I can't get out of it since my reputation and my honor depend on it.) It is not out of fear that I keep my distance but out of respect. Why, how could I fear the devil himself dressed as a woman? Actually, the devil tried it once, and for a certain trick he put on a corset and petticoats. In fact, I think the devil *invented* corsets and petticoats. Anyway, disguised as a lovely young maiden, rich and well-dressed, he appeared to a shepherd, who, as soon as he saw her burst into flames of passion for her. He had a merry time with the she-devil. Afterward, the devil returned to his hideous, horrible form and asked, "Wretch, don't you see the truth of the beauty you have enjoyed? You have nothing left but despair, for you pursued me!" The shepherd, less unhappy than before he ravished her, replied, "Oh, vain and false spirit, you tried to make this unhappy man despair. Come back tomorrow in the same disguise and you'll find me just as amorous and solicitous afterwards as before. Let me tell you a secret: as horrible as he may be, a devil is not a half bad when dressed as a woman.

Angela

You are not yourself. Please, have a drink. Great frights make one thirsty.

Cosme

No, thanks.

Beatriz

We must be going. You have to return to your room two hundred leagues from here. *(Luis begins calling offstage.)*

Cosme

What? What's that noise?

Angela

Are they calling?

Beatriz

Indeed.

Isabel

How dreadful!

Angela

Oh, unhappy me!

Luis (*Within.*)

Isabel.

Beatriz

Heaven help me!

Luis (*Within*)

Open up here.

Angela

For every problem I have a different brother.

Isabel

This is too much!

Beatriz

I shall hide. (*Exit.*)

Cosme

This must be the real ghost.

Isabel

(*To Cosme*) (Come with me.)

Cosme

Sure thing.

Enter Luis.

Angela

What business do you have here in my room?

Luis

A thousand miseries lead me to spoil other pleasures. Not long ago I saw in this room a chair used by Beatriz, and then I saw my brother enter.

Angela

And? What do you want?

Luis

Since this room is above my own, it seemed to me that I heard footsteps. To satisfy myself, I have come up to have a look around.

(Luis opens a door and discovers Beatriz hiding.)

Beatriz, you, here?

Beatriz

Indeed. I had to return because my father became angry again, as usual.

Luis

You both seem quite nervous. What is all this with the napkins, glasses, and sweets?

Angela

Why on earth would you have the slightest interest in the way we women entertain ourselves when we are alone?

Isabel and Cosme make noise in the cupboard passage.

Luis

What is that noise?

Angela *(Aside)*

(I am undone!)

Luis

By God, there are people here! This cannot be my brother's doing. I am sure he knows nothing of this!

(He opens the cupboard wider in order to enter carrying a light.)

My heavens! Here I am worried about the petty jealousies of love, when all along I should have been much more concerned for our honor! I shall take a light, even though I know it may be imprudent. Light can reveal everything, including dishonor. *(Exit.)*

Angela

Oh, Beatriz! If he finds him, we are lost!

Beatriz

If Isabel now has him in her room, then you are worried for nothing. The secret of the cupboard is safe.

Angela

But what if my luck is such that Isabel was not able to close the cupboard tightly. What if Luis enters there?

Beatriz

Then you will need to find a safe place.

Angela

I shall throw myself on the mercy of your father and ask him to help me the way that I helped you. If one problem brought you here, another may take me there.

Exeunt.

[Manuel's room]

Enter Isabel and Cosme through the cupboard. Enter Manuel through the door.

Isabel

Here, quickly. *(She exits.)*

Manuel

Once again I hear people in this room.

Enter Luis with a light.

Luis

I saw a man! God help me!

Cosme

This can't be good.

Luis

Why is the cupboard out of place?

2733 Cosme

Oh, no! Another light! I'll hide under this desk. *(He hides.)*

2734 Manuel

I have had enough of this. (*He puts his hand on his sword.*)

Luis

Manuel!

Manuel

Luis! How is this possible? What utter confusion!

Cosme (*Aside*)

See how they entered! I tried to tell him a thousand times!

Luis

Nefarious gentleman, nay, villain, traitor, contemptible guest who draws his unworthy sword against a host who has shown you nothing but honor, service, and favor! You dare confront me so?

Manuel

I fight only to defend myself. I am totally bewildered seeing you and hearing you. Even should you try to kill me, you will not succeed because I, made stronger in the crucible of misfortune, am now immortal. You shall not, even though you may try, give me death. If all my grief has not done me in, then neither shall you, no matter how brave you are.

Luis

Do not try to talk your way out of this.

Manuel

But wait, Luis. I believe there is a way to satisfy you.

Luis

What satisfaction can there be if you try so boldly to dishonor me? With you standing here in this room, can there possibly be satisfaction?

Manuel

May my sword pierce my heart a thousand times, Luis, if I ever had any idea that there was a passage to the other room.

Luis

So what are you doing locked up in here without any light?

Manuel

(*Aside.*) (What shall I tell him?) I am waiting for my servant.

Luis

When I have seen you hiding, you want me to believe that my eyes are lying to me?

Manuel

Yes, for the eyes are more susceptible to deceit than any of the other senses.

Luis

And if my eyes are deceiving me, you want me to believe that my ears are lying to me as well?

Manuel

Indeed.

Luis

Then all my senses are lying, and only you are telling me the truth? You are the only one who...

Manuel

Wait, before you accuse me of being a liar, I shall cut you down before you can utter another word. If you want a duel, then I am at your service. I have put up with enough in the name of friendship. But since you are determined that we should duel, let us fight fairly. Let us each take half the candle so that we can each see equally well. Close that door you came through so imprudently while I close this other one. I shall throw the key on the floor so that the one who remains alive will be able to leave.

Luis

I shall push the cupboard closed and seal it with this desk so that no one can open it from the other side.

When Luis moves the desk, he reveals Cosme hiding under it.

Cosme

Damn it all.

Luis

Who is there?

Manuel

More bad luck!

Cosme

There's nobody here.

Luis

Tell me, Manuel, is this the servant you were waiting for?

Manuel

Pay no attention to him. I know that I am right. Believe of me what you will, but with my sword in my hand, only one of us will remain alive.

Luis

Then let us fight. What are you waiting for?

Manuel

You offend me greatly if you think I am a coward. I am wondering what to do with my servant. If we throw him out he will tell everyone what he knows. If he stays he will surely come to my aid.

Cosme

No way. Far be it from me to interfere.

Luis

This room has an alcove. Let us lock him in there and thus we shall be equals.

Manuel

Very well. Go, Cosme.

Cosme

Why do you go on so about my not fighting. There wasn't the slightest chance that that would happen. (*Exit.*)

Manuel

Now it is just the two of us.

Luis

Let the duel begin. (*They fight.*)

Manuel

What a valiant fighter!

Luis

What strength! What courage! (*The hilt of his sword comes undone.*)

I cannot believe this! My sword has come undone. I am defenseless.

Manuel

That is no fault of your valor. It was just an accident. Go for another.

Luis

You are a most gracious gentleman. (*Aside.*) (Oh, Fortune, what must I do in such a situation. The man who dishonors me also spares my life? I must find a way, one way or the other, to do the right thing.)

Manuel

Will you not go for another sword?

Luis

Yes. Since you are waiting for me, I shall return promptly.

Manuel

Quickly or not, I shall be here.

Luis

God be with you.

Manuel

And with you.

(*Exit Luis.*)

I shall close the door and remove the key so that no one can see that there are people here. What astonishing confusion besieges my mind! But I knew there had to be another door or passage into this room, and that our visitor was Luis's lady! In fact, everything is turning out just as I imagined. But then, misfortunes are always true.

Cosme looks over the partition..

Cosme

Oh, master! For the love of God, now that you are alone, let me out of here. I am afraid that the ghost will come back for me with all the giving and taking and haggling and squabbling. And here I am in a cubby hole where I can barely see the walls.

Manuel

I shall open the door. I am so overcome by your description of your plight, I cannot imagine anything more pitiful.

Exit Manuel into the alcove. Enter Juan and Angela, who is wearing a cloak.

Juan

Wait here while I seek out the cause of all these goings-on and the reason why you should be leaving the house at this hour. I do not want you to go to your room because I want to satisfy myself regarding what has gone on.

(*Aside*) (I shall leave her here in Manuel's room. Lest he should appear, I shall place a servant at the door with orders that no one shall pass.) (*Exit.*)

Angela

I could not be more miserable. My misfortunes cascade one after the other. I am undone.

Enter Manuel and Cosme

Cosme

Let's get out of here.

Manuel

What are you afraid of?

Cosme

That woman is a devil, and she still won't leave me alone!

Manuel

But we now know who she is, and there is a desk against one door and the other is locked with a key. How do you expect her to get in?

Cosme

However she wants.

Manuel

What a fool you are.

Cosme

(*Spotting Angela.*) Sweet Jesus!

Manuel

Why are you shouting?

Cosme

It seemed like the right thing to do.

2907 Manuel

(*Seeing Angela.*) Are you an illusion, a shadow, or a woman who has come to kill me? How did you get in?

Angela

Manuel

Manuel

Go on.

Angela

Please listen. Luis came to my room in a terrible state. He burst in daringly, raced around madly, searched the room blindly, went through the passage imprudently and found you unexpectedly. The next thing I knew there was the sound of swords clashing. I knew that for two noblemen locked in a room, spurred on by their honor and their valor, there was no alternative but a duel to the death. Breathless and lifeless, I fled from my house, and in the cold dark of night, the bleakness of which reflected my fortune, I began to walk. I stumbled here and made a wrong turn there. Once I tripped and another time I caught my dress on something. Alone, miserable, and distraught, I finally made my way to the threshold of a house that was my prison when it should have been sacred ground or at least safe harbor. But what more can a misbegotten soul expect? Do you not see how fate links together our misfortunes in endless chains? There at the door was my brother, Don Juan. I tried mightily but in vain to resist telling him who I was, but having kept it from him has placed us in such extraordinary jeopardy. Who will believe that silence in a woman could have caused such calamity? And it is true that, as a woman, my silence has led to my death. At any rate, he was waiting at that door when, heaven help me, I arrived at its threshold. I was a volcano of ice or a snowcap of fire. In the scarce light provided by the pale moon, he was able to see the jewels on my breast — it is not the first time such baubles have betrayed a woman — and he heard the rustle of my dress — nor is it the first time a dress has undone a woman. He thought I was his lady and, like a moth to a flame hoping to consummate his love in fire, he found in me only the ghost of his lucky star. Who could believe that a gentleman, consumed by jealousy, should find his fortune so contrary that he should not know that jealousy is his fate? He tried to speak to me but he could not, for feelings have always lacked a proper voice. In sad words that rose poorly formed from his heart to his lips, he sought the cause of his misery. I tried to answer him, but I have already mentioned that feelings know no words. I tried, but I could not. Reason works poorly in the presence of fear. I tried to find excuses for my guilt, but when one seeks out exoneration, it usually comes late or never. The crime is affirmed by the denial. “Come, wicked sister,” he said, “you who are the first stain on our ancient honor. I shall keep you cloistered where you will be safe and out of harm’s way until I discover, calmly and rationally, the cause of this dishonor.” I came in here and fortune allowed my spirits to rise a bit when I saw you. For having loved you I have become a false spirit in my own house. Having admired you, I have been buried alive by my woes. She who would fail to respect your nobility does not love you. She who would admit her treason face to face does not deserve you. My intention was to love you, my goal to cherish you, my fear to lose you, my concern to reassure you, my life’s purpose to honor you, my soul’s ambition to adore you, my desire to serve you, and my plea, in effect, to persuade you to look after my troubles, to help me, to support me, to rescue me, and to deliver me.

3005 Manuel

(*Aside.*) (My misfortunes multiply like hydra, reborn from the ashes. What shall I do in such a blind abyss, a labyrinth, a tangled web. She is the sister of Luis, when I thought she was his lady. My God, if I thought I offended his love, what have I done to his honor? Righteous torment! She is his sister. If I come to her aid and defend her with my sword, maintaining her innocence with my blade, my guilt is even greater, for then I am a traitor who has dishonored her house by my presence. But to wish to exonerate myself by implicating her is to say that she is to blame, and my sense of honor will not allow that. So, what am I supposed to do? If I defend

her, I am a traitor; if I abandon her, I am a cad; if I hide her, I am an unworthy guest; if I turn her over to her brother, I am less than human; if I take her under my protection, I am an unworthy friend. Since no matter which choice I make I must end up worse off, at least let me die fighting.) Fear not, madam. I am a nobleman and you are now with me.

Cosme

They are opening the door.

Manuel

Be not afraid. My valor will protect you.

Angela

It is my brother.

Manuel

Have no doubts. Get behind me.

Enter Luis.

Luis

I have returned. But, what is this? Traitor! (*He threatens Angela.*)

Manuel

Hold your sword, Luis. I have been waiting for you in this room since you left. Here, without my understanding how, this lady entered. She claims to be your sister. I give you my word as a gentleman that I do not know her. Suffice it to say that, deceived, I have spoken to her without knowing who she was. At the risk of my own life and soul I am placing her under my protection. Therefore our duel, which was supposed to be just between us behind closed doors, will now become a public scandal if you do not allow us to leave. Having made sure she is safe, I shall return to satisfy the demands of our dispute. As one who lives by honor and for whom there is nothing more important than sword and honor, allow me to go for the sake of honor, since I allowed you to go for a sword.

Luis

I went for it, but only to place it here at your feet. Our earlier differences are now resolved. But now that you give me a new reason, I have a new cause for which to challenge you. This woman is my sister. No one may take her from my sight without first being her husband. Thus, if you insist on taking her hand, it must be with the promise of marriage. When she is then safe and sound you may return to our duel, if you wish.

Manuel

I shall return, but impressed as I am with your prudence and constancy, I shall not fight but rather throw myself on your mercy.

Luis

My friend. *(They shake hands.)*

Manuel

To fulfill my obligations in full, I offer to your sister my hand in marriage.

Enter Beatriz and Isabel through one door and Juan through another.

Juan

If all you lack is someone to give away the bride, here I am. I was coming from where I left my sister when I heard your voice. Prepared for misfortune, I find I could not be happier. I give you both my blessing.

Beatriz

Well, they may have gotten together, but they did not do it alone.

Juan

Beatriz, you, in my house?

Beatriz

I never left. Someday I shall tell you all about it.

Juan

Let us take full advantage of this happy occasion!

Cosme

Thank God the ghost finally declared herself! Tell me, was it all a drunken dream?

Manuel

Indeed, it was not, and today you shall marry Isabel.

Cosme

I'd really have to be drunk for that. Sorry, but I can't.

Isabel

And why not?

Cosme

Because I don't want to waste time better spent by asking this kind audience to forgive our mistakes. We humbly ask your good will and kind indulgence.

. “The Phantom Lady.” Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, 2026.
<https://www.comedias.org/obras/the-phantom-lady/>