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The Young Lady's Consent

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The Young Lady's Consent

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing: Playwriting

by

Christopher O. Kidder

B.A. Morningside College, 1996

December, 2007

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Dedication

For Gwendolyn, a wonderful young lady.

Acknowledgement

The playwright would like to thank those actors who took part in the workshop of this script's first production (Commedia Beauregard, 2007): Aaron Konigsmark, Jerome R. Marzullo, Jane Hammill, Jesse Dorst, Melissa Bechthold, Lauren B. Wills, and Matt Wenge.

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ABSTRACT

This play is a translation and adaptation of a Spanish play originally written in 1806 by Leandro Fernández de Moratín, *El sí de las niñas*. Because that play was not available to English-speaking actors, I translated the work directly from the original Spanish. The resulting manuscript was not the finished product of this play, however. Through a series of workshops with actors trained in a physical method of theatre I devised in order to modernize classic works to a more modern audience's tastes, the script morphed and grew into the play that follows.

KEYWORDS

Moratín, Comedy, Adaptation, Young Lady's Consent, Translation, 1806, Spain, *El sí de las niñas*,

THE YOUNG LADY'S CONSENT

Translated and Adapted by Christopher O. Kidder
from "El sí de las niñas" by Leandro Fernández de Moratín

Characters

Don Diego
Don Carlos
Doña Irene
Doña Francisca
Rita
Simón
Calamocha

Setting

An inn in Alcalá de Henares (a small city 20 miles East of Madrid). A hallway/foyer with four doors to guest rooms, each numbered. One exit leads a landing of the stairwell to the lobby. A window is to one side. There is a table, a bench and a stool.

Time

One day in 1806. The action begins at seven in the evening and ends at five the following morning.

ACT I

Scene 1

AT RISE: SIMÓN sits at the table. DON DIEGO enters from his room. SIMÓN rises, and starts to dust the table & stool.

DON DIEGO

They're not here yet?

SIMÓN

No, sir.

DON DIEGO

Where the hell are they?

SIMÓN

Where the hell are we?

(inspecting a particularly nasty item on the window sill)

We're in this flea-ridden dump and she's off visiting another of her aunts. She's got 40 of them.

DON DIEGO

Yes. I'm not saying she can't see her aunts, but a half-hour visit and four tears, and she should be done already.

SIMÓN

It seems so strange for you to not leave the inn for two whole days. And what is the reason? Everything gets really boring. Reading gets boring. I read the whole Bible already. Even sleeping is boring. And, mainly, I'm just tired of it all... of the dirty room, the rickety seats, the bad hotel art of *The Prodigal Son*...and the coarse conversation of wagon drivers and boors that don't allow a moment's peace. The bugs here are making me itch.

DON DIEGO

Well scratch it. It's more convenient doing it this way. They all know me around here (the mayor, the abbot, the judge, the rector from Málaga). You know what I mean. Everybody! And it has been necessary to keep quiet and not show my face and be found.

SIMÓN

But why? There's got to be more to it, otherwise this is stupid! All we're doing is taking Doña Irene and the girl to Madrid.

DON DIEGO

Yes, my boy, there is something more than what you have seen. Think about it. The girl. She's pretty.

SIMÓN

Keep going.

DON DIEGO

We must be quick.... You need to know everything. I will fill you in quickly. Look, Simón, for heaven's sake, I trust you to keep quiet. You are a good man, and you have served me faithfully for many years. You see, we have taken the girl out of the convent and we are going to be taking her with us to Madrid.

SIMÓN

Yes, Señor.

DON DIEGO

Because... well... If I hear that you've told anyone, I'll beat you to a pulp!

SIMÓN

Right you are, sir. I have never liked gossips.

DON DIEGO

I already know that, and for that reason I want to trust you. I, in truth, had never seen the girl, Doña Paquita before this trip; but I've heard a lot about her from her mother. And now that I've seen her, I have tried to observe her in these few days, and, to tell the truth, all the many praises made of her... I find them lacking... She really is pretty.

SIMÓN

Yes, she's pretty. Great.

DON DIEGO

She is very pretty, very graceful, very humble... that candor, that innocence! You know, it's not like what you run into around here... And talent... Yes, my boy, much talent. So...Here's what I've come up with.

SIMÓN

You know what, let me stop you, I think I know where you're going.

DON DIEGO

Oh?

SIMÓN

It is an excellent idea. He's a lucky guy. A very lucky guy.

DON DIEGO

What? What are you talking about?

SIMÓN

Brilliant! Sweet, I got it!

DON DIEGO

So, you've figured it out?

SIMÓN

Isn't it clear? Come on! A beautiful, champagne, caviar, white wedding. A wedding!

DON DIEGO

You guessed it! You hit the nail on the head!

SIMÓN

I know I did.

DON DIEGO

But we have to keep it quiet until it is done.

SIMÓN

Why?

DON DIEGO

Because not everyone sees it my way. Because people will talk... They'll call it madness!

SIMÓN

Madness? Sweet madness! ... With a girl like that, eh?

DON DIEGO

Well, she's poor... There it is. Because, just between us, Doña Irene went through her wealth like wildfire since her husband died. If it wasn't for the nuns and her other relatives, she wouldn't have two sticks to rub together. And she's so conceited and very fussy, and always speaking of her kin and of her ancestors... But that's not what I'm looking for... I'm not looking for money, I've already got money. I'm looking for modesty, devotion, virtue.

SIMÓN

Yeah, yeah, those are all good.

DON DIEGO

You're right... Do you know what a woman of means is like? Is she industrious? Do you think she knows how to take care of the house? No. Always fighting with the nannies that if one is bad, another is worse! No, my boy... I would rather have a woman who attends me with love and fidelity. We will live like a couple of saints... And let them talk!

SIMÓN

But, if both are happy, what can anyone say?

DON DIEGO

No. I already know what they'll say... They'll say that the marriage isn't equal. That there is no proportion in age. People talk. That's what they do.

(Mimicking)

"He's so old, he's got one foot in the grave."

SIMÓN

Come on. I don't see such a remarkable difference. Seven or eight years, at the most.

DON DIEGO

What kind of math do you do? Seven or eight years? She just turned sixteen!

SIMÓN

Yeah, so?

DON DIEGO

And I...I am still in good shape, thank God, but...I'm 59. 59 years old. I can still get it up, but... People will talk!

SIMÓN

What? What? That's not what I'm talking about?!

DON DIEGO

What are you talking about?

SIMÓN

I thought she was marrying...well...not you. You want her to marry you?

DON DIEGO

Just catching up with me, eh?

SIMÓN

To you?

DON DIEGO

To me.

SIMÓN

Good grief!

DON DIEGO

Why not?

SIMÓN

Because you're old, and you have a perfectly good, handsome, nephew, Don Carlos. He's a talented young man: well-educated, an excellent soldier, perfectly friendly under all circumstances. So, I figured you were making a match for him.

DON DIEGO

Well...no.

SIMÓN

Well...good.

DON DIEGO

No. No, my boy, he should go back to studying his mathematics.

SIMÓN

He already studies them, or rather, already teaches them.

DON DIEGO

If he made himself a man of courage, and...

SIMÓN

Did you say courage? What do you want from him? Courage! You couldn't ask for more courage from an officer who fought in Napoleon's war. Didn't he take two batteries of artillery with very few following his lead? Didn't he plunge into the trenches covered in mud and blood? When he was given a medal by the king, you cried! I saw you!

DON DIEGO

Yes, that is all true. But, it has nothing to do with this. I am the one she will marry. ME!

SIMÓN

Well, I'm not sure... But, if you're very sure she wants to marry you... If the difference in your ages doesn't scare her... If it is a choice made of her own free will...

DON DIEGO

That's what we've just been talking about!... Then it's a done deal! She's been sitting up there with the nuns the whole time, cloistered. She spends her days with embroidery, sewing, reading devotionals, hearing mass, running through the vegetable garden chasing butterflies, and tossing water on anthills; these have been her occupation and diversions.... The maid who first served her in Madrid, and then for the whole four years in the convent sings her praises... And the best part is, she's never seen another man, so she doesn't know the difference, so what's the harm? Pure as the driven snow! She's perfect, what more could you want?

SIMÓN

Me? Nothing, sir.

DON DIEGO

And don't think that I haven't taken advantage of every possible opportunity to gain her friendship and confidence and to get her to open herself up to me freely... There is still a good amount of time, except that Doña Irene is always yapping, always interrupting, yip yip yip....

SIMÓN

In short, sir, I want to get going as soon as you see fit.

DON DIEGO

Yes... Although the fiancé is not to your liking, I can't believe you just now highly recommended my nephew. Don't you know that I am mad at him?

SIMÓN

Why are you mad at him now?

DON DIEGO

His usual tomfoolery. And last year, you already know, he came to Madrid for two months... that visit cost me a pretty penny... In short, he is my nephew, so be it... But, I'll get to the point... The time came for him to leave for Zaragoza with his regiment... And a few days after he left Madrid, I received notice of his arrival.

SIMÓN

I know, Señor.

DON DIEGO

And he continued writing me, not very often mind you, the return address always saying "Zaragoza."

SIMÓN

That is the truth.

DON DIEGO

Well, the scoundrel was not in Zaragoza when he wrote me those letters.

SIMÓN

What are you getting at?

DON DIEGO

He was supposed to go to the fort, and he never showed up. He left my house on the third of July, and by the end of September he'd not yet reached the barracks. Even if he'd been sent by mail he'd've made better time, don't you think?

SIMÓN

Maybe he got lost, and didn't want to upset you.

DON DIEGO

That's nonsense... Something's turned his head. There are women between here and there, they've got black eyes, they drive him crazy and... well... that's what happened!

SIMÓN

Well, your nephew's a really good looking guy.

DON DIEGO

(Exasperated)

Find the foreman, and tell him we're leaving first thing tomorrow.

SIMÓN

(Aside)

Thank God!

(To Don Diego)

Very good, Señor.

DON DIEGO

And I want you to keep your lips sealed... Got it?

SIMÓN mimes locking his lips and gives the "key" to Don Diego. He then turns to go.

DON DIEGO

Wait! What are you going to do?

SIMÓN

(Lips still "locked")

Mmm mmmmm mm mmm mmmm!

Don Diego gives Simón the "key".

SIMÓN

I'm going to keep my lips sealed.

DON DIEGO

Good.

SIMÓN exits.

ACT I, SCENE 2

DOÑA IRENE, DOÑA FRANCISCA, and RITA all enter through the same door. They are wearing traditional Spanish skirts and long shawls. RITA carries a bundle tied up in a handkerchief and a stack of mantillas (shawls) and places them on the table. She folds them throughout the following scene.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

We're finally here!

DOÑA IRENE

All those damned stairs!

DON DIEGO

Welcome, ladies.

DOÑA IRENE

So... you haven't left yet.

DOÑA IRENE and DON DIEGO sit.

DON DIEGO

I was about to lie down for a nap, but in this place it's difficult to get sleep.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

That's very true... This place has so many bugs... they make me itch.

(She unties the handkerchief bundle and displays its contents)

But, look! Look at all my little things. Mother-of-pearl rosaries, cypress crucifixes, crystal vials of holy water, and this is the Lady Madonna's face on a piece of toast! ... Aren't they pretty?

DOÑA IRENE

Trinkets that the nuns gave her. They were crazy about her.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Everybody loves me. They smile when I come and cry when I leave.

DOÑA IRENE

It's true. When we went to the university here, they liked us so much they escorted us all the way off campus.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(To Rita)

Rita, take all this stuff and be careful of my marzipan statue of St Gertrude.

RITA

(Exiting, pops part of statue into her mouth)
Oh... I'll take care of it.

ACT I, SCENE 3

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Should we go to our rooms, Mama? Or should we stay here?

DOÑA IRENE

For the moment, dear, I just want to rest.

DON DIEGO

It is the hottest it's been all year today.

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, but they do keep this place cool. And such a beautiful sky, anyway...

DOÑA FRANCISCA sits down next to her mother.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I must tell you, my aunt, she sweats like a pig. Oh, how that poor woman sweats

DOÑA IRENE

My sister is quite delicate...She didn't want to part with Paquita, but she is very happy with our choice.

DON DIEGO

I'm very happy that the nuns are happy but, to tell you the truth, it's not the nuns I'm interested in.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Can I go?

DOÑA IRENE

(To Doña Francisca)

No.

(To Don Diego)

Yes, Sister Trinidad is very happy, and as for Sister Bautismo, she's already given you her approval. You remember how she beamed with joy...

DON DIEGO

It's true. If only the involved party showed the same excitement—

DOÑA IRENE

She's an obedient daughter, and she will never go against the wishes of her mother.

DON DIEGO

Of all that I'm certain, but...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Can I go, Mama?

DOÑA FRANCISCA gets up, then sits down again.

DOÑA IRENE

No she couldn't. No sir. A very educated girl, daughter of good parentage, is not capable of behaving in a manner that is less than suitable and due. The girl is a living portrait, a spitting image, of her grandmother Doña Jerónima de Peralta... At home I have the painting, you've already seen it. They had it made for her uncle – Brother Serapión of San Juan – who was the bishop of Mechoacán in Mexico... Well, you know the family tree goes back.

DON DIEGO

So you've already told me.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, he died at sea in the scent of sainthood.

DON DIEGO

That is good.

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, my friend... but, since the family came on such hard times... Well, just in case, his biography is already being written, and who knows, maybe someday it will be published, with God's help.

DON DIEGO

I think you can get anything published these days.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Can I go?

DOÑA IRENE

(To Doña Irene)

No.

(To Don Diego)

The certain thing is that my brother-in-law's nephew, the Canon of Castrojeriz, can't leave it handwritten. Thus far it has taken him nine volumes to write out nine years of the sacred bishop's life.

DON DIEGO

One volume for every year?

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, sir, that is the intended plan.

DON DIEGO

And at what age did the venerable one die?

DOÑA IRENE

Eighty-two years, three months, and four days.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Please can I go, Mama?

DOÑA IRENE

Good God, you're in such a hurry. You may go.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Getting up)

Do you want to see how they curtsy in France, Mister Don Diego, Sir?

DON DIEGO

Yes, my little one. Let's see.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(She does an amusing curtsy)

Look! This way.

DON DIEGO

Amusing girl! Viva la Paquita, viva!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

For you a curtsy, for my Mama a kiss.

DOÑA FRANCISCA kisses her mother and exits to her room.

ACT I, SCENE 4

DOÑA IRENE

She's very pretty isn't she? Isn't the girl charming?

DON DIEGO

She has a natural grace that stirs the spirit.

DOÑA IRENE

What would you expect? A maid without artifice or worldly tricks, who only considers her immediate circumstances... It's no marvel that everything she does and says is "grace," especially in your eyes, since you favor her so.

DON DIEGO

I'd just like to hear from her own mouth what she thinks of this union.

DOÑA IRENE

You would hear the same thing that I have already told you.

DON DIEGO

Yes, I don't doubt it; but just knowing that she deems me worthy of her confidence, would bring me incalculable satisfaction.

DOÑA IRENE

Don't worry a bit about that particular matter. Consider the position you'd put the girl in. It would be wrong, it seems, Don Diego, if a modest young girl, and servant of God, would dare to say, "I want you."

DON DIEGO

Well, if a man went out and met a lady completely by chance in the street and exclaimed this favor suddenly, right away, certainly the maiden would take it badly; but when it is the man who she is to marry within a few days time, she could tell him that same thing. Also, there are certain ways to express one's self.

DOÑA IRENE

With me she uses more candor. We talk of you every moment, and the particular affection she has for you is apparent. She spoke with such sense last night after you left to go to bed! How I wish you could have been there to hear it.

DON DIEGO

What did she say? Did she speak of me?

DOÑA IRENE

Well, no, but she was thinking it, I can assure you of that. Oh, I don't want to go into details.

DON DIEGO

Please, go into detail!

DOÑA IRENE

Well, how she thinks it is better for a creature of her years to have an older husband, with experience, maturity and of behavior—

DON DIEGO

Say no more! She said that?

DOÑA IRENE

No, this is what I told her, and she listened to me with as much attention as if she were a forty-year-old woman ... the same thing. I told her good things... It's a pity, isn't it, how they make marriages these days? They marry a girl of fifteen to a good-for-nothing of eighteen, to a seventeen-year-old they wed another who is twenty-two; a girl without judgment or experience, and a boy also without any sign of common sense or knowledge in the ways of the world. Well, sir, all I have to say is... Who will govern the house? Who will attend to the servants? Who will teach and discipline the children? And what's more... these wild boys who have girls throwing themselves at their feet all the time, you've got to feel pity for them!

DON DIEGO

Certainly it is a pain being surrounded by so many boys who lack the talent, the experience and the virtue that are necessary to direct their education. And a man of virtue and experience will teach her the way of the world.

DOÑA IRENE

All I know is... I'd not seen the end of nineteen years when I first married Don Epifano. God rest his soul. And it is impossible to find a man, present company excluded, more respectful, more gentlemanly... And, at the same time, very funny and amusing. Well, you should know, he was already fifty-six, and of very long appearance, when he married me.

DON DIEGO

Well that's a good age ... He wasn't a boy, but ...

DOÑA IRENE

I'll get to the point. At that time, a dreamboat with very little common sense and reflection, could not have suited me... No, sir ... That is not to say that he was frail or unhealthy, or anything like that. He was completely healthy, praise God, strong as an ox; never in his life had he a single malady, although a type of epilepsy threatened from time to time. But later, when we were married, he was afflicted so often and so severely that I was a widow after only seven months and expecting a little one who was born later, who in the end died from scarlet fever.

DON DIEGO

Wait! ... Was there no heir to Don Epifano?

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, sir, of course...why not?

DON DIEGO

Why not? I'll tell you why not...Because then they... Well, if one were to pay attention to ...
And was it a boy or a girl?

DOÑA IRENE

A beautiful baby boy ... Bright and healthy like a little angel.

DON DIEGO

Certainly that must be a comfort. You've got one daughter and one ...

DOÑA IRENE

Oh, Don Diego! They're bad sometimes, but what does it matter? It is a lot of pleasure, a lot.

DON DIEGO

I believe it.

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, indeed.

DON DIEGO

I can't wait to have children of my own.

DOÑA IRENE

I can't wait to have grandchildren.

DON DIEGO

I can see them already, running and frolicking, young and healthy.

DOÑA IRENE

Children are my life! I've had twenty-two over my three marriages, but this precious girl is the
only one that's made it this far, but I assure you that—

ACT I, SCENE 5

SIMÓN enters from the foyer.

SIMÓN

Sir, the coachman is waiting.

DON DIEGO

Tell him I am on my way ... No wait. Ah! First, bring me my hat and cane. I've been feeling like taking a little walk through the fields.

SIMÓN

Yes, Señor.

SIMÓN exits to Don Diego's room. He returns with a hat and cane, and gives them to his master.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

So, I suppose we leave somewhat early in the morning?

DOÑA IRENE

That will be fine. At whatever hour you choose.

DON DIEGO

About six, then?

DOÑA IRENE

Very well.

DON DIEGO

The sun will be at our backs ... I will tell the driver to come a half-hour earlier.

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, at that hour we will avoid the gossips and busybodies.

DON DIEGO and SIMÓN exit.

ACT I, SCENE 6

DOÑA IRENE

God bless! I'm forgetting something...
(Calling off stage)

Rita!

(Waits. Pause.)

Where is everybody?

(Waits. Pause.)

They've left me here to die.

(Hollers)

Rita!

RITA

(Entering, sheets and pillows under her arms)

Madame.

DOÑA IRENE

What did you do with the cockatoo? Did you give him something to eat?

RITA

He ate more than an ostrich. Then I put him in the window.

DOÑA IRENE

Did you make the beds?

RITA

Yours is done.

(Putting the bedding down)

I'll make the others before it gets dark. Otherwise, I am lost with no more light than a candle...
They should hook me to a post...then I'd know where I am!

DOÑA IRENE

And that girl... What's she doing?

RITA

She is crumbling up a cake to give to Señor Cockatoo for supper.

DOÑA IRENE

I haven't been keeping up with my writing!

(Getting up and heading toward her room)

But I must compose a letter to comfort Sister Bautismo, poor dear.

DOÑA IRENE exits.

RITA

Really? It hasn't even been two hours since we left. How much do you have to say after two hours? Oh, I can't stand these hypocritical and buttery women!

RITA exits into DOÑA FRANCISCA's room.

ACT I, SCENE 7

CALAMOCHA enters from the courtyard with bags, boots, and a whip. HE puts his entire bundle down on the table and sits.

CALAMOCHA

Ah, So, here's room number three. I should've known! Of course, number three. Bad things always come in threes. The Museum of Natural History doesn't have a more abundant collection of bugs! They make me itch. It gives me the creeps ... Oh! Oh! ... And am I stiff! Every part of me is stiff. My legs are so stiff ... Patience, poor Calamocha, patience. I owe a debt of thanks to the horses for saying "We can't go on any longer!" Otherwise, I wouldn't be looking at the number three right now, nor whatever plagues of the pharaohs it may hold. When it comes down to it, if those animals are still alive when dawn comes, it'll be no small thing! They're wiped out.

CALAMOCHA rises, stretches. RITA is heard singing off stage.

CALAMOCHA

Listen! Someone's singing Seguidillas! And she's not bad at all! Come on, let's have a little adventure...

(He strains something as he moves toward the singing)

Oh! I am falling apart! Ah! Ow, ow, ow.

ACT I, SCENE 8

RITA backs into the room, fiddling with the doorknob.

RITA

It's best to lock up. Don't want anyone to steal our stuff.
(Struggles to get the key to turn)
What is wrong with this lock? Damned key won't fit.

CALAMOCHA

Would you like me to put a hand to it, my darling?

RITA

Thank you, dear.

CALAMOCHA

Keep quiet.
(Notices that it is Rita)
Rita!

RITA

Calamocho!

CALAMOCHA

This is a nice surprise!

RITA

You're here? What about your master?

CALAMOCHA

He's with me. We've both just arrived.

RITA

Seriously?

CALAMOCHA

No, I'm just giving you a hard time. Yes, seriously. Hardly had he received the letter from Doña Paquita...I don't know where he went, who he talked to, or how he arranged it, but... we left Zaragoza that very afternoon. We rode and rode and rode and rode and rode and then the horses almost died. You should feel my muscles, they're all quite hard now. All of them.

RITA

Get to the point!

CALAMOCHA

We arrived in Guadalajara this morning, but the birds had already flown on the first stagecoach. Back on the horses, back to the running, and the sweating, and the cracking of the whip... Finally, the nags bushed, us half-crushed, we stopped here intending to go again tomorrow.

RITA

Where is he?

CALAMOCHA

My Lieutenant has gone to the University to see an old friend while supper is being prepared. And... that's the whole story.

RITA

So, he's here?

CALAMOCHA

And more in love than ever, jealous and threatening lives... He's going to put the hurt on anyone who disputes his claim to his Paquita.

RITA

What are you saying?

CALAMOCHA

Nothing more, nothing less than what I've just told you.

RITA

Oh! You give me so much pleasure! Now I'm sure he loves her.

CALAMOCHA

Love? Phooey! Compared to my master, Romeo was a sissy, Don Juan was a good-for-nothing, and Cyrano was a mere child in matters of the heart.

RITA

Oh! When my lady knows this!

CALAMOCHA

But, on to other things... What are you doing here? Is there anyone with you? When did you get here? What—

RITA

Let me tell you! Doña Paquita's mother wrote so many letters, saying she had arranged for a wedding in Madrid to a rich, honest, well-respected gentleman. In short, you could not ask for a better match. The nuns and her mother badgered her so much about it, what else could she do but agree to their wishes. I can't begin to tell you how much the poor child cried, how heart-broken she was. She would neither eat, nor sleep. We had no choice but to notify your master of the situation, all the while hiding Paquita's true feelings from her mother. No sooner had the

RITA (cont.)

letter left for its destination, than we saw the mule-drawn wagon ... and her mother... and the new suitor. They'd come for her. We packed up our stuff as fast as possible, said goodbye to those good women, and quick as a whip we made it here to Alcalá the day before yesterday. We've stayed here while the Señorita visited another aunt who lives here. Another aunt, who is also a nun, and as wrinkled and deaf as the one we just left behind at the nunnery. Paquita has already seen her, and has already given her a kiss of her own, as well as one for each of the rest of the order. So, I believe we'll be on our way early in the morning. But, by chance we—

CALAMOCHA

Stop talking! Say no more... But... So, the suitor is in the inn?

RITA

(Points to Don Diego's room)

That is his room.

(Indicates Doña Irene's and Doña Francisca's rooms, respectively)

And that is her mother's and this is ours.

CALAMOCHA

Ours? Yours and mine?

RITA

Of course not. Here we sleep tonight, the Señorita and me. Because last night, all in that one room, there wasn't space for three of us standing up, let alone to sleep... or breathe.

CALAMOCHA

(Picking up his stuff as if to go)

Well. 'Bye.

RITA

And where are you going?

CALAMOCHA

I know what I'm doing... But, the suitor... Did he bring with him any servants? Or friends? Or relatives? You know... anyone who might save him from the first sword thrust that threatens him?

RITA

One servant came with him.

CALAMOCHA

Little help that'll be! Look, as an act of charity, tell him to be prepared, for he is in serious danger... Goodbye.

RITA

Will you return soon?

CALAMOCHA

I suppose... these things require speed and, although I can hardly move, it is necessary that my lieutenant leave his visit and return here to claim his property and prepare for that man's funeral... You say that's our room, huh?

RITA

Right. Doña Paquita's and mine.

CALAMOCHA

Even better! You minx!

RITA

You ass! Adiós.

CALAMOCHA

Adiós... wicked woman!

CALAMOCHA carries all of his things off to Don Carlos's room, room number 3.

ACT I, Scene 9

RITA

He's so bad, I love it! But... Bless my soul! Don Félix is here! Indeed he loves her, that's for sure!

CALAMOCHA enters from Don Carlos's room, and closes the door behind him. HE exits through the door to the landing. RITA watches him go.

RITA (cont.)

No matter what they say, there are some good ones! And so, what is a girl to do? Love them. There's no other way...just, love them. But what will she say when she sees him, for she is blinded by him? Poor girl! Wouldn't it be a pity if he— It's her!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Entering)

Oh! Rita!

RITA

What is it? Have you been crying?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Why shouldn't I be crying? If you saw my mother... She is very determined that I will love this man very much... She has gotten so angry that she called me a disobedient fiend... Woe is me! Since I do not lie, and I cannot be fake, they call me a fiend.

RITA

She just gets mad and words come out. You're not a fiend.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Sure, but you haven't heard her... And she says that Don Diego complains that I do not tell him anything. I say plenty to him and I have tried very hard up until now to seem happy in front of him, which I am not by the way, and to laugh and to talk like a silly child... And all this to make my mother happy, but if I don't... But the Virgin knows well that it doesn't come from my heart.

Lights begin to slowly shift. Throughout the rest of the scene the lights grow dimmer to show that evening is falling.

RITA

Go on, now. There isn't yet any reason for such anguish... Who knows! ... Don't you remember that one holiday last year that we spent at the quartermaster-general's country house?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Oh! How could I forget! But what were you going to tell me?

RITA

I mean that one gentleman we saw there with the green cross, so gallant, so fine...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You're giving me quite the run-around! You mean Don Félix... What of him?

RITA

Who accompanied us until the city...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And well... and later he returned and I saw him many times, unhappily, though... poorly advised by you.

RITA

Why, Señorita? Was there a scandal? Until now, no one in the convent suspected a thing. He didn't ever enter the doors. And at night when he spoke with you, the distance between the two of you was so great that you cursed it more than a few times... But that is not what I'm talking about... What I am talking about is that a lover like that would not forget his dear Paquita so soon... You can see that all that we have stealthily read in forbidden romance novels is nothing compared to what we have seen in him. Don't you remember those three handclaps between eleven and twelve at night? And the sound of that guitar he played with so much beauty and expression?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Oh, Rita! Yes, I remember everything, and I will hold on to those memories for as long as I live, but he is gone ... and likely entertained by other, newer loves.

RITA

I don't believe that, at all.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

In the end, he is a man... and they all...

RITA

Nonsense! Men are like melons, and the only way to tell which one is ripe is to squeeze it. But, not too hard! That is to say, there are all kinds of melons, the difficulty is in knowing how to choose them correctly. If you're disappointed in the one you select, you can complain about your bad luck, but don't blame the merchandise. There are men who are big liars and even bigger rogues, but I can't believe that of a man whose love and perseverance have been tested over and over. During three months of courtship and conversations in the dark, all that time, you know very well that we didn't see a single action of his as out-of-place, nor did we hear from his mouth one word that was impudent or indecent.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It is true. For that reason, I wanted him so much. For that reason, I have him so fixed in here... here...

(Indicates her heart.)

What must he have said when he saw the letter? God bless! That's certainly a pity. Poor Paquita! And that was it. He said no more... nothing more.

RITA

No Señorita, he didn't say that.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What do you know?

RITA

I know what I know. Hardly had he finished your letter when he hit the road, flying all the way to console his little lady.

RITA approaches the door of Doña Irene's room.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Where are you going?

RITA

I want to see if...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

She's writing her letters.

RITA

Well, she won't stay at it for long once it starts to get dark. Dear Paquita, what I've said to you is the honest truth. Don Félix is here in Alcalá.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What did you say? Don't deceive me.

RITA

That is his room... Calamocha was just speaking with me, just now, and he said Don Felix is going to slay Don Diego.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

That's a little extreme. Are you serious?

RITA

Yes my lady... and he's gone looking for—

DOÑA FRANCISCA

So, he loves me? ... Oh, Rita! It looks as if we did well to warn him! To run so many leagues just to see me, just because I sent for him! How grateful I should be to him! Oh! I can promise him that he'll never have a single reason to complain about me. I will show him gratefulness and love until the end of time.

RITA

I'll bring lights. I'll stay down below until they return. I'll see what he says and what he's planning to do, because with everyone involved here in one place, there could be a devilish scene between the mother, the girl, the old man, and the young lover; and if we don't rehearse this little minuet well, all will be lost.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You are right. But no... he has resolve and talent, and will determine the most convenient way... Look, as soon as he arrives, I want to see him.

RITA

There is no need to worry. I will bring him here, and I'll give that dry cough.
(She demonstrates)
Do you understand me?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes. Good.

RITA

So... then walking out will take nothing more than any old excuse. I'll stay with your old lady. I will talk to her about all her husbands, and about all her in-laws, and about the bishop who died at sea... And, if Don Diego happens to be there...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Well, go...and the moment he arrives...

RITA

That instant!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And do not forget to cough.

RITA

Have no fear.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Just knowing he's near consoles me!

RITA

Without you swearing to it, I believe it.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Do you remember when he told me that it was impossible to remove me from his memory, that there were no dangers that would stop him, nor obstacles that he would not overcome for me?

RITA

Yes, I remember it well.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Ah!... so now you see that he told me the truth.

DOÑA FRANCISCA exits to Doña Irene's room. **RITA** watches her for a moment, then goes out the door to the landing.

ACT II

Scene 1

AT RISE: It is dark outside. DOÑA FRANCISCA runs to the door of the landing, peers out, and then goes to one of the chairs and sits.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Still nobody appears! Just a little patience... And my mother calls me a fool who doesn't know what love is... who only thinks of playing and laughing. Sixteen years she hasn't given me one kind word. I know well what love is, and the restlessness and tears it costs.

ACT II, Scene 2

DOÑA IRENE

(Entering from her room)

You all have left me there alone and in the dark. Where's Rita? I asked her for a light and she never came back.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You were finishing one of your letters, Mama. I didn't want to bother you, so I came out here for a bit of fresh air.

DOÑA IRENE

But that woman, what is she doing that she doesn't bring me a light? Give her one task and she'll take a year! And she knows that I have a short fuse!

(Sits)

For the love of God! And, Don Diego? Is he anywhere to be found?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It does not look like it to me.

DOÑA IRENE

You can count on what I have already told you. And notice that I do not like to repeat a thing twice. This gentleman is hurt, and with goodly reason.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Well... yes, mother, I already know it. Don't scold me further.

DOÑA IRENE

I was not scolding you, my dear. That was advice. Because you don't have the wisdom to know the good that has entered through our door ... And the debts that I've taken on, I don't know what would have become of your poor mother. Always falling and getting up... doctors, drugstore ... That cannibal Don Bruno (God save his soul) charged me twenty or thirty *reales* for each little packet of laxatives or bitter root. Very few girls ever get a chance at a marriage like the one you are going to have. Although it is the prayers of your blessed aunts that we should thank for this good fortune, and not your merits, nor my diligence... What do you say?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Me? Nothing, Mama.

DOÑA IRENE

I didn't think so. Hmpf! You never say anything. Lord help me!

ACT II, Scene 3

RITA enters from the landing with candles and puts them on top of the table.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, you took your sweet time getting here. Where in the world have you been?

RITA

I've been at the store buying candles because the oil lamps make you nauseous.

DOÑA IRENE

They certainly do, especially with this migraine I'm suffering. I had to stop using the camphor plaster. It was as if it did absolutely nothing! I have found that the wafers have worked better for me. Look, leave a light there, and put one in my room... and pull all the curtains. Keep out the mosquitoes.

RITA

Very good, Madame.

RITA takes one light with her and makes as if to leave.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Aside to Rita)
Has he not come?

RITA

(Under her breath)
Don't worry, men always come.

DOÑA IRENE

Listen, that letter on the table there, give it to the inn's porter so that it gets into the mail at once...

RITA goes into DOÑA IRENE's room.

DOÑA IRENE (cont.)

And you, girl, what are you having for supper? It is necessary for us to retire early tonight, for we leave at dawn.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I had a snack with the nuns.

DOÑA IRENE

Be that as it may... At least some soup from the pot to warm up your stomach...

RITA enters with a letter in her hand. Throughout the rest of the scene she keeps trying unsuccessfully to leave.

DOÑA IRENE (cont.)

Look, you must heat up the broth we set aside at lunch, and make us a couple of cups of soup, and bring them to us when they are ready.

RITA

And nothing else?

DOÑA IRENE

No, nothing else ... Oh! And make sure mine is watered down.

RITA

Yes, as always.

DOÑA IRENE

Rita!

RITA

(Aside)

Here we go again!

(To Doña Irene)

Yes, Senora. What do you need?

DOÑA IRENE

Put the letter in the porter's hands, put it personally in his hands and make sure he takes it to the post immediately... But no, not him... I don't want him to take it... they are all drunkards... they are all incompetent. You are to say to Simón that it would make me very happy if he would do me the favor of putting it into the mail. Do you understand all that?

RITA

Yes, Señora.

DOÑA IRENE

Oh! Look!

RITA

(Aside)

And, again.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, since you're in no rush to go... Bring Señor Cockatoo in here for me, would you? Out here he won't accidentally get knocked over and hurt during the night.

RITA

Yes, Senora.

RITA exits through the door to the landing.

DOÑA IRENE

What a horrible night he gave me! That animal didn't once stop reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Prayer of the Holy Shroud all night long. Although enlightening, it kept me awake all night.

ACT II, Scene 4

DOÑA IRENE

Don Diego must have run into someone in town, that's why he's not here.. Normally he is such a thoughtful and punctual gentleman. So well spoken. Such a lovely man. He'll be a lovely husband. And what a house he has! It shines like a glittering object. That means a lot. What linens! What dishes! And what a pantry, filled with everything God could imagine! ... But you don't seem to pay attention to what I'm saying.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, Mother, I heard you quite well, but I did not want to interrupt you.

DOÑA IRENE

There you go, my daughter. You will be like a fish in water there. You will feel like a little birdie in the sky.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Like Senor Parrot!

DOÑA IRENE

Because he loves you so much, and he's such a good God-fearing man... But look, Francisquita, what seriously tires me out is that whenever I talk to you about it, the flower of your words is nipped in the bud. You say nothing in response to me! ... Well, not this time, little missy!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Mother, don't get angry.

DOÑA IRENE

You think you've been fooling me? You think you've been clever? You think I don't know very well where this is all coming from? Don't you see that I know the madness that's been put in that scatterbrained head.... God forgive me.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

But...then.... What do you know?

DOÑA IRENE

Oh, daughter! I have lived a long time, and I have too keen an understanding about the facts of life for you to fool me.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Aside)
I am lost!

DOÑA IRENE

Not relying on her mother! As if she had no mother at all! I was taking you out of the convent no matter what. As long as you get that nun business out of your head, we'll be okay. Look at the childish reasoning in that! She lives a while with the nuns, she gets the idea in her head to become a nun, too! ... She understands nothing of that, nor what— It is possible to serve God in many ways, Francisquita. But, to please your mother, that's the first duty of an obedient daughter. Honor your mother, so that your days may be long, praise God! You're not going to be a nun! If you didn't know that before, you better learn quick!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It is true, Mother... But I have never planned to abandon you.

DOÑA IRENE

Really? But I don't know that...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Believe me, your Paquita will never go away from her mother, nor displease her.

DOÑA IRENE

Make sure you are certain of what you say.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, ma'am. For I don't know how to lie.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, my child, you already know what I have told you. And you can see already what you'll lose, and the pain and dissatisfaction you will cause me, if you fail to behave as you ought... Be careful.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Aside)
Have pity on me!

ACT II, Scene 5

DON DIEGO enters from the landing. HE places his hat and walking cane on the table.

DOÑA IRENE

Well... Look what the cat dragged in!

DON DIEGO

I was just on my way here, when I came across the rector of Málaga, you know, Padre Guardián de San Diego, and Doctor Padilla, and they insisted on filling me up with hot chocolate and churros before they would let me go.

(Sits down next to Doña Irene)

How are things here?

DOÑA IRENE

Fair at best. She's spent so much time in the convent that she wants to go back.

DON DIEGO

What the Devil! Is she still preoccupied with that—?

DOÑA IRENE

Why does that surprise you? Girls! They do not know what they want, or do not want... That is the way they are at that age, so...

DON DIEGO

That doesn't add up. In fact, at that age their passion for something is more energetic and decisive than ours. And since their reasoning abilities are still imperfect and weak, the impulses of the heart are far more fierce.

DON DIEGO grasps DOÑA FRANCISCA's hand in a way that forces her to sit down almost on top of him.

DON DIEGO (Cont.)

But, seriously, Paquita, you really want to be in the convent? I want the truth.

DOÑA IRENE

And if she does not—

DON DIEGO

Leave her alone, Señora, so she may answer.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You know I've already said that to my mother. God forbid that I say anything to upset my mother.

DON DIEGO

But, you say that with such distress, and—

DOÑA IRENE

It's only natural, Señor. Don't you see that?

DON DIEGO

Would you be quiet, for Heaven's sake! And do not tell me what is natural, Doña Irene. I'll tell you what's natural. What's natural is that a girl is full of fear and will not say a word against her mother's wishes... But, if this is the case, upon my life, then that is just splendid.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No, Señor, my mother's words are my words, too. The exact same. Because, whatever she orders me to do, I will obey.

DON DIEGO

Orders, my child! In these matters so delicate, judicious parents do not give orders. They insinuate, they propose, they advise; all that they do. But order! ... And who is the one who must dodge fate's bullet fired by the parents' orders? Well, how many times do we see unhappy marriages, monstrous unions, only carried out because a silly father made an order that he should not have? How many times has an unlucky woman found herself in the coma of a cloister, because her mother or her uncle were determined to give to God what God did not want? No, sir! That is no good... Look, Doña Paquita, I am not one of those men who keeps his defects hidden. I know that neither my body nor my age are things for anybody to fall madly in love with; but nor do I find it impossible to believe that a sensible and well-bred girl could end up loving me with that calm love that really makes marriages successful. To get love like that, I would not have looked for a daughter of those families that live in a decent freedom. I choose the word "decent", for I do not find fault with that which does not oppose the practice of virtue. But, where among all those girls is the one who has not already decided in favor of a more tempting lover than me? And in Madrid, imagine you in Madrid! ... Full of these ideas, I found hope that perhaps you could be all I ever wanted.

DOÑA IRENE

And can you believe, Don Diego, that...

DON DIEGO

I will finish. Doña Irene, you let me finish! Dearest Paquita, I understand that a girl with such good inclinations, such as yourself, may have been influenced by the sacred customs that she has seen practiced in that innocent asylum of devotion and virtue; but, in spite of all that, if a passionate imagination or unforeseen circumstances should make you want someone else, know that I do not want anything by force. I am naïve! My heart and my language never contradict each other. I request the same of you, Paquita: sincerity. The affection that I have for you should not make you unhappy... Your mother is not capable of wishing you harm, and she knows very well that nobody is made blissful by force. If you do not find in me qualities to which you are inclined, if you feel some other concerns in your heart, believe me, insincerity would be our ruin.

DOÑA IRENE

May I speak now, Señor?

DON DIEGO

Her! She should speak, and without a prompter and without an interpreter.

DOÑA IRENE

She will when I say so.

DON DIEGO

Then “say so” already, for it is her turn to respond... It is her that I am supposed to marry, not you.

DOÑA IRENE

I don't think you're going to marry me or her or anyone else, Don Diego. What concept do you have of us? ... Her Godfather said it best, he wrote it very clearly to me just a few days ago when I gave him news of this marriage. That although he has not seen her again since he held her in the baptismal font, he loves her very much; and as folks pass through Burgo de Osma he asks them how she is, and continually he sends us his thoughts in the mail.

DON DIEGO

Well, Señora, what did her godfather write? ... Or, more to the point, what does any of that have to do with anything else we are discussing?

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, Señor, it has to do with it. Yes sir! And although I say it, I assure you not even a monk from the Atocha monastery in Madrid could write a letter better than he did. AND he is not a professor, nor a graduate, nor anything like that, but just a regular man, so to speak, part of the rank and file, with an unhappy little job in a sales department that hardly affords him enough eat. And you have never heard another human express himself so well. Almost the entire letter was in Latin! Is that not something! And he gave me very good advice in it... Yet it's not possible that he could have guessed what is actually happening to us.

DON DIEGO

But, Señora, nothing is happening, nor is there a thing for you to be displeased about.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, wouldn't you expect me to be displeased hearing you speak of my daughter in such terms? Her other loves! Her other cares! ... Because if there were any... Good God Almighty! I would beat them out of her!

(To Doña Francisca)

Answer him, since he wants you to speak, and I will not say a word. Recount for him all the boyfriends that you left behind in Madrid when you were twelve years-old and about all the men you have acquired in the convent staying with that sacred woman. Tell it to him so that he will be put at ease, and...

DON DIEGO

I, my lady, am far more at ease than you.

DOÑA IRENE

Answer him!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I do not know what to say. If you both get angry...

DON DIEGO

No, my child, this is just us giving some expression to what we are saying... but angry, certainly not. Doña Irene knows what esteem I have for her.

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, Don Diego, I know it. And I am extremely grateful for the favors that you do for us... For that reason...

DON DIEGO

Do not speak of gratitude. However much I may do, it is but little ... I only want Doña Paquita to be contented.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, isn't she going to be?
(To Doña Francisca)

Answer.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, Señor, I will.

DON DIEGO

Are you really contented? Because that's all that really matters.

DOÑA IRENE

Completely, Señor. She could not imagine a more pleasurable wedding in all the world.

DON DIEGO

With that knowledge, I can assure you that you won't have any reason for regret. The love and adoration I feel for you will live on, and I hope by strength of my good qualities I will earn your esteem and friendship.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Thank you, Mister Don Diego, Sir... A poor little bug like me!

DON DIEGO

But with such considerable qualities, you are worthy of many more of fortune's favors.

DOÑA IRENE

Come here, come... Come here, Paquita.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Gets up, goes to her mother and hugs her)

Oh! Mama!

DOÑA IRENE

Don't you see how I love you?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes. I do.

DOÑA IRENE

And how much do I for your well-being, that I have no other desire but to see you provided for before I'm gone?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I know it well.

DOÑA IRENE

My pride and joy! Are you going to be good?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, Ma'am.

DOÑA IRENE

Oh! You do not know how much your mother loves you!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

But, I love you, too.

DON DIEGO

Let us go. Let us get out of here.

(Rising to his feet)

I do not want someone to come along and find us crying like three little children.

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, you are right.

The two adults exit into DOÑA IRENE's room. DOÑA FRANCISCA stays behind as RITA enters from the landing.

ACT II, Scene 6

RITA gently tiptoes stealthily to DOÑA FRANCISCA.

RITA

Psst! Senorita!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What do you want?

RITA

He's here.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

He's here? Why didn't you cough?

RITA

(Coughs)

Better? He just arrived a moment ago. With your permission, I gave him a hug... and at this moment he's coming up the stairs.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Oh, my God! ... What should I do?

RITA

Talk to him, but not a lot of chatter. You have to stay focused and figure out a plan. Here he is!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes! Yes, he is!

RITA

I will take care of the old folks in the other room... Have courage, Señorita. See it resolved.

RITA goes into DOÑA IRENE's quarters.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What should I do?

ACT II, Scene 7

DON CARLOS enters from the landing.

DON CARLOS

Paquita!... My life! Why so sad? Doesn't my arrival warrant a more positive reaction?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It does. But I am just beside myself with all that is happening... You know... You know it well... After I wrote to you, they came for me... We'll be in Madrid tomorrow... My mother is here, too.

DON CARLOS

Where is she?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Indicating Doña Irene's room)

Right there. In that room.

DON CARLOS

By herself?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No.

DON CARLOS

Who's with her? Your future husband?

(Approaches Doña Irene's room)

That's better... We have more time to plot.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What are you going to do?

DON CARLOS

I'd commit some reckless act if I were to do what I am inspired to do when I look in your eyes ... But there is time ... Naturally, he is a man of honor, and it is not fair to insult him just because he loves a woman who is worthy of being loved ... I do not know your mother ... For now, there's nothing to be done ... Your honor must be our primary concern.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

She is very insistent that I marry him.

DON CARLOS

That's not important.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

She wants the wedding to be held the moment we get to Madrid.

DON CARLOS

What? No. That cannot happen.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

They are both in agreement on that point, and they say...

DON CARLOS

Well... whatever they say...I do not care. It will not be!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

My mother talks to me constantly of nothing else. She threatens me, she frightens me. For his part, he urges me, and offers me so many things... I am...

DON CARLOS

And you? Have you given him hope? Shown him any love?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Ingrate! You should know that... You ingrate!

DON CARLOS

Yes, I am not unaware of it... I was your first true love.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And the last.

DON CARLOS

I would end my life long before I even thought of giving up the place I hold in your heart.

(Indicates her heart, then takes her hands in his)

It is completely mine... Am I right?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Well, who else would I give my heart to?

DON CARLOS

You are so beautiful! You inspire me with such sweet hope! ... One single word from your lips assures me ... gives me courage for anything. When it comes down to it, I am already here... You call on me so that I can defend you, set you free, and fulfill the promise I made to you thousands upon thousands of times?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You'll be the man who will fight for my honor?

DON CARLOS

I'll be the hero you've been dreaming of. I came for just that reason. If you all are going to Madrid tomorrow, then I am going, too. Your mother will know who I am... There I can count on the support of a good and respectable old gent, who is more like a friend and father to me than the uncle he truly is. He has no other relative more beloved than me. He's very rich, and if the gifts of fortune hold some attraction for you, then this relation should bring extra happiness to our union.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I don't care too much for money. Money can't buy me love.

DON CARLOS

I already know that. Ambition cannot excite the soul of one so pure.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

The greatest thing we'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.

DON CARLOS

There is nothing greater. But you must keep your self calm and wait for fate to change our current distress into enduring bliss.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

This will make my mother so upset. She loves me so much! I have just told her I won't do anything to cause her displeasure, nor will I ever leave her side; that I will always be obedient and good ... And she hugged me so tenderly! She was so relieved by the few things I said ... I do not know, I don't know what path you'll find to leave these difficulties behind us.

DON CARLOS

I will keep searching. Have you no confidence in me?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Well, isn't that evident? Do you think that I would be alive if that hope did not encourage me? Alone and unfamiliar with the world, what would I have done? If you hadn't come, my melancholy would've killed me. Instead, I just died in your arms tonight... You knew to come forth as knight and lover, and in your coming you give me more than words to show you feel that your love for me is real.

DOÑA FRANCISCA is overcome and weeps.

DON CARLOS

How you cry! ... So persuasive! ... Yes, Paquita, I alone am enough to defend you from anyone who tries to oppress you. Who would dare oppose a lover as blessed as I? You have nothing to fear.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Is that possible?

DON CARLOS

Nothing to fear at all ... Love has united our souls in one Gordian knot, and only death can untie us.

ACT II, Scene 8

RITA enters.

RITA

Senorita, your mother. We're supposed to eat and then go to bed. Sir, you'd better go.

DON CARLOS

Yes, it is not advisable to bring about suspicions... Until tomorrow, then. By the light of day I will see the face of my fortunate competitor.

RITA

(Walking to the door to the landing)

A very honorable gentleman, very rich, very sensible; with his waistcoat long, his shirt clean, and his sixty years hidden beneath a wig.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Until tomorrow.

DON CARLOS

Adiós, Paquita.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Go. Lie down and get some sleep.

DON CARLOS

Good night... Sleep well, Paquita.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I'll be here all night. In my bed. Sleeping. Dreaming of you.

DON CARLOS

Adiós, my sweet.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Good night.

DOÑA FRANCISCA goes into DOÑA IRENE's room.

ACT II, Scene 9

DON CARLOS

Take her away from me?! I'll have none of that. No one will stand in my way, whoever it may be.. Her mother couldn't be so imprudent as to force her daughter into a marriage she considered repugnant... I'll put myself in the mix... Sixty years old! He must be very rich... Money! ... Money is definitely the root of all evil.

CALAMOCHA

(Entering from the landing, speaking in a French Accent)

So, Señor, we have half a roasted goat, and... it seems small, I think it was just a kid... And, we have a beautiful watercress salad, with no arugula or other nasty stuff like that, prepared just as you like it by this sinner's own two hands. Who could ask for anything more! Bread from Meco (They make the best bread there, I tell you), and wine from Tercia ... There's all that. We should eat and get some sleep, then we should be able to—

DON CARLOS

Let's go ... Where do we have to go?

CALAMOCHA

Below ... Because the only table I could find is a bench.

RITA

(Entering from the landing with bowls, spoons, and napkins)

Who wants some soup?

DON CARLOS

Enjoy your meal.

CALAMOCHA

If there is any poor maid who would like to feast on roasted goat, with a couple of swarthy gentlemen she might raise her hand at this moment.

RITA

The poor maid has already feasted on half a meatball casserole ... But, she appreciates the offer, soldier.

RITA goes into Doña Irene's room.

CALAMOCHA

Hmm, would you like a little dessert?

DON CARLOS

So...um... Can we go now?

CALAMOCHA

You are such a killjoy, do you know that? Oh, oh, oh!
(Hurries to the door. Speaks in hushed tones.)
Hey! Shhhhh! I say!

DON CARLOS

What is it?

CALAMOCHA

Don't you see who's coming?

DON CARLOS

Is that Simón?

CALAMOCHA

The same ... but, what the devil...?

DON CARLOS

Oh! What shall we do?

CALAMOCHA

Hey, we could get some information out of him if we lied... only with your permission, of course

DON CARLOS

Go ahead... lie as much as you'd like.

ACT II, Scene 10

SIMÓN enters from the landing in a hurry.

CALAMOCHA

Hey, Simón! You're here?

SIMÓN

(Trying to walk past)
Hey... Calamocha.
(Stops. Does a take.)
Calamocha! How's it going? Blessed be the gods.

CALAMOCHA

Man! You... in Alcalá! What's the occasion?

SIMÓN

And, you're standing right there! Bless my soul!

DON CARLOS

How's my uncle?

SIMÓN

Doing well.

CALAMOCHA

But, he stayed behind in Madrid, or...?

SIMÓN

Who would have told me...? Things like this! Sometimes I'm so clueless...

DON CARLOS & CALAMOCHA

Yeah.

SIMÓN

And you! Each time you grow more handsome ... So, you're going to see your uncle, then?

CALAMOCHA

You have come here on some errand for your master?

SIMÓN

And what a hot trip! And the dust on the road! For sure!

CALAMOCHA

Some debt collecting? Perhaps?

DON CARLOS

Could be. As my uncle does have that little ranch in Ajalvir ... So, that's what you're doing here, huh?

SIMÓN

And what a good-for-nothing that administrator was! There isn't a more sly or more conniving farmhand in all the countryside ... So, you've just come from Zaragoza?

DON CARLOS

Well ... you can imagine.

SIMÓN

Or, are you headed there?

DON CARLOS

Where?

SIMÓN

To Zaragoza. Isn't that where your regiment is stationed?

CALAMOCHA

Come on, Simón. If we left Madrid last summer, wouldn't we have made it further than four leagues by now?

SIMÓN

What do I know? Some go by post and still take four months to get there. The roads must be terrible.

CALAMOCHA

(Aside)

Curse you and the horse you rode in on, and the whore who nursed you as a baby!

DON CARLOS

But, you still have not told me if my uncle has stayed in Madrid, or if he is here in Alcalá with you, nor how you've come to be here, nor...

SIMÓN

Well, that I will... Indeed, Señor, I will say to you... So... As my master told me—

ACT II, Scene 11

DON DIEGO begins to emerge from the room. His back is to DON CARLOS and the others. He is still conversing with the women within.

DON DIEGO

No, ladies, I can see. It's all right. I do not need a candle. Good evening, Rita.

DON CARLOS becomes upset and attempts to hide.

DON CARLOS

My uncle!

DON DIEGO exits Doña Irene's room and heads for his own. SIMÓN lights his way with a lantern. DON DIEGO notices DON CARLOS and starts toward him, but SIMÓN places the lantern on the table, which sends DON CARLOS back into shadow.

DON DIEGO

Simón!

SIMÓN

Here I am, Señor.

DON CARLOS

(Aside)
All is lost!

DON DIEGO

Come along, man... But... Who is that?

SIMÓN

A friend of yours, Señor.

DON CARLOS

(Aside)
I'm so dead!

DON DIEGO

How a friend? What do you mean? Carry the light over there.

DON CARLOS

(Takes Don Diego's hand as if to kiss it)

Uncle!

DON DIEGO

(Yanks his hand away)

Don't kiss me! Get out of here!

DON CARLOS

Señor!

DON DIEGO

What are you doing here?

DON CARLOS

Why I...

DON DIEGO

What are you doing here?

DON CARLOS

I... My bad luck has brought me.

DON DIEGO

Always bringing me misery, always!

(Moves closer to Don Carlos)

But... What are you saying? Have you really been hit by some bad luck? Come on... What has happened to you? Why are you here?

CALAMOCHA

Because he has loyalty to you, and loves you well, and...

DON DIEGO

(To Calamocho)

Did I ask you? No, I did not...

(To Don Carlos)

Why have you come from Zaragoza without telling me? Why do you get frightened at the sight of me? You surely have done something that is going to cost your uncle his life.

CALAMOCHA

We were just about to...

DON DIEGO

You were just about to shut up!

CALAMOCHA

Right.

DON CARLOS

Uncle, I've never forgotten what you taught me about honor and prudence.

DON DIEGO

Well then, what have you come for? Is it a duel? Are you running from your creditors? Have you quarreled with your superior officers? Take this worry from me... My boy, take away this anxiety.

CALAMOCHA

It is nothing more than—

DON DIEGO

Shut up already! I told you once. Don't make me say it again.

DON DIEGO takes DON CARLOS by the hand and leads him away from CALAMOCHA and speaks to him in a low voice.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

Tell me what has happened.

DON CARLOS

An indiscretion on my part... I have not shown you proper respect. Coming to Madrid without first seeking your permission... I am very sorry, considering the obvious grief I've given you at the very sight of me.

DON DIEGO

And what is the other thing?

DON CARLOS

There is nothing more to it than that, sir.

DON DIEGO

Then what's this bad luck you were talking about?

DON CARLOS

Nothing, really. Finding you here in this place... and how it upset you so much, when I wanted to surprise you in Madrid, stay for a few weeks, and then return happier for the visit...

DON DIEGO

There is nothing more to it than that?

DON CARLOS

No, Señor.

DON DIEGO

Ponder that for a moment.

DON CARLOS

No, nothing more.

DON DIEGO

Don't tell me that... These escapades are quite impossible... No, sir... Who would permit an officer to go whenever he feels like it, and abandon the way of the regiment? If that's the sort of example you set for your troops, then good-bye army discipline! Come on... That cannot be.

DON CARLOS

Consider, uncle, that this is a time of peace; that in Zaragoza such exact service is not as necessary as in other places where there is no rest for the garrisons... and, essentially, you can be sure since I am here, I must have the approval and permission of my superiors. I look out for my reputation, too, and only leave when I am sure that I am not needed.

DON DIEGO

An officer is always needed by his men. The King puts him there as an example. You're supposed to be a man of virtue and lead by example.

DON CARLOS

That's all well and good, but I've already told you my intentions...

DON DIEGO

Your intentions aren't worth spit! Because you, Señor, felt like seeing your uncle! Your uncle does not want to see you every eight days. Instead, he wants to know that you are a man with some sense, and that you uphold your obligations. That is what your uncle wants.

(Begins to pace)

I'll have to take some action to ensure that this folly isn't repeated. I want you to leave right now and march yourself back to Zaragoza immediately.

DON CARLOS

Señor, if...

DON DIEGO

There is no other option... And you will go this instant. You will not sleep here tonight.

CALAMOCHA

It's just... well... the horses can't run right now, nor can they gallop, nor trot, nor walk, nor hobble along...

(Pause)

...nor move.

DON DIEGO

(To Calamocho)

Well, you can take them with you, carry them on your back if you must, along with your bags, to the inn on the outskirts of the city.

(To Don Carlos)

You will not sleep here.

(To Calamocho)

Come on, get moving... you piece of...work. Downstairs with it all. Pay for your expenses on the way out, take the horses and leave.

(To Simón)

Simón—

SIMÓN

Señor.

DON DIEGO

Help them out... I'm a little short, what have you got?

SIMÓN

I must have two or three bits.

DON DIEGO

Give them to me. Come on... What are you doing?

(To Calamocho)

Didn't I tell you to get a move on? Move on! Fly! Now!

(To Simón)

And you, Simón, go along and help him, and don't leave their sides until you see that they are gone.

SIMÓN and CALAMOCH exit to Don Carlos's Room.

ACT II, Scene 12

DON DIEGO

(Hands the money to Don Carlos)

Take this. That should be enough money for the road. I know what I'm doing... It is all for your own good, you see? What you have been up to is just a foolish act, right? Don't trouble yourself about it. I have affection for you, when you act like you should. I will always be your friend as I have been to this point.

DON CARLOS

I know.

DON DIEGO

Now, obey the orders you have been given.

DON CARLOS

I will do so without fail.

CALAMOCHA and SIMÓN emerge from Don Carlos's room carrying bags and an assortment of other stuff. They head for the door to the landing.

DON DIEGO

To the inn on the outskirts of town. You can sleep there while your horses eat and rest... Do not come back here under any pretext. Do not even set foot within the city limits. Take heed! And by three or four in the morning, leave for Zaragoza. You can be sure that I will know the hour you depart. Do you understand me?

DON CARLOS

Yes, Señor.

DON DIEGO

Make sure you do.

DON CARLOS

Yes, uncle, I will do as you've ordered.

DON DIEGO

Very good... Good bye... You are hereby pardoned of everything... Go with God... And I will also know when you arrive in Zaragoza. Do not even think that I am ignorant of what you did the last time.

DON CARLOS

What did I do last time?

DON DIEGO

If I tell you that I know, and that I forgive you, what more do you want? Now is not the time to discuss this. Be gone.

DON CARLOS

May God be with you.

DON CARLOS turns to leave and then comes back.

DON DIEGO

Almost left without kissing the hand of your uncle, eh?

DON CARLOS

(Placing a kiss on Don Diego's hand)
I didn't dare.

DON DIEGO

And give me a hug,
(They embrace.)
in case we never see each other again.

DON CARLOS

Why won't I see you? Why did you say that? What does that mean?

DON DIEGO

Who knows, my boy? Things happen. Do you have any debts? Do you need anything?

DON CARLOS

No, Señor. Not now.

DON DIEGO

That's good, since you always squander your money... Being that you depend on your uncle's coin purse... Well then, I will write up orders for Señor Aznar to give you a hundred doubloons.

CALAMOCHA

Oh, really?

DON DIEGO

But, watch how you spend them... Do you gamble?

DON CARLOS

No, Señor. Not on your life.

DON DIEGO

You be careful with that... So, have a good trip. And don't get worked up, you'll suffer heat exhaustion. Just an average day's travel each day, nothing more... Are you leaving contented?

DON CARLOS

No, Uncle, for you love me so much and fill my life with such blessings, and I repay you so very badly.

DON DIEGO

We will not speak of what is already in the past... Goodbye.

DON CARLOS

Are you still angry with me?

DON DIEGO

No, certainly not. I was quite angry, but I am already over that... Let's not talk about it any more.

(Puts both hands on Don Carlos's shoulders)

Behave as a good man.

DON CARLOS

Have no doubt.

DON DIEGO

And an honorable officer.

DON CARLOS

That I promise you.

DON DIEGO

(Embraces his nephew)

Adiós, Carlos.

DON CARLOS turns and goes to the door.

DON CARLOS

(Aside)

Do you realize what this means? I'm losing her forever!

DON CARLOS exits.

ACT II, Scene 13

DON DIEGO

This has all worked out so well! He will congratulate me later ... But it won't be the same writing to him about it ... After the fact, it won't matter ... He still respects his uncle! ... He has got no spine, that boy... Such a damned wallflower!

He takes the lantern with him into his room, sending the lobby area into darkness.

ACT II, Scene 14

RITA and DOÑA FRANCISCA enter from Doña Irene's room. RITA notices it is completely dark. Goes back into the room, gets a lamp, and sets it on the table.

RITA

It's awfully quiet in here. Where is everybody?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

They must've retired for the night already... They were exhausted.

RITA

Yes, they were.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It was a long trip. He came all this way for me.

RITA

Yes, it was. Just one of the things a man will do for love, Señorita!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Right. Love! ... How can I ever repay him?

RITA

I'm sure there are many more things he'll do for you now that you can be together... What disappointment it will bring Don Diego! Such a pity... You can see that he's such a good man...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Well, that's the whole thing... If he were a despicable man, my mother wouldn't've entertained his desires, nor would I have to disguise my revulsion... But now things are different. Don Félix has come and I no longer have anything to fear from anyone. While my fate is in his hands, I am the happiest woman of all.

RITA

Ah, shit! Now it's coming back to me! ... She gives me so little to do... Yet you see, I am like you with love on the brain... I'll go get it.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What are you going to get?

RITA

Your bird. I forgot to get him out of there.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, bring him in here before he starts to pray like last night... He's right next to the window in there... Be careful. Don't wake Mama.

RITA

Right! Just listen to the clattering racket down there! There won't be any real sleep until we're back on Lobo Street in our own beds. And that damned gate creaks like...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You can take the lamp.

RITA

I don't need it. I already know where he is.

RITA exits into Doña Irene's room.

ACT II, Scene 15

SIMÓN enters from the landing.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I thought you had all gone to bed.

SIMÓN

My master has probably already gotten down to it, but I still don't know where I'm going to stretch out for the night

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Did you see any people out here?

SIMÓN

I've seen lots of people. There were some folks here, but they've gone now.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

The muleteers?

SIMÓN

No, Señora. An officer and his servant who I think are going to Zaragoza.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Did they mention who they were?

SIMÓN

A lieutenant colonel and his assistant.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And they were here?

SIMÓN

Yes, Señora. Right here in this room.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I didn't see them.

SIMÓN

I think they arrived this afternoon and... As far as I can tell, they must have taken care of their business and so went on their way... Good night, Señorita.

SIMÓN goes off into Don Diego's room.

ACT II, Scene 16

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Collapsing into the chair next to the table)
My God! My soul! What is this? I can barely stand. Woe is me!

RITA

(Enters carrying the birdcage)
Señorita, it's killing me!

SHE places the cage on the table, goes to the door of Don Carlos's room, peers inside, then returns to the Doña Francisca's side.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Oh no! It's true! ... And you know it, too!

RITA

You are not going to believe what I've seen... There's no one there. Nobody. Not even their clothes, or their bags, or anything... What's missing in there only confirms what I've seen with my own eyes through the window. They have gone.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You're sure it was them?

RITA

Yes, Señorita. Both of them.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Have they really left Alcalá?

RITA

I couldn't keep my eye on them once they'd passed the Gate of Mártires. And that's not very far away.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And isn't that the road to Aragon?

RITA

It is.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

He left, because he's an evil—

RITA

Wait, there could be another reason.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Calling out the window)

What have I... What have I... What have I done to deserve this?

RITA

What could have made him leave?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Didn't I love him more than my own life? Didn't he see that I was out of my mind in love with him?

RITA

I don't know what to say, considering it was such a heinous act.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What is there to say? That he never really loved me... That he is not a good man... And he came for that? To deceive me! To abandon me here!

RITA

(Helps Doña Francisca to her feet)

To think that he could have come here with some other plans doesn't seem natural to me... Jealousy, maybe... But why would he be taken in by jealousy? And even if that same emotion did catch him, shouldn't he just try harder? He's never been a coward, and it's not like he was at all frightened of his rival.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You're getting yourself all worked up over nothing... Say that he is a traitor, say that he is a cruel monster, and you'll have said it all.

RITA

Let's get out of here. Someone could come and...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, let's go... go shed our tears... And the fix he's left me in! But, can't you see that he's a wicked, wicked man?

RITA

Yes, Señorita. I can see it now.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

How well he knew how to pretend! And for whom? Me! ... I've been misled so treacherously! Did my affection deserve this reward? My God! What was my crime? What?

RITA takes the lamp with her as they both exit into DOÑA FRANCISCA's room.

ACT III, Scene 1

In the dark, SIMÓN sneaks on to the bench and stretches out to sleep. The birdcage remains nearby on the table. From time to time SIMÓN snores quite loudly.

DON DIEGO

(Enters struggling to get himself into his bathrobe)
At least if I come out here I won't melt. My God, it's hot in there.
(Notices Simón with a start)
Lord! How he snores! Well, at least *he'll* get some rest before the sun comes up.
(Looks out window)
Won't be too long, now. I'll just let him sleep.

SIMÓN jolts awake, and shakily leaps to his feet.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

What? What is it? Try not to fall over, man.

SIMÓN

What are you doing out here, Señor?

DON DIEGO

I came out here, because I can't stay in there.

SIMÓN

Well, I slept like an emperor, thank Heaven, despite the bed being slightly less than plush.
(Raps his fist on the bench).

DON DIEGO

Bad choice of words! ... You should say that you slept the blessed sleep of a poor man who has no money, no ambition, no sorrows, and no remorse

SIMÓN

In fact, you're right... So, what time did you say it was?

DON DIEGO

If the clock on St Justo's is right, it's about 3am.

SIMÓN

Well, then your nephew must be on his way, back in the saddle with the horses' hooves throwing up sparks

DON DIEGO

They damned well better be... He promised me!

SIMÓN

But, if you had seen what a pitiful wreck he was when I left him... How sad!

DON DIEGO

It was necessary.

SIMÓN

I know. I know.

DON DIEGO

His timing was bad. Don't you see? Coming now was so inopportune.

SIMÓN

It's true. Without your permission, without warning you, without having an urgent reason... I'd say it was very bad... Though, on the other hand, he does have sufficient quality of character to make him easy to forgive... I say... It seems to me that he's gotten all the punishment he needs, eh?

DON DIEGO

No... what?! No, no. That I made him go back to his regiment is the important thing... And you can see the circumstances we found ourselves in with him here... I assure you that when he left I felt anguish in my heart.

There is a ruckus outside the window, then three handclaps followed by a pause and eventually the sound of someone playing guitar.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

What is that racket?

SIMÓN

I don't know... People down on the street passing by. Might be some field hands.

DON DIEGO

Be quiet.

SIMÓN

I think we're about to have some music.

DON DIEGO

Yes, and good stuff, from the sounds of it.

SIMÓN

And who will be the unhappy lover that comes to warble in this dirty alley at this time of night? I'd bet he wants the affections of the maid of the inn, she appears to be a naughty little monkey.

DON DIEGO

Could be.

SIMÓN

Here, it's beginning. Let's listen...

DON CARLOS

(From below, singing)

*If the lady I adore
Could know that the tears I weep
Prove my love forever more...
But she can't. She's asleep.
In her dreams she may still know
How much I love her so*

*But if in dreams she wanders
And calls me though I'm not there
My jealousy I squander
Because she really cares
But my tears would run in streams
If I'm not in her dreams.*

SIMÓN

He sounds familiar. He can't play very well, but he's got a nice singing voice.

DON DIEGO

He sings better than most... must be a barber—they're always playing their guitars and singing...trying to stir up business.

SIMÓN

I want to see who... Can you give me a boost?

DON DIEGO

No, leave them alone... Poor people! All they have is their music. I don't like to make anybody uncomfortable.

DOÑA FRANCISCA and RITA enter from their room.

SIMÓN

Señor! Hey! Quickly! Over here!

DON DIEGO

What's wrong?

SIMÓN

That door just opened, and the smell of skirts is filling the air.

DON DIEGO

(Sniffs)

You're right... let's hide!

DON DIEGO and SIMÓN hide quickly to watch.

ACT III, Scene 2

DOÑA FRANCISCA feels her way across the room to the window.

RITA

Be careful, Señorita.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I'm following the wall... I'll be okay.

Guitar music starts back up outside.

RITA

Sure, Señora... They're playing again! ... Silence!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Don't move... don't... First, let's find out if it's him.

RITA

It couldn't be anyone else... The signal cannot lie.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Hush! It is him... My God!

RITA opens the window and claps three times. The music stops.

DOÑA FRANCISCA (cont.)

See! He responds... Happy news, heart! It's my love!

SIMÓN

Did you hear that?

DON DIEGO

Yes.

SIMÓN

What can this mean?

DON DIEGO

Be quiet!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, it's me! You've got some explaining to do!

(Pause.)

What was I supposed to think?

(Pause.)

What is this "escape"?

(Pause. Turns to Rita.)

Rita...friend...be super careful, and if you hear even the slightest murmur, let me know right away.

(Turning back out the window)

For always? No! Say it isn't so...

(Pause.)

That's fine... you throw it...but I can't understand ...

(She backs away from the window just as a brick arcs past outside)

No, no it's not in yet. You missed. Try again.

(The brick sails by once more)

Oh! Don Félix! I've never seen you so timid... PUT YOUR BACK INTO IT!

A brick with a note attached to it sails through the window and into the room. DOÑA FRANCISCA searches for it in the dark, but cannot find it.

DOÑA FRANCISCA (cont.)

That's more like it!

(Pause.)

No. No I didn't catch it, but without a doubt it's actually in here.

(Pause)

I can't find it in the dark. I guess I'll have to wait until daybreak to know your motives for leaving me to die!

(Pause)

Yes, I want to hear it from your own lips. Your Paquita orders you to do it!

(Pause)

What do you think mine is doing?

(Pause)

It doesn't even fit in my chest!

(Pause)

Says you!

SIMÓN tries to get closer to hear better, but trips and knocks over the birdcage.

RITA

Let's get out of here, girl! ... Hurry... there's somebody—

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I'm so miserable! Guide me!

RITA

Come on!

(She runs into Simón. She screams.)

Oh!

BOTH women make their way into Doña Francisca's room.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I'm going to die!

ACT III, Scene 3

DON DIEGO

What was that scream?

SIMÓN

It was one of the apparitions, they tripped me.

DON DIEGO

Go over near the window and see if you can find that brick and note... I can't believe the state I'm in!

SIMÓN

(Feeling around on the floor near the window)
It's not over here, Señor.

DON DIEGO

Keep looking! It has to be there.

SIMÓN

They threw it from the street?

DON DIEGO

That's right. What lover is this? She's just sixteen and raised in a convent! So many of my fantasies are dying right now!

SIMÓN

(Discovers the brick by stubbing his toe on it. He presents it to Don Diego)
Here it is!

DON DIEGO

Go downstairs and get a candle. There should be one in the kitchen or maybe the stables. A lantern! Get a lantern and come back with it post haste.

SIMÓN goes out the door to the landing.

ACT III, Scene 4

DON DIEGO

All my beautiful hopes! Oh, I'm angry. God, I'm so angry! And I don't know who to blame, but I'm going to blame someone! Who...who should feel my wrath? Who can I take my fury out on? It was probably her mother and all her ridiculous relatives! Or, was it me?! ... What pleasures I'd imagined! What happiness I'd promised myself!... But this outrage I feel, this desire for revenge, what shall come of it? On the other hand, I think that—

The door to Doña Francisca's room swings open.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

Yes? What?

Receiving no answer, Don Diego hides.

ACT III, Scene 5

RITA

(Sneaks over to window, looks out, listens for a moment)
They've already gone.

(Searches on the floor for the letter)
Good bless!... I'm so mad at him—I wish we'd never met him. I'm sure he wrote some beautiful letter, but if someone else finds it, we're screwed.... But, what will it say? Nothing but lies, lies, and more lies. Probably wrote some damn thing like, "It's not you, it's me."

SIMÓN

(Returns with a tiny candle, which is lit)
Let there be light.

RITA

(Surprised)
I'm found out!

DON DIEGO

(Approaching Rita)
Rita! So... you're out here?

RITA

Yes, Señor, because...

DON DIEGO

It's a little early to be up... Are you looking for something?

RITA

I was searching for... I will tell you... Because we heard some huge noise...

SIMÓN

Yes? A noise, eh?

RITA

Certainly... A noise, and... look here!
(Comes upon the cage and lifts it up)
It's the birdcage... So, it was the cage, have no doubt. Dear God! If it is dead... no, it is alive. Hurray. Some cat must have come around... definitely.

SIMÓN

Sure, a little pussycat.

RITA

Poor little birdie! And you just know that he is still frightened by it all!

SIMÓN

And with good reason... Don't you think if the cat had found him, that—

RITA

It would've eaten him.

SIMÓN

With relish! There wouldn't be a feather left.

DON DIEGO

Bring me that candle.

RITA

Oh! Leave that one... use this one instead. It's bigger.

(Takes the little candle from Simón to light the one on the table)

A bigger one is always better, especially when staying up all night.

DON DIEGO

And Doña Paquita? Is she still asleep?

RITA

Yes, Señor.

SIMÓN

That's a miracle. She's a heavy sleeper.

DON DIEGO

We must be going.

The MEN go into Don Diego's room. SIMÓN takes the little candle with them.

ACT 3, Scene 6

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Entering from her room)
Rita, please tell me you found the note. Have you found it yet?

RITA

No, Señorita. I haven't found it yet.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And those two were here when you came out?

RITA

I don't know. What I know for sure is that the servant came in with a light, and suddenly, as if they'd popped right up out of the floor, I was caught between the lackey and the master. I couldn't escape, and couldn't come up with a good excuse, either.

RITA picks up the light and returns to searching near the window.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No doubt it was them... they must've been there when I was talking through the window. Oh, Rita, are you sure you can't find the note?

RITA

I can't find it, Señorita.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

They have the note, you can stop looking.... I give up, that was the last piece. You might as well shoot me. They have the note, they know the truth, my mother's going to kill me, so you know, it's either shack up with the old guy or die by the hands of my mother. I might as well lay on the bed and let the worst come.

RITA

(Still searching)
Still a few places I haven't looked...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

(Sits in a chair)
I'm going to go crazy!

RITA

How could he leave without telling you why?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

When he was about to, you gave me warning and we had to leave... But, do you know how scared he sounded when he spoke to me, how agitated he looked? He told me that in that letter I would find justifiable reasons for his leaving me, he wrote it to leave with a trusted person who would see it got into my hands, assuming that seeing me would be impossible... Men are such liars, Rita... He came, saw the competition, and said “Why should I bother someone over this one woman? There are so many women! Let him marry her... I lose nothing... My own peaceful existence comes before the life of some unhappy woman...” My God, forgive me! Forgive me for loving him so.

RITA

Oh! Señorita... I think they are coming back.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I don't care. Leave me alone.

RITA

But if Don Diego sees you this way...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I have nothing more to lose. I'm so depressed, I'm just going to cry. Let them come. Nothing matters anymore. Don Diego, I'm yours! Come and get me!

ACT III, Scene 7

SIMÓN

(Enters with Don Diego)

You've told me everything I need to know so you don't need to go on.

DON DIEGO

Look, have a saddle put on the Arabian immediately. Have them get the horse ready while you're on your way to the inn. If they've left, then you can come back, and get on your horse. If you hurry, you'll catch up with them. Bring them both back here, got it? So... get going. Stop wasting time!

SIMÓN

(Rushing out)

I'm going!

DON DIEGO

You wake up very early, Doña Paquita.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, Señor.

DON DIEGO

That's a great trait in a wife, you'll be good at making me breakfast. Has Doña Irene gotten up, too? Has she called out?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No, Señor... Ah! Rita, why don't you go in there, in case she needs help when she does get up?

RITA goes into Doña Irene's room.

ACT III, Scene 8

DON DIEGO

So, how did you sleep? You don't look like you slept very well.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No, not really, I guess. How about you?

DON DIEGO

Nope. Me neither.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It was too hot.

DON DIEGO

look as though you've been crying—are you all right?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It's just...allergies.

DON DIEGO

You seem to be unhappy. You could tell me if you were unhappy.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It's nothing ... just a bit of ... nothing ... I've got nothing.

DON DIEGO

It's something—you're crying and brooding. Paquita, don't you know I love you?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Yes, Señor.

DON DIEGO

Well, why don't you confide in me? Don't you know I would take pleasure in finding ways to bring you pleasure?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I know you would.

DON DIEGO

Then how, knowing that you have a friend, can you not confide to him what is in your heart?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Because it is that same friend that obliges me to keep quiet.

DON DIEGO

That means that perhaps I am the cause of your sorrow.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No, Señor. You have not offended me in any way... my complaint is with another.

DON DIEGO

Then, of whom, my child? Come here...

(Moves closer to her)

Let's talk, at least once, without beating around the bush, without pretending... Tell me, isn't it true that you look on our proposed marriage with some amount of disgust? How much would you wager that if the choice was yours to make, you wouldn't marry me?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I wouldn't marry anybody else, either.

DON DIEGO

Is it not possible that you have met one more desirable than me? Taller, perhaps? Someone who loves you very much and is a good match for you?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

No, Señor. No, Señor.

DON DIEGO

Think it over...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Didn't I just tell you "no"?

DON DIEGO

Am I to understand that you might prefer a life in the convent instead of a life full of love and comfort?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Not that either. No, Señor... I have never thought such a thing.

DON DIEGO

I don't want to know more... But, of everything you've told me, so much is seriously contradictory. You have no inclination toward a religious life. You assure me that you have no complaint with me, that you are convinced that I really like you, that you don't intend to marry another, nor should I suspect that there is a rival for your hand... So why all this crying? From what depths does this sadness spring, that in such a short time it has changed your countenance to the degree that I hardly recognize you? And this is the way you show you love me?

Lights slowly rise on the scene. It is nearing dawn.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

What reason would I have to mislead you? I'm really not trying to mislead you

DON DIEGO

Is that what you really want? If I disregard these considerations, if I hasten the proceedings of our union, if your mother still approves and it comes to the point of...

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I will marry you, and my mother will be exceedingly happy.

DON DIEGO

And then what, Paquita?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Then..., for the rest of my life, I will be a respectable woman.

DON DIEGO

Of that I have no doubt... But, if I am to be regarded as your friend and companion until death, please tell me: those titles, don't they give me some rights to your trust? Am I not to achieve my aim of knowing who hurts you so? And not to satisfy some impertinent curiosity, but rather in order to put all of myself into consoling you, bettering your life, and making you happy.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Happiness for me! That's already over! I'm so unhappy nothing can fix it.

DON DIEGO

Why?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I will never say why.

DON DIEGO

What stubbornness! When you must presume that I am not ignorant of what the situation is.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

If you have no idea, Don Diego, for God's sake, don't pretend that you do know. And if, in fact, you do know, stop asking me.

DON DIEGO

Fine. Since all you can tell me is that your tears and suffering are simply voluntary on your part, we'll head out for Madrid today, and you'll be my wife by the weekend.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And it will give my mother pleasure.

DON DIEGO

And you will reside in a world of misery.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I already know that.

DON DIEGO

See? Here are the fruits of a “proper upbringing”! This is what is called “raising a girl right”: teaching her to conceal her most basic passions... That’s an upbringing that inspires them with fear, cunning, and the silence of a slave. They taught you well in the convent.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

It’s true... Certainly all what you say is true... That is required of us. That is what we learn at the schools we are given over to... But the reason for my affliction is on a much grander scale.

DON DIEGO

Be that as it may, my girl, you need to perk up a bit... If your mother sees you this way, what will she say? Look, I think she may already have gotten up.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

My God!

DON DIEGO

Yes, Paquita. It’s most advisable for you to get control of yourself ... Don’t let yourself go so much... Trust in God... Come on, our misery is not usually as bad as the picture our imagination paints... Look at what a mess you are! What tears! Things are never as bad as they seem.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

And you, Señor... You know well my mother’s temper. If you do not defend me, who’s going to have compassion for me?

DON DIEGO

Your good friend... I...

(Takes her by the hands)

How is it possible for me to abandon you... little child... seeing you in such a painful situation?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Really?

DON DIEGO

You don’t know my heart.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I think I know it well. I think I do.

DOÑA FRANCISCA attempts to kneel, but DON DIEGO prevents it. They both get up.

DON DIEGO

What are you doing, girl?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I have no idea. I don't know... I deserve so little of this kindness you offer me, a woman who has been so ungrateful to you! No, not ungrateful, just unhappy I guess.

DON DIEGO

I know well enough that you are as thankful as you can be for the love I have for you. All the rest has been... What do I know? My own mistake, and no one else's... But you, innocent one, are not at all to blame.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Come on... aren't you coming?

DON DIEGO

Not right now, Paquita. I will go in there in a little while.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Come as soon as you're ready.

DOÑA FRANCISCA goes toward Doña Irene's room, comes back to Don Diego, and kisses his hands.

DON DIEGO

Yes. Soon.

ACT III, Scene 9

SIMÓN

(Enters out of breath)
They're here, Señor.

DON DIEGO

What'd you say?

SIMÓN

By the time I made it to the city gate, I saw in the distance that they were already under way. I started to shout and tried to signal to them with my handkerchief. They stopped and just as I caught up to them, I told your nephew of your new orders. He grabbed the reins, whipped his horse right around, and is now downstairs. I instructed him not to come up until I gave you notice, in case you had people with you, and you didn't want him to interrupt.

DON DIEGO

And what did he say when you told him my message?

SIMÓN

Not a word... He looked like he'd seen his own death... As I just said, not a word... Seeing him like that has given me new compassion for him.

DON DIEGO

Don't start interceding for him with me.

SIMÓN

Me, Señor?

DON DIEGO

Yes, you. As if I don't understand you... Compassion! He's a scoundrel...A rat!

SIMÓN

He's not so bad.

DON DIEGO

He's a rascal who I have to remove from my life... Don't try to stick up for him!

SIMÓN

(Leaving through the door to the landing)
Very good, Señor.

DON DIEGO

(Putting on an air of agitation and anger)
Tell him to come up here.

SIMÓN

(Under his breath)

Yeah, remove him by bringing him up. Yeah, fine.

ACT III, Scene 10

DON CARLOS and CALAMOCHA enter the room with some trepidation.

DON DIEGO

Come here, nephew, come... Where have you been since our last chat?

DON CARLOS

I was right where you told me, at the inn just outside town.

DON DIEGO

And you did not leave the whole night?

DON CARLOS

No... Yes, Señor, I needed to come back into the city.

DON DIEGO

Oh, you needed to?

DON CARLOS

(Sits)

I needed to speak with a certain individual.

DON DIEGO

Oh?

DON CARLOS

Yes, Señor... I owe this individual many services, and I could not return to Zaragoza without first seeing this individual.

DON DIEGO

Okay, so you have so many obligations to be thinking of... but, you come to see them at three in the morning? That seems to me a big mistake... Why not just write them a note? Like this one I have here... With some paper like this you could have sent a note instead of bothering them at three in the morning.

DON DIEGO hands the note that flew in through the window to Don Carlos ... the brick is no longer attached. Although after a moment, DON DIEGO also offers the brick. DON CARLOS takes the note. CALAMOCHA takes the brick. After taking a closer look at the note, DON CARLOS returns it to Don Diego, and gets up as if to leave.

DON CARLOS

Well, if you already know everything, why call me back? Why not permit me to continue on my way, and avoid a confrontation that will leave neither of us happy?

DON DIEGO

Your uncle would like to hear from your lips what all of this means.

DON CARLOS

What for? You want to know more?

DON DIEGO

Tell me! Because, I want it and I order it so.

DON CARLOS

Great!

DON DIEGO

Sit down.

DON CARLOS sits in a chair. CALAMOCHA attempts to sit, but finding no place nearby to put his backside, he strikes a pose that looks like he is sitting on a non-existent chair.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

Where did you meet this child? You think you're in love? What's gone on between you two? Have the two of you made...promises to each other? How and when did she see you?

DON CARLOS

I was returning to Zaragoza last year, and stopped to rest in Guadalajara, with no intention of staying for any length of time... but, the Quartermaster General...

CALAMOCHA

...at whose country house he had dismounted...

DON CARLOS

...insisted that we stay all day in honor of his wife's birthday, promising me that we'd be back on our way the next day. Among the people who'd been invited to the party was Doña Paquita. The Señora had drawn her out of the convent for a day so she could relax a little.

CALAMOCHA

(standing up, wanting to help tell the tale)
To enjoy herself!

DON CARLOS

(to Calamocha, trying to quiet him)

Right.

(to Don Diego)

I don't know what I saw in her... She brought up a sort of...yearning...to be at her side, to speak to her, and to rise in her esteem.

CALAMOCHA

The Quartermaster General said among other things—

DON CARLOS

In jest, mind you—

CALAMOCHA

(Playing the part of the “Quartermaster General”)

You seem very enamored with the girl. What say we have a little fun and tell her that you're “Don Félix de Toledo”?

(As himself)

The name of many a lover in Calderón's comedies... Ha!

DON CARLOS

Well, I maintained this fiction because by then I had come up with the idea of spending some more time in that city.

CALAMOCHA

Which was good, because we were so trashed we couldn't even see the next morning. Not to mention, the fake name let him stay without the news reaching you.

DON CARLOS

(To Calamocha)

Be quiet!

(To Don Diego)

I noticed that Doña Paquita treated me with a particular regard, and when we separated for the night, I was full of vanity and hopes, seeing that she preferred me to all the other guests that day—

CALAMOCHA

And there were a lot of them!

DON CARLOS

In the end... but I don't want to offend you by telling you...

DON DIEGO

Proceed...

DON CARLOS

I came to know that she was the daughter of a lady from Madrid... a widow and poor... but from an honorable family. It became necessary to confide in my friend—

CALAMOCHA

The Quartermaster General—he made up this story that we were long lost cousins

DON CARLOS

Yes...

(sotto voce to Calamocha)

Shut up!

(to Don Diego)

I had to confide in him my plans, my love, and my need to stay at his home. Without approving or disapproving, he made up some ingenious excuses so that no one in his family would think it strange that I was staying. As his country house was immediately outside the city, I easily came and went at night. I managed to get Doña Paquita to read some of my letters, and based on her brief replies I rushed headlong into a passion that will make me miserable for the rest of my life.

DON DIEGO

Come on... continue... let's hear it all.

DON CARLOS

My assistant, who as you know is a man of the world and a man of mischief—

CALAMOCHA

Hey!

DON CARLOS

He used a thousand different tricks to ease the problems that kept popping up in the beginning.

CALAMOCHA

Really brilliant, too, I can't believe I came up with it! I devised a signal... three claps!

(Demonstrates)

He gave three claps, and then she'd give three claps from the window above the nun's courtyard.

DON CARLOS

We spoke every night, very late, with prudence and precaution, as you can imagine... I always went to her as Don Félix de Toledo, officer of a regiment, respected by my comrades, and a man of honor. I never told her more, nor did I speak of my relatives, nor my aspirations. And I did nothing to give her the understanding that marrying me could bring her wealth. Your wealth, you see. I did not want her to set her sights on me due to something other than love. Yet, each time I saw her, she was more fine, more beautiful, more worthy of being loved... I stayed there nearly three months. But, in the end we needed to go our separate ways. And I left. It was horrible. For some time her letters helped me with my sorrow, and then, in one that I received a few days ago, she told me how her mother was trying to arrange a marriage to an older man. And that she'd die before she'd marry a man other than me... She reminded me of my promises to her, and she begged me to keep them... So we hopped on our horses, made haste down the road, got to Guadalajara, didn't find her there, came here ... you know the rest of the story, there is no reason for me to tell you about it.

DON DIEGO

And what did you hope to accomplish by coming here?

DON CARLOS

To console her, to swear my undying love for her again, to go to Madrid to see you, fall at your feet, and tell you everything that had happened and ask for, not money, nor inheritance, nor protection, nor any of that... no... only your consent and your blessing to the marriage we so desire, that she and I would use as the foundation for all our happiness to come.

DON DIEGO

Well, as you can now see, Carlos, it is time to start thinking differently.

DON CARLOS

I see that.

DON DIEGO

You might love her, but I love her, too. Her mother and her whole family approve of our match. She... whatever promises you may have made to her... she, herself, less than half an hour ago, told me that she is poised to obey her mother in giving me her hand—

DON CARLOS

(Stands up)
But not her heart!

DON DIEGO

What did you say?

DON CARLOS

No, not that... It would be offensive to her... You will celebrate your wedding when it pleases you to do so and she will always thereafter carry herself with appropriate honesty and virtue. But I will always be her first love, the sole object of her affections, so I am and will remain... You will be married to her, she will call you her husband, but when you see, out of the corner of your eye, that she is crying, those tears are for me!... Don't ever ask the reason for her melancholy... I, I will be the cause... The sighs, that she attempts to suppress in vain, will be addressed to her absent friend.

DON DIEGO

Don't speak that way to me!

DON DIEGO walks toward DON CARLOS displaying great anger. DON CARLOS retreats.

DON CARLOS

I've told you already... It is impossible for me to say a word about it without offending you... But, let's put an end to this horrible conversation. Have a happy life... Don't hate me, for I

DON CARLOS (cont.)

never wanted to displease you. The best proof I can give of my obedience and respect, is to leave immediately... But, please, don't refuse me at least the parting knowledge that you forgive me.

DON DIEGO

With that, in effect, you are going?

DON CARLOS

This instant, uncle... And my absence will be quite long.

DON DIEGO

Why?

DON CARLOS

Because it would be no good for me to see her again...ever. If the rumors of the next war's rapid approach are true... well then...

DON DIEGO

(Prevents Don Carlos from leaving)

What are you trying to say?

CALAMOCHA

Yeah. What do you mean by that?

DON CARLOS

Nothing... just that I fancy the thought of bloody battle, because I am a soldier,

DON DIEGO

Carlos!

CALAMOCHA

What horror!

DON DIEGO

How can you have the heart to say that to me?

CALAMOCHA

Or, to me?!

DON CARLOS

Someone is coming...

(Looks around nervously and heads for the landing)

It might be her... May God be with you.

(Turns to go)

DON DIEGO

(Rushes to stop him)

Where are you going? No, my boy, you don't have to go.

DON CARLOS

I must... I will not see her... One glimpse of the two of us together could cause you needless suffering.

DON DIEGO

I just said you don't have to... Now, go in to that room.

DON DIEGO corrals DON CARLOS and CALAMOCHA into Don Diego's room.

DON CARLOS

But... if...

DON DIEGO

Follow the orders you're given, soldier!

DON DIEGO is left alone on stage.

ACT III, Scene 11

DON DIEGO paces about nervously as DOÑA IRENE enters from her room.

DOÑA IRENE

So, Don Diego, is it time to leave yet? Good morning.
(Blows out the candle on the table)
Are you praying?

DON DIEGO

Maybe I should be praying.

DOÑA IRENE

If you want, they could serve the chocolate now, and they could hitch up the horses, so... But, what's the matter, Señor? Is there some new development? Something wrong?

DON DIEGO

I have some news to tell you. Won't you please sit down?

DOÑA IRENE

Wait a minute? Is something wrong? No, don't tell me something's wrong!...Go on, go on! Don't you know how frightened I am? Any sudden change shakes me up, and I... Since my last miscarriage, my nerves have never recovered. They're so delicate now... And that was 19 years ago. No, maybe it's been twenty; but since then, I tell you, every little thing bothers me... And nothing helps. Not baths. Not snake broth. Not even tamarind jelly!

DON DIEGO

Come on! There's no time to blather on about miscarriages or jelly. There is another thing that is far more important to deal with... What are your girls doing?

DOÑA IRENE

They are packing up their clothing in the trunk, so everything will be ready to leave without delay.

DON DIEGO

Good. Would you please sit down? And there's no reason for you to become agitated or frightened by what I have to tell you.

BOTH sit down.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

We must make sure that we don't take leave of our senses just when we need them most... Your daughter is in love.

DOÑA IRENE

Well, sure. I've been telling you that all along. You should learn to listen to me.

DON DIEGO

This ridiculous vice of yours to interrupt every moment! Let me speak.

DOÑA IRENE

Fine. Go on. Speak.

DON DIEGO

She is in love, but not in love with me.

DOÑA IRENE

What are you saying?

DON DIEGO

You heard me.

DOÑA IRENE

Who has been telling you this nonsense?

DON DIEGO

Nobody's been telling me this. I know it. I see it. I am very secure in the truth of it... Come now, what are these tears for?

DOÑA IRENE

(Crying)
Poor me!

DON DIEGO

Where did that come from?

DOÑA IRENE

I'm going to be alone and penniless because I'm an old widow!

DON DIEGO

Oh... Doña Irene...

DOÑA IRENE

At my age and with all my ailments, to treat me in this manner, like an old rag, like a dirty Cinderella, let's say... Who would have believed it of you? Heaven help me! If my late husbands were still alive! My last husband, God bless his soul, was as feisty as a cobra.

DON DIEGO

Look, Señora, I'm at the end of my patience.

DOÑA IRENE

If you gave him any lip, he'd come at you with Hell's fury. During one celebration of Corpus Christi, for almost no reason at all, he beat a commissary officer to a bloody pulp, and if two monks hadn't gotten between them, he would've smashed his spine on the church's door jamb.

DON DIEGO

Look, I need you to listen to me, so you need to sit down and keep quiet!

DOÑA IRENE

Oh! No sir, I know what you're trying to get at. Does this look like the hair of a fool? No, Señor! You no longer want the girl, and so you're searching for any excuse you can find to extricate yourself from your predicament... My daughter! My soul! My heart!

DON DIEGO

Doña Irene, do me a favor... Listen to what I have to say... don't repeat me, don't interrupt me, and don't go on some random tangent... Once I'm done telling you what I have to say, you can cry and carry-on however you want, but in the meantime, keep your suffering to yourself, for the love of God!

DOÑA IRENE

Say whatever you feel you need to.

DON DIEGO

I will, but you don't go back to crying...

DOÑA IRENE

(Wipes her eyes with a handkerchief)

No, Señor, no crying for me.

DON DIEGO

Well, for the last year, more or less, Doña Paquita has had another love. They have talked many times. They have written back and forth. There have been promises of love, and fidelity, and constancy. In the end, the quality of their love has proven that absence does make the heart grow fonder. Because of this...

DOÑA IRENE

But, don't you understand, Señor, that all of that is nothing more than rumors invented by some gossip who doesn't like us?

DON DIEGO

Let's go back to what I was saying before... No, Señora, it is not a rumor. I'll say it again. I know that it is true.

DOÑA IRENE

What is there for you to know, when there isn't a trace of truth in anything you're saying? So, my own flesh and blood, sequestered in a convent, fasting each of the seven Sundays after Easter

DOÑA IRENE (cont.)

in the company of the holy nuns!... She who does not know the world at all, who has yet to leave her shell, as they say!... Clearly, you don't understand Sister Bautismo's temperament... She would not cover-up for even the slightest indiscretion by the girl.

DON DIEGO

There are no indiscretions. We've made a mistake. The girl wants to marry another, not me... We have arrived too late; you have taken very light consideration of your daughter's will ... Come on... Why wear ourselves out? Read this note and you will see the reason.

DON DIEGO hands the note to DOÑA IRENE. She does not even look at it before going to her room. She knocks on the door. DON DIEGO makes a quick attempt to stop her, but she rebuffs him.

DOÑA IRENE

I don't need no damn note! You've made a mistake, you're trying to get out of it. This is making me crazy! ... Francisquita!... Jesus, Mary and Joseph!... Rita! Francisca! Get your butts in here right now!

DON DIEGO

Why are you calling them?

DOÑA IRENE

I want her to come in here, and I want her to see you for who you really are.

DON DIEGO

You've gone and ruined everything... That's what happens when a man trusts the prudence of a woman.

ACT III, Scene 12

RITA

Yes, Señora?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

You called, Mother?

DOÑA IRENE

Yes, girl, yes. Because this man here, Don Diego, is treating us in a way that we cannot endure. Have you taken a lover, girl? Have you pledged yourself to marry someone? What's with this?

(To Rita)

And you, you little hussy, you probably were behind all of this. You have your nose in everything.

(Snaps the letter open & shows it to Rita)

Explain this letter, now!

RITA

(Aside)

It's his handwriting!

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Don Diego, is this how you keep your promises?

DON DIEGO

Well, God knows I'm not to blame... you come here.

(Takes Doña Francisca by the hand)

You have nothing to fear...

(To Doña Irene)

And you, Señora, shut your mouth and listen to me... and don't even think of starting up your foolish nonsense. Give me that note...

(Takes the note from Doña Irene)

Paquita, surely you remember the three handclaps tonight.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

I will as long as I live.

DON DIEGO

Well, this is the letter that was thrown in through the window... There is nothing to worry about, as I said.

(Reads)

"My dearest one: if I cannot speak with you, I will endeavor to have this letter reach your hands. Hardly had we gone our separate ways, when I met the man who was my rival. Upon seeing him, I do not know how I kept from dying in agony. He commanded me to leave town immediately, and I had to follow his orders. You see, my name is really Don

DON DIEGO (cont.)

Carlos, not Don Félix. Don Diego is my uncle. Please, live a happy life, and in doing so, forget your unhappy friend, Don Carlos de Urbina.”

(Folds up the letter.)

DOÑA IRENE

So this is it, huh?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

This is hopeless!

DOÑA IRENE

So, what this man has been telling me is all true! You little slut! Nothing to fear! Ha! Now you can fear me!

DOÑA IRENE goes after her daughter as if to cause her great harm. DON DIEGO and RITA each take one of her arms and hold her back.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Mother! Forgive me!

DOÑA IRENE

No way... I'm going to kill you. You're dead! You're dead meat!

DON DIEGO

What insanity is this?

DOÑA IRENE

I'm killing her!

ACT III, Scene 13

DON CARLOS bursts into the room. HE grabs Doña Francisca by the arm and pulls her away from the others, putting himself between the girl and the rest. DOÑA IRENE, startled, jumps into the arms of DON DIEGO. CALAMOCHA comes sauntering in behind his master, and takes the arm of RITA, who is no longer holding on to Doña Irene.

DON CARLOS

No! I'll be the man who will fight for your honor, Paquita... No one will harm this girl while I'm here.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Félix!

CALAMOCHA

Carlos.

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Carlos!

DON CARLOS

I saw they were trying to hurt her and I couldn't contain myself anymore.

DOÑA IRENE

My God, why is this happening to me?

(To Don Carlos)

Who are you?

(To nobody in general)

What is going on? What scandal!

DON DIEGO

There's no scandal here... This is the man whom your daughter loves... separating them would be one and the same and killing them... Carlos... It is not important... Hug your wife.

DON CARLOS and DOÑA FRANCISCA embrace.

DOÑA IRENE

So he is your nephew?

DON DIEGO

Yes, Señora, my nephew, who with his clapping, and his music, and his note, and his brick, and his love have given me the biggest headache of my life.

DON CARLOS and DOÑA FRANCISCA kneel at Don Diego's feet.

DON DIEGO (cont.)

What is this, my children? What is this?

DOÑA FRANCISCA

So that you might forgive us... so we can be happy.

DON DIEGO

Yes, darlings of my soul... yes.

BOTH lovers stand up, exchanging looks of tenderness.

DOÑA IRENE

And, is it possible that you have decided to make such a sacrifice?

DON DIEGO

I could separate them forever, and tranquilly enjoy possessing such a wonderful young lady; but my conscience would make me suffer... Carlos!... Paquita! How it hurts my soul, what I've done! For, in the end, I am a weak and miserable man.

DON CARLOS

(Kissing Don Diego's hands)

If our love, if our gratitude can console you for such a loss...

DOÑA IRENE

So, this good man is Don Carlos! So it goes...

DON DIEGO

He and your daughter were crazy in love, while you and her aunts dreamt up some big plans, and filled my head with illusions that have now disappeared like a dream... That is what results from an abuse of authority, of the oppression of our youth. These are the securities that the parents and teachers give. We all have learned how much we should trust the young lady's consent... By chance I discovered the error in time... Woe to those who know too late!

DOÑA IRENE

I think we've all learned a lesson here today. When it comes down to it, God sees that it all works out...

DOÑA IRENE

(To Don Carlos)

Come here, you! I want to give you a hug!

(Hugs Don Carlos)

DOÑA IRENE (cont.)

Daughter, Francisquita... Good for you! You have made a good choice... Certainly, he is a handsome guy... oh!... His eyes are enchanting!

RITA

Yes, you go on and tell her, for the girl hasn't noticed for herself!

(To Doña Francisca)

Señorita, I wish you a million kisses.

(Kisses Doña Francisca on the cheek)

DOÑA FRANCISCA

Oh, Rita! Have you ever seen me so happy?! I love you so much, and you will always be my best friend.

DON DIEGO

Beautiful Paquita, please accept this first embrace from your new father... I no longer fear the terrible solitude of my old age... You all will be my heart's delight; and the first fruit of your love... yes, children! ... that one is for me. I can say: "You wouldn't be here, if it wasn't for me!" Its parents' lives and happiness are because of me.

DON CARLOS

We are blessed by your kindness!

DON DIEGO

My children, we are all blessed.

BLACKOUT

Vita

Christopher O. Kidder was born in Corbin, Kentucky and received his BA from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. He resides in Saint Paul, Minnesota.