JEALOUS OF HERSELF

A free translation and adaptation of Tirso de Molina's *La celosa de sí misma* (circa 1619) by

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MELCHOR, an impoverished gentleman from León
VENTURA, his servant
MAGDALENA, his intended wife
ALONSO, her father, recently arrived from the Indies
QUIÑONES, her servant
JERÓNIMO, her brother
SEBASTIÁN, her neighbour, a gentleman from Seville
ÁNGELA, Sebastián's sister
LUIS, Melchor's cousin and Jerónimo's friend
SANTILLANA, a hired footman

NOTE. There's no need for scenery. The different locations can be suggested by the dialogue and by stage lighting. On the other hand, costumes, especially women's, are of the essence in this play. The all-important hooded cloaks may be replaced by veils, but either way, the audience should be able to see the women's faces clearly, while they supposedly remain concealed for the other characters on stage. Suggestions:
DAY ONE

SCENE ONE

Enter Melchor and Ventura, his servant.

MELCHOR. Well, Ventura, we’ve finally arrived in Madrid! And what an exciting place it is!
VENTURA. Yes, sure. But watch out! An honest person here is only someone who hasn’t yet found an opportunity to steal. Nothing is what it seems in Madrid. Well-dressed gentlemen turn out to be crooks. And with a bit of makeup and the right clothes hookers transform themselves into ladies.
MELCHOR. I can’t abide your cynicism, Ventura. And I’m not in the mood to listen to your words of wisdom.
VENTURA. I warn you. You are like a babe in the woods, easy pickings for the wolves that prowl these alleyways.
MELCHOR. Why should I fear them? I have no money and I’ve come to marry seventy thousand ducats per year. My future is assured.
VENTURA. The two hundred ducats in that purse—which is all that’s left of your inheritance—will be enough to tempt more than one of these lovely birds of prey that hover over these streets.
MELCHOR. Stop it. I’m not as naïve as you think.
VENTURA. Aren’t you? I bet you anything you have that, before you meet your future father-in-law, you’ll be caught in the lace net cast by one of these female piscators.
MELCHOR. Enough! What we must do now is enter this church and give God thanks for bringing us here safe and sound after our perilous journey. Let’s go in and then hurry to my betrothed’s house. I long to see if she’s as beautiful as they say.
VENTURA. A woman with a dowry of six hundred thousands ducats will never be considered ugly.
MELCHOR. Ventura, I’ve already told you that, even though money is obviously important to me, I won’t marry a woman just because she’s wealthy. She must also be beautiful as well as virtuous.
VENTURA. Money can buy both beauty and virtue by the sackful.
MELCHOR. Such lowly thoughts are unworthy of my beloved.

*Exeunt Melchor and Ventura talking.*
*Enter Jerónimo and Sebastián.*

JERÓNIMO. We’re neighbours; it’s only right that we should also become friends.
SEBASTIÁN. That rule doesn’t apply in Madrid, don Jerónimo. I know people who have lived here for years and are hardly acquainted with the families living next door. But, tell me, if I may be so bold as to ask, what brought you to Madrid?
JERÓNIMO. My father. He made his fortune in Perú and, now, tired of business and work, has returned home with his family . . . and with the idea of marrying off my sister. He’s already found her a husband: a distant relative from the provinces, whose arrival we’re expecting at any moment. My father doesn’t trust Madrilenian men, you see. He thinks they all are profligates and crooks.
SEBASTIÁN. He’s not far off the mark. Your father is a prudent man.
JERÓNIMO. And you, don Sebastián? What brings you to Court?
SEBASTIÁN. I’m seeking admission to one of the Military Orders and a knighthood and I’m halfway through the process.
JERÓNIMO. How long have you been at it?
SEBASTIÁN. Oh, about three years.
JERÓNIMO. Is your wife with you?
SEBASTIÁN. I’m not married, don Jerónimo. I live with my sister, who joined me about a year ago.
JERÓNIMO. Where from?
SEBASTIÁN. Seville.
JERÓNIMO. I’d love to make her acquaintance.
SEBASTIÁN. You shall. She’s led a very sheltered life, you know. She was raised by nuns in a convent. That’s where I sent her after the untimely death of our parents.
JERÓNIMO. There’s no better place to raise a young girl these days.
SEBASTIÁN. I’m no so sure. She sure came back with some peculiar ideas.
JERÓNIMO. Like what?
SEBASTIÁN. Well, she told me the other day that she couldn’t possibly be descended from Adam, because she couldn’t have an ancestor who dared to walk naked in front of his own wife!

JERÓNIMO. That’s priceless! She must be charming.

SEBASTIÁN. As we’re neighbours, you’ll have plenty of occasions to witness her little idiosyncrasies. But I must warn you that she now says she wants very much to enter the married state.

JERÓNIMO. Is that so?

SEBASTIÁN. Yes, but first, I’ll have to drive some of those ideas she learnt from the nuns out of her head, don’t you think?

_Exeunt Jerónimo and Sebastián talking._

_Enter Melchor and then Ventura._

MELCHOR. (in great excitement) Ventura! Where are you?

VENTURA. Here, sir. Right behind you.

MELCHOR. Where were you hiding?

VENTURA. While you were saying your prayers, I sat on a pew, near the entrance, next to a lady’s maid who winked at me.

MELCHOR. Ah, Ventura! I’m in such a state!

VENTURA. A state of holiness?

MELCHOR. Holiness? Yes! But, not divine! Rather human, Ventura, human holiness! I’ve never seen such divine beauty!

VENTURA. Was I right or was I right? I leave you alone for two minutes and you swallow hook, line and sinker! Did she wink at you too? Did she let you catch a glimpse of her ankle? Did she let her veil fall back to let you admire her curls? Did she wave her hand?

MELCHOR. Stop there, Ventura! Stop right there! It was not her eyes, her hair, her face, her ankle, for I saw none of those, it was . . . her hand, Ventura!

VENTURA. Her hand!

MELCHOR. And what a hand it was! So beautiful, so refined, so perfect! How can I describe to you its little dimples, its long and elegant veins, its gorgeous fingers, all five of them!

VENTURA. How can I describe to you her claws, her hooks, her tentacles, her grasping fingers, all five of them! Did you not see her face?
MELCHOR. No.

VENTURA. I’m sure she hid it for a reason!

MELCHOR. How could I see her face, Ventura, when my eyes were entranced by the contemplation of that living dove, that animated crystal, that hand!

VENTURA. How could you fall in love with her hand, without having seen even a bit of her chin, or at least one eye, or the tip of her nose, or the curl of her eyebrow?

MELCHOR. A hand such as hers, Ventura, is sheer perfection. It speaks eloquently through her five slender tongues. Its diaphanous soul would inflame even a block of marble! I sat right behind it, and soon it shed its skin of subtly embroidered lace to reveal to me a world of jasmines and musk-roses. My eyes beheld alabaster, diamonds, snow wrapped in fire! But then, then she made the sign of the cross, and the hand disappeared, or should I say, the sun set, plunging me in darkness, until . . . moments later it rose again bathing me in a golden light. But, alas!, my joy was short-lived, for its owner, having ended her prayers, cruelly imprisoned it once more in its jail of finespun lace, depriving me of the light of my life, of my heart’s desire, of my . . .

VENTURA. You fell for it! I knew it! She was playing hide-and-seek with her hand and you fell for it!

MELCHOR. But listen. There’s more.

VENTURA. More?

MELCHOR. Yes! There was a man . . . a gentleman, or so he seemed, well dressed, distinguished-looking. He was standing next to her . . .

VENTURA. And?

MELCHOR. And . . . without her realizing it . . . in a fraction of a second . . . fast as lightning . . . he cut the strings of her purse!

VENTURA. Didn’t I tell you? Nothing and nobody is what it seems in Madrid.

MELCHOR. But before he could get away, I grabbed hold of his arm. Not wishing to create a commotion in church, I whispered in his ear that what he was doing was unworthy of a gentleman. He blushed to the roots of his hair; and I, assuming that he was thieving more out of necessity than depravity, seized the purse, took two escudos out of my own pocket, gave them to him, and let him go.

VENTURA. And you kept the purse?
MELCHOR. Here it is. And I’m waiting for its owner to come out in order to deposit it on that heavenly hand of hers. And then I’ll catch one more glimpse of that paradigm of exquisiteness, that cynosure of my eyes, that quintessence of perfection, that apotheosis of elongated phalanges, of domical knuckles, of subtly synovial linings, of volar plates and divine metacarpals! O beautiful hand that clutches my heart!

VENTURA. Well, slap me with a mouldy turnip! You've fallen in love with an appendage, with a protuberance, with an appurtenance! What if the owner of this hand turns out to be a one-eyed female Poliphemus, or as ugly as one of my bunions? What will you do then?

MELCHOR. What a fool! Wise Mother Nature could not possibly allow such lack of proportion! It would be inconceivable for such a hand to belong to anyone but a goddess, to the nymph Danae, to a peerless beauty, noble and rare!

VENTURA. A friend of mine once saw in the street a most splendid female backside. Wishing to find out who could be the owner of such superb buttocks, he overtook her only to discover that she was old, as wrinkled as a ripe cabbage and ugly as sin. Who could’ve imagined, he told her, that such a divine foundation could support such a hellish façade? To which she replied: Friend, if you don’t like my face, you’re welcome to kiss my ass!

MELCHOR. Had you seen my lady’s hand, you wouldn’t make such blasphemous analogies. But she’s approaching! Step aside and prepare to pay obeisance to that nonpareil extremity!

Enter Magdalena and Quiñones, her maid servant, their faces covered by hooded cloaks.

MELCHOR. My lady. May I be so bold as to speak with you?

MAGDALENA. Sir! I’m not in the habit of speaking with strangers.

MELCHOR. My lady, draw back those dark drapes, let the sun shine on us mere mortals, don’t leave me in this vale of darkness.

VENTURA. (to Quiñones) Woman, I can see your neck. That’s enough. Please, don’t show me your face!

QUIÑONES. (Slaps him in the face) Get away from me!

MAGDALENA. Sir, if you wish to impress me with your flatteries, consider it done; but I’ll let you know that this is neither the time nor place to display your wit. Farewell.

MELCHOR. I must perforce follow you, if you leave me thus.

MAGDALENA. If you do, you’ll lose any credit you’ve gained with me.
MELCHOR. You misunderstand me, my lady. I must perforce follow you because I wish to return what a certain cutpurse stole from you. See what’s missing and I’ll restore it to you. Then you can deprive me, if you must, of your lovely sight.

MAGDALENA. (looks at the cords hanging loose from her belt) I am indeed missing a small purse, but it’s of no importance.

MELCHOR. It is to me, since it belongs to you. Could this be it? (Gives her his own purse).

MAGDALENA. That’s not my purse.

MELCHOR. It could be that the thief, skilful as he was, cut several purses. You’re well within your rights to take one for the other.

MAGDALENA. The thief seems to have deceived both of us. The strings of my purse were cut (shows him the loose strings) but these are not. I cannot accept it. If you’re unable to find its owner I suggest you take it to the nearest lost-and-found. And now I must leave you, for there are inquisitive eyes watching us, as we speak.

MELCHOR. I’ll not be found in possession of stolen goods. But you’ll be beyond suspicion in anybody’s eyes. Why don’t you keep it until its owner shows up?

MAGDALENA. Sir, I’m becoming weary of your persistence. I’ll keep it if you let me go. Here, give it to my maid.

VENTURA. (aside) We can now kiss our purse goodbye!

MAGDALENA. And if you find the person who lost it, you can tell him that I’ll return it to him tomorrow at this time and in this place. And now, I beg of you to let me go. And, please, do not follow me.

MELCHOR. Your wish is my command. But I cannot see you go without the glimmer of a hope of seeing you again at least one more time. May I accompany the purse’s owner tomorrow, should I find him?

MAGDALENA. You may. I’ll be here at two o’clock.

MELCHOR. How will I recognize you?

MAGDALENA. (takes off one glove) By my hand.

MELCHOR. O wondrous dawn!

Exeunt Magdalena and Quiñones.
MELCHOR. Ah, Ventura! To purchase heaven’s five climes, the snowy Milky Way, the sun in the sky for a few gold coins, isn’t that truly a bargain?

VENTURA. No. It isn’t. And you’ll regret it. You’ve just paid two hundred ducats for a glimpse of a hand. By my calculations that works out at forty ducats per finger. And this only to see, without the right to touch. I’d like to know how we’re going to manage now. Here we are in the middle of the afternoon, hungry and without a penny!

MELCHOR. Stop moaning! Do you forget that I have a wife with seventy thousand ducats per year waiting for me?

VENTURA. But what if her father’s dead? What if your bride has eloped with another man in the meantime? What if she finds you ugly and sends you packing, which she could do, for she’s a woman after all?

MELCHOR. Me, ugly?

VENTURA. Aren’t you poor? Apollo himself would be considered ugly if he didn’t have a penny.

MELCHOR. Do you really think that a wealthy woman would consider me rich or poor just because I have or do not have two hundred ducats? Come on, Ventura!

VENTURA. At least, she wouldn’t see you as a pauper, which is what you look like right now. With that money you could’ve bought some decent gloves and a new shirt to disguise your true state. As it is, she’ll smell your penury a mile off.

MELCHOR. You forget, Ventura, that I’ve kept her purse. Which I prize more than all the riches of Ophir.

VENTURA. I’m sure it holds no more than a couple of copper coins.

MELCHOR. Would the gentleman thief have been interested in stealing it, if that were the case?

VENTURA. Well, let’s take a look at it then.

MELCHOR. Here it is.

VENTURA. I’ll be blowed! That’s a heavily pregnant purse. Let me hold it.

MELCHOR. Here. Loaded, isn’t it?

VENTURA. You bet! Let me see how rich we are.

MELCHOR. What’s that?

VENTURA. Something wrapped in paper. I’ll see what’s inside.

MELCHOR. I’m sure it will be a rare and precious stone. Perhaps a jewel encrusted with diamonds and emeralds. That’s why it’s so heavy.
VENTURA. *(unwraps the paper).* A stone! A plain stone with a ribbon around it. This purse wasn’t pregnant. It’s a kidney passing a stone!

MELCHOR. There’s something written on the paper. Let me see. *(Reads)* “This stone is good to ease lower back pain”.

VENTURA. That’s an old person’s ailment. Just as I suspected, she’s as old as the hills.

MELCHOR. Is there anything else?

VENTURA. Yes.

MELCHOR. Bring it out.

VENTURA. Here’s a thimble, and a thread winder, and a cheap ring. That’s your bargain! You gave her our last two hundred ducats, but at least we can now thread a needle, if we had one, and cure our backache while looking at our stupid mugs in this glass ring!

MELCHOR. You may complain, Ventura. But I’m the happiest man in the world, for all these objects have been touched, and are therefore blessed in my eyes, by that divine hand of hers.

VENTURA. Thieving hand, you mean.

MELCHOR. A heavenly hand, which I’ll have occasion to behold again tomorrow.

VENTURA. I doubt we’ll ever see her or her hand again.

MELCHOR. I’m certain of it, for I’m a man of faith.

VENTURA. You really believe she’ll return our two hundred ducats?

MELCHOR. Yes.

VENTURA. I don’t think she’s that stupid. Let’s hope your future wife is still alive, at home and with her mind unchanged.

MELCHOR. But, wait, Ventura.

VENTURA. What now?

MELCHOR. How can I possibly marry another woman after having fallen in love with that heavenly hand?

VENTURA. By thinking of your future here on earth, that’s how.

MELCHOR. How can I betray such an angelic hand?

VENTURA. Angelic and dressed in black and with sharp nails? That’s the hand of a devil.

MELCHOR. It’s rather a veiled sun.

VENTURA. A sun with claws.
Enter Luis and Jerónimo.

LUIS. But isn’t this Melchor?
MELCHOR. Cousin! Fancy you being the first person I meet in Madrid.
LUIS. I’ve been expecting your arrival for two days. Didn’t your letter say you’d be here by the beginning of the month?
MELCHOR. Blame my delay on the foul weather we had during the journey. It rained every other day and the roads were impassable.
LUIS. Melchor, before you say another word, let me introduce you to your future brother-in-law, don Jerónimo.
JERÓNIMO. Welcome to Madrid, don Melchor. We’re all at home looking forward to your visit.
MELCHOR. I was on my way there. Trying not to get lost in this maze of streets and houses.
JERÓNIMO. Then, if you’ll allow me, I’ll run ahead and warn my sister of your impending arrival.
As you know, women don’t like to be caught unawares.
MELCHOR. Yes, you’re right.
JERÓNIMO. Would you mind staying here for a while with don Luis, until I return with my father?
I’m sure he’d love to accompany you, as it’s only proper, to our house. Unless, of course, you’d prefer us to wait for you there.
MELCHOR. Whatever is most convenient for you and your father, don Jerónimo.
LUIS. If I may make a suggestion, I’ll take my cousin to your house in a little while. That will give us the chance to talk and catch up with our news.
JERÓNIMO. So be it. That’ll probably be best. I better get along then. I’ll see you both soon.

Exit Jerónimo.

LUIS. Well, Melchor. What news from León?
MELCHOR. Not much. Everyone’s well and send you their kindest regards and best wishes. And what about you? Did you resolve that legal matter to your satisfaction?
LUIS. I did indeed. And I got my inheritance, as was my right as the first born.
MELCHOR. Congratulations!
LUIS. And you, Ventura? How’s life treating you?
VENTURA. Very badly. I’m mad as hell at that never-ending plain we had to cross, at those mountain passes we had to climb, at those disgusting inns we had to stay in, and especially at a certain thieving hand that’s even now counting our ducats.

MELCHOR. Will you stop bitching?

LUIS. And you, Melchor? Are you very much in love with your intended wife?

MELCHOR. How can I, Luis? I don’t know why the god of love is depicted wearing a blindfold. As far as I am concerned, love cannot happen unseen.

LUIS. She’s very attractive, you know?

MELCHOR. That may very well be, but there’s no guarantee that I’ll find her in the least desirable.

LUIS. Well, then. I’ve a confession to make.

MELCHOR. A confession, cousin?

LUIS. Yes. I wish to tell you, and please don’t take it the wrong way, that seeing you in Madrid pains me dreadfully.

MELCHOR. How? Why, in God’s name?

LUIS. Melchor, you’re poor and your intended has a rent of seventy thousand ducats per year. I am wealthy, incredibly wealthy, now that I’ve got my inheritance, and also your relative, and your friend . . . But . . . But . . . I’ll say it! I shan’t become your competitor.

MELCHOR. My what? I don’t understand. Luis, please, speak plainly.

LUIS. Beautiful Magdalena and her considerable fortune will be yours soon. And I . . . I would’ve considered myself the happiest man alive if I’d been allowed to love her. But I am not, although I worship the ground she treads on. And I can’t . . . because of you. So, let’s not dwell on this anymore. Let’s forget it. I never said it. There! Let me take you to her house. She loves you. She loves me not. I adore her. But she’ll marry you. There! Solution? I must yank her out of my heart, even if I bleed to death!

MELCHOR. But Luis, wait a second. As I just said, I’ve never set eyes on Magdalena and I can hardly be expected to feel anything for her. If you love her, then speak to her father. With my blessing. I assure you that I won’t stand in your way. Her money is not going to make me love or marry her.

LUIS. But, Melchor. How can I speak to her father? I don’t even know if she has any feelings towards me. And she hasn’t the slightest idea that I worship her, that I’d die for a smile from her. I only met her once, you see, and that’s when I negotiated with her father on your behalf. And all I did then was shower praises on you. She hardly paid any attention to me.
So, lose no sleep over this. Forget I said anything. I’ll not dream of standing between you and her or of separating you from her fortune. I won’t! There!

MELCHOR. And I’ll not dream of standing between you and your love either. Look, your Magdalena has never seen me. She may, in her imagination, have created an ideal image of me, which may very well not correspond with reality. How can I know that she won’t be disappointed? That she won’t hate me at first sight? Please, cousin, don’t give up your love on my account. Believe me. You’re welcome to her.

LUIS. Don’t raise my hopes, Melchor. Please, don’t!

MELCHOR. Why not? Especially since . . .

LUIS. Since what?

MELCHOR. Luis, the truth is that it wouldn’t surprise me in the least if, when I meet her . . . I’m . . . unable to contain my indifference!

LUIS. Unable to contain your indifference? Why?

MELCHOR. Because . . . I have a certain celestial hand indelibly etched on my mind.

LUIS. A hand!

MELCHOR. That’s right. A hand that’s rendered me blind to any other beauty.

LUIS. Don’t speak in riddles, Melchor. A hand? Whose hand? You must tell me all about it as we walk to Magdalena’s house.

MELCHOR. Well, I went into this church and sat behind . . .

SCENE TWO

*Enter Magdalena and Quiñones, with a dress in her hands.*

MAGDALENA. So don Melchor’s about to arrive?

QUIÑONES. That’s what your brother says.

MAGDALENA. I need to change my dress, then.

QUIÑONES. Why?
MAGDALENA. Quiñones, I associate this dress with the handsome stranger we saw in the church at La Vitoria. By shedding it, I hope to discard the unsettling thoughts that he lodged in my mind.

QUIÑONES. And changing your dress will do that?

MAGDALENA. It would.

QUIÑONES. Whatever!

MAGDALENA. Here, help me put on this dress. Hand me that mirror. Make sure the skirt hangs right. And my hair? Is it all right at the back?

QUIÑONES. Everything’s perfect and you look fine.

MAGDALENA. Ah Quiñones, I dread this visit. I was hoping to have some fun with my adorable and adoring stranger before being married off to this... don Melchor. It’s outrageous that we women have to be subjected to the will of our fathers.

QUIÑONES. Let me pinch that cheek. It looks a bit pale.

MAGDALENA. Unseen, must I love the man my father’s chosen for me? It’s perverse.

QUIÑONES. The stranger was a fine specimen.

MAGDALENA. More than fine. He was handsome, and bold, and daring. Ah, if only don Melchor turned out to be half the man the other one is! If only I could buy for my future husband some of the many lovely traits of that stranger: like his wit, his manly face, his strong build, his...

QUIÑONES. Money can’t buy true love, I always say. But, you never know. Don Melchor may turn out to be even better than your stranger.

MAGDALENA. How can that be? Such virility! Such intelligence! You do realize that he confronted the thief and then switched purses on purpose, giving me the one with the ducats.

QUIÑONES. Of course I do.

MAGDALENA. That won me over. Not because of the money, but because it spoke volumes of his gallantry.

QUIÑONES. But what’s the use of feeling like that when your future husband’s knocking at the door?

MAGDALENA. What’s the use? It’s a beautiful memory I’ll always cherish. That’s the use. But who’s that at the door?

QUIÑONES. Your neighbours.
Enter Ángela and Sebastián.

SEBASTIÁN. My dear lady, allow me to introduce myself. I am don Sebastián de la Hoz y Negredo. And this is my sister Ángela.

MAGDALENA. I’m very pleased to meet you.

SEBASTIÁN. Your brother Jerónimo and I met this morning at La Vitoria and professed our good will towards each other.

MAGDALENA. I’m glad to hear that.

SEBASTIÁN. So, I thought it only proper to pay my respects to you in person and to bring my sister who’ll promise eternal friendship to you.

MAGDALENA. I thank you. I’m both happy and proud to have such gracious neighbours. I’m very glad to meet you, Ángela.

ÁNGELA. Your humble servant. I understand that you’re soon to be married. And ... and I’d like you to know that I’d be delighted to be your bridesmaid, should that position still be vacant, of course. I so love weddings!

MAGDALENA. I thank you very much for your generous offer. But you caught me by surprise and I don’t quite know what to say right now.

ÁNGELA. I understand. Who wouldn’t be left speechless by the prospect of marriage? Good heavens! In front of a priest and in the presence of so many people to say “I do!” to a man? How forward!

MAGDALENA. Especially, I suppose, when, as is my case, the woman doesn’t even know what her husband looks like.

ÁNGELA. O, I couldn’t possibly marry someone I hadn’t seen! What if he turned out to be as ugly as a devil!

SEBASTIÁN. Ugliness is only skin deep, Ángela. And proper ladies obey the wishes of their guardians, just as Magdalena’s doing.

ÁNGELA. Well, I won’t. I’ll marry only for love. I’m so passionate! And virtuous too! I couldn’t marry a man who wasn’t pure and exemplary. And he has to be handsome too. I pray everyday to Saint Anthony to find me the right man.

Enter Alonso, Jerónimo, Luis, Melchor and Ventura.
ALONSO. My dear daughter, let me introduce your intended husband to you. As you can appreciate, you’re a lucky girl, thanks to my good judgment in choosing don Melchor for you.

MAGDALENA. (aside to Quiñones) Quiñones, isn’t he the stranger who stole my will?

MELCHOR (aside to Ventura) Just as I feared, Ventura, compared to the owner of that divine hand my intended looks very plain indeed.

VENTURA. (aside to Melchor) Are you sure? Look at her hand. I could swear it’s the same one that grasped our purse.

MELCHOR. Are you drunk? Don’t blaspheme!

VENTURA. How can I forget the hand that took our pride and joy? I tell you it’s the same one!

MELCHOR. You’re insane. That heavenly hand was partly covered by a lace net ...

VENTURA. That’s because she was fishing!

MELCHOR. ... and this one is bare.


MELCHOR. Sir, her beauty has rendered me wordless. I must adore, admire and keep quiet, as if I were in a church. Besides, not being used to the ways of the Court, I’d be afraid I’d say something unseemly or foolish.

MAGDALENA. That, my dear sir, can never be, for I’d judge you clever no matter how foolish your words may actually turn out to be. With your permission, father, now that I have met don Melchor, I shall retire to my room with Quiñones. As you know, I cannot take too much excitement at once.

ALONSO. I know, my daughter. I’ll make sure don Melchor is well looked after.

Exeunt Magdalena and Quiñones. The men bow.

SEBASTIÁN. (to Melchor) If I may be so bold, my dear sir, please accept the heartiest congratulations of a neighbour and his sister, who henceforth remain at your service. As I am fond of saying, propinquity is as good as family relation.

JERÓNIMO. Don Sebastián and his sister live in the house next door.

MELCHOR. I thank you both from the bottom of my heart.

ÁNGELA. (aside to Sebastián) Methinks Saint Anthony’s answered my prayers, brother. I fancy don Melchor.
SEBASTIÁN. *(aside to her)* Don’t even think about it, sister!

ALONSO. Don Sebastián, I would be honoured if you and your sister would accept my invitation to attend a modest celebration I’m planning for this evening.

SEBASTIÁN. The honour will all be ours.

ALONSO. And you Melchor, my son, know that you are in your house and that when you leave it, it will be as my daughter’s husband.

*Exeunt Alonso, Jerónimo, Sebastián and Ángela, who keeps glancing at Melchor.*

LUIS. Well, what do you think of your bride, Melchor? There! Didn’t I tell you? Isn’t she beautiful?

MELCHOR. Cousin, true lovers aren’t fickle. If anything, I’m even more in love now with that adorable hand than I was before I saw her.

LUIS. But isn’t your bride’s hand as attractive?

MELCHOR. Are you mad? Not in the least! My lady’s hand is pure perfection and suffers no competition!

LUIS. It must be quite a hand!

MELCHOR. It is! Believe me! Tremendous, unbelievable! It’s a hand the likes of which you’ve never seen before!

**DAY TWO**

**SCENE THREE**

*Enter Magdalena, dressed in mourning, and Quiñones.*

MAGDALENA. Well, I’m not happy. Not happy at all, Quiñones.

QUIÑONES. But isn’t he the man you thought adorable, and bold and I don’t know what else only yesterday?

MAGDALENA. Yes, and I must confess that I find him now even more adorable than before . . . But, tell me, Quiñones, how can I trust a man who falls in love with the first woman he sees, even
if that woman is me? A man who comes all the way from León to marry me, can be so changeable as to fall head over heels in love, not even with a whole woman, but with a hand, even if that hand belongs to me? Once married, would he not do the same with every female hand he sees? And bear in mind that every woman’s got two of them!

QUIÑONES. But it so happens that he fell in love with your hand, and nobody else’s. That being the case, who can you be jealous of?

MAGDALENA. Myself. That’s who.

QUIÑONES. Well, you’re in trouble then. What do you plan to do?

MAGDALENA. First of all, meet him, as promised.

QUIÑONES. And what’s the point of dressing in mourning for that?

MAGDALENA. You’ll see in due course.

QUIÑONES. Can’t you tell me now?

MAGDALENA. No, because I don’t want you to talk me out of what I’m determined to do.

QUIÑONES. I know better than to try to dissuade you.

MAGDALENA. You’d think me mad.

QUIÑONES. I already do.

MAGDALENA. Is the carriage ready?

QUIÑONES. Waiting for you in the street. But may I at least know where you’re going?

MAGDALENA. To Doña Juana’s house. To offer my condolences on the death of her father. And while I’m there, I need you to hire a footman and a sedan chair and send them to her house to fetch me.

QUIÑONES. A what?

MAGDALENA. A footman and a sedan chair.

QUIÑONES. What for?

MAGDALENA. I’ll explain it all later. Now do as I say.

QUIÑONES. Whatever!
SCENE FOUR

Enter Melchor and Ventura, arguing.

VENTURA. But how can you spurn a real woman, beautiful and wealthy, let’s not forget it, for a rapacious hand? You haven’t even seen one of her eyes! You don’t even know if she’s an old hag or a child. You’ve no idea if she has a snub nose or a bulbous beak, or a foot-long proboscis. In short, you know bugger all about her.

MELCHOR. Go on, go on talking nonsense. In one ear and out the other. This is the place. I’ll wait for her until she comes.

VENTURA. Do you really believe she’s as stupid as to return our purse?

MELCHOR. We’ll find out soon enough.

VENTURA. She’d only do it if she thought there was more where that came from. Maybe our purse wasn’t pregnant enough for her.

MELCHOR. She’ll be here. Just as she promised.

VENTURA. But seriously, don’t you like Doña Magdalena even a little bit?

MELCHOR. She leaves me cold. My heart belongs to that hidden beauty, to that heavenly hand, which can only be a true reflection of the loveliness of her face, just as her face is a reflection of her divine soul.

VENTURA. And if she turns out to have one eye red and the other yellow, blue lips, brown teeth, sunken cheeks and a pockmarked face? What then?

MELCHOR. In the unlikely event that she’s as you describe her, then, and only then would I consider going back to Magdalena. She may not be beautiful, but at least she’s rich.

VENTURA. And what if your mysterious lady is beautiful but poor as a church mouse?

MELCHOR. Not likely.

VENTURA. But what if she is?

MELCHOR. If that were the case, then I’d marry her, take her with me to León, and live happily thereafter on the little money I’ve left.

VENTURA. There’s no happiness without money, and don’t let anybody tell you different. But who’s this lady in mourning?
Enter Magdalena, her face covered.

MELCHOR. Ah Ventura! That's my lady!
VENTURA. She’s dressed for a requiem mass. Bad omen.
MELCHOR. She’s the lady whose hand I saw yesterday at church. I’d recognize her figure and bearing anywhere. (approaches Magdalena). My lady, here I am, at your service.
MAGDALENA. (uncovers her hand) Do you recognize this hand?
MELCHOR. O dawn, O early bright, O light of day!
VENTURA. O . . . O . . . O . . . ! Is he in pain already?
MAGDALENA. I’ve come, as promised.
MELCHOR. If you were always as faithful as you are in keeping your promises, you’d show me the sun that your hood has eclipsed.
MAGDALENA. My purpose in coming here is simply to give back what doesn’t belong to me.
MELCHOR. If you refer to my soul, which yesterday deserted me, then don’t bother, for I consider it hopelessly lost.
MAGDALENA. Was it yours?
MELCHOR. Yes, my lady.
MAGDALENA. Well. It’s a very naughty soul! It kept me awake most of the night. Uninvited, it’s become master of my own house. I swear that it would’ve taken possession of me, had not a friend of mine arrived this morning demanding its return. She claimed it belonged to her.
MELCHOR. Belong to her! Who could tell such a barefaced lie?
MAGDALENA. A certain doña Magdalena, a friend of mine who’s noble, sensible, beautiful and very rich.
MELCHOR. Doña Magdalena!
MAGDALENA. Yes. I was curious about you and so I decided to investigate. I know that you’ve come to Madrid to marry her. I know that your name is Melchor, and that you’re a gentleman, but poor. I know that today you’ll sign your wedding contract and that the religious ceremony will follow soon thereafter. And you want me to believe your passionate protestations of love! Do you take me for a fool? If I were to show you my face, like I showed you my hand yesterday, you’ll know who I am, and I’ll become the laughing stock of you and your Magdalena and her whole family. Long live whoever invented ladies’ cloaks, I say!
MELCHOR. Your information is correct, my lady, but your conclusions could not be more off the mark. No amount of money, not even the beauty of Helen of Troy, would make me stop loving you to the end of my days. I saw your rival yesterday—allow me to call her that, unless you wish me to refer to her as my enemy—and she cannot hold a candle to your divine hand. She seemed to me neither beautiful nor a worthy competitor to you. I would not, I cannot surrender my will to her, for it belongs to you alone. And now I think the time has come to see the face of my mistress. I beg of you. Enough modesty!

MAGDALENA. I am nearly persuaded to grant your request, but . . . No. I won’t! All I’ll say to you now is that I am neither more beautiful, nor richer, nor younger, nor wiser, nor more noble, nor more worthy of your love than doña Magdalena is.

MELCHOR. I find that hard to believe. For to compare the two of you is to compare day and night.

MAGDALENA. Then, prove it to me. Break off your engagement to doña Magdalena. Then and only then will I reveal my whole person to you.

MELCHOR. Nothing will give me more pleasure.

Enter Santillana and speaks to Magdalena.

SANTILLANA. I beg your pardon, my lady. It’s time to go.

MAGDALENA. No. Not yet. Wait for me over there.

SANTILLANA. Yes, my lady.

Santillana moves to where Ventura is and speaks with him while Magdalena and Melchor mime their conversation.

VENTURA. Hello there, old man!

SANTILLANA. Hello yourself.

VENTURA. What’s your name?

SANTILLANA. Santillana.

VENTURA. And your Christian name?

SANTILLANA. Serum.

VENTURA. Consumptives would love an extract of you. How long have you served your lady?

SANTILLANA. A couple of hours.
VENTURA. But you know who she is.
SANTILLANA. No idea.
VENTURA. I don't believe you. You look like a smart fellow. This coin says that you do know.
SANTILLANA. It does? (tries to grab it)
VENTURA. It's yours. But only after you spill out everything you know about her.
SANTILLANA. Everything?
VENTURA. Everything.
SANTILLANA. And you won't tell anyone?
VENTURA. I won't.
SANTILLANA. Well, if it's to remain a secret between us . . . I can tell you that she is . . .
VENTURA. She is . . .
SANTILLANA. . . a lady . . .
VENTURA. I can see that.
SANTILLANA. . . in love with your master.
VENTURA. I can see that too. That information is not worth a farthing. I want to know her name.
SANTILLANA. Her name.
VENTURA. Yes, Serum. Her name.
SANTILLANA. Her name is . . . Countess.
VENTURA. That's not a name but a title.
SANTILLANA. Is it?
VENTURA. It is. I promise you. You have to tell me what she's the countess of.
SANTILLANA. She's the countess of . . .
VENTURA. Yes, yes?
SANTILLANA. Chirinola!
VENTURA. Chirinola?
SANTILLANA. Chirinola!
VENTURA. And where is her chiri-county? In China?
SANTILLANA. No, sir. It's in the province of Naples.
VENTURA. And where does she reside here in Madrid?
SANTILLANA. In a house with blue lattice windows on Silva Street.
VENTURA. Is she married?
SANTILLANA. On her way to.
Ventura and Santillana continue miming their conversation while Magdalena and Melchor speak.

MELCHOR. So, you still refuse to grant me my wish?

MAGDALENA. Yes, but . . . I’m also grateful to you, and curious to see if you think me more beautiful than your Magdalena. So, I’ll allow you to take a peek at one of my eyes.

MELCHOR. Ah my mistress’ eye is exactly like the sun! Ventura! Ventura!

VENTURA Yes, sir! (to Santillana) I’ll pay you another time.

SANTILLANA. Eh, you!

MELCHOR. Ventura, please take a look at this eye, this morning star, and don’t tell me that Magdalena, whom I abhor, is more beautiful or more worthy of my love.

VENTURA. It’s indeed a splendidferous eye.

MELCHOR. Could we be so fortunate as to see its companion?

MAGDALENA. Here it is.

VENTURA. Are they holy relics, that we can see them only one at a time?

MELCHOR. Is there such a miracle?

MAGDALENA. Do you think my eyes can compete with those of your future wife?

MELCHOR. Such comparison is invidious, my lady. Magdalena’s eyes are . . .

VENTURA. Cowplops.

MAGDALENA. (gives Ventura a ring) Here you have, in recognition of your perspicacity.

VENTURA. O wondrous hand! O munificent appendage! This is a hand and not doña Magdalena’s limp, cold, and skinny paw! This truly is a hand worthy of the Countess of Chirinola!

SANTILLANA. Hush! Won’t you be quiet?

MELCHOR. Come again?

MAGDALENA. What?

VENTURA. The truth cannot long remain hidden. You’re the Neapolitan Countess of Chirinola.

This old fartcatcher told me.

MELCHOR. Are you a countess in Naples, my love?

MAGDALENA. Me? Yes . . . I suppose I am . . . I men, since the untimely death of my father, that is. I then became the Countess of . . . Chirinola, just as your servant says. But now, I better go.
Important matters relating to my father’s last will and testament await me. Farewell. Until you fulfil your promise.

MELCHOR. Consider it done!

SCENE FIVE

Enter Ángela and Sebastián.

SEBASTIÁN. Sister, I burn with love for our charming neighbour, Magdalena. But how can I prevent her marriage to that smart ass, don Melchor?

ÁNGELA. I don’t know, but you better pray and do something quick. The marriage contract will be signed today. And tomorrow, which is a holiday, the first banns will be read in church.

SEBASTIÁN. I wish he’d never set foot in Madrid!

ÁNGELA. I don’t.

SEBASTIÁN. I know you fancy him.

ÁNGELA. I certainly do. I want don Melchor all for myself. Saint Antony gave him to me.

SEBASTIÁN. Well, you can’t have him. He’s too poor. No prospects. I’ll find you a husband. You want someone prudent, stable and sensible.

ÁNGELA. No, I don’t. I want don Melchor. He’s mine.

SEBASTIÁN. Even if he doesn’t love you?

ÁNGELA. Even if he doesn’t. The nuns told me that to love is to suffer.

SEBASTIÁN. Then, stop loving him and you’ll stop suffering.

ÁNGELA. I can’t. I want to love him and to suffer!

SEBASTIÁN. Well, that’s not going to happen. You must forget him.

ÁNGELA. Forget him! I’ll suffer too much if I do.

SEBASTIÁN. Let me get this right. You’ll suffer if you love him and you’ll suffer if you don’t?

ÁNGELA. That’s right.

SEBASTIÁN. Then there’s only one option open to me.

ÁNGELA. What?

SEBASTIÁN. I’ll have him killed.
ÁNGELA. What? You’d murder the man I love?
SEBASTIÁN. The way I see it, with his death, your love for him will die too, and with it your suffering.
ÁNGELA. That same remedy could be applied to you. Why don’t we have your Magdalena murdered and then your love and your suffering will be over too!
SEBASTIÁN. There’s something else we could do: disrupt their wedding.
ÁNGELA. How?
SEBASTIÁN. I could claim that Magdalena promised to marry me.
ÁNGELA. And your witnesses?
SEBASTIÁN. Don’t I have servants and good friends ready to back me up?
ÁNGELA. That may be a good delaying tactic, but not enough to persuade her to marry you.
SEBASTIÁN. If I can delay the wedding, I’m confident that eventually my nobility and especially my wealth will win the day. Her father is old and therefore covetous, like all old men. Sixty thousands ducats per annum plus the knighthood I expect to be awarded soon should be enough to persuade both of them.
ÁNGELA. Don Melchor is so handsome, in a virtuous kind of way.
SEBASTIÁN. Money and a title are even more handsome.
ÁNGELA. Well, you’d better get on with it then. Before they sign the contract.
SEBASTIÁN. I won’t waste another minute. Bye, sister.
ÁNGELA. Bye, brother.

Exit Sebastián. Enter Ventura.

VENTURA. I was looking for . . . but I see he’s not here.
ÁNGELA. Wait! Don’t go!
VENTURA. My master’s waiting for me.
ÁNGELA. Listen.
VENTURA. I’m all ears.
ÁNGELA. What’s your name?
VENTURA. Ventura.
ÁNGELA. That’s a good name.
VENTURA. I’m adventurous by nature.
ÁNGELA. Didn’t you arrive yesterday from León?

VENTURA. I did.

ÁNGELA. Can you keep a secret?

VENTURA. I can keep it better than I can keep my master’s purse.

ÁNGELA. This ring will make you discreet.

VENTURA. *(puts ring on his finger)* It will certainly help.

ÁNGELA. Do you know who I am?

VENTURA. No idea.

ÁNGELA. Do you think your master could fall in love with me?

VENTURA. *(looking at the ring in his hand)* I have no doubt.

ÁNGELA. But isn’t your master’s heart really set on doña Magdalena?

VENTURA. No, not really. He finds more faults in her than in a rented mule. He won’t marry her.

ÁNGELA. Why then did he come all the way from León?

VENTURA. Because he wanted to wed her money. But then this lady happened.

ÁNGELA. Lady? What lady?

VENTURA. A lady, or rather a lady’s hand he fell in love with.

ÁNGELA. And she loves him too?

VENTURA. Madly.

ÁNGELA. Who’s she?

VENTURA. A one-eyed countess from Naples. She gave me this other ring.

ÁNGELA. And her name?

VENTURA. The countess of the purse.

ÁNGELA. What kind of title is that?

VENTURA. The one I give her, for she’s a great purse snatcher.

ÁNGELA. Speak seriously. Who’s she?

VENTURA. My master fell in love with her hand and today she’s promised to give it to us in marriage as soon as she settles her father’s will. He died but yesterday.

ÁNGELA. She overcame her grief rather speedily.

VENTURA. That’s right. She’s a fast worker, like my master. It’s love at first sight with him. As soon as he finds out you love him, he’ll change his mind again. All he’s seen of this countess is one hand and one eye. The moment you show him your nose, your mouth and your chin,
he'll forget her and fall in love with you. Trust me. That's the way to his heart. Show him a few parts of your anatomy and he's yours. And now I'd better go before I get into trouble.

SCENE SIX

Enter Magdalena, wearing a different dress, and Quiñones.

MAGDALENA. I'm in a quandary, Quiñones. I find myself loved and hated, desired and rejected. Veiled, he's passionately in love with me; unveiled, he thinks me ugly and detestable. Being my own rival for his affections, I’m jealous of myself! This hand of mine is offended by the attentions that my other hand receives. When he praises my eyes, I feel aggrieved. A mere cloak suffices to make him either love or detest me. To wed me he agrees to break off our engagement. And I, who follow his steps like a shadow, cry when I'm pleased, lose when I win, and loathe him when he adores me.

QUIÑONES. Well, if you want my opinion, you only have yourself to blame. By not telling him who you are, you've now got two women in one body. That's why you wish him to leave you for yourself. You want to be the winner in the war you wage against yourself. And you prevent him from marrying you by asking him to tear up your marriage contract. If you ask me, you can only complain of one person: yourself.

Enter Ángela, Sebastián, Jerónimo and Alonso and speak unawares of Magdalena and Quiñones, who listen to their conversation.

MAGDALENA. Hush! My father, my brother and those awful neighbours are here. Let's listen to their conversation.

ÁNGELA. His servant told me, and others have confirmed it. I am simply scandalized.

SEBastián. I can testify to what my sister says. I did not want to believe it at first, until I saw it with my own eyes. He's already given his word, I suspect in writing, and they would already be married, had it not been for the unexpected death of the old count. As you're our
neighbour, I was naturally concerned. Nip it in the bud, I say, before it does irreparable harm to your reputation.

ALONSO. Don Melchor in love so soon? He arrived only yesterday and you tell me that today he’s practically married. Who can believe such a thing?

SEBASTIÁN. How do you know how long he’s been in Madrid? Maybe he arrived weeks ago in disguise and incognito. Who knows what he’s been up to since then?

JERÓNIMO. If don Luis, his cousin, and I had not happened to bump into him yesterday by pure chance, I doubt he’d have paid us a visit.

ALONSO. Enough! If you’ve seen it and heard it, how can I doubt it? Isn’t everything in this town pure chicanery and illusion? *(noticing her)* Magdalena!

MAGDALENA. Father.

ALONSO. Have you accidentally overheard our conversation?

MAGDALENA. I have, father. Don Melchor, thinking himself worthy of more beauty and wealth than I can offer, is about to become a count.

ALONSO. You know that too?

MAGDALENA. Yes. His wife-to-be, who’s a good friend of mine, confided that a certain Don Melchor, poor but of noble family, had recently arrived in Madrid to marry another woman, but that having met her, in the course of a single hour, he’d managed to win her love and affection. They would already be husband and wife, hadn’t it been for the inopportune death of her father. She doesn’t know that I am the other woman, and I thought it convenient not to disabuse her so as to discover the whole truth about this sordid business. And to top it all, she’s invited me to be a guest at their wedding, which will take place on Sunday. It will be a private affair, because of her mourning.

ALONSO. This is beyond belief! And who’s this countess?

MAGDALENA. I can’t disclose that. I’ve been sworn to secrecy until the matter is concluded.

JERÓNIMO. The damn traitor! Revenge!

ALONSO. Never mind that. I think our Magdalena is lucky to have escaped marriage to such a perfidious and two-faced man.

MAGDALENA. *(pretending to cry)* She has beautiful hands and dazzling eyes; she’s a countess and he’s dying to become a count. I wish him the best of luck!
ALONSO. Have you ever heard of such a thing? And to think that I wanted him to be your husband out of friendship for his father, may he rest in peace. But never mind. I’ll find you another husband, as noble as he’s and far richer.

SEBASTIÁN. I offer myself to be that man, don Alonso, and I include my sister in the bargain. Instead of neighbours we’ll become family. I’ll marry Magdalena and my sister Ángela will be Jerónimo’s wife. Her dowry amounts to twelve hundred thousand ducats. And I enjoy an annual rent of sixty thousand.

JERÓNIMO. If you agree, father, I’ll be forever grateful to that snake, don Melchor, since his refusal to wed my sister affords me such a beautiful consort.

ÁNGELA. (aside to the audience) We’ll see about that!

ALONSO. I find your offer very generous, don Sebastián, but let’s not be too hasty. I see don Melchor’s approaching. We shall hear what the future count has to say for himself.

Enter Melchor and Ventura.

MELCHOR. Greetings, don Alonso and the company! I wanted to see you, sir, and you too Magdalena, to inform you that… a friend of mine from León, a captain, has just arrived in Madrid on his way to Toledo. He’s going to marry there and needs a guarantor, to testify that he’s indeed who he claims to be. He’s asked me to accompany him and I cannot in good conscience deny his request. So, I’ve come to ask for your permission to be absent, much against my will, for a few days.

ALONSO. You’re very considerate to inform us, don Melchor. I wish you a safe journey. And on your return, please make sure you pay us another visit. You’ll want to congratulate Magdalena, for I suspect that, brief as your absence may be, she’d have found another husband by then. Exit.

JERÓNIMO. Your journey, don Melchor, is not as long as you claim. Your destination is, I believe, a few hundred yards down the street. Please, accept my congratulations on your impending marriage and on the acquisition of a title. (hisses) You villain, you’ll pay for this! Exit.

SEBASTIÁN. I regret to have known you for such a short time, sir. May you enjoy your countess for much longer. Exit.

ÁNGELA. If it’s not too inconvenient, please let us know the secret location of your wedding, and also the time, so that we may rejoice with you. I so love weddings! Exit.
VENTURA. Quiñones, the bundle of clothes I gave you yesterday, two shirts and a ruff...

QUIÑONES. They’re down by the river. The washerwoman is called Mary Pines. Go find her. If you’re also getting hooked, you’ll need to wear a clean shirt. And as for you, don Melchor, may you live long enough to see your greatgrandsons become, the oldest, an archduke, and the rest at least archbishops. Exit.

MAGDALENA. They’ve all congratulated you, don Melchor, but I will not. Instead, I’ll offer you my condolences. About an hour ago, the countess, who is a dear friend of mine, told me that an uncle of hers is arriving today in Madrid to escort her back to Italy. It seems that she may lose her inheritance as well as all her vast estates if she doesn’t wed a certain Signore Salvatore Cosmano, her cousin. She must perforce go to Valencia, where she’ll sail at once for Naples. She’s been told to hurry, for the seas are full of pirates and she runs the risk of being kidnapped or worse. She asked me to say goodbye to you on her behalf. And I can tell you that, while doing so, I saw her wipe away a tear with her divine, angelic hand, so different from my own coarse and rugged appendage. My father will find me a husband and I’ll follow his wishes, like the dutiful daughter I am. I regret to tell you, don Melchor, that you seem to be one of the many who are called but not one of the few who are chosen. Exit.

VENTURA. Wow! She’s left you lookin’ like a fool with your breeches on the ground! You’re now a count in doublet and hose! They made a monkey out of you! To have two women tell you to get lost in one day is no mean feat. We better hope these rings they gave me are firmer than they are. Else, we’ll sleep on the street tonight.

MELCHOR. (downcast) I want to return to León, Ventura.

VENTURA. And, pray tell me, what are you going to do there, wifeless and purseless?

MELCHOR. I have enough money to live modestly. Let’s leave this labyrinth, where lovers are wed and widowed at the same time. I swear off Madrid! You were right, Ventura. Nothing is what it seems in this town.

VENTURA. I told you! But it may not be too late to find a remedy. Your countess is going back to Chirinola and won’t return any time soon. But Magdalena is still here and single. And she’s very beautiful. She’s pissed off with you now, of course. But you can talk her round to consenting to marry you again. Beg her father to forgive you. Try to win over her brother. Sue for peace and whisper sweet nothings in her ear. You can still succeed in getting what you came here for in the first place. And forget about that damn hand!
MELCHOR. If that angelic hand could only be expunged from my mind, I’d follow your advice, Ventura.

VENTURA. And if you don’t like doña Magdalena, there’s her neighbour, doña Ángela, who’s also got the hots for you. And she brings a dowry of twelve hundred thousand ducats!

MELCHOR. They’re all as nothing to me, compared to my countess.

VENTURA. Fine! Back to León we march then! I’ll go and pack our suitcases.

*Enter Santillana.*

SANTILLANA. Excuse me, sirs! Is there a gentleman here from León?

VENTURA. He’s our countess’ footman. This is the gentleman from León, Serum.

SANTILLANA. Greetings! The countess, my lady, the one who spoke to you this morning, sends you this letter and this gift.

MELCHOR. So, my lady, the countess, is still in Madrid?

SANTILLANA. Where else?

MELCHOR. Ventura, give him a coin.

VENTURA. A coin, my foot!

MELCHOR. Do as I say.

VENTURA. Give away a few more coins and we’ll be buck naked. Here, take it.

MELCHOR. Listen, Ventura, to her letter. This is what she writes: “To test your love, I told Magdalena about my return to Naples and my impending marriage to my cousin Salvatore. These are lies designed to deceive her and to make sure that your love is as true as you declare it to be. To tie you over in the meantime, this footman will deliver to you two thousand escudos and a parcel with some new shirts and a dozen Naples biscuits. I look forward to seeing you at La Vitoria tomorrow at the usual time. Love, your countess.” Forget about the suitcases, Ventura!

VENTURA. They’re forgotten! She’s given us two thousand escudos!

MELCHOR. You see? There was no journey to Naples, no arranged marriage! She wants to see me again!

VENTURA. Two thousand escudos! Come here, Serum! I want to give you a big, wet kiss!

SANTILLANA. Get off me! D’you want the Inquisition knocking at your door?
MELCHOR. “I look forward to seeing you at La Vitoria at the usual time”! Ah, my adorable hand! I shall behold you again!

SCENE SEVEN

Enter Ángela and Quiñones.

QUIÑONES. I know I’m betraying my mistress by helping you, but your brother’s liberality has won me over. He’s been so generous to me! So many presents, so many attentions. Who can resist him? He’s indeed a true gentleman. But I must tell you: even with my help, you won’t succeed while don Melchor’s infatuation for the countess lasts. She only pretended to be leaving for Naples to find out if he truly loved her.

ÁNGELA. So, the countess is still in Madrid? She’s not going to wed her cousin?

QUIÑONES. Not at all! It was all a ruse to discover if, with her out of the picture, don Melchor would marry doña Magdalena. But now, seeing how he reacted to the news, how he still rejects doña Magdalena’s beauty and wealth, and how he’s ready to return to his native León to live there alone and in poverty—which is enough to melt a heart of stone—she sent him two thousand escudos, some new shirts and a dozen Naples biskets together with a note asking him to meet her tomorrow at La Vitoria, where all will be explained and their marriage arranged!

ÁNGELA. And how do you know all this?

QUIÑONES. Santillana, her footman, told me.

ÁNGELA. Well, I can’t allow that to happen.

QUIÑONES. I know. And, since I’m determined to help you and your bighearted brother, here’s my plan to thwart them.

ÁNGELA. Tell me. I’m all ears.

QUIÑONES. Tomorrow, you must dress in mourning and go to La Vitoria making sure that your face is concealed under your hooded cloak. Take this purse, which don Melchor entrusted to my mistress. I’ll explain later how it came to my possession. He’ll be expecting the countess, and on seeing you he’d undoubtedly mistake you for her. As I have learned, all he’s seen of
that lady is one hand and half-an-eye. Show him your own hand, which is no less beautiful than hers. Give him his purse, as confirmation that you are indeed the countess. Say how pleased you are that he’s spurned Magdalena for your sake. Declare your love and your eagerness to be his lawfully wedded wife. If all this works out, you’ll find yourself married to the man you fancy; your brother will wed doña Magdalena; and perhaps doña Magdalena’s brother, don Jerónimo, will seize this opportunity to marry the countess. And then we’ll all be merrily celebrating a triple wedding! And it will all be my doing!

ÁNGELA. If all this works out as you’ve planned it, you shall be handsomely rewarded . . .

QUIÑONES. I should think so.

ÁNGELA. . . in heaven.

DAY THREE

SCENE EIGHT

Enter Melchor and Luis.

LUIS. I thought you were on your way back to León.

MELCHOR. Things have changed, Luis. My countess is meeting me here today.

LUIS. But wasn’t she returning to Naples?

MELCHOR. No. She decided to stay for my sake. Cousin, you can rejoice with me. You’ll see me turned into a count very soon. And married to the most beautiful woman on earth.

LUIS. My heartiest congratulations, Melchor! And in return, offer me your deepest condolences, for I understand that my beloved Magdalena is to be married to her neighbour, don Sebastián. And Jerónimo, Magdalena’s brother, has asked for the hand of don Sebastián’s sister, Ángela. The old man, don Alonso, has consented to both marriages. Everything’s arranged to their satisfaction, and I am burning with jealousy and afraid of doing something I’d later regret.
MELCHOR. You’re not losing much, Luis. I’d not marry Magdalena if she owned all the silver in Perú. Compared to my divine countess’ eyes, hers are cold and lifeless, like those of a dead fish.

LUIS. I’ll allow you to insult her beauty, for she won’t be mine anymore. But I must leave you, Melchor. Once again, my congratulations, even if on this occasion your happiness only lays the foundations for my woe. There! I said it. Goodbye, cousin.

*Exit Luis and enter Ventura.*

VENTURA. He looks glum. What’s wrong with him?

MELCHOR. Nothing that concerns you, Ventura. What news do you bring?

VENTURA. Our golden countess is here. She who gives two thousand escudos fully deserves to be called that. Go, bow and scrape and kneel in front of such a bountiful deity.

*Enter Ángela, dressed in mourning, her face hidden by a hood.*

MELCHOR. My lady, when will dawn break yonder, through those dark clouds? Why don’t you cheerily rouse the slumbering morn?

ÁNGELA. Don Melchor, why do you speak like that? Did you perchance had a sleepless night? Was it because of my feigned absence?

MELCHOR. I did spend a restless night, my lady. But this joyful day more than compensates for it. ÁNGELA. Loving you as I do, I could hardly go to Italy leaving you behind.

MELCHOR. Give me licence to kiss your adorable hand.

ÁNGELA. My hand is not for everyday use. As a reward for your constancy, I’ll show you one of my eyes.

MELCHOR. That’s paying me in gold instead of silver.

*Ángela shows him one of her eyes. Ventura leans over to take a look at it.*

VENTURA. Either I’m much mistaken or that’s not the eye we saw yesterday. Yesterday’s eye was dark brown and this one is blue!
MELCHOR. Don’t pay any attention to this fool, my lady. I trust my soul and my memory, where your dazzling eye is indelibly etched. I know this is the eye I adore. But, who is this?

Enter Magdalena, dressed in black like Ángela.

VENTURA. Another lady in mourning.

MAGDALENA. I see now, don Melchor, that I was wrong to trust you. I absent myself but a few hours and you’ve already found another love.

MELCHOR. But . . .

MAGDALENA. Don’t say another word! Now, saddened at one more proof of men’s fickleness and treachery, I’m definitely returning to Italy. May you and your lady live happily ever after. I’ve learned my lesson and won’t be made a fool again by another Spaniard.

MELCHOR. My lady, please, don’t go. Tell me. Are you my countess?

MAGDALENA. That’s what I assumed, that I was yours, but now I see I was sadly mistaken and you’ve all but forgotten me. Goodbye!

MELCHOR. Please, countess, don’t leave me!

ÁNGELA. Countess? Are you in love with another countess? You traitor, double-crosser, villain! I thank heavens that I’ve discovered your duplicity in time. I never thought the mountains of León could breed such deceitful men. Goodbye!

MELCHOR. (to Magdalena) Countess, don’t go! (to Ángela) Countess, please listen to me!

ÁNGELA. The day before yesterday you asked me to look after this purse. Here! Take it!

MELCHOR. This is indeed my purse!

ÁNGELA. Except you won’t need it now, after the two thousand escudos I sent you yesterday.

MELCHOR. You sent me that money?

ÁNGELA. And the new shirts and the Naples biskets too. Use them to seduce another defenceless countess in this church, like you seduced me.

MAGDALENA. What do I hear? You, a countess? You met don Melchor in this church? You gave him money, new shirts and Naples biskets?

ÁNGELA. Of course I did. And don’t come here, dressed like me, trying to get credit for my good deeds! That purse proves that I am don Melchor’s countess.

MELCHOR. She’s right. That’s my purse. (to Magdalena) Madam, I don’t know who you are. If you’re making fun of me, please stop this instant.
MAGDALENA. That purse must have been stolen from my house! But wait. Here, look at my eye. Don’t you recognize it?

MELCHOR. Ah life-giving sun! Object of my inmost desires! Of course I recognize you.

MAGDALENA. Don’t you remember the cords of my purse hanging loose from my belt after the thief snipped them?

MELCHOR. I do, I do!

MAGDALENA. Are these the same?

MELCHOR. They are, they are!

MAGDALENA. So, who’s now making fun of you? Me or her?

ÁNGELA. Her! I have the real cords that cutpurse snipped back home. She must have counterfeited those to deceive you.

MELCHOR. Ventura, help me! Who do I believe?

VENTURA. I don’t know. I must be drunk, since I’m seeing double.

MELCHOR. Ladies, I don’t know which one of you is the real countess, except . . . except for one thing. I have her divine hand indelibly etched on my mind. Please, show me your hands so that I may recognize my true love.

MAGDALENA. I’m happy to do so.

ÁNGELA. Me too.

Enter Jerónimo and Sebastián engaged in (miming) conversation at one end of the stage.

MAGDALENA. (aside) Heavens! My brother! He can’t find me here.

ÁNGELA. (aside) Good God! My brother! I must escape.

MAGDALENA. I was determined to clear up this confusion, don Melchor, but you don’t deserve it.

Bye! Exit running.

ÁNGELA. I’m disappointed at your lack of faith in me, so I won’t show you my hand after all.

Goodbye! By the way, tomorrow I leave for Italy! Exit running.

VENTURA. Shall I go and pack our suitcases?

MELCHOR. I can’t believe what’s just happened!

VENTURA. If it’s any consolation, we’re two thousand escudos ahead, compared to yesterday. But look! Here comes don Jerónimo and his neighbour. They each have a sister in love with you. Why don’t you ask for the hand of one of them?
MELCHOR. Quiet! I want to hear what they’re saying.

JERÓNIMO. The amount of her dowry is of no importance to me, don Sebastián. I love Ángela and wish to marry her.

SEBASTIÁN. And I fell in love with Magdalena the moment I saw her. Isn’t it great that, beside being neighbours, we’ll now be brothers-in-law twice over?

JERÓNIMO. But, wait! Isn’t that the infamous count standing over there?

SEBASTIÁN. That’s him. I thought he’d be very far from here by now.

JERÓNIMO. To avoid any unpleasantness, I’ll pretend not to see him.

SEBASTIÁN. Me too. Let’s get out of here.

Exeunt Jerónimo and Sebastián.

VENTURA. Either they haven’t seen you, or they don’t want to see you. But look who comes now.

Enter Santillana.

VENTURA. What remedy do you bring us, Serum?

SANTILLANA. (in a monotone, not paying any attention to Ventura) My lady, the countess, says that, even though she is very upset with you, she still wants to see you one last time. You are to go at eleven o’clock this evening to doña Magdalena’s house. She says you know that lady and where she lives. Doña Magdalena is in great trouble and the countess plans to spirit her away to her palace in Naples. But before they leave, she wants you to go and wait below the window that faces the narrow alleyway that runs behind the house. She’ll see you there and speak with you. She says that doña Magdalena is not to know anything about this, because she’s in great danger. She told me not to expect a reply, but to remind you that it gets nippy at night, so wrap up warm and don’t catch a cold! Bye. Exit.

MELCHOR. Wait, listen...

VENTURA. I think he’s deaf.

MELCHOR. What do you think of this, Ventura?

VENTURA. I think this is a trap laid by Doña Magdalena’s father and brother.

MELCHOR. For what purpose?

VENTURA. To force you to marry her.
MELCHOR. But haven’t we just heard that she’s marrying don Sebastián?
VENTURA. You broke your word. Maybe they want to teach you a lesson you won’t soon forget.
MELCHOR. Nothing and no one will stop me from following my lady’s call. The question is, which of the two countesses is calling?
VENTURA. We’ll soon find out.

SCENE NINE

Enter Magdalena, wearing a different dress, and Quiñones, with Melchor’s purse in her hand.

MAGDALENA. Did you give Santillana my precise instructions?
QUIÑONES. I did.
MAGDALENA. And did he understand them?
QUIÑONES. I made him repeat them a dozen times, until he could recite them by heart.
MAGDALENA. And did you tell him nobody else is to know about it?
QUIÑONES. I did. By the way, I found your purse. Here it is. I concealed it so well, I thought I’d lost it. (aside to the audience) Thank God doña Ángela returned it just in time!
MAGDALENA. So, it wasn’t stolen after all. Then, the fake countess must had had one made just like this one. There’s no other possible explanation. But how did she find out what happened from the moment I saw don Melchor in church until today? She knew all about the purse, and the countess of Chirinola, and the two thousand escudos, and the new shirts and even the Naples biskets! She practically proved to him she’s the real countess!
QUIÑONES. I wonder who could’ve told her?
MAGDALENA. I wish I knew.
QUIÑONES. Well, at least now you can be jealous of another lady, and not just of yourself.
MAGDALENA. How little you know me, Quiñones. Listen, doesn’t don Melchor love me as the countess?
QUIÑONES. He certainly does.
MAGDALENA. My rival, doesn’t she pretend to be the countess?
QUIÑONES. That’s what she calls herself.
MAGDALENA. Does don Melchor love her as the countess?
QUIÑONES. He does.
MAGDALENA. Does don Melchor hate me as Magdalena?
QUIÑONES. He seems to.
MAGDALENA. Doesn’t it then follow that if my rival pretended to be Magdalena instead of the countess, he’d flee from her as he flees from me?
QUIÑONES. I suppose so.
MAGDALENA. Therefore, I’m at the same time jealous of myself as the countess, jealous of myself as my rival, and jealous of my rival as the countess. I am in fact three persons in one, like the Trinity. And jealous of all three!
QUIÑONES. It reminds me of that three-shell game they play in the market. But here you are worrying about all these problems, while your father and brother are planning your wedding to don Sebastián.
MAGDALENA. Their plans are of little concern to me compared to my jealousy. Quiñones, if they should ask for me, tell them I’m indisposed and resting in my room.
QUIÑONES. Do you wish to lie down for a little while?
MAGDALENA. No.
QUIÑONES. Shall I keep you company?
MAGDALENA. No. I just wish to be left alone with my thoughts.
QUIÑONES. Whatever!

SCENE TEN

Night time. Enter Melchor and Ventura.

MELCHOR. This is the alley, Ventura, and that’s the window. What’s the time?
VENTURA. It must be near eleven o’clock.
MELCHOR. How peaceful the dark can be.
VENTURA. The moon is showing only half-an-eye, like our chiri-countesses.
MELCHOR. I wonder which of the two is the real one. And what’s the other one up to?
VENTURA. God only knows.

*Doña Magdalena appears at a window.*

MELCHOR. But look, see where the moonbeam glimmers white on that face at the window?
VENTURA. I see it.
MAGDALENA. Is that you, don Melchor?
MELCHOR. Is it you, my dear countess?
MAGDALENA. Lower your voice and come closer. We musn’t be overheard.
MELCHOR. When will I be fortunate enough to see your heavenly face?
MAGDALENA. When I am less upset with you. And when I’m reassured that it wasn’t you who devised that scene with the other countess. I know that you recognized her.
MELCHOR. Had I known or loved her, she’d have no need to pretend to be you.
MAGDALENA. Is she beautiful?
MELCHOR. I doubt it, for then she’d not have attempted to steal someone else’s beauty.
MAGDALENA. Well, I’m ready to forgive you, provided you offer a remedy.
MELCHOR. A remedy suggests that I caused some harm, and I assure you that I’m guiltless. But I’ll accept your forgiveness if, as it is customary, the pardoned is allowed to kiss the hand of the pardoner.
MAGDALENA. This window is a bit too high. Your lips won’t reach my hand.
MELCHOR. Love overcomes all obstacles. Ventura, come here!
VENTURA. What now?
MELCHOR. Go down on your hands and knees.
VENTURA. What? What for?
MELCHOR. So that my lips can kiss the heavenly hand that dangles so sweetly up there.
VENTURA. Me on all fours? What am I? A step ladder? Find yourself a workbench or something to stand on.
MELCHOR. Do this for me, Ventura.
VENTURA. Your boots are filthy. Is my back a shoe scraper?
MELCHOR. I’ll get mad at you.
VENTURA. I don’t care.
MELCHOR. What if I give you one of my best doublets?
VENTURA. Well, if you put it that way . . . Can I have the black one with the silver trimmings?
MELCHOR. Yes.
VENTURA. Done. But this is the first and last time I do this for you, you hear?
MELCHOR. Thanks, Ventura.
VENTURA. Hurry up, climb on my back, kiss her hand and let’s be done with it.
MELCHOR. (climbs on Ventura’s back) O my beautiful hand! How lovingly you wait for me!
VENTURA. Get on with it! You’re not a feather, you know?
MELCHOR. This is the hand I love.
MAGDALENA. It will soon be yours forever.
MELCHOR. How happy I’ll be to feel its light weight on my hand!
VENTURA. How pissed I am feeling your weightiness on my back! Could you please wrap it up?
You’re heavier than a debt. My back’s bent like a chorizo sausage!
MELCHOR. (kissing her hand) My darling, my precious angel, my dearest!
VENTURA. Enough! I can’t take it any more!

_Ventura rolls on his side and Melchor falls down._

MELCHOR. Ah, damn you!
VENTURA. I’m like a rented mule. When I get tired, I just lie down.
MELCHOR. If I didn’t consider that ...
VENTURA. Consider whatever you like. My back couldn’t take it any more.
MAGDALENA. Now, listen, my beloved don Melchor.
MELCHOR. I’m listening.
MAGDALENA. Have you recovered from your cruel fall?
VENTURA. He’s recovered. I haven’t.
MELCHOR. What do you want to tell me, my darling?
MAGDALENA. I don’t wish to mislead you anymore. Tomorrow, I’m departing for Italy.

Burdensome obligations, imposed on me by a last testament and will, oblige me to marry my cousin Salvatore Mancuso. And my uncle urges me to return, accept my responsibilities and do my duty. I delayed my departure only to see you. Tomorrow, I will be taken away to Naples. Ah! I wish I could stay with you. But as it is not possible, I want the second best thing. Listen. I love Magdalena as I love myself. I know she adores you. I would like to repay
her friendship and her kindness. And the only way I know how to is by offering you to her. She loves you. You are poor. She's as rich as she's beautiful. My sorrow will only be lessened by the knowledge that she'll take my place in your heart. Be true to her and do what I ask of you, for it will be my last request.

MELCHOR. If this is all true, and my malevolent fate has ordained that tonight I both win and lose you— and even though what you're asking me is an extraordinary sacrifice, for, compared to you, the goddess of beauty itself would seem ugly to me—to show you how much I love you and how I obey your smallest wish to the letter, I promise to do what you ask, even if marrying Magdalena is certain death to me. But since I'm to lose you anyway, death is welcome to me.

MAGDALENA. You are indeed the epitome of lovers. Wait here a minute. I'll call her. And right here, you're to hold her hand and solemnly promise to marry her. Will you do that?

MELCHOR. I'll obey your wishes.

MAGDALENA. But you must be nice to her. Speak sweet words of love.

MELCHOR. My tongue will utter them, but not my soul.

MAGDALENA. And you'll promise to marry her?

MELCHOR. I said that I will.

MAGDALENA. Ah, you traitor! Unfaithful lover! How could I've ever trusted you? So, my smallest wish would induce you to marry someone else. It would, wouldn't it? Well, I want a more constant lover, a steadfast companion, firm and unwavering in his affections!

MELCHOR. Light of my day, my countess, please don't go! Wait, hear me out!

MAGDALENA. What can you say in your defence?

MELCHOR. Don't be offended by what I imagined was your dearest wish. You know that I accepted your request to marry a woman I abhor only because you commanded me to do so. I expected praise for my sublime sacrifice, not censure.

MAGDALENA. Even if she were embarking for the Indies, what woman could possibly ask her lover to love someone else? I expected vehement protestations from you, a firm refusal to go against your inclinations, a declaration of your undying love. I wanted you to describe in detail her many shortcomings, her inadequacies. That would have made me happy and make me love you even more. Didn't you say but yesterday that she left you cold, that she was stupid, that you'd prefer death to marriage to her?
MELCHOR. Enough, enough, my beloved. I know I've erred. Please, forgive me. I swear on the most sacred that, as far as I'm concerned, there's no monster comparable to Magdalena. Even if you depart for Naples and I were promised all the gold that the sun engenders in the depths of the earth, I'd not consent to marry her.

MAGDALENA. (speaking in two different voices) –What's going on here? –Ah, it's you, Magdalena, my friend. Come, come forward. Here's your don Melchor saying horrible things about you. I'll let him repeat them to your face. I am tired and I'm going to bed. (She leaves and returns a moment later speaking in a different voice). Don Melchor, he who speaks badly of women behind their backs is not only discourteous but unworthy of my respect and of the countess' love. I've come to the conclusion that you're a man of limited intelligence, unable to appreciate a woman like me. A blind man would hardly be a good judge of colours, would he? So, go back to the mountains of León and keep company to your sheep. In Madrid you're clearly out of your depth. (leaves the window).

VENTURA. Well, she kept nothing back, did she? But how did she know about the sheep?

Enter Alonso, Jerónimo, and Sebastián with lights.

ALONSO. Did you say there's a suspicious man prowling this alley?
JERÓNIMO. That's what my servant told me.
VENTURA. I think we better make ourselves scarce.
SEBASTIÁN. There they are!
ALONSO. Isn't this don Melchor?
JERÓNIMO. Death to the traitor!
ALONSO. No, wait! Sheath your sword, my son. Don Melchor, what kind of madness is this? Do you need to come and speak to my daughter in secret, in the dark, in the middle of the night when you had every opportunity to do so openly and in the light of day?
JERÓNIMO. This is an attempt to compromise my good sister's name! Revenge!
MELCHOR. You couldn't be more wrong, if you think I'm here for your sister.
ALONSO. Who then?
MELCHOR. The countess, your guest. She commanded me to come here to speak with her.
ALONSO. A countess in my house?
MELCHOR. Yes indeed.
JERÓNIMO. Are you out of your mind? There’s no countess here.
MELCHOR. I was just speaking to her at that window.
JERÓNIMO. Don Melchor, you can’t wriggle out of this with such humbug!
VENTURA. My master speaks the truth. I served as the bench on which he stood to reach her hand. My back will testify to that fact.
ALONSO. Heavens! A countess in my house without my knowledge?

Enter Ángela.

ÁNGELA. Yes, don Alonso! I am the one who, concealed behind my cloak, pretended to be a countess to win don Melchor’s love. And this evening, through that window, I promised to be his legally wedded wife.
SEBASTIÁN. Sister! What are you saying?
ÁNGELA. That I have free will and will, with Saint Anthony’s help, marry whomever I please.
MELCHOR. Ah, my beloved. My soul acknowledged you, even though my eyes had never seen you whole. You are my true wife!

Enter Magdalena, Quiñones and Santillana.

MAGDALENA. No, she is not! She’s deceived you. She’s usurped my title. I’m your counterfeit countess and your true wife. And I can prove it. Here’s the purse and the cut strings and here are my two witnesses, Quiñones, my maid, and Santillana, my footman.
SANTILLANA. That’s the truth. I’ve served as her footman and her postman.
MAGDALENA. And for the final, definitive proof, here’s my hand, which sparked your love for me in the first place.
MELCHOR. I recognize it, and, ashamed of myself, I beg you to allow me to kiss it.
ALONSO. Don Sebastián, love comes unbidden. We must needs accept that this marriage was made in heaven . . . I think.
SEBASTIÁN. I agree. Besides, it’s getting late and this play is becoming altogether too confusing and lacking in sense. Let’s put an end to it, I say. Ángela, don Jerónimo will be your husband.
ÁNGELA. Well, if I can’t have don Melchor, I’ll make do with don Jerónimo.
JERÓNIMO. And I with you, my dear.
ÁNGELA. Saint Anthony will approve, I'm sure.

VENTURA. Quiñones, my master is marrying your mistress. Shouldn't we get married too? What do you say?

QUIÑONES. Whatever!