

CELESTINA



a free version and adaptation

by

José María Ruano de la Haza

based on the English translation by

James Mabbe

(first printed in 1631 in London by J.B.)

of the

Comedia de Calisto y Melibea

by

Fernando de Rojas

(first published in Burgos, Spain, by Fadrique Alemán de Basilea, in 1499)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Celestina

Melibeia

Calisto

Sempronio / Sosia

Voice of Pleberio

Voice of Elicia

Voice of Alisa

PROLOGUE

Two men carry the lifeless body of Melibea across the back of the stage.

VOICE OF PLEBERIO (*off*).—Alas! My solace's in the suds. Behold her, whom I begot, dashed and broken all to pieces. The order of dying has been altered. My threescore years were fitter for the grave than her twenty. The earth would have enjoyed my hoary hairs more than her golden tresses. For whom did I build these turrets? For whom did I get honours? For whom did I plant trees? For whom did I build ships? O world! I thought in my more tender years that both you and your actions were governed by order and ruled by reason; but now I see that you are a labyrinth of errors, a dance full of changes! You cast before us the bait of your best delights and, when we have swallowed, you show the hook that chokes us. You promise mountains but perform mole-hills! O my most unhappy daughter! What shall I do when I come into your chamber and find it empty? What shall I do when I call you and you do not answer me? O Love, I did not think you had the power to kill your subjects! Why did you let me escape when I did pass through the midst of your flames in my youth? I thought I was free of your snares when I began to grow towards forty. I did not dream that you would take vengeance of the parents in the children. Who gave you so great a power? Who gave you a name which so ill befits you? If you were Love, you would love your servants. Yet you are the cause of all our misfortunes. They gave you a sweet name; but your deeds are exceeding sour. Some call you god, but God kills those whom he created and you those who follow you. O my bruised daughter, bruised even all to pieces! Why would you not take pity of your kind and loving mother? Why did you show yourself so cruel against your aged father? Why have you left me all alone in this vale of tears?

SCENE I

Calisto y Melibea in a church.

CALISTO.—In this, Melibea, I see God's greatness.

MELIBEA.—In what, Calisto?

CALISTO.—In giving Nature the power to endow you with such perfect beauty. And in affording me so great a favour as your fair presence; and in a place so convenient to unsheath my secret grief. Such a favour is undoubtedly greater by many degrees than any service, sacrifice or good works that I have offered God. What saint up in heaven ever saw a more glorious creature than I behold here below? Although we do differ in this: that they rejoice without fear of losing such blessedness and I must dread the torment which your absence will inflict upon me.

MELIBEA.—Hold you this, Calisto, so great a reward?

CALISTO.—So great, in truth, that if God should give me a place in heaven above his saints, I should not hold it so great a happiness.

MELIBEA.—Then I shall give you a similar reward, if you persevere.

CALISTO.—Blessed are my ears which can hear so gracious a word.

MELIBEA.—But unfortunate by the time you have heard your doom, for your payment shall be as foul as your presumption was foolish! How dare you hazard yourself on the virtue of woman like me? Go, wretch, begone out of my sight, for my patience cannot endure that you have dared to communicate your illicit love to me!

SCENE II

Enters Calisto in his chamber and then Sempronio, his servant.

CALISTO.—Sempronio, Sempronio! Where is this accursed varlet?

SEMPRONIO.—I am here, sir, about your horses.

CALISTO.—My horses, you knave, why then do you come out of the hall?

SEMPRONIO.—The gerfalcon bated and I came in to set him on the perch.

CALISTO.—The devil take you! Go, you unlucky rogue, go, I say, and open the chamber door
and make ready my bed!

SEMPRONIO.—Sir, the bed is ready for you.

CALISTO.—Shut the windows and leave darkness to accompany me. My sad thoughts deserve
no light. O death! How welcome are you to those who outlive their happiness!

SEMPRONIO.—What's the matter with you?

CALISTO.—Get you gone! Do not speak to me!

SEMPRONIO.—Since you will lament all alone, I will be gone, sir.

CALISTO.—The devil go with you!

SEMPRONIO.—With me, sir? I don't think he can go with me when he stays with you.

CALISTO.—Sempronio!

SEMPRONIO.—Sir.

CALISTO.—Reach me that lute.

SEMPRONIO.—Sir, here it is.

CALISTO.—What grief can be so great as to equal my misery?

SEMPRONIO.—That lute is out of tune.

CALISTO.—How shall I tune it if I am out of tune? How shall I hear harmony when I am at
such discord with myself? My will is not obedient to reason and I harbour in my breast
peace and war, love and hate, injuries and suspicions. And all of these from one and the
same cause. Take this lute and sing me the most doleful ditty you know.

SEMPRONIO.— (*sings*) *Nero from Tarpey doth behold
How Rome doth burn all on a flame;
He hears the cries of young and old,
Yet is not grieved at the same.*

CALISTO.—My fire is far greater, and less is her pity.

SEMPRONIO.— (*aside*) My master has surely lost his wits.

CALISTO.—What's that you mutter to yourself, Sempronio?

SEMPRONIO.—Marry, sir, I said, how can the fire which torments one living man be greater than the fire which burnt such a city and such a multitude of men?

CALISTO.—How? I shall tell you. Greater is the flame which lasts fourscore years than the one which endures but one day; and greater the fire which burns one soul than the one which burns a hundred thousand bodies. See what difference there is between painted shadows and lively substances? So great is the difference between the fire you speak of and the one which burns me. If Purgatory's fire is such, I would rather that my soul should go with those of irrational animals than to the heavenly abode of the saints.

SEMPRONIO.— (*aside*) It's not enough to show himself a fool, he also speak like a heretic.

CALISTO.—Did I not tell you to speak aloud? What's that you mumble to yourself?

SEMPRONIO.—I said that may God not wish that upon you, that what you said sounded like heresy.

CALISTO.—Why?

SEMPRONIO.—Because it is contrary to the Christian religion.

CALISTO.—So what?

SEMPRONIO.—Are you not a Christian?

CALISTO.—I? I am a Melibean. I love Melibea, I worship Melibea and I believe in Melibea.

SEMPRONIO.— I know now on which foot you halt and I shall heal you.

CALISTO.—You speak of matters beyond the moon. It is impossible.

SEMPRONIO.—O, sir, exceeding easy; for the first recovery of sickness is the discovery of the disease.

CALISTO.—What do you think of my sickness?

SEMPRONIO.—It is misery enough for a man to have his will captivated and chained to one place only.

CALISTO.—You do not know what constancy is.

SEMPRONIO.—Perseverance in ill is not constancy, but obstinacy; however it pleases you philosophers of Cupid to call it.

CALISTO.— You yourself take pleasure in praising your Elicia.

SEMPRONIO.—Do as I say and not as I do.

CALISTO.—Why do you reprove me?

SEMPRONIO.—Because you subject the dignity of a man to the imperfection of a weak woman.

CALISTO.—A woman? O you blockhead, she's a goddess!

SEMPRONIO. —Are you in earnest or do you but jest?

CALISTO.—Jest? I verily believe she is a goddess and do not believe there is another god in heaven.

SEMPRONIO.—What? Did you ever hear such a blasphemy?

CALISTO.—Why do you laugh?

SEMPRONIO.—I laugh because I did not think that there could be a sin worse than the one invented in Sodom.

CALISTO.—How?

SEMPRONIO.—Because those men of Sodom, sir, attempted to lie with angels and you, with whom you believe to be God.

CALISTO.—A pox on you for a fool, you make me laugh!

SEMPRONIO.—What, would you weep for the rest of your life?

CALISTO.—Yes.

SEMPRONIO.—And why?

CALISTO.—Because I love her, before whom I find myself so unworthy that I have no hope of obtaining her.

SEMPRONIO.—Ah, sir, how despair you of obtaining a woman, many of whom have basely prostituted themselves to the embracements of stablegrooms and others even to brute animals? Have you not heard of Parsiphae who played the wanton with a bull and of Minerva who dallied with a dog?

CALISTO.—Tush, I believe it not, they are but fables.

SEMPRONIO.— And that of your grandmother with the ape, is that a fable too? Witness your grandfather's knife.

CALISTO.—A pox on this coxcomb, what nonsense he gives!

SEMPRONIO.—Have I nettled you, sir? Read your histories, study your philosophers, examine your poets; and you shall find how full their books are of women's vile and wicked examples. Listen to Solomon where he says that women and wine make men curse. Consult with Seneca and you shall see how vilely he reckons them. Hearken unto Aristotle. Gentiles, Jews, Christians and Moors, all of them agree on this.

CALISTO.—Tell me, I pray, this Adam, this Solomon, this David, this Aristotle, this Virgil and many others, did they not subject themselves unto them? Am I greater than these?

SEMPRONIO.— You should follow those that subdued them rather than those that were subdued by them. Fly from their deceits. Do you know, sir, what they do? Things that are too hard for any man to understand: they observe no mean; they have no reason; nor do they take any heed in what they do. They will give you roast-meat and beat you with the spit. They will invite you unto them and presently send you packing with a flea in your ear; they tell you their love and yet proclaim hate; they are quickly won and quickly lost; soon pleased and soon displeased. They expect you to guess their slightest whim; and their apprehensions admit no delay. O what a plague, what a hell, nay what a loathsome thing it is for a man to have to do with them any longer than during that short prick of time that he holds them in his arms and gets his pleasure.

CALISTO.—The more you tell me and the more inconveniences you set before me, the more I love her.

SEMPRONIO.—I see this is no fit counsel for young men, who know not how to submit themselves to reason nor to be governed by discretion. Give your reputation its due proportion, sir, and think of yourself as more worthy than you consider yourself. First of all, because you are a man; then, of an excellent and singular wit; and endowed by Nature with wisdom, largeness of limbs, force and agility. Lastly, the stars were so propitious at your birth and yourself born under so good a planet that you are beloved of all.

CALISTO.—But not of Melibea. And I tell you, Sempronio, that my gifts, compared with Melibea's, are but as stars to the sun. Consider the nobleness of her blood, the great state she is born into, the excellency of her wit; and lastly her divine beauty, of which, I pray you, give me leave to discourse a little for the refreshing of my soul. And what I shall tell

you shall be only of what lies open to the eye; for if I could discourse of what is concealed, we would not have to argue so earnestly as we do now.

SEMPRONIO.— (*aside*) What fooleries will my master tell me now?

CALISTO.—I will begin first with her hairs. Have you seen those skeins of fine twisted gold which are spun in Arabia? Her hairs are more fine and shine no less than they. They have the power themselves, without any other help, to transform men into stones.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) Into asses rather.

CALISTO.—Her eyes are clear and full; the hairs of her lids rather long than short; her eyebrows thinnish and prettily arched; the nose of middling size; her mouth little; her teeth small and white; her lips red and plump; the form of her face rather long than round; her breasts placed at a fitting height. But who can describe to you their rising roundness and the pretty pleasing fashion of her little tender nipples? Her hands little, and in a measurable manner accompanied by sweet flesh; her fingers long; her nails large and well coloured, like rubies intermixed with pearls. And as for those parts which I could not eye, if one can judge things unseen by the seen, they must be incomparably better than those on which Paris gave his judgement in the difference between the three goddesses.

SEMPRONIO.—Have you done, sir?

CALISTO.—As briefly as I could.

SEMPRONIO.—Suppose all this you say is true, yet in that you are a man, I still say you are more worthy than she.

CALISTO.—In what?

SEMPRONIO.—In that she is imperfect; out of which defect, she lusts and longs after yourself or even after someone less worthy. Did you not read the Philosopher, where he tells that, as matter desires form, so woman desires man?

CALISTO.—O wretch that I am, when shall I see this between me and Melibea?

SEMPRONIO.—It is possible that you may; and as possible that one day you may loathe her as much as you love her now. And this shall happen when you come to the full enjoyment of her and when you look on her with other eyes.

CALISTO.—With what eyes?

SEMPRONIO.—With clear eyes.

CALISTO.—And with what, I pray, do I see her now?

SEMPRONIO.—With some kind of spectacles which make little things seem great and great little. But do not despair; I myself will take this business in hand and shall accomplish your desire.

CALISTO.—God may grant you what your wish. I rejoice to hear you, though hopeless of ever obtaining it.

SEMPRONIO.—Nay, I will make sure of it.

CALISTO.—Heaven be your good speed. My cloth of gold doublet, which I wore yesterday, it is yours, Sempronio.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) If my master clap such spurs to my sides, I shall bring her to his bed.

CALISTO.—But tell me, how do you think to purchase her pity?

SEMPRONIO.—I shall tell you. It is now a good while since, at the lower end of this street, I fell acquainted with an old bearded woman called Celestina, a witch, subtle as the devil, and well practised in all the rogueries that the world can afford. I hear that she has marred and made up again more than five thousand maiden-heads in this city. She will move hard rocks, if she lists, and at her pleasure provoke them to luxury.

CALISTO.—O that I might but speak to her.

SEMPRONIO.—I will bring her hither to you.

SCENE III

Celestina speaks to Alicia, who remains invisible off stage.

CELESTINA.—Elicia, Elicia! Sempronio is coming!

ELICIA.—(off) O hush! Peace, peace!

CELESTINA.—Why? What's the matter?

ELICIA.—(off) Peace, I say, for here is Crito.

CELESTINA.—Put him in the little broom closet! Quick! Tell him a cousin of yours and friend of mine is come to see you!

Enter Sempronio.

SEMPRONIO.—(Embraces Celestina) O my dear mother, what a longing I've had to come to you!

CELESTINA.—My son, my king! I am so overjoyed I cannot speak. Embrace me once more. What? Three whole days and never see us? Elicia, Elicia, guess who is here?

ELICIA.—(off) Who, mother?

CELESTINA.—Sempronio.

ELICIA.—(off) O how my heart leaps and beats in my body! What of him?

CELESTINA.—Look here, he's here. I will embrace him and you shall not.

ELICIA.—(off) Out, you accursed traitor! Pox, plagues and botches consume and kill you!

SEMPRONIO.—Hy, hy, hy! Why, how now, my Elicia? What troubles you?

ELICIA.—(off) What? Three whole days away and not once come to see me!

SEMPRONIO.—(parodies Calisto making fun of the invisible Elicia while Celestina laughs) Do you think, sweetheart, that distance can divorce my affection from you or even the least spark of the true fire which I bear in my bosom? Where-e'er I go, you go with me. But soft; methinks I hear somebody's feet above. Who is it?

ELICIA.—(off) Who is it? One of my sweethearts!

SEMPRONIO.—Nay, like enough, I easily believe it.

ELICIA.—(off) Nay it is true! Come up here and see him!

SEMPRONIO.—I go.

CELESTINA.—Come hither, my son, come along with me; let that fool alone, for she is idle-headed and almost out of her little wits because of your absence. Regard not what she says, for she will tell a thousand flim-flam tales. Come with me and let us talk.

SEMPRONIO.—But who is that above?

CELESTINA.—Would you know who?

SEMPRONIO.—I would.

CELESTINA.—A wench entrusted to my care by a friar.

SEMPRONIO.—What friar?

CELESTINA.—You don't want to know.

SEMPRONIO.—Now, as you love me, good mother, tell me what friar is it?

CELESTINA.—You would know it? The fat one.

SEMPRONIO.—Alack, poor wench, what a heavy load she is to bear!

CELESTINA.—We women must bear all; though you have seen but few sores in our bellies.

SEMPRONIO.—Sores? No, but many great swellings.

CELESTINA.—Now fie upon you, you do but jest, I am sure!

SEMPRONIO.—If I do but jest, then let me see her.

CELESTINA.—O wicked wretch! I see that one wench is not enough for you. Elicia shall know it.

SEMPRONIO.—Be patient, mother, I don't wish to see her or any other. I only want to speak a word or two with you. And so, put on your mantle and let us go; and by the way I will tell you all.

CELESTINA.—Let us go then! Elicia, farewell; make fast the door!

The light changes to suggest that they are in a street.

SEMPRONIO.—Now, mother, listen to me and don't let your ears go a-wool-gathering. I want you to know that, since the time that I first entered into league with you, I never desired but share all things with you.

CELESTINA.—May almighty God, my son, share his good blessings with you, for you take pity of this poor wicked old woman. But say on, make no more delay; for our friendship needs no preambles.

SEMPRONIO.— Calisto is hot in love with Melibea; he stands in need of your and my help; and because he needs our joint furtherance, let us join together to make some purchase of him.

CELESTINA.— Sempronio, I am as glad of your news as a surgeon of broken heads. And as he at first fester the wounds, the more to endear the cure, so I mean to deal with Calisto.

SEMPRONIO.—Hush, no more. We are now at the gate, and walls, they say, have ears.

The light changes to suggest the interior of Calisto's house.

Enters Calisto.

CALISTO.—Sempronio!

SEMPRONIO.—Sir. This is Celestina.

CALISTO—I see now that the face is indeed the index of the soul. O virtuous old age! O glorious hope of my desired end! I wish to draw near you and my lips long to kiss those hands which can bring about the fullness of my recovery.

CELESTINA.— (*aside to Sempronio*) This fool thinks to feed me the bones which I have already gnawn. Sure the man dreams; when he comes to fry my eggs, he'll find what's wanting. Bid him shut his mouth and open his purse.

CALISTO.—(*aside to Sempronio*) What did the mother say? It seems to me that she thinks I offer words to excuse my reward.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside to Calisto*) You have hit the nail on the head, sir.

CALISTO.— (*aside to Sempronio*) I will quickly put her out of that doubt.

SEMPRONIO.— (*aside to Calisto*) And in so doing you shall do well, sir; for you should not let weeds grow among the corn, nor suspicion in the hearts of friends, but root them out straight away with the hook of good works.

CALISTO.— (*gives Celestina a purse*). Receive, dear mother, this poor gift of a man who offers you his life with it.

CELESTINA.—My good lord Calisto, the fashion of your liberality much exceeds the greatness of your gift.

SEMPRONIO—(*aside to Celestina*) Mother, what has he given you?

CELESTINA.—(*aside to Sempronio*) You shall know in good time.

CALISTO.—Now, mother, go your ways and cheer up your own home and when you have done that, pray hasten hither and cheer up mine.

CELESTINA.—Good chance attend you.

CALISTO.—And you too. Farewell.

Exit Celestina.

CALISTO.—Sempronio, tell me, the hundred crowns I gave that old beldam, are they well bestowed or not?

SEMPRONIO.—Yes, sir, exceedingly well. And now be pleased to return back to your chamber and there take some rest, since your business is in such good hands.

CALISTO.—Methinks, Sempronio, it is no good counsel that I should rest here accompanied and that she who seeks my cure should go all alone. It were better that you should go along with her and hasten her on, since you know that on her diligence depends my welfare.

SEMPRONIO.—Sir, I would fain go to fulfil your command, but, if I leave you alone, you will talk idly, do nothing but sigh, weep and take on, shutting yourself up in darkness, desiring solitude and seeking new means of thoughtful torment.

CALISTO.—How like a silly fool you talk! Don't you know that it eases the pain to bewail its cause? O how sweet it is to the sorrowful to unsheathe his griefs! What ease do broken sighs bring with them! As many poets as have ever written of comfort and consolation, say the same thing.

SEMPRONIO.—Read a little farther and you shall find that they say that to seek after matter of sorrow is a kind of madness. Kick not therefore against the prick. Feign yourself to be merry, pluck up your spirits and be of good cheer, and all, you shall see, shall be well.

CALISTO.—Sempronio, my friend, since it so grieves you that I should be alone, call Parmeno hither and he shall stay with me; and henceforth be you (as you have ever been) faithful and loyal to me, for in the service of the servant consists the master's remuneration.

SEMPRONIO.— Parmeno, Parmeno!

SCENE IV

Street. Day. Enter Sempronio running and then Celestina.

SEMPRONIO.—Look how slowly the old bearded bawd moves! Now she has her money, her arms and legs are broken. Eh, mother Celestina!

CELESTINA.—How now, son? What news with you?

SEMPRONIO.—Our sick patient knows not what he wants. He will have his cake baked before it be dough. He fears your negligence and is angry with his closefistedness and offended that he gave you no more.

CELESTINA.—There is nothing more proper to lovers than impatience; especially new ones. They never once think of the harm which the meat of their desire may occasion unto them and their servants.

SEMPRONIO.—What do you say of servants? Do you think that any danger is likely to come unto us by labouring in this business? I'd rather see him and all his love go to the devil. For it is better to lose his service than my life in serving him.

CELESTINA.—Well said! Yet, my son, it is necessary that a good proctor should follow his client's cause diligently; that he colours his plea with some feigned show of reason; to the end that the client may both see and say that, though he did not prevail, yet he both spoke and laboured for his fee. That way the proctor shall not want for clients, nor Celestina for love suitors.

SEMPRONIO.—Frame it to your own liking; for I am sure this is not the first business you have taken in hand.

CELESTINA.—The first, my son? Few virgins (I thank God for it) have you seen in this city that I have not helped sell their wares. As soon as the girl is born, I write her down in my register and keep a catalogue of all their names to the intent that I might know how many escaped my net. Why, what did you think of me, Sempronio? Can I live by the air? Can I feed myself with wind? Do I inherit any other land? Have I any other house or vineyard? Know you of any other substance of mine besides this office? By what do I eat and drink? By what do I put clothes on my back and shoes on my feet? In this city

was I born; in it was I bred; and in it I live (though I say it) in good credit and estimation, as all the world knows. You may rest assured that he who knows not both my name and my house is a stranger in this town.

SEMPRONIO.—But tell me, mother, do you think you can do any good regarding Melibea?

CELESTINA.—No surgeon can at the first dressing give a true judgment of his patient's wound.

But what I see for the present, I'll plainly deliver unto you. Melibea is fair; Calisto passionate and frank. He cares not to spare his purse, nor I my pains. He is willing to spend and I to speed him in his business. Let his money be stirring and let the suit hang as long as it will. Money can do anything; it splits hard rocks; it passes over rivers dry-foot. There is no place so high that an ass laden with gold will not get up to. Calisto's foolishness and ardour are sufficient to mar him and to make us. Now, Sempronio, farewell. I must go to Pleberio's house. For though Melibea braves it and stands so high on her pantoufles, yet she is not the first that I have made stoop and stop cackling. They are all ticklish and skittish at first; but after they are well saddled, they never tire of it. If they journey by night, they wish it may never be morning. They curse the cocks because they proclaim it is day; and the clocks because they go too fast. When they see the morning star arise, they sigh for sorrow; and the clearing of the day is the clouding of their joy. I myself never tired to travel on that road, my son; and, old as I am, God knows how I still long for it. The more so these maids who boil without the help of fire. They will entreat him of whom they were entreated; endure torment for him whom before they had tormented; and will be servants to those whose mistresses they were. They will willingly break through stone walls, open windows, feign sickness and, if the hinges of their doors chance to creak, will anoint them with oil. I cannot explain to you the great impression that the sweetness of the first kisses leave in their hearts. They are enemies of the mean and wholly set upon extremes.

SEMPRONIO.—Mother, I understand not these terms.

CELESTINA.—Marry, I say that a woman either loves or hates him of whom she is beloved, so that if she does not entertain his love, she cannot dissemble her hate. And because I know this, I go more merrily to Melibea's house than if I had her fast in my fist already. For I know that, though at first I must be forced to woo her, yet in the end she will be

glad to sue me; and though at present perhaps she will threaten me, yet at last she will be well pleased to flatter me.

SEMPRONIO.—Mother, look well about you. Take heed what you do. For a bad beginning can never make a good ending. Think of her father, who is noble, and of great power and courage; think of her mother, who is jealous and furious; and you, suspicion itself, no sooner seen than mistrusted. Melibea is their only child, and by miscarrying will miscarry with her all their happiness. The very thought of it makes me tremble. Go not to fetch wool and come home shorn yourself; seek not to pluck her wings and come back yourself without feathers.

CELESTINA.—Without feathers, my son?

SEMPRONIO.—Or feathered, mother, which is worse.

SCENE V

Enter Celestina. She holds a skein of red wool in one hand and a piece of paper or parchment in the other.

CELESTINA.—I conjure you, sad god Pluto, lord of the infernal deep, emperor of the damned court, proud commander of the fallen angels, grand signor of those sulphureous fires which the flaming mountains flash forth, governor of the torments and chief tormentor of the sinful souls that lie howling in hell! I, Celestina, your most noted client, conjure you by the virtue of these vermillion letters, by the blood of that bird of the night with which they are characterized, by the power and weight of these names and signs which are contained in this paper, by the fell and bitter poison of those vipers whence this oil was extracted, with which I annoint this clew of yarn -- I command that you come without delay to obey my will that Melibea shall buy this yarn of me, so that the more she shall behold it, the more her heart be mollified and the sooner wrought to yield to my request. I also command that you will open her heart and wound it with the strongest and crudest love for Calisto in such a manner that, despising all honesty and casting off all shame, she may discover herself unto me and reward both my message and my pains. Do this and I am at your command to do what you will have me do.

The light changes, suggesting a street in daylight. Celestina speaks to herself while walking briskly.

CELESTINA—Now that I am all alone I shall consider that which Sempronio feared concerning my travail in this business. For, although I dissembled with him, I am scared that, if I am found out by Melibea's father, it would cost me my life; or at the very least, I should be much impaired in my honour if they toss me up in a blanket or cause me to be cruelly whipped. And then my hundred crowns in gold shall have been purchased at too dear a price. Ah, wretched me! Into what a labyrinth have I put myself? Shall I persist, or shall I

desist? If the theft be found about me, I shall either be killed or carted with a paper crown on my head. But in case I should not go, what will Calisto say? What will he think? That I have discovered the plot to Pleberio so that I might gain by both? And he will rail upon me like a madman and he will upbraid me to my face with most reproacheful terms, saying "Out, you old whore; why did you increase my passions with your promises? False bawd as you are, for all the world your feet can walk, for me only your tongue; others can have works, I only words; others can have remedy at your hands, I only torment." So that, look I on which side I will, it is ill here and it is ill there; pain and grief on either hand. But of two evils, it is the wiser course to incline to the lesser. And therefore I had rather offend Pleberio than displease Calisto. Lo, yonder's the gate. Coraggio, coraggio, Celestina; be not dismayed. All omens are propitious in my proceedings, or else I am nobody in this my art. Of four men that I met on the way three were called John and two of them were cuckolds. The first word that I heard passing along the street was a love complaint. I have not stumbled since I came forth. Methinks the very stones of the street did sunder themselves one from the other to give me way as I passed. Nor did my skirts hinder my feet. Nor do I feel any weariness in my legs. Every one salutes me. Not a dog has once barked at me. I have neither seen any bird of a black feather, neither thrush nor crow, nor any other of the like unlucky nature.

The light changes to suggest the interior of Melibea's house. Enters Melibea.

MELIBEA.—What old witch is this that comes sweeping the streets with her gown? Fie, what a dust she makes!

CELESTINA.—Peace be in this house.

MELIBEA.—Mother, you be welcome. What wind drives you this way?

CELESTINA.—My good lady Melibea, to sell this little parcel of yarn of mine own spinning. I have no better remedy to help myself and relieve this my poor state. Look well upon it; it is as fine as the hair of your head, as strong as the strings of a viol, white as a flake of snow, spun all with mine own fingers, reeled and wound up with mine own hands. Did you ever see better? Three royals I received no longer ago than yesterday for an ounce.

MELIBEA. —I shall tell my mother to give you that which is reasonable for your yarn.

CELESTINA. — (*gives her the yarn*) Madame, God grant that you long enjoy your noble youth and this your flourishing prime. It is a time when more pleasures and delights are found than in this old decayed carcass of mine, which is nothing but a very spittle-house of diseases; an inn full of infirmities; a storehouse of melancholy thoughts; a near-neighbour unto death.

MELIBEA.—Tell me, mother, why do you speak so ill of that which the whole world so earnestly desires to enjoy and see?

CELESTINA.— They desire it because by living to live old, they live. And life, you know, is sweet. Hence it is that children desire to be men and men to be old men; and old men to be more and more old; and though they live in so much pain, yet do they still desire to live. For fain would the hen live for all her pip. But who is he, my lady, who can recount unto you the inconveniences of old age? Its torments, its cares, its troubles? Those deep furrows and wrinkles in the face; that change and alteration in the hair; that fading of fresh and lively colour; that want of hearing; that weakness of sight; that hollowness of the eyes; that sinking and falling of the jaws; that toothlessness of the gums; that feebleness of legs? But ah my lady, if all these miseries come accompanied with poverty!

MELIBEA.—Methinks, mother, it should be a great grief unto you to think upon those good days of yours which are past and gone. Would you not be willing to run them over again?

CELESTINA.—My lady, a traveller, tired out after a hard day's travel, would be foolish to wish to return to the same place from whence he came. There is nothing in the world more sweet or more pleasing to the truly weary than the inn.

MELIBEA.—Were it only to live, it would be good to desire what I say.

CELESTINA.—As soon, my lady, dies the young lamb as the old sheep. There is no man so old that he may not live one year more, nor no man so young that he may not die today.

MELIBEA.—You have scared me with your words, which put me in remembrance that I have seen you before. Tell me, mother, are not you Celestina, that dwelt in Tanners' Row near the river?

CELESTINA.—The very same.

MELIBEA.—By my fay, you are become an old woman. I would not have known you, had it not been for that slash over your face. Then you were fair, now greatly altered.

CELESTINA.—My lady, try to take hold of time, so that it slips not from you! Have you not heard what they say, that the day will come when you shall not recognize yourself in a mirror? Though, I am grown gray before my time and seem double my years. Of four daughters that my mother had, myself was the youngest. And therefore I am not so old as you take me to be.

MELIBEA.—Friend Celestina, I am very glad both to see and know you; and I have taken great pleasure in your discourse. Here, take some money and farewell, for you look, poor soul, as if you have eaten nothing all this day.

CELESTINA.—O angelic image! O precious pearl! How truly have you guessed! But have you not heard that man shall not live by bread alone? It is not only eating that maintains a man or woman, especially me, who am used to fasting a whole, nay, two days together while soliciting other folk's businesses. For it was evermore my fashion to seek trouble in serving others rather than in pleasing myself. If you give me leave, I will tell you the reason of my coming.

MELIBEA.—Acquaint me, mother, with all your wants; and if I can help you, I shall willingly do it.

CELESTINA.—My wants, madam? Nay, others', as I told you; for my own I pass at home with myself without letting anyone know them. I eat when I may and drink whenever I can get it; for, for all my poverty, I never wanted a penny to buy me bread, nor a quart to send for wine, no, not in all this time of my widowhood. For whilst my husband lived, I always had a good vessel in my house. And when one was empty another was full. I never went to bed without eating a toast well steeped in wine and drinking two dozen of draughts, for fear of the mother, wherewith I was then wont to be troubled. But now that I husband all things myself, I am fain to fetch my wine in a little poor jar, which will scarce hold a pottle. And sometimes in punishment of my sins (which cross I am willing to bear), I am forced to go six times a day with these my silver hairs about my shoulders to fill it up at the tavern. But I should not like to die of death till I see myself with a good rundlet of wine. For as the saying goes, no young man, spruce and fine, walks as briskly as a man with bread and wine. For ill does the spindle move when the beard does not wag above. I am telling you all this because of what I said concerning others' and not my own necessities.

MELIBEA.—Ask what you will, be it either for yourself or anybody else.

CELESTINA.—My most gracious lady, your sweet words give boldness to my tongue to speak what my heart longs to utter. I come lately from one whom I left sick to the death, who with only one word from your mouth will save his life, so great is the devotion which he bears to your gentle disposition.

MELIBEA.—Good woman, I don't understand you. On the one hand you provoke me to displeasure; on the other you move me to compassion. I don't know how to return a convenient answer. I should think myself happy if my words might save the life of any Christian man, for to do good is to be like unto the Deity, and he that can cure one that is sick, not doing it, is guilty of his death.

CELESTINA.—My lady, I cannot be persuaded that God did paint in vain such a fair face, enriched with such grace, were it not to make it magazine of virtue and mansion of mercy. The pelican with her beak breaks up her own breast that she may give her very flesh to her young ones to eat; the storks maintain their aged parents in their nest for as long as they should live; the rooster does not eat anything but without first calling his hens about him to give them part of his feeding. Now, if Nature gave such knowledge unto birds, why should we that are men be more cruel one to another?; why do we not give part of our graces and of our persons to our neighbours? Especially when they are afflicted by secret infirmities of such a nature that, where the medicine is, thence is the cause of the malady.

MELIBEA.—For God's love, without any more dilating, tell me who is this sick man. His sickness and his cure flow from one and the selfsame fountain?

CELESTINA.—You cannot choose, my lady, but know a young gentleman in this city, nobly descended, whose name is Calisto...

MELIBEA.—Enough, enough! No more, good old woman! Not a word more! Is this the sick patient for whom you have made so many prefaces, you bearded impudent? What ails this wicked man that you should plead for him with such passion? I will have you burnt, you false witch, you enemy of honesty! Fie upon you, filth! Out of my sight!

CELESTINA.— (*aside*) In an ill hour came I hither, if my spells fail me (*addressing an invisible devil*) Ah, brother! All is lost!

MELIBEA.— Dare you mutter words before me? Would you have me soil my honour to give life to a madman? Shall I make myself sad to make him merry? Would you have me

overthrow and ruin my father's house and honour? Do you think I do not perceive your drift? Tell me, traitor as you are, how did you dare to proceed so far with me?

CELESTINA.— My fear of you, madame, interrupted my excuse. Give me leave, good lady, to make an end of my speech and then you will neither blame it nor condemn me. Then will you see that I rather seek to do God's work than endeavour any dishonest course; and that I do it more to add health to the patient than to harm the fame of the physician. Had I thought that your ladyship would so easily have made this bad construction, I would not have dared speak anything that might concern Calisto or any other living man.

MELIBEA.— For God's sake, let me hear no more of this madman, this leaper over walls; this hobgoblin; this night-walker, long-shanked like a stork. This is he who saw me the other day and began to court me with I know not what extravagant phrases, professing to be a great gallant. Tell him, good old woman, that the best way to have his sickness leave him is to leave off his loving and relinquish his purpose. And for your own part, you may thank God that you escape hence scot-free. I have already heard enough of you and of all your *good qualities*, though it was not my hap to know you.

CELESTINA.— (*aside*) Many fiercer dames have I tamed in my days. Tush! No storm lasts long.

MELIBEA.— What say you, mine enemy? Speak out, I pray, that I may hear you. Have you anything to say in your excuse?

CELESTINA.— I wonder not that you should be thus rigorous with me, for a little heat will serve to set young blood a-boiling.

MELIBEA.— What words can you demand of me for such a man? Answer to my demand, since you say you have not yet concluded.

CELESTINA.— Marry, a certain prayer to Saint Helen of Poland, madame, which, as he is informed, you have and serves to cure the toothache. And also, that girdle of yours which is reported to have touched all the holy relics which are in Rome and Jerusalem. This gentleman is exceedingly pained with the toothache and even at death's door with it.

MELIBEA.— If you wanted this, why did you no tell me sooner? Why went you beating about the bush?

CELESTINA.— Because my plain and simple meaning made me believe that you would not have suspected any evil in it. For the love of God, don't lay the fault on me. And if he has

committed an error, don't let that redound to my hurt; for I am but the messenger. Don't break the rope where it is weakest. Don't be like the spider, which never shows its force but on poor little creatures. I have no other trade but to serve those in need; this is my occupation, this I make my happiness. It was never in my desire to hurt one to help another, though your ladyship may perhaps have been otherwise informed behind my back. In short, my lady, I have as few enemies in this city as a woman can have; I keep my word with all men; and what I undertake I perform as faithfully as if I had twenty feet and so many hands.

MELIBEA.— I have heard so many tales of your false and cunning tricks that I don't know whether I may believe that your errand was for this prayer.

CELESTINA.—Never let me pray it (or if I pray it, let it never be heard above) if you can draw any other thing from me, though I were to be put to a thousand torments!

MELIBEA.— I know very well that neither oath nor torment shall make you speak the truth.

CELESTINA.—You are my good lady and mistress; you may say what you list and it is my duty to hold my peace. You must command and I must obey.

MELIBEA.—You do so confidently plead your ignorance that you make me almost ready to believe you. But you should not wonder that I was so exceedingly moved, for two things did concur in your discourse, the least of which was sufficient to make me run out of my wits: first, in naming this gentleman, who thus presumed to talk to me; then, that you should entreat me for him, without any further cause given, which could not but engender a strong suspicion of hurt to my honour. But since all is well meant and no harm intended, I pardon all that is past; for my heart is now somewhat lightened. It is a pious and a holy work to cure the sick.

CELESTINA.— And such a man, my lady! If you knew him as well as I, you would not judge him as unfavourably. By my fay, the poor gentleman has no gall at all, no ill meaning in his heart. For bounty, he is an Alexander; for strength, a Hector; Hercules did not have his strength and courage. Take him all together and you shall find him like an angel in heaven. But now, my lady, one poor tooth so torments him that he does nothing but complain.

MELIBEA.—And how long, I pray, has he?

CELESTINA.—Marry, I think he is about some three and twenty years old.

MELIBEA.—I do not care to know his age. I ask you how long he has been troubled with his toothache.

CELESTINA.—Some eight days, madame, but you would think he had had it a year; he is grown so weak with it. And the best remedy he has is to take his viol and sing so many songs and in such doleful notes that, though I know little of music, methinks he makes the viol speak. Consider then, my lady, if such a poor woman as I am has not cause to count myself happy if I may give life unto him to whom the heavens have given so many graces. Not a woman that sees him but praises God, whose hand did draw so perfect a piece.

MELIBEA.—O how I regret now my impatience! For he being ignorant and you innocent of any intended ill, you have endured the distemperature of my enraged tongue! In requital of your sufferance, I will forthwith fulfil your request and likewise give you my girdle. And because I have not the time to write the prayer before my mother comes home, come secretly for it to-morrow morning. And..., I pray, mother, say nothing to this gentleman of what has passed between you and me, lest he should hold me either cruel, sudden or dishonest.

Melibea gives Celestina her girdle.

CELESTINA.—Madame, I much marvel you should entertain any doubts. Fear not, for I can cover anything.

MELIBEA.—I will do more for your sick patient than this, if need require, in requital of your great patience.

CELESTINA.—(*aside*) We shall need more and you must do more than this, though perhaps you'll get scarce thanks for it.

MELIBEA.—Mother, what's that you talk of thanks?

CELESTINA.—Marry, I say, madame, that we both give you thanks and we are both at your service. And if by my entreaties I have done him any good, I fear that by my over-long stay I have done him as much harm. And therefore if your ladyship will give me leave, I will haste to see how he does.

MELIBEA.—Godspeed.

SCENE VI

Daytime, street. Enter Sempronio and Celestina.

SEMPRONIO.—Either my eyes don't match or that's Celestina. Now the devil go with her, how she drags her gown!

CELESTINA.—Why do you make the sign of the cross, Sempronio?

SEMPRONIO.—I will tell you why. Who did ever see you walk the streets with your head hanging on your bosom and your eyes cast down to the ground? And in such post-haste, as if you were going to get a benefice? But tell me, what good news do you bring?

CELESTINA.—Sempronio, my friend, come along with me to Calisto and you shall hear wonders. If I were to tell you now, I would as it were deflower my embassy, whose maidenhead I mean to bestow on your master. You shall have your parcel of the profit, but I mind to have all the thanks for my labour.

SEMPRONIO.—*You shall have your parcel....* Marry, come up! I tell you plainly, I do not like this word. And therefore parcel me no more of your parcels, Celestina.

CELESTINA.—Go to, you fool! Hold your peace, be it part or parcel, you shall have what you will yourself! What's mine is yours. Let us laugh and be merry, rather than fall out about dividing the spoil. Yet I must tell you that old folks have more need than young; especially you, who live at full table, upon free cost.

SEMPRONIO.—There is more to a man's life than eating and drinking.

CELESTINA.—What, my son? A chain for the hat or a slingshot to go from house to house shooting at birds and aiming at other birds in windows? I mean pretty wenches, you fool, such birds as have no wings to fly from you; you know my meaning, sir. But woe, Sempronio, unto her who is to maintain her honour and begins to grow old as I do now!

SEMPRONIO.—*(aside)* O cogging old hag! She would as willingly cozen me as I would my master. But I will mar her market.

CELESTINA.—What are you saying, Sempronio? Whom do you talk to? Are you gnawing my skirts?

SEMPRONIO.—What I say, mother Celestina, is this; that I do not marvel that you are mutable; for being so you do but as others have done before you. Remember that you told me you would defer this business, leading my master along in a fool's paradise; but now you run headlong without either sense or wit to tell Calisto of all that has passed. Don't you know that men esteem most those things which they find most difficult to achieve? Is not every day of his pain a double gain for us?

CELESTINA.—A wise man alters his purpose but a fool perseveres in his folly. A new business requires new counsel. I know that your master, as I have heard, is liberal and somewhat of a womanish longing; and therefore he will give more for one day of good news than others for a hundred days of pain. Peace, you fool, and you shall see how this old woman will handle him.

SEMPRONIO.—At least tell me what passed with that gentle lady, for, trust me, I long to know the answer as much as my master does.

CELESTINA.—Peace, you fool. What? Does your colour alter? I know by your nose what porridge you love. You had rather have the taste than the scent of this business, eh? Come, I priyou, let us hurry, for your master will be ready to run mad if we stay over-long.

SEMPRONIO.—Ay, he'll be, even if we don't.

Light changes to suggest the interior of Calisto's house. Enters Calisto.

CALISTO.—What good news, mother? Speak, I pray you, dear mother!

CELESTINA.—O my good lord Calisto!, O my new lover of fairest Melibea! How can you pay this old woman, who has hazarded her life in your service? What woman was ever driven to such narrow shifts? The very thought of it empties my vital veins of all their blood. I would have given my life for less than the price of this old tattered mantle, which you see here on my back.

CALISTO.—Good mother, either cut off your discourse or take you this sword and kill me!

CELESTINA.—Your sword, sir? Let your sword serve to kill your enemies and such as wish you harm. As for me, I will give you life with the good hope I bring you.

CALISTO.—Good hope, mother?

CELESTINA.—Ay, good hope, since the door is set open for my second return. And, shall I tell you?, she will sooner receive me in this poor tattered mantle than others in their silk and cloth of gold.

CALISTO.—For God's sake, mother, tell me what she was doing? How did you get into the house? How was she apparelled? What countenance did she show you at your first entrance?

CELESTINA.—Such countenance, sir, as your fiercest bulls use towards the men that cast sharp darts at them in the bullring.

CALISTO.—And you call these good hopes and signs of health? What then are those that are mortal? Why, death itself could not be half so deadly, for death would ease my torment. My good mother, if you don't want me to die desperate and that my soul should go condemned from hence to perpetual pain, certify me briefly whether your demand had a happy end or not. And also explain the meaning of that cruel and stern look, for that is rather a token of hate than of love.

CELESTINA.—The greatest glory which is given to the bee is that whatsoever he touches he converts into a better substance. In like manner so it has befallen me with those gruff and surly speeches of Melibea. All her sour looks and words I turned into honey, her anger into mildness, her fury into gentleness, and her running from me into running to me. What do you think Celestina went there for? To pacify her fury, to receive upon my poor mantle all the blows meant for you, to endure her revilings, bitter tauntings and disdainful terms. For this is what ladies such as she are wont to do when they are first sued for their love. And why do they do this? So that what they give may the better be esteemed. And therefore they will speak worst to him whom they love best. Which if they do not do, there would no difference between the love of a common whore and that of an honest damsel that stands upon her honour. And therefore, when they see that a man loves them, though they themselves burn in the liveliest flames of love, yet for modesty's sake, they will outwardly show a coldness of affection, a sober countenance, a constant mind, a chaste intent, and pour forth words as sharp as vinegar that their own tongues wonder at; for they are forced to confess the contrary of what is in their hearts. But because I would have you have some ease of your sorrows, before I relate at large

all the words that passed between her and me, know for your comfort that the end of her discourse was very good.

CALISTO.—Now, dear mother, that you have given me assurance, say what you will and I shall be attentive. Now my heart is at rest; now my thoughts are quiet; now my veins recover their lost blood; now I have lost my fear. Tell me then, by what means did you get into the house?

CELESTINA.— By selling a parcel of thread which I had with me; by which trick I have taken in my day more than thirty maids of as good worth and quality as herself, and some ever greater.

CALISTO.—Greater, mother, perhaps in body, but not in beauty, not in discretion, not in virtue, not in speech.

CELESTINA.—Noble Calisto, let your ears be open to what I shall tell you, and you shall see what my great care has effected for you.

CALISTO.—O that I had lain hid underneath your mantle that I might have heard her speak!

CELESTINA.—Under my mantle, noble sir? Alack, she would have seen you through the more than thirty holes that it has!

CALISTO—But tell me, dear mother, what did you do when you were left all alone with her? Were you not stricken dumb in her presence?

CELESTINA.— No. But rather grew the bolder to utter my mind to her. I delivered my embassy, and told her in what extreme pain a certain person lived, and how one word from her mouth would ease him of his mighty torment. And she stood in suspense, looking wisely and steadily upon me, somewhat amazed at the strangeness of my message, hearkening very attentively, till she might come to know who this person was that, for want of a word from her mouth, lived in such great pain, and what manner of man he might be whom her tongue was able to cure? And in naming you, she cut off my words, and with her hand struck herself a blow on the breast, as one that had heard some strange and fearful news; and she charged me to cease my prattle, and to get out of her sight, unless I would that her servants should become my executioners and make short work with me in these my old and latter days. And she then call me witch, sorceress, bawd, old whore, false baggage, bearded miscreant, mother of mischief and many other ignominious names, with which they scare

children. And when she had ended with her bugbears, she began to fall into swoonings and trances, making many strange gestures, her blood boiling within her, throwing herself this way and that way, writhing and winding her body, her hands and fingers being clenched one within another, hurling and rolling her eyes on every side, striking the hard ground with her tender feet. Now, all this while, I stood me still in a corner, like a cloth that is shrunk in the wetting, not saying so much as any one word unto her; yet glad with all my heart, to see her in this cruel and pitiful taking. And the more her throws and pangs were, the more did I laugh in my sleeve at it; because I knew that her yielding would be the sooner and her fall the nearer. Yet must I tell you, that while her anger did foam out its froth, I did not suffer my thoughts to be idle, nor give them leave to run a wool-gathering, but recollecting myself, and calling my wits about me, I found a salve to heal that hurt, which I myself had made.

CALISTO.— Dear mother, pray tell me what salve you found, for I do not see how you could light upon a fit excuse good enough to cover and colour the suspicion of your demand.

CELESTINA.— I told her that your torment was the toothache; and that the word which I craved of her was a prayer that she knew, which was reputed to be of great power against that pain . . .

CALISTO.— O rare woman in thy art! O cunning creature! Was there ever the like woman born in this world?

CELESTINA.— Sir, do not stop me in the course of my speech. Give me leave to go on, for night draws on and I might have some mishap on my way home.

CALISTO.— You shall have torches and you shall have pages to accompany you home.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) Yes, just in case the pretty young thing is ravished on the way. She is afraid of the crickets, which chirp in the dark.

CALISTO.— What's that you said, Sempronio?

SEMPRONIO.— I said, sir, that I shall accompany her home; for it is very dark.

CALISTO.— Well said, Sempronio; you shall by and by. But proceed, I pray, in your discourse; and tell me what farther passed between you. What answer made she for the prayer?

CELESTINA.— Marry, that with all her heart I should have it.

CALISTO.— With all her heart? O joy! How gracious and how great a gift!

CELESTINA.— Nay, this is not all; I craved more than this.

CALISTO.— What, my honest old woman?

CELESTINA.— Her girdle, affirming that it was very good for the allaying of your pain since it was well known that it had touched so many holy relics.

CALISTO.— And what did she say to that?

CELESTINA.—Reward me for my good news, and I will tell you.

CALISTO.— For the love of God, take my whole house, and all that is in it.

CELESTINA.— Give this poor old woman but a mantle, and I will give into your hand the very girdle she wears about her body.

CALISTO.— What do you talk of a mantle? Tut, a kirtle, a petticoat, anything, all that I have.

CELESTINA.— It is a mantle that I need; that alone shall content me. Enlarge not therefore your liberality; for to offer much to him that asks but a little is a kind of denial.

CALISTO.— Run, Sempronio, call hither my tailor, and let him presently cut her out a mantle and a kirtle of that fine pure cloth which he took to cottoning!

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) So, so; all for the old woman; because like the bee, she comes home laden with lies, as he does with honey; as for me, I may go work my heart out, and go hang myself when I have done.

CALISTO.— Now the devil go with him, with what an ill will does he go! I think there is not any man living so ill served as I am with this grudger of my good, repiner of my prosperity and enemy to my happiness. You villain, what are you mumbling to yourself? Do as I command and vex me no more, for there will be as much of the piece left as will serve to make you a jerkin.

SEMPRONIO.—All I am saying, sir, is that it is too late to have the tailor come tonight.

CALISTO.— Let it alone then till tomorrow; and for you, mother, let me entreat you out of your love to me to have patience until then. And now, I pray, let me see that glorious girdle, which was held so worthy as to ingirt so goodly a body. My afflicted heart, which has not had one minute of delight since it first knew that lady, shall then rejoice. All of my senses have been wounded by her, all of them have brought whole basketfuls of trouble to my heart. Every one of them has vexed and tormented it all they could; the eyes, in seeing her; the ears, in hearing her; and the hands in touching her.

CELESTINA.— Ha! What's that? Have you touched her with your hands?

CALISTO.— In my sleep. In my dreams I have seen her every night.

CELESTINA.— Then you have punishment enough, sir; for when others take their rest in their beds, you prepare yourself to suffer your next day's torment. But be of good courage; pluck up your heart: after a tempest, follows a calm. Take this girdle, for if death prevents me not, I promise to deliver its owner into your hands.

CALISTO.— O happy girdle, you have hedged in that body which myself am not worthy to serve! O you, knots of my passion, which have entangled the object of my desire, tell me if you were present at that uncomfortable answer of fairest she, whom you serve and I adore.

CELESTINA.— Sir, remember that Rome was not built in one day; nor Troy ruined in a year.

CALISTO.— O unfortunate that I am! For cities are encircled and walled in with stones; and stones by stones are easily overthrown. But this my dear lady has her heart environed with steel; there is no metal that can prevail against her; no shot that can make a breach; and should ladders be reared to scale the walls, she has eyes which let fly darts of repulsion and a tongue which discharges whole volleys of reproaches.

CELESTINA.— No more, good sir, no more; bridle your passion; for the stout courage and boldness of one man did get Troy. Do not doubt that a woman may work upon another, and win her unto you. You have little frequented my house, you are ignorant of my art and don't know what I can do.

CALISTO.— Say, mother, what you will, and I will believe you, since you have brought me so great a jewel as this. O you glory of my soul, encircler of so incomparable a creature, I behold you and yet believe it not. O girdle, girdle! Were you my enemy too? Tell me the truth; if you were, I forgive you, for it is proper unto good men to forgive.

CELESTINA.— Cease, good sir, this vain and idle humour; for my ears are tired of listening to you, and the girdle almost worn out with your handling.

CALISTO.— Peace, good mother, for this girdle and I well understand one another. O wretch that I am! If the heavens had made and woven you out of these my own arms, and not of silk, I might have daily rejoiced in clasping and enclosing those members which you, without sense or feeling, not knowing what it is to enjoy so great a glory, hold in strict embracements.

SEMPRONIO.— Stop, sir, for it looks as if you would rather enjoy this girdle than Melibea herself.

CALISTO.— Villanous fool, disturber of my delight, what mean you by this?

SEMPRONIO.— By talking and babbling as much as you do, you kill both yourself and those which hear you. Cut off your discourse and listen to Celestina and hear what she will say unto you.

CALISTO.— Mother, are my words troublesome to you or is this fellow drunk?

CELESTINA.— Even if they are not, you should not talk thus but rather give an end to these long complaints; and for God's sake, use the girdle like a girdle!

CALISTO.— O my much honoured matron, my mother, my comfortress! Let me glad myself a little with this messenger of my glory. Give me leave to go forth into the streets with this jewel, that they who see me may know that there is no man more happy than myself ... (*suddenly remembering*) And the prayer?

CELESTINA.— She has not given it me yet.

CALISTO.— And what was the cause why she did not?

CELESTINA.— The shortness of time; but she told me that if your pain did not decrease, I should return to her again tomorrow.

CALISTO.— Decrease? My pain shall decrease when I see a decrease of her cruelty.

CELESTINA.— Sir, content yourself with what has been said and done; she is already bound, and is ready to yield any help that I ask for to cure this infirmity of yours. Tell me, I pray, if this is not well for the first bout. Well, I will now get me home; and by the by, if you chance tomorrow to walk abroad, make sure that you go muzzled about the cheeks with a cloth, that she may not accuse me of petitioning a falsehood.

CALISTO.— Nay, to do you service, I will clap on four double cloths, if necessary; but for the love of God, tell me, did anything more pass between you? For I die out of longing to hear the words which flow from so sweet a mouth. How did you dare, not knowing her, to be so bold, to show yourself so familiar, both in your entrance, and your demand?

CELESTINA.— Not knowing her? They were my neighbours for four years: I dealt with them; I talked with them; and laughed together with them day and night. Her mother, why she knows me better than her own hands: and Melibea too, though she be grown now so tall, so great, so courteous a lady.

CALISTO.— Courteous, you say? I think you say it but in a mock. Was her like ever born into the world? Did God ever create a better or more perfect body? Can the like proportion be painted by any brush? Is she not the paragon of beauty? All the women who know her complain of heaven, because it did not remember them when it made her; and they are all consumed with envy and attempt to equal by art the perfection which Nature bestowed upon Melibea without any labour. They pill, and dis-hair their eyebrows with nippers, with playsters of pitch or barme, and other the like instruments. They seek after wall-wort, and the like herbs, roots, sprigs, and flowers to make lyes, wherewithal to bring their hair to the colour of hers; and they spoil and martyr their faces, clothing them with divers colourings, glistenings, paintings, unctions, ointments, strong waters, white and red pargetings, which, to avoid prolixity, I repeat not.

CELESTINA.—(*aside to Sempronio who is about to interrupt Calisto*) Sempronio, give him leave to run on; for he will fall anon from his ass, and then his journey will be at an end.

CALISTO.— But in her, Nature, as in a glass, did wholly behold herself; that she might make her most absolutely perfect. A little fair fountain-water with a comb of ivory is sufficient to make her surpass all other of her sex in beauty. These are her weapons; with these she kills and overcomes; and with these has she bound me in so hard and strong a chain that I must forever remain her prisoner.

CELESTINA.— Sir, put a period to your words, trouble yourself no more; for this chain which shackles you is not so strong that my sharp file may not cut it in sunder. Which I will do for you, that you may be at liberty. And therefore give me now licence to take my leave of you; for it grows very late; and let me have the girdle, for you know I must needs use it.

CALISTO.— O disconsolate that I am! My misfortunes still pursue me; for with you, or with this girdle, or with both, I would willingly have been accompanied all this dark and tedious night. But because there is no perfect happiness in this our painful and unhappy life, let solitariness wholly possess my soul and cares be my continual companions.
Sempronio!

SEMPRONIO.—Sir.

CALISTO.— Accompany this matron home to her house; and as much pleasure and joy go with her as sorrow and woe stay with me.

CELESTINA.— Sir, fare you well. Tomorrow I shall make my return, and visit you again; not doubting but that my gown and her answer shall meet here together. And in the interim, let me entreat you to be patient. Settle your thoughts upon some other things, and do not so much as once think upon her.

CALISTO.— Not think upon her? That is impossible. Nay, it were heresy to forget her who is the sunshine of my life.

SCENE VII

Enters Celestina and then Melibea.

CELESTINA—Peace be in this house.

MELIBEA.—O wise and honest mother, you are welcome!

CELESTINA.— Say, my lady, what is your disease that you so lively express the tokens of your torment in those maiden blushes?

MELIBEA.— Truly, mother, I think there must be some serpents within my body that are gnawing upon my heart.

CELESTINA.—(*aside*) I will be even with you, you fool, for your past anger; I will make you pay for it with a witness.

MELIBEA.— What's that you say? Have you perceived by my looks any cause from whence my malady proceeds?

CELESTINA.— You have not, madame, told me the quality of your disease and you would have me divine the cause? What I say is that I am heartily sorry to see your ladyship so sad and so ill.

MELIBEA.— Good old woman; make me merry then. For I have heard much of your wisdom.

CELESTINA.— Madame, only God is wise. But as he imparted unto men the ability of finding out fit and convenient medicines — some of which were attained to by experience, some by art and some by a natural instinct— a small portion of these good gifts were given to this poor old creature, myself, who is here present to do you the best service she can.

MELIBEA.— O how pleasing are your words to my ears! Methinks I see my heart broken in your hand in pieces. For the love of God, afford me some remedy for it.

CELESTINA.— A great part of health is the desiring of health. And a good sign of mending, to be willing to mend. For which reason I reckon your grief the less, and hold it the less dangerous; but so that I may minister a wholesome medicine unto you, and such as may be agreeable to your disease, it is requisite that you first satisfy me in these three

particulars. The first is, on which side of your body does your pain lie. The second, how long you have had this pain; whether it has taken you but of late or no; for your newly growing infirmities are sooner cured in the tenderness of their growth than when they have taken deep rooting. The third is, whether this your evil proceeds of any cruel thought which has taken hold on you. This being made known, you shall see me set myself roundly to work about your cure; for it is very fit that you should open the whole truth to your physician, as you would to your confessor.

MELIBEA.— Friend Celestina, you, wise matron and great mistress in your art, you have well opened unto me the way by which I may manifest my malady to you. You have questioned me like one that is well experienced in these kind of sicknesses. My pain is about my heart; its residence near unto my left pap, but disperses itself over every part of my body. Secondly, it has been born but of late; and I never did think that any pain whatsoever could have deprived me of my understanding, as this does; it troubles my sight, changes my countenance, takes away my stomach; I cannot sleep for it, nor will it suffer me to enjoy any kind of pleasure. As for the thought, which was the last thing you demanded concerning my disease, I am not able to deliver it unto you, and neither the cause of it; for neither death of kinsfolk, nor loss of temporal goods, nor any sudden passion upon any vision, nor any dotting dream, nor any other thing can I conjecture to be the cause of it, save only a kind of alteration, caused by yourself upon your request in the behalf of that gentleman Calisto, when you entreated me for my prayer.

CELESTINA.— What, madame? Is Calisto so bad a man? Is his name so bad that only but to name him should send forth such poison? Do not believe that this is the cause of your grief. I scent another thing in the wind, and if your ladyship will give me leave, I will tell you the cause of it.

MELIBEA.— What physician did ever demand such leave to cure his patient? Speak, speak what you please; for you shall always have leave of me to say what you will, provided that you do not wrong my honour with your words.

CELESTINA.— I see, my lady, that on the one side you complain of your grief, and on the other side you fear your remedy. Your fear strikes fear into me; which fear causes silence, and silence truce betwixt your malady and my medicine; so that it will be the cause that your pain shall not cease nor my cunning cure you.

MELIBEA.— The longer you defer my cure the more you increase my pain and augment my passion. Either your medicines are manufactured of the powder of infamy and the juice of corruption or else your skill is worth nothing.

CELESTINA.— Madame, if you are willing to be cured, and that I should discover unto you the sharp point of my needle without any fear at all, frame for your hands and feet a bond of patience; for your eyes, a veil of pity; for your tongue, a bridle of silence; for your ears the stuffing of sufferance; and then shall you see what effects this old mistress in her art will work upon your wounds.

MELIBEA.— O how you kill me with delays! For the love of God, speak what you will, do what you will, exercise your skill, put your experience in practice, for there can't be any remedy so sharp as to equal the bitterness of my pain; no, though it touch upon mine honour, though it wrong my reputation, though it afflict my body, though it rip and break up my flesh in order to pull out my grieved heart.

CELESTINA.— Well then, first of all we must bring a more manifest remedy and more wholesome mitigation of your pain from the house of that gentleman, Calisto.

MELIBEA.— Mother, I pray you, fetch not anything from his house. If you love me, do not so much as once name him.

CELESTINA.— Madame, I pray be patient, which is the chief and principal pillar and must not be broken. For then all our labour is lost: your wound is great and has need of a sharp cure; and wise men say that the cure of a lancing surgeon leaves behind it a large scar. One nail drives out another and one sorrow expels another. Do not give your tongue leave to speak ill of so virtuous a person as Calisto.

MELIBEA.— For God's sake, no more of him, no more. Did I not tell you that you should not speak a word of him, neither good nor bad?

CELESTINA.— Madame, this is the second point in my cure, which if you by your impatience will not consent unto, my coming can little profit you. But if you will, as promised, be patient, you shall remain sound and out of debt, and Calisto well paid and out of complain.

MELIBEA.— So often will you name this gentleman unto me that neither my promise nor the faith I plighted you will suffice to make me endure your words any longer. Why should he be well paid? What do I owe him? How am I bound to him? What charge have I

put him to? What has he ever done for me? What necessity is there to use him as the instrument of my recovery? More pleasing would it be unto me that you would tear my flesh asunder and take out my heart.

CELESTINA.— Without any rupture or rending of your garments, love did lance your breast. I will not sunder your flesh to cure your sore.

MELIBEA.— How do you call this grief that has seized on the better part of my body?

CELESTINA.— Sweet love.

MELIBEA.— Tell me then, what thing is this sweet love? For only in the very hearing of it, my heart leaps for joy.

CELESTINA.— It is a concealed fire; a pleasing wound; a savoury poison; a sweet bitterness; a delightful grief; a cheerful torment; a sweet, yet cruel hurt; and a gentle death.

MELIBEA.— O wretched that I am! For if your relation be true, I rest doubtful of my recovery, according to the contrariety which these names carry.

CELESTINA.— Let not your noble youth be diffident of recovery. For where heaven gives a wound, there it gives a remedy; and as it hurts, so it heals; and so much the sooner, because I know where grows the flower that will free you from all this torment.

MELIBEA.— How is it called?

CELESTINA.— I dare not tell you.

MELIBEA.— Speak and spare not.

CELESTINA.— Calisto.

Melibea faints y Celestina holds her in her arms.

CELESTINA.— O madame, Melibea! Ah woe is me, what a fainting is this? O accursed old woman! Must your steps end in this? If she dies, they'll kill me. Why, Melibea, my sweet lady, my fair angel! Why don't you speak to me? Where is that cheerful colour that was wont to beautify your cheeks? Open your bright eyes. Lucrecia, Lucrecia, come hither quickly! Come quickly, I say! You shall see your lady lie here in a swoon in my arms. Run down quickly for a jar of water.

MELIBEA.— (*recovering her senses*) Softly, speak softly, I pray; do not trouble the house.

CELESTINA.— Ay me! Sweet lady, do not sink any more: speak, speak unto me as you were wont.

MELIBEA.— I will, I will, and much more than I was wont.

CELESTINA.— What will you have me do, my precious pearl? Whence arose this sudden qualm? I believe my needles are broken.

MELIBEA.— No; it is my honesty that is broken; it is my modesty that is broken: my bashfulness occasioned my swooning. But now, my good mistress, my faithful secretary, it is in vain for me to seek to smother what you so openly know. Yea, many days are now past since that noble gentleman spoke of love to me. His speech was then as hateful to me as it is now pleasing. With your needles you have stitched up my wound. In my girdle, you carried away the possession of my liberty; his toothache was my greatest torment; his pain my greatest punishment. I highly praise your singular sufferance, your discreet boldness, your solicitous and faithful steps. That gentleman is much bound to you, and myself more, for my reproaches and revilings could never make you slack your perseverance in your suit; rather, like a most faithful and trusty servant, the more I reviled you, the more diligent you were; the harsher answer I gave you, the better you seemed to take it; when I was most angry, then were you most mild and humble. And now, laying aside all fear, you've gotten out of my bosom what I never thought I'd discover to you or to any other whosoever.

CELESTINA.— My most dear lady and friend, on my way hitherwards, as also here in your house, I stood in great doubt as to whether it were best to discover my petition unto you or no. When I thought on the great power of your father, then did I fear; but when withal, I weighed the nobleness of Calisto, then I grew bold again; when I observed your discretion, I waxed timorous; but when I considered your virtue, and your courtesy, I recovered new courage: in the one I found fear; in the other, safety. And since, madame, you have been willing to grace me with the discovery of so great a favour, declare your will unto me, lay your secrets in my lap; put into my hands the managing of this matter, and I will give it such a form as both you and Calisto shall very shortly accomplish your desires.

MELIBEA.— O my Calisto! My dear lord, my sweet and pleasing joy, if your heart feels the like torment as mine, I wonder how it gives you leave to live. O you, both my mother and mistress, handle the business so that I may presently see him.

CELESTINA.— You shall both see him and speak with him.

MELIBEA.— Speak with him? That's impossible.

CELESTINA.— Nothing is impossible to a willing mind.

MELIBEA.—Tell me how.

CELESTINA.— I have it in my head: marry thus, within the doors of your house.

MELIBEA.—When?

CELESTINA.—This night.

MELIBEA.— Thou shall be glorious in mine eyes if you compass this. But soft, at what hour?

CELESTINA.—When the clock strikes twelve.

MELIBEA.— Go, begone, hie you, good mistress, my faithful friend, and talk with that gentleman, and will him that he comes very softly at his appointed hour

CELESTINA.— Farewell. Lo, yonder is your mother making hitherward.

SCENE VIII

Calisto in his chamber. He plays the lute and sings.

CALISTO.— *In peril great I live,
And straight of force must die:
Since what desire doth give,
That, hope doth me deny.
This pain, this martyrdom,
O heart, well dost thou prove,
Since thou so soon wast won
To Melibea's love.*

CALISTO.—Sempronio!

Enter Sempronio.

SEMPRONIO.—Sir.

CALISTO.—How far night is it? Is it time to go to bed?

SEMPRONIO.— It is rather, sir, too late to rise.

CALISTO.— What do you say, fool? Is the night past and gone then?

SEMPRONIO.— Ay, sir, and a good part of the day too. Put Melibea, sir, a little out of your mind and you will then see that it is broad day; for like a partridge dazzled by a buffet, you are blinded by the great brightness which you contemplate in her clear eyes.

Church bells are heard.

CALISTO.— Now I believe it; since the bells toll for Mass. Give me my clothes; I must go to church and there beg of God almighty that he directs Celestina and changes Melibea's heart, or else that he shortens my sorrowful days.

SEMPRONIO.— Sir, do not vex yourself so much. You cannot accomplish all that you would in an hour; nor is it discretion for a man to desire so earnestly what may end badly.

CALISTO.—I wonder, Sempronio, where you got so much philosophy?

SEMPRONIO.— Sir, white is not whatever differs from black, nor is all that glitters gold; your hasty desires not being measured by reason make my counsels seem better than they are. Would you, that at the first word, they bring Melibea to you, manacled and tied to her girdle, as if you had sent to the market for some sort of merchandise? Sir, be of good cheer; for no great happiness can happen in an instant. One stroke can not fell an oak.

CALISTO.— You have spoken well, if only the quality of my evil would consent me to take it so.

SEMPRONIO.— To what end serves understanding, if the will shall rob reason of her right?

CALISTO.— The sound man says to the sick, Heaven send you your health. I will no more counsel, no more hearken to your reasons; for they revive and kindle afresh those flames which burn and consume me. I will go to Mass alone; and will not return home till you call me with the good news of Celestina's arrival; nor will I eat anything, till Phoebus his horses shall feed, and graze their fill in those green meadows where they used to bait, when they come to their journey's end.

SEMPRONIO.— Good sir, leave off these circumlocutions; leave off these poetical fictions; for a speech which few understand is not comely. Say till the sun set, and everyone will know what you mean. Come, eat something in the meanwhile, that you may keep some life in you.

CALISTO.— Sempronio, my faithful servant, my good counselor, my loyal follower; be it as you will have it; for I can see that my life is as dear unto you as your own. Fetch me a slice of citron and come with me to the church of the Magdalene.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) The devil and ill fortune follow you; for in the very same hour have you eaten this citron as Apuleius did that poison which turned him into an ass.

SCENE IX

Enter Calisto and Sempronio in a church and pretend to pray.

SEMPRONIO.— Take heed, sir, lest you give occasion of talk to the world, for now-a-days, he who is too devout is called an hypocrite. What will they say of you, if they see you thus, but scoff in derision at you and say he is gone to church to pray to the holy saints for the favour of some mistress. If you are oppressed with passion, endure it at home in your own house. Discover not your grief unto strangers, since the drum is in hands who best know how to beat it.

CALISTO.—In whose hands?

SEMPRONIO.—In Celestina's.

Enter Celestina. She joins them and pretend to pray too.

CELESTINA.— Who's that names Celestina? What say you of this slave of Calisto's? I have come trudging all along Archdeacon street to see if I could overtake you and I could not because the long skirts of my petticoat hindered my feet.

CALISTO.— O you, joy of the world, relieveresse of my pain, my eyes looking-glass! My heart exult for joy in beholding so honoured a presence, an age so ennobled with years. Tell me, what is't you come with, what good news do you bring? For I see you look cheerful and yet I know not the reason.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) The old woman looks merry; sure, she has sped well today.

CELESTINA.— All this day, sir, have I been labouring in your business and have neglected other weighty affairs, which did much concern me: many I suffer to live in pain, only that I may yield you comfort. I have lost more by it than you are aware of; but farewell it. All is well lost, since I have brought my business to so good an end: Melibea is wholly at your service.

CALISTO.—O, what do I hear?

CELESTINA.— Nay, she is more yours than her own, more at your service and command than of her father Pleberio.

CALISTO.— Speak softly, good mother, take heed what you say; lest Sempronio should call you mad. Melibea is my mistress, Melibea is my god, Melibea is my life, I am her servant, I am her slave.

SEMPRONIO.— Good sir, your doubts make you cut off Celestina in the midst of her discourse. You would tire out a saint with your disordered and confused interruptions. Why do you cross and bless yourself? It were better you would give her some thing for her pains. For these words are worthy of better payment.

CALISTO.— Well have you spoken. Dear mother, I know full well that my small reward can in no way reward your pains; and so instead of a gown and a kirtle, take this little chain, put it about your neck, and go on with your discourse and my joy.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) A little chain? This spend-thrift makes no reckoning of it; I will not give away my part of that chain for half a mark of gold.

CELESTINA.— Noble Calisto, to such a poor weak old woman as myself, you have showed yourself exceedingly liberal. So, I will restore you your health, which was lost; your heart, which was fainting; and your wits, which were turning. Melibea is pained more for you than you for her; Melibea loves you and desires to see you; Melibea calls herself yours; and this she holds as a title of liberty, and with this, she allays that fire which burns more in her than in yourself.

CALISTO.—Sempronio, am I here? hear I this? Look whether I am awake or not. Is it day or is it night? O you great God of heaven, I beseech you that this may not prove to be a dream. Tell me, mother, do you make sport with me?

CELESTINA.— Whether I jest or no you shall see by going this night to her house just as the clock strikes twelve.

CALISTO.— Should I hope for so great a happiness? Can so great a blessing light upon Calisto? I die till that hour comes. I do not deserve so great a favour, nor am I worthy to speak with so fair a lady.

CELESTINA.— I have often heard, that it is harder to suffer prosperous than adverse fortune. Consider, I pray, that Celestina is on your side; and that even if you were uglier than a

demon, I would sell you for the most handsome man in the world. You don't know on whom you have bestowed your largesse.

CALISTO.— And, mother, did you not tell me that she would come to me of her own accord?

CELESTINA.— Yes, and even upon her very knees. Good Angels defend you and direct you.
Farewell.

Exit Celestina.

CALISTO.— Mother, fare you well, I will lay me down to sleep, and rest myself a while, that I may redeem the nights past and satisfy the better that which is to come.

SEMPRONIO.—(*aside*) The old trot makes haste to be gone. She cannot persuade herself that the gold chain is as yet sure enough in her hands. But let her beware of the devil, and take heed that I do not tear off her soul with my bare hands when we come to divide the spoils.

SCENE X

Enter Calisto and Sempronio in a poorly illuminated street.

CALISTO.— Look out, Sempronio, and see if anybody be stirring in the street.

SEMPRONIO.— Sir, I see not any, and though there were, yet the darkness of the night is such that it is impossible for any either to see or know us.

CALISTO.— Let us along then this way, Sempronio; for though it be somewhat about, yet is it more private and less frequented. (*Sound of bells*). Now it strikes twelve, a good hour.

SEMPRONIO.— We are near the place.

CALISTO.— We are come in very good time. Go, Sempronio, and peep in at the door, to see if that lady is there or not.

SEMPRONIO.— Who, I, sir? God forbid that I should mar what I never made. It were much better, sir, that your presence should be her first encounter. Else, she should be moved to anger in seeing another person acquainted with what she so secretly desires to be done; and also, because she may haply imagine that you mock her.

CALISTO.— Well have you spoken! I will go myself. You stay here.

Sempronio moves to one side of the stage.

CALISTO.— Madame; mistress, are you there?

Enters Melibea on a balcony.

MELIBEA.— Who speaks? Who is there without?

CALISTO.— He that is come addressed to your command.

MELIBEA.— Sir, what is your name? Who willed you to come hither?

CALISTO.— Let not your ladyship fear to discover herself to this captive of your gentle disposition; for the sweet sound of your words, which shall never fall from my ears,

give me assurance that you are that lady Melibea, whom my heart adores; I am your servant Calisto.

MELIBEA.— The excessive boldness of your messages have forced me, Calisto, to speak with you, although I don't know what you may imagine to get more out of my love. Banish therefore from you those vain and foolish thoughts, that both my honour and my person may be secured from any hurt they may receive by an ill suspicion. For which purpose, I am come hither. Do not, I beseech you, put my good name and reputation upon the balance of detracting tongues.

CALISTO.— O miserable and unfortunate Calisto! O, how have you been deluded by your servants! O you deceitful Celestina; why did you falsify this my lady's message? Why did you command me to come hither? Did not you tell me, that this my lady would be gracious unto me?

MELIBEA.— Cease, good sir, your true and just complaints. For neither my heart is able to endure it nor mine eyes any longer to dissemble it. You weep out of grief, judging me cruel; and I weep out of joy, seeing you so faithful. O my dearest lord how much more pleasing would it be to me to see your face than to hear your voice! But since at this present we cannot enjoy each other as we would, take the assignment and seal of those words which I sent unto you, written in the tongue of that diligent and careful messenger, Celestina. All that she said, I do here confirm. I acknowledge it as my deed, and hold the assurance I have made you to be good and perfect. Good sir, dry up your tears and dispose of me as you please.

CALISTO.— O my dear lady! Hope of my glory, easeress of my pain, and my heart's joy. What tongue can be sufficient to give you thanks for your incomparable kindness? O, how long ago did I entertain this thought in my heart and, as a thing impossible, repelled it from my memory. And now the bright beams of your shining countenance have given light unto my eyes, inflamed my heart, awakened my tongue, unwreathed my shrunken-up spirits, and in a word, infused such a spirit of boldness into me that they have borne me up by their power unto this high estate wherein I now behold myself.

MELIBEA.— Calisto, ever since I had true notice of you, your great worth, your singular graces and your nobleness of birth have wrought so effectually with me that my heart has not so much as one moment been absent from you. And although I have these many days

strove and strove again to dissemble it, yet I could not smother my thoughts. As soon as that woman returned your sweet name unto my remembrance, I discovered my desire unto her, and appointed our meeting at this very place and time, where I beseech you to take order for the disposing of my person, according to your own good will and pleasure. These doors debar us of our joy. I curse their strong locks and bars, as also my own weak strength. For were I stronger and they weaker, neither should you be displeased nor I discontented.

CALISTO.— How, my lady, do you suffer a paltry piece of wood to hinder our joy? Never did I conceive that anything, save your own will, could possibly hinder us. O troublesome and sport-hindering doors, I pray to God that you may burn with as great a fire as now consumes me. Give me leave, sweet lady, that I may call my servant, and command him to break them open.

MELIBEA.— My love, will you undo me? Will you wound my reputation? Your hope is certain and the time short. Besides, your pain is single, mine double: yours for yourself, mine for us both; you only feel your own grief, I both your own and mine. Content yourself therefore and come tomorrow at this very hour; and let your way be by the wall of my garden, for if you should now break down these cruel doors, though haply we should not be presently heard, yet tomorrow morning there would arise in my father's house a terrible suspicion of my error.

CALISTO.— My dear lady, my joy and happiness; why do you style this an error, when it was granted unto me by the saints in heaven? Praying today in front of the altar of the Magdalene, that solicitous woman, Celestina, came to me with your happy message...

Noises off. Sempronio who hears them reacts with fear in his corner.

SEMPRONIO. —Hark, hark, what noise is this? The business goes ill; I am but a dead man!

MELIBEA.— Calisto, what's that? For your own sake and mine, have a care of yourself; I fear me, you stand in danger.

CALISTO.— Madame, fear nothing; for I stand on a safeguard. It must be my man, Sempronio, who is a madcap, and disarms as many as pass by him; and belike, he has wounded someone.

MELIBEA.—You bring only one manservant?

CALISTO.— Only one; but should half a dozen set upon him, he would not be long in disarming them and make them fly; he is a tall lusty fellow and of true and well approved metle. And were it not in regard of your honour, he should have broken these doors in pieces; and in case we had been heard, he should have freed both yourself and me from all your father's servants.

MELIBEA.— O for the love of God, let not such thing be attempted; yet it glads me much that you are so faithfully attended

SEMPRONIO.— (*coming close to Calisto*) Sist, sist; hear you sir? make haste and be gone, for here is a great company coming along with torches; and unless you make haste, you will be seen, and known; for there is not any place where you may hide yourself from their view.

CALISTO.— O unfortunate that I am! How am I forced, my lady, against my will to take my leave! Believe me, the fear of death would not work so much upon me as the fear of your honour does; but since we must part, may the angels be the guardians of your fair person. My coming, as you have ordered it, shall be by the garden.

MELIBEA.— Be it so, and may God be with you.

Exeunt Calisto and Sempronio.

PLEBERIO.—(*off*) Wife, are you asleep?

ALISA.—(*off*) No, sir.

PLEBERIO.— (*off*) Do you not hear some noise or stirring in your daughter's chamber?

ALISA.— (*off*) Yes, marry do I. Melibea, Melibea!

PLEBERIO.— (*off*) She does not hear you; I will call a little louder. Daughter Melibea!

MELIBEA.—Sir?

PLEBERIO.—(*off*) Who tramples and makes that stirring to and fro in your chamber?

MELIBEA.— It is Lucrecia, sir, who went forth to fetch some water for me to drink, for I was very thirsty.

PLEBERIO.—(*off*) Sleep again, dear daughter; I thought it were something else.

SCENE XI

Enter Calisto and Sempronio.

CALISTO.— Sempronio, shut the door and bring up a light.

SEMPRONIO.— You were better, sir, to take your rest and sleep what little remains till dawn.

CALISTO.— I will follow your counsel; for it is no more than I need. But tell me, Sempronio, what do you think of that old woman? What a piece of work has she brought to pass! What could we have done without her? But tell me; did you hear what passed between me and my mistress? What did you do all the while? Were you not afraid?

SEMPRONIO.— Afraid, sir? Of what? All the world could not make me afraid.

CALISTO.— Did you not sleep a whit?

SEMPRONIO.— Sleep, sir? It is for boys and children to sleep; I did not so much as once sit down, not put one leg over another. I kept watching still, as diligently as a cat for a mouse, so that, if I had heard but the least noise, I might presently leap forth and do as much as my strength would let me perform.

CALISTO.— I am not surprised, Sempronio, for I know you to be valiant; and though the fox changes his hair, yet he never changes his nature. I told my mistress Melibea what was in you and how safe I held myself, having you at my back for my guard. I am much bound unto you; pray to heaven for your welfare and do not doubt but that I will more fully guerdon your good service. Good night, and heaven send you good rest.

Exit Calisto.

SEMPRONIO.— Go post haste unto hell! As for me, before it be day, I will get me to Celestina's house, and see if I can recover my part in the chain. She is a crafty woman, and I will not give her time to invent some villainous trick or other whereby to shift me off, and cozen me of my share.

SCENE XII

Enter Sempronio who calls at a door.

SEMPRONIO.— Mistress Celestina, open the door!

CELESTINA.— (*off*) Who calls?

SEMPRONIO.— Open up, your son is here.

CELESTINA.— (*off*) I have no son that be abroad at this time of night.

SEMPRONIO.— It is Sempronio; open the door, I am come hither to break my fast with you.

Enter Celestina.

CELESTINA.— O you mad lad, you wanton wag, enter, enter, how chance you come so early?

It is but now break of day, what have you done? what has passed? Tell me, Calisto's hopes, are they alive or dead? Has he her, or has he her not?

SEMPRONIO.— How, mother? Had it not been for me, his soul would now be seeking her eternal rest. If it were possible to prize the debt he owes me, all the wealth he has were not sufficient to make me satisfaction.

CELESTINA.— Good God! Have you been in such danger since I saw you? Tell me, how was it? How was it, I pray?

SEMPRONIO.— Marry, in such danger, that as I am an honest man, my blood still boils in my body, to think upon it.

CELESTINA.— Sit down, I beseech you, and tell me all.

SEMPRONIO.— It will require a long discourse; and I am quite tired with the trouble and toil I have had. You may do better to provide something for my breakfast; it may be that, when I have eaten, my choler will be somewhat allayed. My earnest wish now would be to light upon someone, on whom I might revenge my wrath, for I could not do it on those that caused it, so fast did they fly from my fury.

CELESTINA.— The pockes canker out my carcass to death if you make me not afraid to look on you. You look so fierce and so ghastly. But for all this, I do believe you jest. Tell me, I pray you, Sempronio, as you love me, what has befallen you?

SEMPRONIO.— Mother, my arms all broken and battered in pieces, my buckler without its ring of iron, the plates cut asunder, my sword like a saw, my cask beaten as flat as a cake. I have nothing to protect me when my master shall this night have access unto his mistress by the way of her garden. I don't know, if my life lay on it, where to find one farthing to furnish myself anew.

CELESTINA.— Since it is spoiled and broken in your master's service, let your master pay for it. Besides, you know that he is not one of those who say to their servants: "Live with me, and look out some other to maintain you". He has so liberal a disposition that he will not give you money for this only, but much more, if needs be.

SEMPRONIO.— How can you in conscience imagine that I should be so importunate as to demand more than he has already given me of his own accord? I don't want it said that he has given me an inch and I have taken an ell. He has given us a hundred crowns in gold; he has given us, besides, a chain. Let us content ourselves with what is resonable; let us not lose all by seeking to gain more than is meet; for he that embraces much, holds little.

CELESTINA.— How wittily this ass speaks! I swear to you that had these words been spoken after dinner, I should have said that you had taken a cup too much. Are you well in your wits, Sempronio? What has your remuneration to do with my reward? Am I bound to buy you weapons? Must I repair your losses and supply your wants? Now I think upon it, let me be hanged if you have not took hold of a little word that carelessly slipped out of my mouth the other day, as we came along the street; for as I remember I then told you that what I had was yours and that if Fortune did prosper my business with your master, that you should lose nothing by it. But you know, Sempronio, that words of compliment and kindness are not binding: all is not gold that glitters, for then it would be a great deal cheaper than it is. Besides, as soon as I came from your house, I gave the chain to this fool Elicia, that she might look upon it and cheer herself; and she, for her life, cannot call to mind what she has done with it. All this live-long night neither she nor I have slept one wink for the very thought and grief of losing it. Not so much

for the value of the chain (for it was not worth much), but for the ill luck of it. And to my misfortune, at the very same time that we missed it, came in some friends of mine; and I am sorely afraid, lest they have lighted upon it and taken it away with them. But now, my son, that I may speak home to the point: if your master gave me anything, what he gave me is mine. I never asked you for any share of your cloth of gold doublet, nor ever will. We both serve him and he will give unto us as we each deserve. And as for what he has given me, I have twice endangered my life for it; more blades have I blunted in his service than you; more substantial stuff have I wasted, and more hose and shoes have I worn out, than you have. And you must not think, my son, that all this does not cost me good money. Besides my skill, which I did not get fooling around or sitting still or warming my tail over the fire, as most of your idle housewives do, but with hard labour and by my own industry. As for you, what have you done? If you have done anything for Calisto, Calisto is to requite you. I get my living by my trade and my travail; you yours with recreation and delight; and therefore you are not to expect equal recompense. But even so, if my chain is found again, I will give you a pair of scarlet breeches, which is the comeliest habit that young men can wear. But if it is not found, you must accept of my good will; and I'll be content to sit down with my loss; and all this I do out of pure love, because you were willing that I should have the benefit of managing this business before another; and if this will not content you, I cannot do withall. To your own harm be it.

SEMPRONIO.— This is not the first time I have heard it said that the sin of avarice reigns in old folks. As also that other, “When I was poor, then was I liberal; when I was rich, then was I covetous”. So that covetousness increases with getting and poverty with coveting: and nothing makes the covetous man poor but his riches. O heavens! How does penury increase with abundance! How often did I hear this old woman say that I should have all the profit that should grow from this business, thinking then perhaps that it would be but little? But now she sees how great it grows, she will not part with anything, no, not so much as the parings of her nails; that she may comply with that common saying of little children: “Of a little, a little; of much, nothing”.

CELESTINA.— If you are angry either with yourself, your master, or your arms, wreck not your wrath upon me; for I know well enough whence all this grows. I now perceive on which

foot you halt; not out of want of what you demand; nor out of any covetousnes that is in you, but because you think I will tie you to the rack and make you captive all your lifetime to Elicia, and provide you no other fresh ware. But be still, my boy; for if I could help you with one, I will not stick to furnish you with half a score of handsome wenches, fairer than her by far.

SEMPRONIO.— You talk of chalk and I of cheese. Do not think to put me off with a jest; my demand desires a more serious answer. And assure yourself: if I can help it, you shall take no more hares with this greyhound. Therefore, lay aside these tricks and do not argue any longer on the matter; I know your fetches too well. To an old dog, a man need not cry, “Now, now”. Come off therefore quickly, and give me one half of what you have received from Calisto. Come, come, exercise your wits upon some other. Flap others in the mouth, you old filth, with your coggings and foistings; for I know you too well.

CELESTINA.— Why, what am I, Sempronio? What do you know me to be? Brought you me, as a whore, out of the stews? Bridle your tongue for shame, and do not dishonour my hoary hairs. I am an old woman of God’s making, no worse than all other women are. I live by my occupation, as other women do, very well and handsomely; I seek not after those who seek not after me; they that will have me, come home to my house to fetch me; they come home, I say, and entreat me to do this or that for them. As for the life that I lead, whether it be good or bad, heaven knows my heart. And do not think out of your choler to misuse me, for there is law and justice for all, and equal to all; and my tale, I doubt not, shall be as soon heard (though I am an old woman) as yours. Let me alone, I pray, in my own house, and with my own fortune.

SEMPRONIO.— Do not hit me in the teeth with these idle words and threats, unless you want me to send you where you may better make your complaint!

Sempronio beats Celestina.

CELESTINA.— Elicia, Elicia! Arise and come down quickly! Bring me my mantle, for, by heaven, I will hie me to the Justice and there cry out and rail at you like a mad woman! What do you mean, to menace me in my own house? Shall your valour and your

bravings be exercised on a poor, silly, innocent sheep? On a hen that is tied by the leg and cannot fly from you? On an old woman of sixty years of age? Go and wreak your anger on someone who is girt with a sword, and not against me and my poor weak distaff. It is great cowardice to assail the weak and those that have but small power to resist. Filthy flies bite none but lean and feeble oxen! If Elicia, who lies above there in the bed, would have hearkened unto me, this house should not have been (as it is now) without a man in the night; nor we would sleep (as we do) by the shadow of a candle. But to pleasure you, and to be faithful unto you, we suffer this solitude.

SEMPRONIO.— O you old covetous cribbe that are ready to die with the thirst of gold! Cannot one half of the gain content you?

CELESTINA.— What half? A pox on you. Out of my house! Cause not our neighbours to come about us! You would not, would you, that Calisto's business should be proclaimed openly at the market square?

SEMPRONIO.— Cry, bawl, and make a noise; all's one, I care not: either you perform your promise or else die you must!

CELESTINA.— Justice, Justice! Help, neighbours! Justice, Justice! Here is a ruffian that will murder me in my house! Murder, murder, murder!

SEMPRONIO.— (*stabs her repeatedly*) Ruffian, you whore? Ruffian, you old bawd? Have you no better terms? You old sorceress; you witch, you! I will send you post haste unto hell!

CELESTINA.— Ay me, I am slained! Ay, ay! Confession, Confession!

Celestina falls dead. Sempronio lets the bloodied dagger fall from his hand.

SEMPRONIO.— (*looking through an imaginary window*) The people begin to flock hitherward. Yonder comes the Alguazil. Ay me, wretch that I am! There is no means of escape, for they have made good the door and are entering the house. (*Noises off*) I will leap out of this window and die rather than fall into the hands of Justice!

Exit Sempronio running. A loud cry is heard off stage.

SCENE XIII

Enter Calisto.

CALISTO.—Sempronio, Sempronio! Where are you? O what an outcry do I hear in the market-place! What's the matter? There is some execution of justice to be done, or else people are up early to see some bull-running. Yonder comes Sosia; he will tell me what the business is. Look how the rogue comes pulling and tearing of his hair; he has tumbled into one tavern or other. But methinks he comes weeping.

Enter Sosia.

CALISTO.— What's the matter, Sosia? Why do you weep? Whence do you come now?

SOSIA.— O miserable that I am! What misfortune could be more? O what great dishonour to my master's house! O what an unfortunate morning this is!

CALISTO.— What's the matter, man? Why grieve you thus? What mischief has befallen us?

SOSIA.—Sempronio...

CALISTO.— What of Sempronio? What means this fool? Speak a little plainer, you torment me with delays.

SOSIA.— ... he lies beheaded in the market square.

CALISTO.— O unfortunate mischance! Is it true? Did you see him?

SOSIA.—I saw him, sir.

CALISTO.— Take heed what you say; for this night he was with me.

SOSIA.— Well then, he rose early to his death.

CALISTO.— O my loyal servant! O my faithful secretary and counselor in all my affairs! Can this be true? O unfortunate Calisto! You are dishonoured as long as you live; what shall become of you, having lost such a trusty servant? Tell me, for pity's sake, Sosia, what was the cause of his death? What spake the proclamation? By what Justice was he beheaded?

SOSIA.— The cause, sir, of his death was published by the cruel executioner, who delivered with a loud voice: “Justice has commanded that this violent murderer be put to death”.

CALISTO.— Murderer? Who did he so suddenly slew? It is not four hours ago since he left me. How call you the party whom he murdered? What was he for a man?

SOSIA.— It was a woman, sir, one whom they call Celestina.

CALISTO.— What’s that you say?

SOSIA.—What I heard, sir.

CALISTO.— Was that Celestina that has the slash over her face?

SOSIA.— The very same, sir. I saw her stretched out in her own house, having received in her body above thirty stab wounds; and her maid Elicia was weeping by her.

CALISTO.— O unfortunate Sempronio! How was he? Did he see you? Did he speak to you?

SOSIA.— O sir, had you seen him, your heart would have burst with grief. He had both his arms broken, and his face so sorely bruised that it was all black and blue, for, so that he might not fall into the alguazil’s hands, he leapt down out of a high window; and so being half dead, they chopped off his head. Methinks he scarce felt what harm was done him.

CALISTO.— I, on the other hand, feel how much I am touched in my honour. I wish to God I were dead instead of him! O my name and reputation, how you must be going from mouth to mouth! O my secret actions, how openly will you now walk through every public street and open market-place? What shall become of me? Whither shall I go? If I go forth to the dead, I am unable to recover them, and if I stay here, it will be deemed cowardice. What counsel shall I take? Tell me, Sosia, what was the cause he killed her?

SOSIA.— That maid, sir, of hers, called Elicia, which sat weeping and crying over her, made known the cause of her death to as many as would hear it; saying, that he slew her because she would not let him share with her in that chain of gold which *you* had lately given her.

Calisto looks horrified.

SCENE XIV

Night. Melibea's orchard. Enters Melibea.

MELIBEA.— Methinks Calisto stays very long. The angels be his guard and preserve his person from peril! I am afraid lest some misfortune or other may befall him as he is on his way to me. For who knows, whether he may chance to light upon the night-watch, and they, not knowing him, have set upon him, and he, to defend himself, has either hurt them or they him? Or perhaps some roguish cur with his cruel teeth (for such dogs as they make no difference of persons) have bit him? Or perchance he has fallen upon the causeway or into some dangerous pit, where he may receive some harm? But hark, hark, what steps are those that I hear in the street? And I think I hear somebody talking on this side of the orchard.

CALISTO.— (*off*) Sosia, set the ladder here; for, though it be higher, yet I take it to be the better place.

SOSIA.— (*off*) Get up, sir; and I will along with you. For we don't know who is there within.

CALISTO.— (*off*) Stay here, you fool, I will in alone.

Enters Calist as if jumping down from a wall.

MELIBEA.— O, my dear lord, take heed how you leap! Come down, come down gently, I pray.

CALISTO.— O divine image! O precious pearl, before whom the whole world appears foul! O my lady and my glory, I embrace and hug you in mine arms, and yet I do not believe it.

MELIBEA.— My lord, since I have entrusted myself in your hands, since I have been willing to comply with your will, do not work my undoing for a delight so fleeting and performed in so short a space. For actions that are ill, after they are committed, may easier be reprehended than amended. Rejoice in what I rejoice, which is to see and draw near unto your person. But do not offer either to ask or to take that which, being taken

away, is not in your power to restore. Take heed, sir, that you do not overthrow what, with all the wealth in the world, you will not be able to repair.

CALISTO.— Dear lady, since I have waited my whole life to obtain this favour, it were folly in me to refuse it when it is so kindly conferred upon me. You will not lay so hard a command upon me, nor will it be in my power to contain myself within the limits of your command; for I tell you, it is not in any man that is a man to forbear in such a case; much less in me, loving as I do. Having swum through this sea of desire, will you then, after my many travails, deny me entrance into that sweet harbour, where I may find some ease from all my former sorrows?

MELIBEA.— As you love me, Calisto: though your tongue take liberty to talk what it will, yet, I prithee, let not your hands do all that they can. Be still, good sir, since I am yours; suffice it you content yourself in the enjoying of this outwardness which is the proper fruit of lovers, and do not rob me of the greatest jewel which nature has enriched me with. Consider besides that it is the property of a good shepherd to fleece, but not to flay his sheep; to sheer them, but not to uncase them.

CALISTO.— Madame, what do you mean by this? That my passions should not be at peace? That I shall run over my torments anew? That I shall return to my old yoke again? Pardon, sweet lady, these my impudent hands, if too presumptuously they press upon you. They never once thought they could touch, no not so much as any part of your garments, and now they lay themselves with a gentle palm on this dainty body of yours, this most white, soft, and delicate flesh.

Calisto takes Melibea in his arms. Exeunt.

SCENE XV

Enter Melibea and Calisto.

MELIBEA.— O my life and my dear lord, how could you find in your heart that I should lose the name and crown of a virgin for so short a pleasure? O my poor mother, if you did but know what we have done, with what willingness would you take your own death and with what violence would you give me mine! O my most honoured father, how have I wronged your reputation and given opportunity to the undoing of your house! O traitor that I am! Calisto, why did I not first look into that great error, which would ensue by your entrance?

Bells are heard.

CALISTO.— Is it possible? Methinks we have not been here above an hour and the clock now strikes three.

MELIBEA.— My lord, for the love of God, now that all that I have is yours; now that I am your mistress; now that you cannot deny my love; deny me not your sight during the daytime! And on such nights as you shall resolve to come, let your coming be by this secret place and at the selfsame hour. I shall then look for you, prepared with the same joy with which I now comfort myself in the expectation of those sweet nights that are to come. And so for the present I will take my leave. Farewell, my lord. My hope is that you will not be discovered, for it is very dark; nor I heard in my house, for it is not yet day.

CALISTO.—Sosia, throw hither the ladder.

SOSIA.— (*off*) Sir, there it goes.

Calisto climbs the ladder.

MELIBEA.— My love is gone. He has left his heart with me and has taken mine with him.

Exit Melibea.

SCENE XVI

Night. Enter Melibea singing in his orchard.

MELIBEA.— *O that I kept the key,
Which opes to these fair flowers,
To pluck them day by day,
When you do leave these bowers.
The lilies and the roses,
Put on their newest colours,
And when thy love reposes,
They breathe their freshest odours.*

*Sweet is the fount, the place,
I drank at, being dry;
More sweet Calisto's face,
In Melibea's eye.
And though that it be night,
His sight my heart will cheer,
And when he down shall light,
O how I'll clip my dear!
The wolf for joy doth leap,
To see the lambkins move,
The kid joys in the teat,
And thou joy'st in thy love.
Never was loving wight,
Of's friend desired so;
Ne'er walks of more delight,
Nor nights more free from woe.*

Calisto is heard within.

CALISTO.— (*off*) Sosia, do you hear? Set up the ladder and see you make no noise; for methinks I hear my mistress sing.

Enters Calisto and listens to Melibea.

MELIBEA— (*sings*)

*Sweet trees who shade this mold
Of earth, your heads down bend,
When you those eyes behold
Of my best-loved friend,
Fair stars whose bright appear
Doth beautify the sky,
Why wake ye not my dear,
If he asleeping lie?*

*You birds, whose warblings prove
Aurora draweth near,
Go fly, and tell my love
That I expect him here.
The night doth posting move,
Yet comes he not again;
God grant some other love
Do not my love detain.*

Calisto moves behind her and gently touches he shoulder.

MELIBEA.—Ah!

CALISTO.— The sweetness of your voice has ravished me. O my sweet mistress, and my life's happiness!

MELIBEA.— O pleasing treason! My lord! My soul! I cannot believe it; where have you been, you bright shining sun? In what place have you hid your brightness from me? Is it not a pretty while since you heard me? Why did you suffer me to send forth my words into the air, senseless and foolish as they were, and in this hoarse swannish voice of mine? Look on the moon, and see how bright she shines upon us; look on the clouds, and see how speedily they rack away; hearken to the gurgling waters of this fountain, how sweet a murmur, and what a pretty kind of purling they make, rushing along these fresh herbs and pleasant flowers; hearken to these high cypresses, how one bough makes peace with another by the intercession of a mild, gentle and temperate wind, which moves them to and fro. Behold these silent and quiet shades, how dark they are, and how excellently well prepared for the covering and concealing of our sports.

Calisto lays his cloak on the floor and they both sit on it.

CALISTO.— Dear lady, and glory of my life, if you love me, give not over your singing.

MELIBEA.— Why, my love, would you have me sing? Or how can I sing? For it was my desire of you that ruled my voice and made me air my notes. But now that you are come, that desire disappears and the tone of my voice is distempered and out of tune. And because you, sir, are the pattern of courtesy and good behaviour, how can you in reason require my tongue to speak when you cannot rule your own hands and keep them quiet? Why do not you forget these tricks? Command upon them to be quiet, and will them to lay aside this offensive custom, and consider, my dearest, that as to see you is the greatest happiness that either my heart or my eye can enjoy; so is it as displeasing to me to see you handle me so roughly. Your honest sporting pleases me, but your dishonest hands offend me, especially when they are too far out of reason. Pray do not disturb my garments. Leave them be. Do not ill use me as you did the last time. Why do you persist in trying to tear and damage my dress?

CALISTO.—Madam, he who wants to eat the bird must first pluck its feathers.

MELIBEA.— Sir, shall I send Lucrecia to fetch you some sweetmeats?

CALISTO.— No, lady; no other sweetmeats for me, save only to embrace your body, to fold it within my arms, and to have the possession of your beauty. Everywhere a man may eat and drink for his money. But that which can not be bought, that which in all the world is not to be matched, why do you wish me to delay in enjoying so sweet a treasure? O my dear mistress! I wish it would never be day, that I might still enjoy that sweet happiness which my senses receive in conversing with your delicate and dainty sweet self.

MELIBEA.— Sir, it is I that enjoy this happiness. If anybody gain by it, it is I; and no thanks are able to requite so great a favour.

SOSIA.— (*off*) Out, you ruffianly rascals! Come you to fright those that fear you not? Out, you rogues!

CALISTO.— Madame, this is Sosia's voice; suffer me to go and see that they do not kill him, for there is nobody with him. Give me my cloak quickly; it lies under you.

MELIBEA.— Pray do not go without your cuirasses. If you love me, come back; I will help to arm you myself.

CALISTO.— That, mistress, which a sword, a cloak, and a good heart cannot do, can never be effected by cuirass.

SOSIA.—(*off*) Are you come again? I shall plume you, I shall, you rascals.

CALISTO.— Lady, if you love me, let me go. The ladder stands ready for me.

Exits by the ladder.

MELIBEA.— O miserable me! Why do you go so fast and all disarmed to hazard your life amongst you know not whom? Lucrecia, come hither quickly; for Calisto is gone to thrust himself into a quarrel.

SOSIA.—(*off*) Stay, sir, do not come down! They are gone; it is nobody but lame Thraso and a company of other rogues with him. Take heed, sir, hold fast by the ladder, lest you fall!

CALISTO.— (*off*) Ay me, holy mother of God! I am a dead man! Confession!

SOSIA.—(*off*) My unfortunate master is fallen from the ladder! He neither speaks nor wags!

MELIBEA.— O wretch that I am! What do I hear?

SOSIA.—(*off*) O my master, my master is dead! Dead without confession! O unlucky day!

MELIBEA.— O disconsolate woman that I am! What vile mishap has thus disturbed our quiet? Is all my joy turned into smoke? Is all my pleasure lost? All my glory come to an end? So short a time to possess my pleasure? So soon to see my sorrows come upon me? I am but a dead woman; I can live no longer, since I may no more enjoy the joy of my heart. O ungrateful mortals! We never know our happiness until we have lost it!

Melibea falls to the ground. Two men carry her lifeless body off stage.

VOICE OF PLEBERIO (*off*).—Alas! My solace's in the suds. Behold her, whom I begot, dashed and broken all to pieces. The order of dying has been altered. My threescore years were fitter for the grave than her twenty. The earth would have enjoyed my hoary hairs more than her golden tresses. For whom did I build these turrets? For whom did I get honours? For whom did I plant trees? For whom did I build ships? O world! I thought in my more tender years that both you and your actions were governed by order and ruled by reason; but now I see that you are a labyrinth of errors, a dance full of changes! You cast before us the bait of your best delights and, when we have swallowed, you show the hook that chokes us. You promise mountains but perform mole-hills! O my most unhappy daughter! What shall I do when I come into your chamber and find it empty? What shall I do when I call you and you do not answer me? O Love, I did not think you had the power to kill your subjects! Why did you let me escape when I did pass through the midst of your flames in my youth? I thought I was free of your snares when I began to grow towards forty. I did not dream that you would take vengeance of the parents in the children. Who gave you so great a power? Who gave you a name which so ill befits you? If you were Love, you would love your servants. Yet you are the cause of all our misfortunes. They gave you a sweet name; but your deeds are exceeding sour. Some call you god, but God kills those whom he created and you those who follow you. O my bruised daughter, bruised even all to pieces! Why would you not take pity of your kind and loving mother? Why did you show yourself so cruel against your aged father? Why have you left me all alone in this vale of tears?

THE END