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"SAN CRISTOBAL DE LA HAVANA"

A "Comedia" In 8 Scenes With Songs.

by

Rene A. Buch.

Set in the region of the place in Havana at the
beginning of the XVII century.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHORUS

DON DIEGO

SILVIO, mulatto

PALMA, mulatto

GOVERNOR

BELISA

DON JORGE

DONA GUIOMAR

DONA URRACA

PEOPLE, MEN AT ARMS, ETC.

The action takes place in Havana at the beginning of the XVII century.

SCENE: AT RISE:

The stage is empty.
There is only a transparent curtain covering a smaller stage or platform where the action is going to take place.

Enter CHORUS, with a yellow cape. The costumes must be delightfully reminiscent of XVII century Spain.

CHORUS

Oh, for the delusions of our great Don Miguel to be able to bring back the time that has been forgotten!

Art is growing old and in a perennial striving to achieve its lost youth, we go, like children learning a language, to a small school where Imagination is our only tool. That is why we are here now. We, poor farcical puppets of an age that refuses to believe. We ask of you that supreme gift necessary to every Art. Belief. That when I say my hand, my fish-bowl, each one of my fingers has turned into five golden fishes in your imagination. Doubt has proved a failure. So let's believe again. Believe against reason, against our own beliefs of today that shall be forgotten tomorrow. Perhaps, perhaps we'll be able to smile. And how precious a smile can be in a world that has forgotten that twist of man's humor. But to the point. Behind that curtain waits our farce, our story that can be told only on our terms. So from now on forget your own reality. We have no place for it here.

Because this space, this stage, is whatever we want it to be.

Now...let's imagine an island on the route to Spain. And a city that isn't a city yet. San Cristobal de la Havana! A musical name to a musical atmosphere. Because the sea is music, and the seabreeze plays on the foam-covered waves as in a well tuned "vihuela".

In its bay, the galleons rest, fill their bellies for the long Atlantic trip that awaits them and depart leaving white foam and particles of themselves

on the blue waters of the bay.

To this port, this last door of the great Spanish Empire, another galleon has arrived. But in it, a Spanish Grandee, en route to Spain, visits for the first time the happy island of Cuba.

His name, Don Diego de Hurtado, Comendador of Peru. Peru's gold has ennobled him, and now, his spurs hit the rocky coast with a tinge of impatience. The Governor General of the loyal island of Cuba, is as usual, late. Spanish pride is great, especially when there is the sun perched over his head, mercilessly hitting the plumes of his finest hat. The Governor shouldn't be late, ...You see, Don Diego is to marry his only daughter, the fair Belisa, and the reason for Don Diego's arrival is the opportunity long since devised by their families, for the first meeting.

But what am I saying...? I do hope you believe what I say...For great things lie in store for the mighty gentlemen. But a light! A light is needed!

(Shouting backstage)

A light! A light for my gracious Lord Don Diego de Hurtado y Macurijes!!

(A spotlight, behind the transparent curtain, hits the motionless figure of DON DIEGO standing on the little stage)

The stage is set! Now, let our puppets explain themselves...

(Bowing to the audience)

With your permission...

(He opens the transparent curtain of the little stage and exits)

...I am not at all conscious of the importance of my words...

...I am not at all conscious of the importance of my words...

...I assure you, my good men, that the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans possess by now more parts of myself than my poor mother, may her soul rest in Eternal Glory.

...Isn't Your Grace a queen by birth? If by name, is not unfaithful, your father, His Excellency the

SCENE II:

A public plaza. The set on the little stage, if any, should be an open plaza with a public fountain in small size which makes the figures standing as if they were too big and artificial.

On stage is DON DIEGO de HURTADO, and SILVIO, the GOVERNOR'S servant, mulatto. MEN OF ARMS too.

DON DIEGO

Has his Excellency news of my arrival?

SILVIO

He has, Your Grace.

DON DIEGO

And am I to be kept waiting here, I, the only son of the Viceroy of Peru, under this blasted sun that that can wither even the plums of my hat?

SILVIO

I know nothing about that, Your Grace. But His Excellency was getting ready to meet Your Grace, when he sent me ahead to greet you.. "Run you fool"- His Excellency said- "and in meeting my future son-in-law tell him I'm on my way there." So I came. So I've said to Your Grace, many times and!..

DON DIEGO

(Interrupting him)

And he is not here yet...! What am I led to believe! The journey was not too pleasant, and the sea proved to be not at all conscious of the importance of my person...

SILVIO

Was Your Grace ill?

DON DIEGO

Ill? I assure you, my good man, that the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans possess by now more parts of myself than my own mother, may her soul rest in Eternal Glory.

SILVIO

Isn't Your Grace a seaman by birth? If my memory is not unfaithful, your father, His Excellency the

Viceroy, is famous all over the Empire for his deeds in the Armada.

DON DIEGO

My father, as you say, has had the opportunities of getting acquainted with Neptune's lanes but unfortunately (except for a trip from Spain to Peru, a few years ago) I had never been away from land in all my life.

SILVIO

I hope that by now Your Grace has recovered from his long sea voyage and that this "villa" of San Cristobal de la Havana can proudly hold you within its limits as a gift from Heaven, nay, a star from the great Catholic Empire of Philip the Second.

DON DIEGO

Enough of your chatter, villain! What no respect for the Grandees of Spain! If we were in Lima, in the gracious and delightful court of Lima, I would have punished you so in earnest that in truth you would not be able to recognize yourself.

SILVIO

But, sire...

DON DIEGO

Silence, I say!

(Fanning himself with a handkerchief)

It is so hot in this wild country! "The most beautiful land human eyes have seen," the Admiral said. After being at sea for so long a time I imagine that the plains of Castille would have seemed that.

(SILVIO is going to speak)

Silence, I say. You should be on your knees in front of me. Is this what this land breeds? No respect for established authorities?

SILVIO

The sun is a great leveler, Sire.

DON DIEGO

(To one of his MEN AT ARMS)

If this rascal utters one more word, finish him!

(SILVIO shrinks in front of him. There is a pause.)

(Offstage now a woman's voice is heard singing. It is a simple song with a syncopated rhythm)

PALMA

(Offstage)
 Mama Jacinta,
 Washing her clothes,
 To-To-
 Found only her ribbons,
 Her petticoats,
 Oh...Changó...
 Oh...Changó...

(Hearing the song, DON DIEGO has looked first surprised, then charmed and when the time comes of PALMA'S entrance he is really entranced)

(PALMA enters. She is a beautiful mulatto. She carries a clay jug on her shoulders and is very simply dressed in a white robe with a yellow shawl. She laughs)

DON DIEGO

(To SILVIO)

Are all Cuban women like this?

(SILVIO does not answer but looks very annoyed at DON DIEGO'S interest in PALMA)

Didn't you hear what I asked you?

SILVIO

I cannot speak, Sire, and lose my life and liberty. For what I could say to you depends on taste. I've known many women and, for instance, Caudad, who belongs to our household is uglier than a witch, and Crescencia, is not what I call a woman and Mastirio...

DON DIEGO

(Interrupting him)

Won't you ever be silent?

(SILVIO remains silent. PALMA is pantomiming the action of filling her jug at the fountain. A pause)

Now, villain, will you answer my ^uquestion?

SILVIO

Your Grace commands me to speak and I speak. Then Your Grace wants me silent and I am silent as a priest listening to confession. Then Your Grace

demands that I speak. I do so. Then my silence
against is requested. I grant it. So I remain
and shall remain silent even though it burns my
mouth not to speak. But I obey.

DON DIEGO

You grant it! Great things this land breeds.
Villains who stand in front of their master
and refuse to obey. Is it then this that the
Governor demands of you?

SILVIO

I am His Excellency's secretary. I write his
private letters. His letters to your father,
in reference to your coming marriage with the
beautiful Belisa, came from these fingers and
these thoughts. Haven't I then reasons to be
proud since I, in my humble service and loyalty,
have been able to create, yes, create such
gorgeous happenings? Now, tell me, Sire!

DON DIEGO

I grant you then you have your points. But
your manners certainly leave a lot to be desired.

SILVIO

Allow me, then...Your Grace...

PALMA

Sire. (Interrupting him)
Silvio!

SILVIO

(Pretending not to hear PALMA)
...to behave as I can, for what can I do. Know-
ing no other place but these shores.

DON DIEGO

The wench is calling you. Do you know her?

SILVIO

(In spite of himself)
Yes, Your Grace. She belongs to His Excellency's
household, too. A slave in the service of Dona
Belisa.

DON DIEGO

And?

SILVIO

Do I know her? Of course I do...

PALMA

Silvio!

I'll marry your widow with such eagerness that
I'll be back.

I would marry her, and buy her freedom.

DON DIEGO

Then it is high time you should answer.

(To PALMA)

You...over there. Come here.

Yes, call me Palma, Sire.

PALMA

(Smiling humbly)

Yes, Sire...? A lovely name! A musical name! A
rhythmic name! No other name would fit you better.
And now, Palma, DON DIEGO Do you know who I am?
Come here.

PALMA

For (PALMA does so) you must be Don Diego de
Murtada, my mistress's brother and my master's
Were you born here?

DON DIEGO

Yes, Sire. Viceroy's heir. I am powerful, Palma.
So powerful that one word from me might mean your
freedom and your DON DIEGO
Not even in Lima, I've found a woman of your
charms. This island could be then such a place as
I've been told. How could a gentleman of your
standing be interested in a lovely slave as I am?
How could the son SILVIO down here work a poor
Sire... as my reason?

DON DIEGO

The (To SILVIO) please to realize that there
Go and tell His Excellency I am waiting for him.
I would appreciate his haste. Let's say
an established position, granted to you by my
liberality.

SILVIO

A command from you is a Church Law that can't be
disobeyed. I'll go...
And (Aside to PALMA) Grace? My knowledge is
Behave now, you, or I'll see to you later in such
a fashion that your own mistress won't know who
you are... a few years now. Not too many. Not
so far that I can see myself knowingly enough
or stupid enough.

PALMA...

(The same, laughing)

My lord and master is the Governor so there is
really no need for your pretending.
What worries you, my child?

SILVIO

(To DON DIEGO)

I'll carry your orders with such dexterity that before you realize it, I'll be back.

(He exits)

DON DIEGO

What is your name?

PALMA

They call me Palma, Sire.

DON DIEGO

Palma!... A lovely name! A musical name! A rhythmic name! No other name would fit you better. And now, Palma, tell me. Do you know who I am.

DON DIEGO

For what I've heard you must be Don Diego de Hurtado, my mistress's betrothed and my master's future son-in-law.

PALMA

Also, the Viceroy's heir. I am powerful, Palma. So powerful that one word from me might mean your freedom and your civil rights.

PALMA

And for what reasons would a gentleman of your standing be interested in a lowly slave as I am? How could the sun gaze down upon such a poor landscape as my person?

DON DIEGO

The Christian law makes me realize that there is a soul in you, plus other things, that I'd like to bring out to proper frame. Let's say an established position, granted to you by my liberality.

PALMA

And at what price, Your Grace? My knowledge is not overwhelming but I've been on this valley of tears, as the Reverend Father calls it every Friday, for a few years now... Not too many. Nor so few that I can consider myself knowingly enough or stupid enough and I...

(She stops)

DON DIEGO

What worries you, my child?

PALMA

(Falsely shy)

My everlasting soul, Sire.

DON DIEGO

Don't you believe then that I can make up for a few years of doubts and disperse them. An orthodox Catholic I am. But religion has a place in life that I can't grant it.

PALMA

But then I know not what to say. Perhaps you are right... Who am I, poor slave as I am, to judge the words of so mighty a gentleman as you are.

DON DIEGO

You have the seed of wisdom, my child. And now... When shall I be able to see you so that the ennoblement of your soul might become a sweet reality?

PALMA

Your Grace is far too impetuous and I too shy.

(A fanfare is heard)

But here comes my master.

(The GOVERNOR enters with his train. The GOVERNOR goes to DON DIEGO. SILVIO is following him)

GOVERNOR

My Lord Don Diego...! To my arms...! Son...!

(He coughs. They embrace)

This moment makes my life complete. A son at last...

DON DIEGO

And how is my fair Belisa?.. in private...

GOVERNOR

Belisa? Oh, fine, fine... Awaiting your arrival as a dry field thirsts for rain... Of course, her youth sometimes makes her forget... You know how it is... The importance of this match.

DON DIEGO

And when shall I have the honor of meeting Dona Belisa, whose beauty is famous all over the

GOVERNOR

I think we can go now... My daughter awaits us...

Empire?

GOVERNOR

As soon as we reach the Palace. Dona Urraca and Dona Guiomar, my sisters, are breaking the news to Belisa of your arrival. You'll meet them there too. They have been for Belisa a sort of cooperative mother since my wife died. Silvio! You are sure Donna Urraca and Dona Guiomar know of His Grace's arrival?

SILVIO

Yes, Your Excellency. I let them know myself.

GOVERNOR

Good! Then, my son, nothing delays us but the time we'll spend in going back to the Palace.
(The GOVERNOR talks to one of his followers)

DON DIEGO

(To PALMA. Aside)
Shall I see you soon?

PALMA

Your Grace is my lord and master. Command and I'll obey.

DON DIEGO

Good...! Then I'll see you latter at the Palace. And remember, through me and my wishes, you can be free.

PALMA

Your Grace is too kind!

DON DIEGO

And tonight, when everybody is asleep... Will you let me talk to you...in private...

GOVERNOR

(Returning. Not knowing)
My son...!

DON DIEGO

Yes...!

(PALMA moves away and SILVIO joins her)

GOVERNOR

I think we can go now...My daughter awaits us...

SILVIO

(To PALMA)
What are you after?

DON DIEGO

(To GOVERNOR)
All my dreams then come true.

PALMA

What have I done?

SILVIO

Don't you know, you heartless woman?

GOVERNOR

There are things that I wanted to...

SILVIO

And all the time, my love for you, meant nothing.

PALMA

Don't be silly! What else could I do?

DON DIEGO

But my father is so far away! It must be carried

PALMA

He has all the power!

GOVERNOR

Won't he be able to come ~~for~~ the ceremony?

SILVIO

And you all the ideas!

DON DIEGO

It's such a long trip!

PALMA

Then let's go.
(Tender)

Silvito! Don't you trust me?

SILVIO

No...

GOVERNOR

But we thought...

PALMA

Really?

SILVIO

(Giving in)

I know... But still...

DON DIEGO
I don't think it could be possible.

GOVERNOR
Will you try? The Viceroy here, in Cuba...

PALMA
You are the only one in my life.

SILVIO
True?

DON DIEGO
Where shall we go now?

GOVERNOR
First to the *Ayuntamiento*. The Villa of San Cristobal de la Havana honours you there.

DON DIEGO
(Looking at PALMA)
Will it take long?

GOVERNOR
Not more than necessary. Etiquette must be carried on...

PALMA
(To SILVIO)
Be careful. He is watching us!

SILVIO
The hell with him!

PALMA
You might lose your life, you know.

DON DIEGO
Then let's go.

GOVERNOR
Immediately. Silvio! Is everything ready at the *Ayuntamiento*?

SILVIO
Yes, Your Excellency.

DON DIEGO
(To PALMA)
Tonight?

PALMA
I am your slave...†

DON DIEGO
Tonight, then. When everybody is asleep.

GOVERNOR
Come, my son. It is time.

DON DIEGO
I follow you.

(Fanfare. The GOVERNOR exits with DON DIEGO and SILVIO. Crowd exits. PALMA remains along)

PALMA
You, overblown fantoche! Tonight you said. And tonight it will be. But you still don't know... You still don't know this is not Lima nor I care your father is the Viceroy...
(She starts singing)

The Peruvian minstrel
Has lost his lute...
Oh, Chango...
Oh, Chango, Chango...
The wind is blowing
But the strings are mute
Oh Chango
Chango...

(She starts laughing and exits)

BLACKOUT

Powerless I am. You know my means cannot compete with the Peruvian's riches. But here comes Palma. Perhaps some news she brings of our disaster.

(PALMA enters)

Palma! Here! What news with you?

PALMA
The condor is here. A few moments now and at the Palace, (all the town already knows it) will be at ear case you.

SCENE III: A patio in the GOVERNOR'S Palace. DONA BELISA AND DON JORGE talking.

DON JORGE

Belisa! Don Diego landed this morning and that means, Belisa, that our love is dead. Your father wouldn't consent to our wedding and now I am left, poorer than before, after having loved you.

BELISA

Boundless as my love is for you, I couldn't refuse my father's will. And now, the hawks are ready to devour their prey. Take me away! Don't let my heart be trodden by another man.

DON JORGE

Belisa! Why is your father so set against me? That my blood, as yours, is pure and noble no one denies. Yet by his conceit and wishes to possess a place in the Court of Madrid, he's worked all these years to propitiate your marriage with a man you don't love.

BELISA

Sacrifice it is and not a slight one. For I am left outside with empty voices and forsaken soul. My father, my own father, has denied me power to select the only thing that would have made my life complete. If you feel your love, my love, is broken by unavoidable power, what power have we? Take me away that I may be forever in your arms and thus forget what now seems like a future turned into today.

DON JORGE

Powerless I am. You know my means cannot compete with the Peruvian's riches. But here comes Palma. Perhaps some news she brings of our disaster.

(PALMA enters)

BELISA

Palma! Here! What news with you?

PALMA

The condor is here. A few moments now and at the Palace, (all the town already knows it) will he appear unto you.

BELISA

Oh, curse! That politics can twist my will and so I am left with empty arms waiting for a husband I despise already.

DON JORGE

Let's go away! The island is big. We can hide ourselves. And if you are willing, my sweet love, to fly from all these prisons and political devices, my two arms will hold you and defend you, even though I die for it.

BELISA

To leave Havana? No...but yes...It seems the only way. Perhaps we will be able to reaffirm our love in empty places and dreamed of distances.

PALMA

If I may say some words to make this happening of a lesser importance let me tell you that I've seen the lord.

BELISA

Where?

PALMA

By the fountain of the public plaza where your father met him.

BELISA

What is he like?

PALMA

A man of such conceit as only a Viceroy could have in himself begotten. A real Viceroy's heir with a flair for women.

BELISA

What do you mean?

DON JORGE

What age is he?

PALMA

While they were talking, your father and your future husband, I, standing there made such an impression on the gentleman's eyes (probably after

BELISA

Palma! If this scheme turns right you'll be a free woman and you'll have my protection for the rest of your life.

such a long voyage an easy prey) that he demanded on behalf of my Christian soul, an interview with me tonight with offers of my freedom and security.

BELISA

He could, you know. But still I cannot see what you are driving at.

PALMA

I'll tell you plainly. If I play his game I think I might produce such happenings as never have ~~they~~ happened in this here town.

BELISA

What's on your mind? I know your wits.

PALMA

Allow me to refrain from telling you just now.
(To JORGE)

Are you willing, Sir, to let the Fair Belisa, our greatest joy and our greatest pride, to be snatched from under your very, pardon me, nose?

DON JORGE

I'd rather kill myself.

PALMA

That won't be necessary. If my scheme works out. But you must ask no questions and keep Silvio out of my way.

DON JORGE

If you can make the wedding impossible you can ask of me, of us, whatever is in my power to grant.

PALMA

Then tonight, be ready for any emergency. Gather your friends and station them near the Palace. At the right moment if my plans are right...
(She whispers in their ears for a few seconds)
Understood?

DON JORGE

I shall be ready. And fair Belisa, if this plan works out it won't be necessary for us to part again. May the Lord be with you.

(JORGE exits)

BELISA

Palma! If this scheme turns right you'll be a free woman and you'll have my protection for the rest of your life.

PALMA

Please, my lady, understand that I am doing all this for no reason at all. Perhaps for just the opportunity to enjoy myself in the face of such a powerful gentleman. You have been kind to me, and everything that I could do, being it within the realm of my meagre possibilities, I would do it. I couldn't bear to see you snatched away from us and living at the Court of Lima.

You are kind, Palma. And in this moment I assure you, my one and only friend.

(Offstage. A lyrical voice) BELISA...! Belisa...!

PALMA

Your aunt is looking for you.

(Offstage. A sharp voice) BELISA...!

Belisa...!

(Hurt)

BELISA

(Calling back) Here...! Here I am!

((DONA URRACA and DONA GUIOMAR, BELISA'S aunts enter. They're old and dressed in severe black costumes. DONA URRACA is tall and slender, DONA GUIOMAR is birdlike and fluttering))

DONA GUIOMAR

Belisa, child, he is here!
Yes, Aunt. I understand.

DONA URRACA

Enough, Guiomar. His Excellency, Don Diego do Hurtado, your future husband, had arrived, Belisa, for your first meeting.
especially when they don't have it. But, let's here for the best of the boys. For PAK sake.

DONA GUIOMAR

He is here, child! Your future husband! Oh, I am so happy! Love is everywhere now.

Yes, Aunt. I know all that. But how do you know it?

DONA URRACA

That is enough, Guiomar! You must remember we are women of quality and such talk hardly fits our social position.

BELISA

So he is here! And what am I to do? Shout with joy? Cry a little, perhaps? Is that what is expected of me?

DONA URRACA

Hardly so. We have educated you for this moment and we expect you will behave the same way you would behave in front of a dish you know already. A course at a big dinner that begins to bore you.

DONA GUIOMAR

But no! She should be bashful and somewhat ashamed as it is proper to a maid on such an occasion.. A feast day, a day to remember, a glorious day when all maiden hopes are going to crystallize in...

DONA URRACA

(Interrupting her)

Enough, Guiomar! Don't let yourself be carried to such extremes. Remember who you are and that you are not married. You shouldn't know...

DONA GUIOMAR

(Hurt)

~~I see... But~~ I was just trying to...

DONA URRACA

(To Belisa)

Now, remember what you are going to do. Don Diego will be standing by your father, we'll go in first, than you'll follow us, two steps behind. We'll curtsey and so will you. Then he'll come and kiss your hand. No more. Understand?

BELISA

Yes, Aunt. I understand.

DONA URRACA

Don't talk too much. Just a few words. A man likes to feel his intellect above a woman's, especially when they don't have it. But, let's hope for the best in this case. For your sake.

BELISA

Yes, Aunt. I know all that. But how do you know it?

DONA URRACA

Palma! Fix Dona Belisa's train.

PALMA

Yes, Dona Urraca.

(She does so. Aside to BELISA)

Don't worry, Dona Belisa... Everything will come out as I expect it.

BELISA

I do hope so.

DONA URRACA

(To BELISA)

Ready.

BELISA

Yes, Aunt.

DONA GUIOMAR

This is so beautiful! So beautiful!

BELISA

Yes, Aunt.

DONA URRACA

Open the curtains, Palma!

(PALMA goes L. and pantomimes the action)

DONA GUIOMAR

Don't be nervous.

BELISA

I assure you, Aunt, that I am not.

DONA URRACA

Ready? Let's go...

(The two aunts exit first in perfect formation. Two steps behind, BELISA. PALMA remains alone a few seconds. Then joins them too and exits)

BLACKOUT

SCENE IV:

When the lights go up again the CHORUS is sitting on the verge of the platform. The curtain is closed on the little stage.

CHORUS

And so the meeting is to take place. What will they say? Probably in all their lives they won't have anything more to say to each other than in this first encounter. The girl is shy, or so it seems. Don Diego, flamboyantly self-centered, feels the Viceroy's gaze hovering over his shoulders. He is so proud! You must remember that at the time, his greatest title is a simple one: a Spanish gentleman. The master race of centuries ago, especially here, on an island where the only offering is the breezes and the sunlight. And of course, its ports of call. But let's see what's going on at the main hall of the Palace.

(The lights go up on the little stage and the characters can be seen, motionless in a sort of unmoved painting of the period. The transparent curtain opens)

There they are! They make such a beautiful picture. But let's see these puppets alive!

(He makes a gesture toward the stage)

(The action starts on the little stage, but no voice is heard when they speak. As a film without a sound track)

We don't have to hear what they say. You see, it is not their own words they are saying. It is something they have learned during years of training. We still do such things, even now. In this modern, proud, forsaken world of ours we still say things that are equivalent to all these past formalities. "Darling, how good of you to come and visit us?", when we really don't care to see anyone but our own face in the mirror every morning. Because one thing all men, of all times, have in common. The love of one's self. That is here, now. In front of our eyes. See Don Diego - what is he thinking? It might be...

(He thinks) (Pointing to someone in the audience)

What would you say, Sir, on such an occasion? Let's pretend for a moment again, that your father, instead

of falling asleep in his favorite chair, his cigar out, while his wife listens to the worst kind of soap opera available, were the Viceroy of Peru? You belong, then, to this frame of ideas. And your words, that today talk about the final score not of a Each Suite, but of the last baseball game, will have the same intonation and the same ideas this puppet with a powerful father has here on the stage. Ideas aren't yours but belong to your period. If they don't, then you are an out-cast who will be hailed the next generation as a prophet. But now, today, you are a menace to Society if you think on your own. But we really shouldn't worry about that in this case. Don Diego is a good citizen, a law-abiding character because the law is his. And he is dumb, as every character in a puppet show should be. He doesn't think. He talks.

(ON the stage all the actions of the presentation of Don Diego have gone wrong. Either he wasn't standing as Belisa's aunts told her he would be or any other device that the director of this play can conceive to spoil a perfect set of social machinery at work can be taken for a cause. The result is a pandemonium of running around into everybody's way until the CHORUS realizes what is happening and then...)

But, what...?

(To the audience)

I must beg your pardon. My poor puppets weren't as well trained as I thought.

(He snaps his fingers and the action stops on the little stage. CHORUS goes up to the little stage and places the actors, as if they were manequins at a window in their right places. As he does so...To the audience)

A creator always believes in his own creations... And even I thought they were ready. They know their lines but as they don't have any lines in this scene...! That is the trouble with actors... They can never be silent...There...!

(He goes down to the main stage)

They are ready now...

(He snaps his fingers again and the action starts, this time correctly, To the audience)

You don't have to look at them again...It will work this time. You could listen...If a theater audience could listen to something more than their own heart beating. But you won't...Do you want silence. I crave for silence on the stage myself... But we are not sure ourselves anymore and silence is the climate of thinking. And we don't want to think. Isn't it ironic? We fought for centuries to think for ourselves and now that we can do it, we never do it... But well, that's human nature. And human nature, they say, comes from God. So let's not argue about God's will. It is so.

(Looking at the stage)

Look at Palma! She is young and alive! Of course she doesn't know all this. No one really knows of oneself. We just go on receiving sections, portions of ourselves from other people until we are so confused that we believe (let's say) our grocer boy better than we believe ourselves. Palma will be happy. Because she can laugh. Don Diego can't keep his eyes off her... Please, don't be scandalized! As a matter of fact it is proper. Very proper. Belisa is ready to smile now. Because she knows Palma will win. But will she win?

(On the stage all the ceremony is taking place as planned. BELISA is properly introduced to her future husband and there is a lot of bowing and courtseying. It must be timed so that the speech of the CHORUS ends at the right moment of the action)

Don Diego now is trying desparately to reach Palma, to be near her and set an exact time for their appointment. A "rendez-vous" between the mightiest of the mightiest and a low daughter of a slave race. The dry Castilian winds wanting a Cuban scent. Guitars and drums.. But now, here is his chance. Palma is ordered to take his hat and cape.

(On the stage PALMA does so...)

Let's hear what they'll say...But only for a few seconds...

(He snaps his fingers, again)

(On stage)

DON DIEGO

(TO PALMA, whispering)
Where shall I see you tonight?

PALMA

The corridor in front of your room.

DON DIEGO

The time?

PALMA

Midnight.

DON DIEGO

I won't prove ungrateful. But you promise that...

(CHORUS speaks and we can't hear the voices on the stage anymore although they go on talking)

CHORUS

And so the appointment is made. The lusty heir of the Conquistadores is ready for an easy conquest. Palma is willing too, or so it seems. We, as audience to this impossible story, only have to wait...And in waiting lies the secret of wisdom. But I'm talking too much. The trap is set...We must wait...But time is really non-existent on the stage. A word of mine and centuries will pass as butterflies. But I won't say it. No... Not now...I, too, want to see... But I'm tired...

(Yawning)

You'll excuse me.

(He makes a gesture and the lights go out on the stage)

I'll see you at midnight.

(Bows and exits)

(To DON DIEGO)

BLACKOUT
You'll have to excuse me, Sire...She is carried away by your presence. There have been times when I've had to hide all the pastoral books she had been developing for years for fear of the loss of her mind or worse still, of her soul, for in all those tales of forsaken ladies a maiden's heart might lose its purity, and what else can a maid have but that?

SCENE V:

A clock is heard in the half hour. The lights go up on the little stage. The GOVERNOR, the AUNTS, BELISA, SIVIO, and PALMA are escorting DON DIEGO to his chamber.

GOVERNOR

Well, my son, I think that after such an eventful day, you must give to your body what belongs to the body and rest you must.

DON DIEGO

(Looking at PALMA)

Rest, yes...Your Excellency. Your reception has been to me more than just an official reception. I remain indebted to you. And with me, my own father, who thanks you, through and by me.

GOVERNOR

Thank you...Thank you...

DONA URRACA

It is rather late...We hardly ever go to bed this late...Of course today has been such an occasion that we...

DONA GUIOMAR

(Interrupting her)

Yes...Yes...Just like one of the romances we have read where sheperds and sheperdesses sing their love in the empty woods...I always dreamed of something like this. And now I can see it! My dream come true!

DONA URRACA

That is sufficient, Guiomar!

(To DON DIEGO)

You'll have to excuse my sister, Sire...She is carried away by your presence. There have been times when I've had to hide all the pastoral books she had been devouring for years for fear of the loss of her mind or worse still, of her soul, for in all those tales of forsaken loves a maiden's heart might lose its purity, and what else can a maid have but that?

Wait...of Sir, Palma is my private maid, and

DON DIEGO
I understand...
(Dubiously)
What else?

DONA GUIOMAR
It is not so...But then, what can I do, being
younger than Urraca, but to obey.

DONA URRACA
Enough, Guiomar! Belisa...It is past your bed-
time...And tomorrow, Sunday, we must go to an
early mass.

BELISA
(Courtseying)
A calm and restful evening, my lord!

DON DIEGO
I thank you, fair Belisa...!

BELISA
And now, Aunts, I am ready for your prayers
and my rest...

DONA GUIOMAR
Well said, Belisa... "...your prayers and my
rest"...God bless her soul! And how demurely
can her words become...Pay no attention Don
Diego, to her sweet phrases for there is no one
in the whole Empire who can compete in wisdom,
flair and mind with our own Belisita. Why, there
have been times...

DONA URRACA
Enough, Guiomar!
(Courtseying)
Good night, my lord.

DONA GUIOMAR
(The same)
Good night, my lord!

BELISA
Good night, my lord!

(THEY start to exit, PALMA following...She
stops)

Wait...! Sir, Palma is my private maid, more

faithful a maid, I haven't found. She'll remain
at your service...Good night again...
(And with a smile, she exits, followed by
DONA URRACA and DONA GUIAMAR)

GOVERNOR
I wonder what she meant with that smile. I
really never know what my daughter thinks. It
is as it should be, of course, because a girl
has dreams like butterflies and a father can't
be bothered, don't you think so?

DON DIEGO
Indeed I do, Your Excellency.

GOVERNOR
Silvio!

SILVIO
Yes, Your Excellency.

GOVERNOR
Am I right?

SILVIO
Your Excellency is always right...

GOVERNOR
You see? And now my son, after the wedding -
that should be as soon as possible - don't ever
let the women tell you what to do... If she wants
to go this way, you make her go that way...But
not for any reason at all. If there is a reason
behind it, then you can't be master, but Reason
is master. My daughter...Silvio!...

SILVIO
Yes, Your Excellency?

GOVERNOR
How old is Dona Belisa?

SILVIO
She was nineteen three months ago, Your Excellency.
We had celebrations.

GOVERNOR
That's right.

(To DON DIEGO)
I don't know what I would do without Silvio...
He is really the right hand of the Colonial
Government, though sometimes, I must admit it,

I've been forced to punish him...Like the time he beat that merchant because he made propositions to Palma...You remember that, don't you, Palma? I always wondered if the merchant was to blame..

PALMA

It was just an unhappy incident, Your Excellency, in which, being what I am, a poor girl with no freedom at all, I saw myself involved without my wanting it. And thanks to Silvio at last I could get out of it...

SILVIO

But at what price! My back still hurts from the punishment and I can't kneel at church. But God knows why I can't.

GOVERNOR

(To DON DIEGO)

I wish you could have seen the merchant!

(He starts laughing, and PALMA and SILVIO join in the laughter, until the GOVERNOR realizes that DON DIEGO is not laughing and stops. PALMA and SILVIO stop laughing immediately)

GOVERNOR

(Coughing)

Well...!

(Out of a clear sky)

And how is your father?

DON DIEGO

His Excellency the Viceroy of Peru, is feeling quite well regarding that his lumbago is not giving him peace. Sometimes he feels that the task of ruling this section of the Empire is not worth his health.

GOVERNOR

Is the court at Lima as they say? I mean, as rich and brilliant as the very court in Madrid?

DON DIEGO

Yes...It is the most brilliant court in the Americas. Not even Mexico can be compared with it...

GOVERNOR

(Laughing rather stupidly)

Do you hear that, Silvio, Palma? Are you listening of the court in Lima where my daughter shall

be one of its most brilliant roses?

PALMA

(Knowingly)

We hear, Your Excellency.

GOVERNOR

You don't know, my son, how I cherish the idea of your coming marriage...All my life I wanted the best for my daughter. Suitors she had had. But I turned them away on your behalf though I admit that sometimes the silence I received from Peru made me doubt. There was for instance this Captain, Don Jorge de Monteverde, fine family and all that...But not a doubloon to his credit...I turned him down but he is still around Havana. He hasn't given up hope, I presume. But I saw to my daughter's safety first...She is not allowed to see him under any circumstances and his appearance in the Palace strictly forbidden...So you see, my son, how I take care of your rights...

DON DIEGO

Everything is as it should be expected. This match is, as you know, very much at your advantage...

(Looking at PALMA)

So let's not talk more about it...

SILVIO

(Aside to PALMA)

You better watch out, Palma...I'm not going to let you out of my sight for a moment...

PALMA

(Provoking him)

Don Diego is no merchant...So don't think that...

(Her voice becomes inaudible as the voice of the GOVERNOR is heard)

GOVERNOR

I remember your father in Flanders, once when His Majesty had all the troops there for hot "manzanilla"...I remember he said - your father, I mean, not His Majesty who wasn't there at the moment...I think Her Majesty the Queen was being bled at the time...Where was I?...Ah, yes...! Your father...Now, what did your father say? In the name of God, my memory is getting worse every day...Silvio!

SILVIO

Yes, Your Excellency.

GOVERNOR

Remind me tomorrow to call the physician and see what ails me that I can't even remember something about the Viceroy...

DON DIEGO

(Looking at PALMA)

I wonder why?

(The CHORUS enters left...The action goes on without sound just as in the scene before)

CHORUS

(To the audience)

Pardon me if I've delayed! I thought that for a while, "they" (referring to the actors) could make the story for themselves... I should have known better. If I hadn't showed up the Governor would go on all night telling stories and anecdotes he doesn't remember. And in these times of rush and hurry we simply can't waste those precious minutes we are bound to use in things of no avail. So you see that's why I had to come back...

(To GOVERNOR)

My Lord, the Governor of this beautiful island, you have never seen the Viceroy in your life... Why then now all this pretense?

GOVERNOR

Sir...One can choose one's dreams.

CHORUS

You are right there, my lord. Dreams I think are the only things left for free choosing in man's life...But Don Diego knows you are lying... So why pretend?

GOVERNOR

I know I lie and he knows I lie, but what of that. We both pretend and we believe, for a few moments, what we say. What more can we ask?

CHORUS

Now I know why you are Governor of this precious island, this stone on the King of Spain's crown. You are wise...But now you are in the way of the author of this story...

(Confidentially)

Don Diego wants you to go away...And take Silvio with you...

GOVERNOR

Why? For what reasons?

CHORUS

You are asking too much, old man. Don't you believe me?

GOVERNOR

Why should I?

CHORUS

Because I tell you so.

GOVERNOR

Is that enough reason?

CHORUS

For this play, yes. And for your audience.

GOVERNOR

What do you want me to do?

CHORUS

Just say - "My son, you must be tired. I must leave you to your rest."

GOVERNOR

(Memorizing)

"My son, you must be tired. I must leave you"... Why?

CHORUS

(Losing patience)

Because Don Diego must talk to Palma.

GOVERNOR

What about?

CHORUS

What has a man to say to a woman?

GOVERNOR
 Oh...! I see...!
 (Turning to DON DIEGO)
 "My son, I must be tired..."

CHORUS
 (Correcting him)
 "You must be tired"

GOVERNOR
 (To CHORUS)
 That's what I said.

CHORUS
 No...He, Don Diego, must be tired...

GOVERNOR
 I see... "My son, you must be tired...
 (He can't remember)

CHORUS
 (Prompting him)
 "I must leave you"...

GOVERNOR
 "I must leave you" (I remember) to your rest."
 (To CHORUS)
 Was that all right?

CHORUS
 Very well...You are a brilliant man.

GOVERNOR
 The talent of a man nowadays is measured, I think, by the accuracy with which he repeats other people's ideas...Come, Silvio, I need you...

SILVIO
 But I...

GOVERNOR
 Enough...! We can't argue...Come with me. Good night, my son. Palma stays with you.

SILVIO
 (To PALMA)
 See what you do...!

(GOVERNOR exits, mumbling, followed by SILVIO)

CHORUS

(With relief)
There! The coast is clear... Now, Don Diego and
Palma...The rest is easy...
(He exits)

PALMA

Do you need me, my Lord?

DON DIEGO

Always...When shall I be able to see you alone...?

PALMA

If Your Grace is so set on this...talk with me,
I'll meet Your Grace here in about half an hour,
and I will lead Your Grace to my modest room...
If Your Grace wants to.

DON DIEGO

If I want to? No mortal ever was held by such
powerful bindings as I am now by your eyes,
your smile, your...

PALMA

(Interrupting him)
Then I'll be here in half an hour. Now I must
go to my ladies' chamber and help them undress
and after that, I must do my nightly prayers...

DON DIEGO

I'll be waiting...

(PALMA bows and starts to exit)

You won't keep me waiting, will you?

(PALMA smiles and exits)

Hmmm...?

BLACKOUT

SCENE VI:

The AUNT'S chamber.
When the lights go up
DONA GUIOMAR is wearing
a nightgown. BELISA is
there, too, and PALMA.
There are two beds.

(To BELISA) DONA GUIOMAR
When will the wedding take place?

BELISA
I don't know...Father has made all the arrange-
ments until now...Let him decide when...Let
him get married...

(Entering) DONA URRACA
Who?

DONA GUIOMAR
Her father.

DONA URRACA
What?

BELISA
Yes...Why not? He is the one who wants this
ceremony. Not I...

DONA URRACA
What are you saying?

BELISA
I know what I am saying. But you are set on
not understanding.

PALMA
(Aside to BELISA)
Be careful!

DONA URRACA
The child is dreaming...I know it...

BELISA
Do you?

DONA GUIOMAR
(Lyrically)
Don't you love him?

DONA URRACA

Stop that, Guiomar! A girl shouldn't hear about those things...Sometimes I think a devil is in you, saying those sinful things.

DONA GUIOMAR

(Scared)

The devil? Oh, no!

(Falling on her knees)

"Deo confiteor"...Save me, of lord! from my sins... Satan, away! Away with you! "Holy Mary, Mother of God!

DONA URRACA

Stop that mumbling, Guiomar.

BELISA

Look what you've done!

DONA URRACA

I should have known better. Guiomar!

(Sternly)

Guiomar! Stop all this nonsense immediately!

(DONA GUIOMAR goes on with her praying)

All right! All right! I apologize...There is no devil in you...

DONA GUIOMAR

Do you mean it?

DONA URRACA

I mean it.

DONA GUIOMAR

How do you know?

DONA URRACA

I know...Believe me...And please get up!

DONA GUIOMAR

It would be awful if it weren't true. If the devil were really inside myself. Or worse still...! If a departed soul from a sinful woman were to take hold of myself...A woman like that Dona Salome who killed Don Juan the Baptist, or her mother, that famous Dona Herodias...And I would wake up in the morning and everyone would think I was myself, when inside of me, all these women

were the real me then.

(Horrorified)

Oh, no!

(Shouting)

Confession! Confession!

BELISA

Now...Now...Everything is all right, Aunt.

DONA URRACA

Yes, Guiomar...Stop all this chatter. Palma! Help me to get her up.

PALMA

Yes, my lady.

(Between the three of them they get DONA GUIOMAR to her feet)

DONA URRACA

Now, let's pray...It is very late...
(After getting her up, now they all kneel down again)

DONA URRACA

(With a huge rosary)
Our father which art in Heaven...

PALMA, BELISA AND DONA GUIOMAR

(Repeating)
Our father which art in Heaven...

DONA URRACA

Hallowed is thy name.

ALL

(The same play)

(While the praying is going on, in the front stage DON JORGE appears with people following him)

DON JORGE

(To FIRST MAN)

We shall wait here for the signal...

FIRST MAN

Are you sure?

DON JORGE

Yes...Everything is ready now, I hope...

SECOND MAN

What shall we do?

DON JORGE

For the time being nothing...Wait...That's all we can do now. When the signal comes you have your instructions.

FIRST MAN

Yes...we know...

SECOND MAN

(Not knowing)

Yes, we know...

(On the stage)

BELISA

(Aside to PALMA)

Do you think Jorge is waiting outside?

PALMA

I hope so...I'll see...

(Walking on her knees she goes to an imaginary window and looks out. She moves back to BELISA)

There are some men on the streets...But it is too dark out there to say...

BELISA

(The same)

I hope he is there.

PALMA

You promised to protect me. I mean afterwards.

BELISA

I promised.

DONA URRACA

(Annoyed. In a high voice)

Holy Mary, Mother of God... (and so on)

(BELISA and PALMA lower their voices and join the prayer)

DON JORGE

The lights are still on.

FIRST MAN

It is not midnight yet.

DON JORGE

This waiting is awful...When I was fighting in Flanders...

FIRST MAN
 (Interrupting him)
 I know, I know... You've told me...

DON JORGE
 (Embarrassed)
 Have I? Well...
 (And his voice becomes inaudible)

DONA URRACA
 (Getting up)
 "Amen." And that's enough for tonight.

(They all get up)

BELISA
 I think I'll go to bed now...

DONA GUIOMAR
 And I wish you'll sleep of angels.

BELISA
 Thank you, Aunt!

(GUIOMAR kisses her)

DONA URRACA
 Good night, Belisa!
 (Doing the same)

BELISA
 Thank you.. Good night! Good night! Palma...!

PALMA
 Good night, Dona Belisa.

(BELISA exits)

DONA URRACA
 (To PALMA)
 Palma! Help us to get to bed.

PALMA
 Yes, my lady.

(They go to the two beds and PALMA tucks them in...)

DONA GUIOMAR
Good night, Palma!

PALMA
(Putting out a candle)
Good night, my ladies.

DONA URRACA
Be ready for an early mass, Palma.

PALMA
Yes, my lady. Good night...I hope nothing
disturbs your sleep.
(And puts out the other candle! The scene
is dark now. After a few seconds they
are snoring. PALMA smiles and exits...
complete darkness)

FIRST MAN
(On the street)
The lights are out!

DON JORGE
Yes...To your positions, men.

(They exit in different directions. As
they do so CHORUS is discerned sitting
on the main stage looking wistfully
at the audience)

SCENE VII:

CHORUS

Well it is dark now...The Palace is silent at last, but the scheme is on...It's midnight...

(A clock, to his sign, starts chiming off-stage)

Even the streets seemingly are empty...But we know it is not so...We, you, distinguished, sensitive, intelligent audience and myself know it is not so.

(The voice of a man, a town crier, is heard)

VOICE

(Offstage)

Twelve o'clock and all quiet...Midnight!
In the name of the Lord, midnight!

CHORUS

And Don Diego...Where is Don Diego now?

(Shouting)

Don Diego!

(A spot light shows DON DIEGO in a long nightgown opening a door...He has a candle in his trembling hand)

(PALMA enters)

PALMA

Is Your Grace ready?

(PALMA looks at DON DIEGO who looks at her with a smile)
Ready? Never have I waited so eagerly for any-
thing...Or anybody, my lovely girl...

(He touches her skin)

PALMA

(Evading him)

Your Grace is too kind!

DON DIEGO

Where shall we go? I want to get to a place where I can...

PALMA

(Interrupting him)

Talk to me...?

Talk! Yes... My dark one! You are so beautiful!

PALMA
Your Grace jests.

DON DIEGO
Never in my life I've been so earnest.

PALMA
But I'm a nobody. A slave. And you. You are the heir of the Viceroy...

DON DIEGO
Tonight, a smile from you is more valuable than a Castilian fortress.

(He tries to embrace her. She evades him)

PALMA
Your Grace is passionate.

DON DIEGO
You'll see that I am.

PALMA
(Scared)
Someone is coming...! Quickly! Where can I hide?

DON DIEGO
(Showing the door)
Here...

(PALMA hides behind the door, but the audience can see her, laughing at what is going on)

(SILVIO enters)

SILVIO

(Amazed)

Your Grace!

DON DIEGO
(Pretending to be walking in his sleep) Wak-
ing up)

What? What? Where am I?

SILVIO

(Suspiciously)

What has happened to Your Grace?

DON DIEGO

(With fake tragedy)

It happened again! Oh Silvio! My great-great-great-grandfather left me as inheritance not only his title but his disease! I must admit that the Grand Duke of Cueruavaea and San Benito do lor Prior, was a somnambulist. So am I.

SILVIO

(The same as before)

Walking in your sleep, Your Grace?

DON DIEGO

I dreamed I was on the Elysian Fields and now I discover myself on a passage way of the Palace. It is a great delusion.

SILVIO

Your Grace should get to bed. I'll help you.
(He makes a move towards the door)

DON DIEGO

(High)

No! I mean, I can't sleep now...! Get me a glass of water, Silvio.

SILVIO

There is a jug by your bed, Your Grace.

DON DIEGO

It is warm, by now...Get me fresh water.

SILVIO

I am sure, Your Grace, it is not warm.

DON DIEGO

(Losing his temper)

When the son of the Viceroy tells you the water is warm, all the water jugs of the Empire turn hot...Do you understand?

SILVIO

Yes...Your Grace...The water is hot...I understand.

DON DIEGO

(With a grand gesture)

Now, go!

SILVIO
 (Against his will)
 Yes, Your Grace...
 (He starts exit)
 But I'll be back soon...With cold water...
 (He exits)

(As soon as he has left, PALMA comes out from behind the door)

PALMA
 (With a sigh of relief)
 Ohhh...! That was close...!

DON DIEGO
 (Grandly)
 You have nothing to worry with me, my child.

PALMA
 We must get to a private place. I'll lead you to my room...Will Your Grace follow me...?

DON DIEGO
 To the last circle of Hell, my dove!

PALMA
 (Smiling)
 That will not be necessary...Follow me...
 (She starts exit. DON DIEGO follows her.
 The door vanishes and another door appears. She stops)
 I'll go in first...Wait a few seconds and then come in...
 (Suggestive)
 The door is unlocked...!

DON DIEGO
 I'll be here...Waiting for you. For your tenderness...

PALMA
 (Cocquettishly)
 Don't wait too long!
 (She opens the door that slides into position again as to suggest she has come in. The beds of the AUNTS are visible now. PALMA stands a few seconds in front of the door while DON DIEGO is now behind the door and out of sight. The snoring of the AUNTS can be heard)

SCENE VIII:

PALMA with a little laugh, leaves the door and hides behind one of the beds. But she can be seen always. After a few seconds the door opens and DON DIEGO enters. PALMA blows from where she is, and, irrationally, the candle on DON DIEGO'S hand goes out. There is darkness now.

DON DIEGO

Purri (Purring)

I see your little game, my lovely kitten...But I need no light to find you...That you are here I can tell...I can feel your presence even in my bones...Now, pet, doll, darling pomegranate of the tropics...Don't hide! It's me! Only me! But don't worry...As I told you, I need no light... Your eyes will guide me...

(Stumbling over something)

Damn it! Not you, my dove, my precious little dark plum...! Here is no longer Don Diego, but whatever you want me to be...

(A loud snore from DONA URRACA is heard)

Oh, so you are asleep already? Are you enticing me to come closer, to be near you? A woman's game is a man's downfall. But what a pleasant one!

DONA GUIOMAR

(Talking in her sleep)

Dona Salome...Dona Herodias...! Holy Mary, Mother of God...

(And her voice goes down to a mumble)

DON DIEGO

Salome, you are, my lovely hibiscus...But sweeter and more desirable...Like brown sugar from your own mills...Let me be the cane-cutter of such a flower.

(PALMA laughs)

Oh, you laugh, Dona Salome? The night is cold but there is warmth in your arms. Will you let me find shelter there?

DONA GUIOMAR
 (In her sleep)
 A woman of passions! Melibea looking for Calixto!
 Men at my feet!

DONA URRACA
 (In her sleep)
 Enough, Guiomar!

DON DIEGO
 You speak, my love? Oh, speak again! And let
 your voice be the North Star that shall guide
 me to your nest...
 (A loud snore is heard)
 Still pretending sleep, my love? Here I am...
 Burning for you...
 (He sneezes)
 Damned draught!

(Now DONA GUIOMAR gets up, asleep)

DONA GUIOMAR
 (In her sleep)
 You shouldn't have come, my love! I know I have
 made you dream but I need more than dreams. I
 am a woman of passions, and you know it... Now
 you've played with fire... Now Dona Salome,
 demands and demands again... Can't you see...?
 I am trembling...

(She embraces DON DIEGO, who recognizes her
 He tries, quietly but firmly to disengage
 himself from her clutch, but she will not
 let him go)

You are afraid now... Afraid, because this woman
 demands of you...

(She stops)
 Don't be afraid! I am no longer a Princess...
 And I desire you...! I desire you...!

DONA URRACA
 (In her sleep)
 Enough, Guiomar! Holy Mary, Mother of...
 (A mumbling of words. A snore)

DON DIEGO
 (Terrified) (In a low voice)
 Palma! Palma! Where are you?

DONA GUIOMAR
 Don't be afraid, Calixto! Celestina has given
 me your letters, flaming with ardent love and
 now I am aflame. Take me! Take me! I am yours...!

DON DIEGO
 (Striving to escape)
 Yes...Yes...I will take you.

(At which moment DONA GUIOMAR wakes up, and seeing him so close, utters the loudest shriek uttered by an honorable lady in distress)

DONA GUIOMAR
 Eeeee...h!!!

(DONA URRACA wakes up and seeing a man shrieks too)

DONA URRACA
 Eeeee...h!!!

DON DIEGO
 (Very humbly)
 Quiet, please! It is a mistake! Quiet!

(For only answer the two AUNTS shriek again)
 (PALMA laughs...)

(DON DIEGO runs to the door...At that moment the sound of bells, as if the city were being attacked by pirates, is heard... Shouts and voices...)

(DON DIEGO falls on his knees and starts praying the "Deo confiteor" in a loud voice...)

(BELISA enters, right...The GOVERNOR and SILVIO, left. DON JORGE enters too, sword in hand followed by his men... People of the town appear too carrying window frames through which they watch the scene. PALMA joins BELISA...CHORUS enters with the crowd...)

DON JORGE
 Coward! Assassin! Don Juan!

(Sword in hand, DON JORGE pursues DON DIEGO all over the room...)

GOVERNOR
 What's this? Don Diego? Here?

BELISA
 (With a feeble cry)
 Papa! Papa!
 (And she runs to the GOVERNOR and embraces him)

GOVERNOR
 (Tender)
 There! There!

(The pandemonium reaches a state where everybody is talking at the same time, until the GOVERNOR, standing on one of the beds shouts louder. DON JORGE stops his chase and DON DIEGO falls on his knees again)

GOVERNOR
 Silence! Silen...ce!!

(There is silence now)

(To DON DIEGO)
 Well, Sir...Can you explain?

DON DIEGO
 (Loudly)
 Deo confiteor...(And so on)

GOVERNOR
 (Amazed)
 The man now talks in Latin! He has lost his wits...!

DONA URRACA
 (Hysterically)
 To the stake with him! Burn him! Burn him, he who comes hidden in the night to besiege maidens' citadels...

CROWD
 Burn him! Burn him!

DON DIEGO
 (In complete terror)
 Noooooo!

GOVERNOR
 I don't understand...But then I never do...I am the Governor...

DON JORGE
 Belisa!

BELISA
 (Runs to him and embraces him)
 Jorge...!

DON JORGE

(To GOVERNOR)

Your Excellency! In front of all these people of the loyal town of San Cristobal de la Havana, I demand the hand of your daughter...! You've seen now, what kind of a person this man is... I've saved your sisters' honor... And my prize is Belisa.

GOVERNOR

(To BELISA)

What do you have to say?

BELISA

(Demure)

I am like wax to your desires, father.

GOVERNOR

That means you want him and if I said no, you would make our lives unbearable. Be it so...

(To DON JORGE)

She is yours... Silvio! Don Diego is leaving tomorrow... Write the proper letters and explanations to his Majesty the King and the Viceroy... I must get some sleep...

(To the crowd)

To bed... To bed...!

BELISA

Jorge!

DON JORGE

My love!

(The crowd disperses...)

SILVIO

Your Excellency, this is as good an opportunity as any... Will you grant me permission to marry?

GOVERNOR

(High)

What?

SILVIO

(Taking PALMA'S hand)

I want to marry Palma...

GOVERNOR

But she is a slave..!

BELISA

No, father...As her freedom is mine I give it
back to her...Palma, you are ~~free!~~ ~~women...~~

PALMA

Thank you, my lady.

(To SILVIO)

I told you that ~~it~~ would be more to gain than the
merchant's affair...

(They embrace and kiss each other)

GOVERNOR

To bed now...To bed...I must sleep.

(He exits)

DON JORGE

Belisa! Always...Together always!

(They exit)

DONA URRACA

(Following them)

Wait...! Wait...!

(To GUIOMAR)

We must follow them...She is our ward...!

(She exits)

DONA GUIOMAR

(Looking at DON DIEGO, still on his knees
praying)

Why did I have to scream!

DONA URRACA

(Appearing),

Guiomar...! Come.

(She exits again)

DONA GUIOMAR

(Docile)

Yes, Urraca...

(And birdlike she exits running with a sigh
of dissatisfaction)

SILVIO

(To PALMA)

I don't know what to think!

PALMA

(Smiling)
 Don't, my love! From now on, I'll do the thinking
 around here...!

(They exit)

(DON DIEGO is left alone, kneeling, pray-
 ing still, almost numb, not realizing
 what has happened)

(CHORUS steps forward and addresses the
 audience)

CHORUS

Up to here what I was told to do...Now you
 know...! A silly story....! But sometimes a
 silly tale can bring a smile...!

(The lights dim on the little stage)

I am sorry to have taken so much of your time.
 But we must learn again to spend our time as if
 it were golden doubloons...If you have smiled
 tonight I am well paid...Because a smile is the
 beginning of Wisdom...

(He pulls the curtain of the little stage)
 Now, to your homes again...To responsibilities
 and rush...To the tedium of life...If you have
 dreamed tonight...

(He stops)

But that would be too much to ask...If you have
 enjoyed yourself with my childish story, my
 work is complete...Pardon us! We are the ones
 who refuse to forget...If you'll excuse me...

(He bows)

Good night!

(He exits)

(There is a fanfare and CURTAIN)