

ELICIA: My aim is true. You can always depend on your trusty maid.

(MELIBEA is gone. ELICIA opens the garden door.)

ELICIA: Let's have a look.
Oh, God, another one!

CALISTO: Another what?

ELICIA: Another suitor. Each day there are more. They're dropping from the trees like the apples of autumn, just as wormy, most of them are, just as overripe....

CALISTO: If I have rivals, I have to fight them.

ELICIA: There's just one other roundabout today, Well bred, polite, a charming man.

CALISTO: I was trying to be charming. It didn't work. She hates me now.

ELICIA: Well...

CALISTO: She does, she does, she hates me now; I'll die, I will, I can't live without her.

ELICIA: You saw her yesterday for the very first time. You've spoken to her twice. You lived before you met her, and You'll live for years to come.

CALISTO: I won't.

ELICIA: You will. You look perfectly healthy.

CALISTO: I only look that way; inside, I bleed.

ELICIA: And so does she.

CALISTO: She...suffers?

ELICIA: Dreadfully.

CALISTO: Because...?

ELICIA: A man.

CALISTO: ...Who causes her pain?

ELICIA: Night and day.

CALISTO: Show me; I'll kill him; I'll tear out his heart And offer it up as a present to her, A savage token of my barbaric love!

ELICIA: Savage, barbaric, but not very bright! It's you, you fool, you lunatic, you lout. You're her persecutor, she aches for you.

CALISTO: No.

ELICIA: Yes.

CALISTO: No.

ELICIA: Yes.

CALISTO: Yes?

ELICIA: Yes.

CALISTO: Yes! How do you know?

ELICIA: Oh, we maids know these things about our mistresses;

We're in and out of their lives like bees in lilies, Tidying up more than their bedclothes and their hair. She didn't have you arrested.

CALISTO: She threatened to.

ELICIA: But she didn't. I would have. She didn't. You're alarming. Wild. How can she resist you?

You have such pretty teeth. Each one Like a little kernel of white corn.

Here she comes: hide in the bush;

She's on the brink: I'll give a push.

(Aside) She's ready to fall for him head over heels;

And why am I helping? I know how he feels.

When passion possesses, you freeze and you burn,

Your bedsheets get knotted; you toss and you turn;

Your laundry gets soiled, you tear out your hair,

So I'm helping out; and why should I care?
I find him attractive; and intrigue is fun,
And a surrogate love affair's better than none.

(MELIBEA enters.)

MELIBEA: Who are you talking to, Elicia?
I thought I warned you to keep the door shut.

ELICIA: There's a gentleman, ma'am.
He's lying out here. On the ground,
Writhing and flailing in some kind of mortal agony,
Making terrible, terrible sounds.

MELIBEA: Oh, let me see. (*She looks.*)
There's no one here.

ELICIA: He's disappeared.

MELIBEA: Maybe he got better and went away.
Or maybe he crawled into a bush to die. We could
start beating the bushes, I suppose.

ELICIA: Spare the poor bushes. Wherever he's crawled,
we'll hear him moaning. He moaned very strangely,
the poor, poor man.

MELIBEA: Strangely?

ELICIA: Yes. Each moan sounded like someone's name.
Yours, in fact. Just like this:

"MMMMMMMelib-b-b-eeeeaaaahh!",
"MMMMMMMelib-b-b-eeeeeeeeaaaahh!"

MELIBEA: Oh! Oh! Calisto! It was Calisto! He's found
yet another way to make a spectacle of himself! Another
way to drag my name through the mud! Calisto! That
troll! That fountain of dreadful metaphors! (*She kneels.*)
Please, Holy Father, please, Blessed Mother of God,
what crime did I commit that you should send this
demon to torture me? Make him go away! He frightens
me! I hate him! I hate him! I hate him, I hate him, I hate
him!

CALISTO: (*To ELICIA, from the bush*) It's going very well.
Congratulations.

ELICIA: (*To CALISTO*) Back in the bush. I'm not done yet.
(*To MELIBEA*) I know just what you mean, ma'am. The
minute I saw him I said to myself, "I hate that man".
For one thing, he's so ugly.

MELIBEA: Isn't he?

ELICIA: Remarkably ugly. Warty like a squash. Greasy.
Fat. The ugliest man I ever saw.

MELIBEA: Well, not so ugly as that, but...

ELICIA: Ugly enough. And incredibly stupid!

MELIBEA: Stupid?

ELICIA: A veritable clod of earth; an ox could outsmart
him.

MELIBEA: I thought he spoke well.

ELICIA: Sure, if you like hearing gibberish.

MELIBEA: It wasn't all gibberish.

ELICIA: Oh, please, ma'am, your natural generosity
carries you away.

MELIBEA: I am not naturally generous; it's just that he....

ELICIA: All that hot air! (*Imitating CALISTO*) "Melibea!
So fair! Radiant! Divine! Beautiful Melibea! Little star
of the dawn!"

MELIBEA: Actually I liked the part about the little star of
the dawn.

ELICIA: You're far too sensible to fall for that stuff.
I mean obviously you aren't worthy of such intense,
passionate adoration.

MELIBEA: What do you mean by that?

ELICIA: Well, it's obvious.

For a mad mad moment I thought,
 "My God, she's scrubbing the floor!"

ISABELLE: Help me, Lyse. — *Begin*

I can't bear to live

A single instant after he is dead.

(*She picks up the dagger.*)

Look. It's my father's knife.

LYSE: Put it away.

There's a less painful solution.

ISABELLE: There's no other remedy.

Assist me or else

Become my enemy.

LYSE: I've saved him.

ISABELLE: Clindor?

LYSE: At liberty tonight.

ISABELLE: Tell me what to do.

LYSE: Meet me at the prison at midnight exactly.

I have the key to Clindor's cell.

ISABELLE: Lyse! How did you get it?

LYSE: His jailer is a lonely man.

ISABELLE: This sacrifice...

LYSE: Is even more than you imagine.

ISABELLE: I swear to you, if he goes free,
 You'll live your days a wealthy woman.
 I will wait on you.

LYSE: It's not your servitude I crave.

A handsome payment is another matter.

Here are the keys to your father's vaults;

Go in, pack a bag

With all the coins and jewels you can carry.

We flee tonight; you with your love, no longer lonely;
 I with the loot, no longer poor.

ISABELLE: I'll give you half of all I have.

LYSE: Only half?

ISABELLE: It's a lot of money.

LYSE: You haven't seen the jailer.

ISABELLE: All then; everything.

You shall have diamonds for setting him free!

Clindor and I will need no gold!

I'll be his equal, we'll both be orphans,

Homeless and poor in the wide, wide world!

How happy we'll be!

LYSE: Both poor. I know Clindor will be overjoyed.

ISABELLE: It's you who deserve this ecstasy, not I.

I am your friend, Lyse, till the day I die. (*Exit*)

LYSE: Tonight when we open the door to his cell

He can claim his newly paupered bride;

I'll have a countinghouse consolation.

I wish them every penniless joy —

I'll jingle money at their wedding.

And how the hungry cat will cry

To find the fattest bird flown away.

Moderation is best, Aristotle said it:

Everyone feasts, but no one is full. (*Exits*) — *end*

PRIDAMANT: Well, if the maid is rich, my son's a fool
 not to choose her—the other one's a bit high-strung,
 and likely to be a spendthrift. On the other hand, the
 maid's too scheming, it'd be constant work keeping up
 with her. I only hope he doesn't make a mistake....

(*ISABELLE and LYSE enter the prison.*)

PRIDAMANT: Ah! The prison.