

Slave to Her Own Lover

“My name is doña Isabel Fajardo and not, as you have thought, Zelima, nor am I Moorish but Christian, the daughter of Catholic parents who belong to one of the most prominent families in the city of Murcia. This brand that you see on my face is only a shadow, a symbol, of the stain on my good name and on my character caused by a man’s falseness. You will truly believe me when you see how I remove it. Would that I could so easily remove the mark my misfortune and my folly have made upon my soul!”

As she said this she tore the brand from her face and cast it far from herself, leaving the crystal clarity of her heavenly face to shine unblemished, without stain or shadow, revealing the radiant sun of her unclouded beauty. Everyone listened to each word her beautiful mouth uttered, totally absorbed and not daring to take their eyes from her face for fear that she, like an angel, might vanish. Trying to imagine whether she was more beautiful with the brand or without it, the young men felt even more smitten and the ladies more envious. They almost regretted seeing her without the brand because they’d grown accustomed to it. Lisis, who loved her so tenderly, was particularly affected. She shed several tears but, not wanting to interrupt, she quickly wiped them away with her lovely hands. When the beautiful doña Isabel saw that her listeners had all fallen silent and that each one was waiting in eager anticipation, she began her tale:

I was born the only child in my parents’ house, so that I alone should cause its ruin. Beautiful as you can see, noble as I have said, and wealthy

enough to find a suitable husband if I'd been sensible and not so unfortunate. Until I was twelve, my parents pampered and regaled me because they had no other children on whom to lavish their affection. The two of them instructed me in everything important to a woman of my position: not only the qualities that make one a virtuous Christian but also the edifying exercise of reading, writing, playing music, dancing, and all the other requisites in a person of my category. Having no other children, my parents outdid themselves to provide for me all the things which parents think embellish their daughters and I excelled in everything.

Forgive me for praising myself, but I have no other defender and it would not be right for my talents to pass unmentioned in this company, and indeed I have paid dearly for them. While I was gifted in everything, I was especially good at writing poetry. I became the wonder of the whole region and the envy of many who were not so accomplished in this exercise. There are some ignoramuses who are consumed by a woman's success, as if a woman, by being intelligent, could take away their intelligence. Barbaric ignorance! If you know how to compose poetry, then compose it; no one is stealing your talent! And if verses you yourself did not compose are good and, especially if they are by a woman, admire them and praise them! If they are bad, excuse her, remembering that she has so few resources; writing poetry is more praiseworthy in a woman than it is in a man because being less educated she has less art with which to adorn it.

By the time I turned fourteen, my father already had so many suitors for my hand that he became irritated and told them they should let me grow up. They told him that they so idolized my beauty that they could not give up the hope of winning it. Among the most impassioned was a gentleman named don Felipe. He was a little older than me and was as well endowed with good looks, gentility, and nobility as he was lacking in wealth. It seemed as if fortune, envious of the gifts heaven had lavished upon him, had meant to deprive him of her own gifts. In short, he was poor, so poor that he was altogether unknown in the city, a misfortune shared by many. He was the suitor who most sighed and wept to win my affection despite the fact that I paid him no attention. When the servants in my house saw that I wasn't interested in him, they didn't listen to what he said either. I never really did look at him, which explains why later on he went unrecognized. Would to heaven I had looked at him carefully

and so taken measure to prevent the misfortune that I now lament. I might have been able to prevent some of it. But how could I, in my elevated position, know to look at one so poor? Of course, I did have enough money for myself and for him, but at any rate, I never noticed him sufficiently to be able to describe his face until I found myself engulfed in misfortune.

At that time [1640], the Catalan Revolt took place as a punishment for our sins, or maybe only for my own; our losses have been great but my own were greater yet. In the Revolt, those who died won eternal fame while I who survive have earned ignominious infamy. In Murcia we learned that His Majesty King Felipe IV (may God protect him), was going to the loyal and illustrious kingdom of Aragón to oversee the civil war. My father, like any man who had spent the flower of his youth serving his king, knew that His Majesty would need brave men like him so he decided to reenter the service so that the king, fair and honorable, should on this occasion reward all his service both present and past.

When my father began to prepare for his journey, my mother and I were so sorrowful, and my father was too, that as a result of our pleading he decided to take us with him. Our sorrow turned to joy. The decision made me especially happy as I was a young girl eager to see new places, but all the sooner to lament my unlucky star which was leading me to perdition. The departure was set, everything packed which, although light, had to show my father's importance and that he was descended from the old Fajardo family of Murcia. When we left that kingdom, my departure caused widespread sorrow throughout the realm, which was solemnized in prose and in poetry by all the brightest minds.

We arrived in the very noble and sumptuous city of Zaragoza and took lodging in one of its best houses. After I had rested from the journey, I went out to see the city and I saw and was seen. This, however, was not what caused my downfall, for the fire was within my own house. Even if I'd never gone out my misfortune had already spied me out, as if this noble city were lacking in beauties when, in fact, there were so many that there weren't sufficient pens or words to praise them. Indeed, there are so many beauties in Aragón that their number causes envy in other kingdoms. Even so, people began to exaggerate my beauty as if they'd never seen beauty before, for, as the saying has it, everything new is pleasing. I don't know if it was as great as they said, I only know it was

enough to cause my downfall. Would that I hadn't been so beautiful, then I wouldn't have suffered such great misfortune!

My father spoke with His Majesty and when he learned that my father had been such a great soldier during the wars, that his vigor and valor remained undimmed, that he always gave good account of himself in action, the king honored his courage with knighthood in the Order of Calatrava and gave him command of a cavalry regiment with the rank of field commander. Because my father would have to wait in attendance upon the king, he sent to Murcia for as much of the household as could be transported, while the rest of his estates were tended by noble relatives who lived in Murcia.

A highly respected and moderately well-to-do widow was mistress of the house where we were lodged. She had one daughter and one son. His name was don Manuel and he was young, well-spoken, and gallant, if only he hadn't proven such a false traitor. I won't mention his last name; it's better to withhold it since he didn't know how to do it honor. Oh, at what cost to myself have I learned all this! Oh, loose women, if only each one of you and all of you together understood what you do every time you succumb to the false caresses of a false man, you would instead choose to be born without ears and without eyes! If only you could learn the truth from me: that you lose much more than you gain!

Our landlady's daughter, named Eufrasia, was quite beautiful. She was engaged to marry a cousin who was in the Indies, but she expected him home with the next fleet so that soon they should marry. She and I became as fond of each other as did her mother and mine. Day or night we were never apart except to give nightly rest to our eyes. We were always together; either I was in her apartment or she in mine. To put it simply, the whole city called us "the two friends." This is how her brother don Manuel came to love me, or deceive me—they both amount to the same thing.

At first I was surprised by his flirtation and by the liberties he took, and I resisted, considering them overbold affronts to my dignity and my modesty. To put a stop to his attentions I even cooled my friendship with his sister and began to avoid going to her apartment every time I could do so without its being noticed. Then don Manuel grew melancholy and despairing; he expressed such sorrow that I guess when I saw how my harshness was affecting his health, I felt moved to take pity on

him. I did not look upon him with disfavor (the few times I managed to glance at him unnoticed).

Since it was necessary for me to have a husband, I would even have liked for him to be the lucky one. But alas, he had different intentions. So many others did have this honorable aim but he never entertained any such idea. Besides, my father's love for me was so ambitious that if don Manuel had sought to marry me, my father would never have accepted him, because there were others with much more to offer. Nor would I have gone against my father's wishes for anything in the world. Until that time, love had not ensnared my will; indeed, I think that love took offense at my free spirit and for that very reason caused all the harm that has cost me so many sorrows.

Don Manuel had had occasion to communicate his feelings to me only through his glances and his reticence as I gave him no opportunity to do so until one afternoon when I was with his sister in her room. He came out of his room just across the hall carrying a musical instrument and came to sit on the bench next to us. Doña Eufrosia begged him to sing something. When he refused, I also urged him, so as not to appear rude. He really wanted nothing better and sang a sonnet which, if my long story is not too tiresome to you, I shall recite together with the other verses that will come up during its course.

Speaking for everyone, Lisis begged her to recite the sonnet, for it would give them great pleasure. She said:

“Doña Isabel, nothing you say could fail to please those who listen to you. Hence, in the name of all these ladies and gentlemen, I beg you not to omit anything from your account of what happened to you. If you did, that would cause us great sorrow.”

“Well,” replied doña Isabel, “this is the sonnet don Manuel sang, but let me explain that we called each other Belisa and Salicio. Now, with your kind permission:

The earth, condemned to a great flood,
was totally submerged in its rage,
her eyes were rivers overflowing,
because the clouds turned into angry seas.

The sweet retiring Philomena,
since she cannot see the sun's red rays,

does not sing him songs of abandonment,
 seeing herself disconsolate without his light.

Procne laments, the nightingale does not sing,
 the flowers have lost their beauty and perfume,
 and everything is likewise sorrowing,
 until, with such great light as to shock the sun,
 all wisdom, grace, and love,
 Belisa came forth and everything became serene.

When don Manuel finished singing, he cast his instrument down on the bench and exclaimed:

“Why should I care that Belisa’s sun rises in the east and brings joy to all who see her if for me she’s always like a lowering sunset?”

After he uttered these words, he fell into a kind of swoon and his mother, sister, and maidservant, all very upset, had to carry him in to his bed and I retired to my apartment. I was not really sad or happy, but I do know I felt confused and I made up my mind to allow no further occasion for his boldness. If I’d kept firm in my determination, I would have been all right. But already in my heart love was beginning to win out even as I was struggling to maintain my distance, and especially two days later when I learned that don Manuel’s attack was alarming the doctors.

Because of all the excitement I didn’t see doña Eufrosia until the next day. After she finished attending her brother, she left him to rest and came to my room complaining harshly of my lack of concern and my fair-weather friendship. Troubled by her displeasure, I made excuses saying I didn’t know, I’d had to take care of urgent correspondence from back home, and we made up. Later that afternoon, to accompany my mother, I had to go visit him. Since it was true that my disdain had caused his illness, I tried pleasantly and with affection to return to him the health I’d taken away. My jokes and witticisms had various effects on don Manuel; one minute he seemed happy, the next sad. This caused me particular concern although I carefully dissimulated it. When it came time to take our leave, my mother and I approached to say all the proper things and to wish him improved health, the things you always say to sick people. He thrust a note into my hand so unexpectedly that, shocked at his audacity and obliged by respect for his mother and mine who were right there, I could only conceal it. The moment I returned to my apartment I went into my bedroom, sat down on the bed, and took out the

treacherous note to tear it up unread. Just as I was about to rip it to pieces, I was called out because my father had come home. I had to postpone its punishment and there was no time until I went to bed.

I was very fond of the maid who usually helped me dress and undress, because we'd grown up together. That night after she'd gotten me ready for bed, I remembered the note. I asked her to get it for me and to bring me a lamp so I could burn it. That crafty Claudia! That was her name and well she deserved to be called crafty because she'd turned against me in favor of that thankless and as yet unknown don Manuel. She asked:

"Do you believe, my lady, that the poor unfortunate youth has committed some crime against the faith that you punish him so cruelly? Whatever he's done was not done from malice but from innocence. Indeed I think he has an excess of faith rather than any lack thereof."

"Be that as it may, he's impugning my honor," I replied, "and this letter must die to prevent there being accomplices."

"What criminal is condemned without first being heard?" Claudia retorted. "As I see it, your honor is as unblemished as it was on the day you were born. For heaven's sake, read the letter and then, if it deserves punishment you can burn it, particularly if it's as unfortunate as its author."

"You know who it's from?" I asked.

"Since you won't read it, who else can it be from but poor don Manuel who, because of you, is in his present state, bereft of health and hope—two ills which would have caused his death already if he were not so unfortunate! Even death abandons the unfortunate."

"You act as if you'd been bribed, you argue his case for him so appealingly."

"Of course I haven't been bribed!" Claudia exclaimed. "I just sympathize, or maybe it would be better to say I feel sorry for him."

"How do you know that all these sorrows you so grieve for were caused by me?"

"I'll tell you," the crafty Claudia said. "This morning your mother sent me to inquire about his health. The moment the sorrowing gentleman saw me it was as if he saw the heavens opening. He told me his troubles and blamed them all on your disdain. While he spoke he wept and sighed, making me feel his sorrows as if they were my own so that my own sighs and tears accompanied his."

“You’re really soft-hearted, Claudia,” I responded, “and awfully quick to believe a man. If you were his beloved, how quickly you would console him.”

“So quickly,” Claudia said, “that by now he’d be well and happy. He said even more: that as soon as he can get about, he’ll go so far away that news of him will never reach your ungrateful ears or your cruel eyes.”

“I wish he were well already so he could keep his word,” I replied.

“Alas, my lady!” Claudia said. “How is it possible for a body as lovely as yours to harbor such a cruel soul? For the Lord’s sake, don’t be so cruel! The time has long passed for diamond-hearted ladies to let their knights die from lack of pity. You must get married; that’s what your parents brought you up for. That being the case, in what way is don Manuel undeserving of your taking him to be your husband?”

“Claudia,” I said, “if don Manuel were as enamored as you say, and if his intentions were honorable, he would have asked my father for my hand by now. Since he hasn’t done that but instead has tried to get me to accept his advances, he’s either deceiving me or testing my weakness. So don’t ever mention his name to me again, for in truth you’re making me angry.”

“Those are the very words I said to him,” Claudia answered back, “and he asked how could he dare to propose marriage formally without first knowing your will. It could so happen that even though your father accepts him, you might not like the idea.”

“My father’s pleasure is my own,” I said.

“Now, my lady,” Claudia went on, “let’s read the letter. Simply reading it can do no harm, and whatever comes is up to heaven.”

By then my heart was softer than wax. All the while Claudia was trying to persuade me, I’d had several conversations with myself and they all agreed with what my maid was saying, they all favored don Manuel. But I didn’t want to encourage her as I saw her more on his side than on mine, so I commanded her never to speak of the matter again and ordered her not to go back to his room. I started to burn the letter and she snatched it away to protect it. Finally, since I wanted exactly what she was urging, I opened it, first warning her that don Manuel was to know only that I had torn it up unread, which she promised. The note read like this:

I do not know, my ungrateful lady, what your heart is made of; even if it were of diamond, my tears would have melted it. Instead it grows harder and harder, impervious to all the trials I suffer. If I wanted you to be anything less than mistress of my soul and of all that I possess, I could understand your cruelty. But since you seem to want to see me die a hopeless death, I promise to please you by absenting myself from your ungrateful eyes and from the world. I shall prove this to you as soon as I can leave my sickbed and maybe then you will regret not having accepted my love.

That's all the letter said, but what else was there to say? May God protect us from the timely letter! Even unread a letter engenders desire and produces fruit where before there was none. Just think of what was to happen to me now, for I had not only read it, I had also examined each of don Manuel's merits one after the other and all together.

Oh, false gentleman, deceptive lover, executioner of my innocence! Woe be to all ill-advised and credulous women who let themselves be overcome by lies so well adorned that their glitter lasts only as long as does the appetite! Alas for the deception which after it's been experienced could deceive no one! Men! How can you, being made of the same form and flesh as us and having no more soul than we have, how can you treat us as if we were made of different substance? You don't even feel obligated by all the services we women do for you from the moment you're born until you die! If you appreciated everything that you received from your mother, for her sake you would esteem and reverence us all. I've learned at great cost to myself that your one design is to persecute our innocence, to vilify our intelligence, to conquer the fortress of our chastity. By debasing us and making us common, you raise yourselves up to the realm of immortal fame. Let all women open up the eyes of their minds; let them not be vanquished by those from whom they can expect the same ill reward as I received. But at least I can now on this occasion tell my disenchantment with the hope that, by my example, women can recover the good name they have lost and cease giving occasion to men to brag and make mock of women, so they don't feel bad about their weakness and the cursed attractions that lead them to commit such follies that instead of being loved they're scorned, vilified, and reviled.

Once again I commanded and begged Claudia not to tell don Manuel

that I'd read the letter or to mention any part of our conversation. She promised and went off, leaving me alone. I was entertaining so many confusing thoughts that I hated myself for having them. One moment, I was filled with love, the next, I would reject it; then I told myself I hadn't behaved improperly and I felt better. In the end, angrily, I made up my mind not to favor don Manuel or give him any opportunity to make bold advances without scorning him either, which might drive him to further brash behavior. Having come to this decision, I renewed my friendship with doña Eufrasia and we would talk together with the same delightful frequency as before. When she called me "sister-in-law," which didn't really bother me, don Manuel would listen with interest, and when I didn't respond to him to his satisfaction, at least he didn't get offensive and persist in telling me openly of his love. The most favor I showed him was to remind him to ask my father for my hand, which assured him of my good will. Since he had other intentions, however, he never did.

Then came the happy time of Mardi Gras. It was celebrated everywhere but that city was so famous for its celebration that it was called the "Zaragoza Mardi Gras." Everyone rejoiced and partied without noticing anyone else's excesses. Thus it was that one afternoon I set out for doña Eufrasia's room to don my costume for the masked ball we'd arranged, and she and her maids and some other friends were busy inside getting everything ready. Her treacherous brother, who must have been waiting for just this moment, stopped me at the door to his rooms which, as I've said, were right next to his mother's. As on other occasions, he greeted me very courteously. I was preoccupied and didn't think he might become overbold. Anyhow, he was already holding my hand and, seeing me hesitate, he pulled me in such a way that I couldn't resist and he jerked me inside and locked the door with the key. I don't know what he did to me; my fright brought on a mortal swoon that deprived me of my senses.

Alas for the feminine weakness of all women, made cowards from infancy with all their natural strength dissipated from the start by teaching them how to do hemstitching rather than how to use weapons! How I wish I'd never come back to my senses! How I wish that the arms of that evil man had taken me to my grave! But my dreadful fate was preserving me for greater misfortunes, if that's possible. After about half an

hour, I did come to my senses and I found myself—no, I'm wrong, I did not find myself—I saw that I was ruined. So ruined that I did not know myself then nor would I ever again: I shall never recover myself. That affront filled me with mortal rage; what might have caused tears and despair in another woman filled me with a demonic fury. I disentangled myself from the infamous prison of his arms and grabbed his sword which was lying beside the bed. I took it from its sheath in order to sheathe it in his body but he evaded the blow, which was no miracle, for he was a master of evasion. Since I failed to wound him, I tried to plunge the sword into my own body, saying: "Traitor, if I cannot take vengeance on you, then I shall upon myself: that is how a woman like me avenges her affronts." But by quickly embracing me, he managed to wrest the sword away from me.

Fearing that I might put an end to my life, the crafty lover tried to pacify me and give me some explanation. He excused his effrontery saying that he only wanted to be sure of me. One minute with caresses the next with angry cajolery, he gave me his word that he would become my husband. Finally when I seemed quieter, although I wasn't really, I really felt like a serpent that's been trod upon, he let me go back to my room so choked with tears I could scarcely breathe. I took to bed with a dangerous illness aggravated by an anguish and a depression that brought me to the brink of death. My parents were so grieved to see my illness that they were a painful sight to see.

If don Manuel had previously been pleasing to me in some ways I now loathed his very shadow. Although Claudia kept trying to find out from me the cause of my great grief she couldn't, nor would I hear from her a single word about don Manuel. When his sister came to visit me, it was like dying all over again. I was so filled with loathing that if I didn't kill myself it was only because I didn't want to lose my soul. From the nature of my feelings, Claudia finally recognized my ill. To make sure, she spoke with don Manuel. He told her everything that had happened and asked her to reassure me and try to assuage my anger, making her the same promise he'd made to me that he would have none other for his wife.

Heaven allowed me to recover from my illness for I had greater ills yet to suffer. One day when my mother and the other maids were out and Claudia was alone with me, she said:

“I’m not surprised, my lady, that you’re as angry as you’ve been and still are. Remember, though, that fortune sends us trials and heaven allows them for its own purposes which we can never understand. You shouldn’t take them too much to heart for in the end you risk losing your life and maybe your soul too. I confess that my lord don Manuel’s temerity was the worst imaginable, but your temerity is more terrible because, while you have a lot at risk in all of this, you haven’t really lost anything. The minute he becomes your husband, the slip is mended. If your loss could be remedied by grief and despair, then it would be right to indulge in them. But you can no longer afford to put off the man who has possessed you and who’s master of your honor. In your efforts to put him off, you anger him with your distance; you make him resentful and give him reason to abandon you. Your enemy’s qualities are not so negligible that he couldn’t win any other beauty in the realm.

“You’d be wise to seek your remedy now, for later when you seek it you may not find it. Today he asked me to reassure you and tell you what a mistake you’re making with him and with yourself. That he’s very sorry about your illness. That you should take heart and try to get well. That your will is his and he won’t fail you in this or in anything you command him to do for your pleasure. Look, my lady, this is what’s right for you. Let your parents begin preparations for him to become your husband so that the crack in your honor can be soldered and mended. Anything else is madness and ruination for you.”

I realized that Claudia was giving me sound advice as there could be no other remedy, but I was filled with such self-loathing that I couldn’t give her an answer for him for a long time. For over two months I wouldn’t let my aggressive lover visit me, not even after I began to get up, nor would I accept any message he sent. My only response to any letter that came into my hands was to tear it up. As a result of this and maybe because at that time he felt some affection for me, or else, stung by my scorn, he intended to further his treachery, don Manuel unburdened himself to his sister and told her about everything that had gone on between him and me. Doña Eufrasia, shocked and saddened, put him to shame for such a grossly evil deed and then took it upon herself to assuage my anger. She and Claudia worked on me so hard that they finally won out. When lovers make up, the sorrow intensifies the pleasure and so it was that all the loathing I had felt for don Manuel turned to

love, while his love for me turned into loathing. The instant men enjoy possession, their love vanishes like a puff of smoke.

I spent the next year in this unhappy situation, never managing to get don Manuel to appoint intermediaries to arrange for our marriage with my father. My father, knowing my scant interest in marrying, disregarded many proposals of marriage. My lover kept putting me off by saying that he would grant my wish and his own as soon as His Majesty awarded him the habit of the Order of Santiago he had petitioned for, which would make him more acceptable as a son-in-law to my father. The delay upset me and made me apprehensive, but fearing to displease him, I didn't press him more.

During this time, a young man came to serve us as replacement for a servant my father had dismissed. I later learned that he was the same poor gentleman from Murcia whom I'd never favored. Who does look with favor on a poor man? Unable to live without me, he'd changed his name and his dress and effected this transformation. The first time I saw him, I thought I recognized him, but that seemed impossible, so I paid him no more attention. Luis, which is what he said his name was, immediately realized what the situation was between myself and don Manuel. Because of my dignity and position, however, he never imagined that our relationship had gone beyond a chaste and honorable desire directed toward the conjugal bonds of matrimony. While he felt sure that he could never be accepted even if he were recognized as don Felipe, he suffered his sorrow in silence so that he should not be deprived of seeing me. Although he endured this suffering as a lover disregarded and even scorned, he considered himself happy and rewarded in his love, in that he could see me and speak to me at all hours.

Several more months went by like this, and I thought I was happy and rewarded in my love, although I learned later that don Manuel was a master in the art of pretending and that his love was not true. If only my deception had lasted!

But how can falsehood pass for truth without eventually being discovered? I recall that one afternoon we were sitting in his sister's drawing-room joking together and being witty as on other occasions. Suddenly he was called out. As he got up from his seat, his dagger dropped into my lap. He'd taken it off as it was a nuisance sitting on such a low bench. I made up a sonnet on this theme:

Take away your cutting blade; be not
 the cause of some inadvertent crime,
 for, Salicio, it might happen that I be Dido
 if, to my regret, you try to play Aeneas.

You may consider acceptable any kind of attack
 on a loving heart surrendered to your valor,
 for one who is well loved is close to thankless;
 if you seek my good, ingrate, remove your blade.

If, at any harshness in your eyes,
 I weep for you, Aeneas, and fear myself to be Dido
 take from me the means for me to kill myself.

My love gives warning: if you want my life
 as spoils, then kill me with love;
 you will gain honor and I a sweeter fate.

Doña Eufrosia and her brother praised the quickness with which I'd composed the sonnet more than the sonnet itself, and don Manuel's praise was grudging. He appeared to be quite moody, and I began to fear some sort of trouble. Later when I was alone, I complained of my unrequited love and lamented my misfortune to heaven, and my eyes bewept all my fears. When don Manuel saw how sad I was, my eyes undeservedly marked by my suffering for they were not to blame for my tragedy, he asked me for an explanation. To preserve my dignity, I denied that I'd been weeping from my sorrow, which was so deep I could hardly conceal it.

I fell in love; I pleaded; I surrendered. Let the sorrows come, let them pile up one on top of another. But to be victim of such great misfortune because I'd been raped, has this ever happened to anyone else but me? Alas, lovely, wise ladies, what a disenchantment this is if you think about it! Alas, you men, what an affront this is to your deceptions! Who would ever have imagined that don Manuel would so deceive a woman like me when even though he was wealthy and noble, my parents wouldn't have hired him to be a squire in their house! When I realized he didn't value me, my deepest sense was that he didn't deserve me.

Now the truth of the matter was that for ten years don Manuel had courted a woman in Zaragoza who was not among the most beautiful and certainly not among the most chaste. Despite the fact that she was married, her husband was tolerant and so she repulsed no suitor. Her husband could eat his meals without having to work for a living and

whenever it was necessary he would absent himself so as not to inconvenience her. Now here's a lesson for all men, although the base, vile creatures who live in this fashion are beasts, not men. When Alexandra, which was this "lady's" name, was most engulfed in her relationship with don Manuel, that's when heaven chose to punish her—or to destroy me—by visiting upon her a dangerous illness. Seeing herself at the brink of death, she vowed to God that she'd give up her evil affair and swore to keep her vow. After she recovered her coveted health, she did keep her promise for a year and a half. During this time don Manuel, rejected by Alexandra, had set out to ruin me.

I learned later that during this time he continued to make formal calls upon her and gave her gifts in recognition of her past favors. Curses upon these courtesies that cost others so dear! While he was occupied courting me, he gave up his visits to Alexandra knowing how little fruit that would bear. When my thankless master stopped visiting her house, that woman understood that he was elsewhere occupied. She searched for the reason and either by bribing servants in don Manuel's house or maybe my own misfortune revealed it to her, anyway, she found out that don Manuel was talking of marriage to me. People extolled my beauty to her and described his great passion for me and how he couldn't resist idolizing my image. When people gossip, and especially to someone else's detriment, little detail is required. In the end, jealous and envious of my happiness, Alexandra broke her vow to God. This overwhelmed me in suffering, for if she unscrupulously betrayed God, how could she fail to outmaneuver me? She was bold and determined, and the first thing she did was boldly to come see me.

I'd better get on with the story, otherwise this disenchantment will never end. The torment I suffer in its telling is not so slight that I savor the detail of describing it.

Alexandra flattered don Manuel and begged him to resume their former friendship. She got what she wanted. She broke her vow to God to reform and began to repeat all her former sins.

It might seem, my friends, that I take pleasure in mentioning frequently the name of my thankless lover, but in truth his name is poison to me and each time I bring it to my lips I wish it would end my life.

In short, then, he was lulled and transported by the deceptive spells of that Circe. Just as a quarrel produces greater desire in lovers, he renewed

his visits to her house so assiduously that he never came to my house. Not during the lazy summer days or during the long dreary winter evenings did he have even an hour for me, which made me feel all the sorrows a helpless and unloved woman feels. When my sadness and complaining forced him to find an instant to be with me, he was so cold and grudging that the flaming ardor of my passion dimmed but didn't go out; it burned with just the sufficient temper. Then I felt afraid. Jealousy is born of fear, and jealousy leads you to seek out misfortune and to find it. I can promise a loving heart no greater perdition than becoming jealous. It's a sure thing that there can be no recovery from that fall if the heart represses its affronts and pretends to ignore them, for then there'll be no limit to them. If it speaks out openly, as mine did, then all respect is lost. No longer could I overlook don Manuel's excessive behavior, and I began to show my anger and to reprove him and scold him, which made me seem tiresome and ill-tempered. Within a short time, I found that I was loathsome to him. A sonnet I composed one day when I was most impassioned comes to mind. I'll recite it for you, hoping it doesn't bore you:

Oh, happy woman, do not live confident
that you will always be loved,
the time will come when cold snow
will extinguish the beauty of your joy.

Like you, I also enjoyed bliss once,
now, as you can see, I am most wretched;
I was well loved, esteemed, and courted,
by the same one your pleasure and my sorrows pursue.

Console my passion, for my lover
who is now yours, was ungrateful to me
as he will also be to you, oh happy woman.

You will repay me for his faithlessness;
do not imagine that you've bought him cheaply
for you, too, will find yourself jealous just like me.

Don Manuel accepted these courtesies even though he no longer valued them. Almost angrily he tried to allay my suspicions and swore that they were unfounded. Day after day, however, he became increasingly committed to his dalliance, so he and I came to have so many disagreements and arguments that there was more death than love be-

tween us. That's when I decided to find out the truth of the matter so he could no longer lie to me. I also hoped to find some way to remedy the terrible damage that was being done. I ordered Claudia to follow him, and that was the end of everything.

It all came to a head when one afternoon I noticed that he seemed restless. Despite my begging and crying and his sister's pleading, we couldn't keep him from leaving the house, so I sent Claudia to find out where he was going. She followed until she saw him enter Alexandra's house; waiting to see what would happen, she watched Alexandra, don Manuel, and some friends get into a carriage and go off to a garden.

Claudia could no longer bear such liberties taken at my expense, so loyally she followed after them. She entered the garden and confronted don Manuel, telling him what he deserved to hear since every word she said was true. Don Manuel, furious at being found out, berated and scolded Claudia, treating her more as if he were her master than my suitor. Then the bold Alexandra, taking license from being the favored one, attacked Claudia verbally and physically. She said she well knew who I was, my name, indeed everything that had happened to me. Mixed in with this abuse were threats that she'd tell my father everything. She never really did tell him but she did other things just as bad or even worse. She began to come to don Manuel's rooms at all hours. She'd burst in, knocking everything over and uttering a thousand outrageous lies. Several times she and Claudia had it out, but to avoid boring you, I shall summarize. Alexandra was a woman who did not fear God or her husband and her aggressiveness reached the extreme of her attempting to kill me with her own two hands.

Don Manuel didn't blame Alexandra for all this turmoil but me, and he was right since I was the one who suffered most because of the great risk I was taking. By that time, however, I was so involved in the affair that no danger seemed too risky or too perilous. I would plunge into any situation without regard for the consequences. My whole life was affliction, weeping, complaining of don Manuel's behavior. Sometimes I was sweet and cajoling, sometimes accusatory. Then I would make up my mind to give him up and forget about the whole thing even if it did ruin me. Other times I would beg him to speak to my parents, hoping that if I were his wife these wars would end. But he was no longer interested in me. His sister doña Eufrosia was fearful and worried about all this strife

because it imperiled her brother's life, but no matter how hard she tried, she could find no solution.

I composed a poem about all this turmoil I want to recite to you because it paints the subtle shades of my feelings. It goes like this:

Now, overcome by my sorrow,
with all my senses becalmed,
I am detaining my soul
which keeps trying to escape;
now it seems that my life
is like the candle that burns
and flickers, fearing to expire,
and comes back to life again
because, although it wants to die,
it keeps postponing it till later.

Crying nights and days
I punish my eyes,
as if my eyes, like my darling,
were the cause of all my woes.
Happiness, where are you?
Tell me, where did I lose you?
Answer, what did I do wrong?
What cause can there be
except that I do not deserve my darling,
my greatest good who has abandoned me?

I was sun to an ungrateful sky,
if the sky can be ungrateful;
he was fire, he turned to ice;
sun was I, now I am moon,
his treatment causes me to wane;
but if the greatest deity,
which is love, is within me
and if love can never wane,
it will be hard for him to accomplish
what his coldness is seeking.

I was jealous but, when loved,
I had made fun of jealousy.
In jealousy I used to see
only melodrama instead of life;
now alone and scorned,

I am Tantalus in all his splendor,
and I rage with thirst.
Alas, what grief! Alas, what affronts!
With water at my lips,
I torture myself even more.

Is there a woman so mad
who, seeing herself scorned,
does not tire of the suffering
and become as hard as rock?
Only I, because the ancient law
of forgetfulness leaves me untouched;
let grief follow upon grief,
and coldness upon coldness,
then love will learn
that I know how to love.

Thankless lover, colder than ice,
snow who freezes snow,
if you do not fear my dying
you should fear it from now on;
niggardly with your favors,
draw the cord tighter,
with it cut off this life
by persisting in your thankless ways:
some day you will be sorry
you have been so cruel to me.

Cruel one, follow the spell
of that deceitful siren
who attracts you to her lair
bewitching you with her song;
flee my loving tears,
disregard your duty to my love;
even so I shall wait
for you to be, as I wish,
a Phineas to that harpy
so that I may be avenged.

Boast of your coldness;
be not obliged by my plaints;
hood your eyes,
weary of my constancy;
insult my nobility;

do not obey reason
 and I, who in my heart,
 have been all love
 shall battle your neglect
 by dying because of you.

Well I know that your self-confidence
 is part of my misfortune;
 it would be better for me to kill you
 by making you mistrustful.
 Your cruelty overwhelms me,
 for as you see yourself well loved
 you treat my love with disregard;
 because a noble woman
 either never really loves
 or she ceases to be what she once was.

Weep, my eyes, for there is
 no remedy for your ill,
 the pain is mortal:
 for my killer to triumph
 dying is all that remains,
 my soul rises to my lips,
 my life is now unraveling
 from its ties to my soul;
 but even seeing that he has killed me,
 I cannot forget the one who abases me.

Oh my soul, seek another place to be,
 for I give you my word
 that there is in your dwelling
 a master who seeks to command everything.
 What are you waiting for,
 when your master has dismissed you
 and placed in your stead
 another soul he prizes more?
 Can't you see that he delights there
 and lives more happily?

Oh how many lost glories
 you leave behind in this house!
 Why do you take none with you?
 Not because they were wrongfully gained
 or ill rewarded but indeed well served,
 for in this no woman can better you.

But if the cruelty that casts you out
is so inhuman, well can you see
why he hates seeing you,
so go forth willingly.

You leave without all your powers,
how can you abandon them?
Wherever you may go
you will not be loved, as you will learn.
But I hear you telling me
that you are like one who burns
and when he sees that the flames will
consume his whole life,
he lets his ruined estate
burn up entire with the house.

Thinking about my misfortune,
I have come close to death,
my estate entirely burnt
which was only wealth without hope.
Oh, you who live secure
and happy in someone else's house
still filled with all my fire
which will some day come alive
and burn down your house;
take example from my pain.

Feel how I feel, and look
at your fall and think of me:
yesterday I was magnificent,
today I'm not a shadow of myself.
What occurs from yesterday to today
can occur from today to tomorrow.
You are happy and fortunate,
but trusting in a fickle man
is a very great mistake.
Don't feel so happy, Juana.

Once he called my eyes glorious,
my words were heavenly pleasure,
then he made me jealous and I became
just as jealous as he made me.
Oh, a curse upon the woman who loved
totally loyal, totally jealous,
when a woman should be cautious,

dissembling,
to avoid finding herself
scorned as I now am.

Oh love! because I have served well
your supreme deity,
take pity on my life!
This reward I beseech:
do not let that ravager delight
in seeing me die for him,
but by dying let me live,
death it will be and not life;
love, deliver the wound
which I know not how to ask for.

At this time it happened that His Majesty named the lord admiral of Castile as viceroy of Sicily. When don Manuel found himself engulfed in the rivalry between Alexandra and me, and not wanting to marry me, he realized that the situation was explosive. So without saying a word to his mother or his sister, he arranged through his good friend the lord high steward for the admiral to take him on as chamberlain. He kept it all a secret up until the very day of the admiral's departure, telling only the valet he was to take with him. Two or three days beforehand he had his belongings packed and gave us to understand he was going to spend a week or so at a place where he had some property. During the time I'd known him, he'd made this journey several times.

The day of his departure came, and after he took leave of his family, he came purposefully to my house to say good-bye to me. Since I was unaware of his deception, I felt sad but was not as grief-stricken as I would have been had I known the truth. When he came to embrace me, there was more tenderness in his glance than usual, his eyes were brimming with tears and he couldn't utter a word. This affected me and made me feel both confused and suspicious. I thought, however, that love must be working some miracle between us. That's how I felt that day, sometimes thinking that he did love me and weeping tears of joy, and other times crying from sorrow over his absence. After night fell, I was sitting sad and pensive in a chair, my cheek resting on my hand, waiting for my mother to return from a visit when the servant we called Luis entered. He was really don Felipe whom I hadn't recognized as the poor gentle-

man I'd never favored because of his poverty, who now worked as our servant only to be serving me. He saw me as I've described and said:

"Alas, my lady! If you knew the extent of your misfortune as I do, your sorrow and confusion would turn into mortal despair."

That shocked me, but I remained silent so as not to interrupt his mysterious explanation, and he went on, saying:

"My lady, you need no longer pretend with me. For a long time I've imagined what must have happened but now things are different and I know the whole truth."

"Luis, you must be mad!" I exclaimed.

"No, I'm not mad," he continued, "though I could be because the love I feel for you as my mistress is not so small that with what I've found out today it might not drive me out of my mind and maybe even deprive me of my life. It's not right for me to keep you in the dark any longer. The treacherous don Manuel is departing for Sicily with the admiral, whom he now serves as one of his gentlemen. I learned this from his own servant and I know he's done this evil deed to avoid giving you the satisfaction he owes you. I saw him depart this afternoon with my own eyes. Tell me what you'd like done in this matter and I swear by who I am, and I'm more than you think, that as soon as I know your pleasure I shall fulfill my promise to you even at the cost of my own life, or else he and I both shall die."

Hiding my pain, I responded: "If what you say is true, then who are you that you're brave enough to do what you promise?"

"Give me instructions," Luis replied, "and when they've been accomplished, then you shall know."

I had just recalled the suspicion I'd felt at first that he was don Felipe and was about to say so when my mother entered and ended our conversation. Choking back my sighs and tears, I greeted her and quickly retired to my room and threw myself down on the bed. It's unnecessary to recount my laments, my tears, my indecision about whether to kill myself or kill the man who was killing me. I finally decided on the worst thing possible, as you will soon hear. My earlier decisions had been honorable, but the one I finally made was what brought about my total ruin. I jumped up with more resolve than my grief might indicate. Hastily I gathered up my own jewels and my mother's and a great quantity of gold and silver money that was in my keeping. Then I waited for my father to

come home for dinner. After he arrived I was called down, but I sent word that I wasn't feeling well and would eat something later. They sat down at the table and I saw my way clear to carry out my crazy decision, because all the servants were occupied serving the table. If I tarried a moment longer it would be impossible to put my plan into effect, because Luis would lock the street doors. He alone carried the key and he would give it to no one, not even Claudia, who delivered our messages. I went from my room into the hall, slipped out of the house, and found myself in the street.

Not far from my house was the house of the servant I mentioned whom my father had dismissed when he hired Luis. I knew him fairly well because, grieved by his poverty and by his being so old, I'd given him some assistance and even visited him several times when I went out without my mother. That's where I went now. The good man received me with deep sorrow to hear about my misfortune. He understood all too well what it meant, since I'd promised him that he would come and work in my house as soon as I got married.

Octavio, which is what his name was, upbraided me for my decision but as it was too late now, he had to obey and remain silent, particularly since I had money, part of which I gave to him. Besieged by fear and sorrow, I spent the night there. The next morning, I ordered him to go to my house and without letting anyone know, to speak with Claudia and tell her he was looking for me as he had on previous occasions. He was really supposed to find out what was going on and whether they were searching for me.

Octavio went. What he discovered was the culmination of my misfortune. When I have to recall this I don't know why my heart doesn't break. Octavio got to my ill-fated house and saw all the people of the city coming and going. Surprised, he went in with the rest and looked for Claudia. He found her sad and in tears. She recounted to him how, after dinner, my mother had gone up to my room to find out what was wrong with me. When she didn't find me there, she asked the servants and they told her they'd left me lying on the bed when they'd gone down to serve dinner. Everybody began to look for me inside the house and outside. They found the corridor door open when it was always kept closed. They also saw the keys to my desk lying on my bed, so they searched inside the desk and noted what was missing and realized that I wasn't

gone by accident. My mother started screaming and my father came upstairs. When he found out the nature of his loss, being older, the pain and shock caused him to keel over senseless. They never knew whether his grief or the fall made him faint so profoundly that he never returned to his senses. My ignoble behavior was the cause of this.

Claudia told him how, although the doctors ordered them to take their time, it was already too late, for by then it was only a matter of burying him. My mother was close to death herself, so with her own loss she scarcely noticed my absence except to curse my terrible error. She'd found out all about my affair with don Manuel because as soon as I was gone, everyone hastened to tell her everything they knew. She wouldn't let them conduct a search for me, saying that since I'd chosen a husband to suit my own taste, may God grant me greater happiness than I had brought to her house.

Octavio came back with this news, sad and bitter to me, particularly when he told me that the whole city was talking of nothing else. My suffering and rage redoubled and I felt close to death myself. But heaven had not yet punished me sufficiently for causing such great harm; it preserved me so that I should suffer still more.

The news that they weren't searching for me encouraged me slightly. I sewed my jewelry and some doubloons into a pouch so I could wear it without its being seen, and I made all the arrangements for our journey. After four or five days had passed, at nightfall Octavio and I took to the road and headed for Alicante, whence my thankless lover was to embark. Upon arriving there, we learned that the galleys had not yet come, so we took lodging at an inn where we hoped to figure out how I could confront don Manuel.

Every day Octavio would go to the admiral's lodgings. He would check on my treacherous husband (if I may call him that) and report to me what was going on. One day he told me, among other things, that the high steward was looking for a female slave; several had been brought before him but he hadn't been satisfied with them. The moment I heard this I decided to play yet another trick, a greater folly even than what I'd already done. No sooner said than done. I counterfeited the \$ brand for my face and, donning clothing appropriate to my being a Moorish slave, I took the name Zelima. I ordered Octavio to take me before the admiral saying I belonged to him and that, if I pleased the admiral, my price was

not to be a factor. Octavio felt terrible about my decision, and he wept copious tears over me. I consoled him and reminded him that the purpose of the disguise was only to help me get out of Spain so I could pursue don Manuel and bring him back to my love. By keeping my thankless master under my eyes without his recognizing me, I could discover his true intentions. My words consoled Octavio, as did the fact that I told him he could keep the price paid for me. I asked him to let me know in Sicily how my mother was faring.

It turned out that everything worked as I'd planned, and before the week was out, I'd been sold for a hundred ducats. Ultimately I found myself enslaved, not to the master who had purchased me and paid that sum, but to my own treacherous and thankless lover, for whose sake I had delivered myself to such a vile course of action. Octavio felt somewhat mollified by the money he received for my purchase and an additional amount I added. Still, he took his leave of me with such sadness and sentiment that, to avoid seeing him weep, I had to leave him abruptly and go to my new master and mistress. I wasn't sure if I was sad or happy but I was certainly more fortunate in finding good masters than in the other experiences I've recounted. I was able to please them and earn their affection so that before long I became mistress of their good will and of their house.

My mistress was young and amiable, and I got along with her and the other two girls in the household so well that they came to love me as if I were daughter to each one and sister to them all. One of the girls in particular, Leonisa by name, loved me so much that I always ate with her and even slept in her bed. She kept trying to persuade me to turn Christian and I pleased her by saying that I would as soon the right moment came, for I wanted to do that even more than she wanted me to.

The first time don Manuel saw me was one day when he'd come to dine with my master and mistress. While he dined with them frequently because they were close friends, I hadn't had a chance to see him before because I hadn't left the kitchen until this day I'm describing, when I brought a dish out to put on the table. The instant that traitor set eyes on me he recognized me, although the \$ brand on my face must have confused him; it looked so real that nobody would suspect it was counterfeit. Holding his hand halfway to his mouth, he forgot to put the morsel in his mouth, so astounded was he at the sight. On one hand, he thought I was

who I was, but then on the other, he couldn't believe that I would commit such madness, and he didn't even know about all the misfortune that had occurred to my family, all because of him.

I felt no less astonishment at the coincidence I beheld. When I saw don Manuel staring at me, dumbstruck, I turned my eyes from him to keep him in ignorance a while longer and I looked at the servants who were serving him. In the company of two servants from my master's household I saw Luis, my servant from back home. I was astonished to see him, and Luis was as astounded as don Manuel to see me in such a guise. Because he had a clearer image of me in his mind, he recognized me in spite of the false brand. As I was returning to the kitchen, I heard don Manuel ask my master and mistress if I was the new slave they'd bought.

"Yes," replied my mistress, "and she's so pretty and pleasant that it saddens me terribly that she's Moorish. I would pay double her purchase price to see her turn Christian; it almost makes me cry to see that brand on such a lovely face and I curse a thousand times the one who placed it there."

Leonisa, who was present, interjected: "She says she branded herself from grief over a disillusionment she suffered because of her beauty and she's promised me that she'll become Christian."

"If she weren't wearing that brand," don Manuel said, "I'd think she was a beauty I knew back home, but I guess it's possible for nature to have made a Moor from the same mold."

As I mentioned, I returned to the kitchen feeling very upset from having seen Luis. I called one of the house servants and asked him who that lad was who was serving at the table with the others.

"He's a servant don Manuel hired this very day because his former servant killed somebody," he replied.

"I know him from a house where I spent some time," I said. "I certainly would like to speak with him for I'm happy to see someone here from back home."

"He'll come eat with us shortly," he said, "and then you'll be able to speak with him."

Dinner soon ended and all the servants including Luis came into the kitchen and sat down. In spite of my sadness, I could scarcely keep from bursting out laughing at the sight of Luis. The more he stared at me the

more amazed he looked, especially when he heard them call me Zelima. It wasn't that he didn't recognize me; he was amazed at the extreme indignity I'd gone to because of my love. As soon as dinner was over, I drew him aside and asked him:

"What fate, Luis, has brought you to this place?"

"The same fate as yours, my lady, unrequited love and my desire to find you and avenge you when the time and place are right."

"Please play the game and call me only Zelima. This is very important to my honor. Now is not the time for vengeance, save for the vengeance love takes on me. I've told the others that you used to serve in the house where I was brought up, that I knew you from then. Don't tell your master you recognized me or spoke with me. You see that I trust you more than him."

"As surely you should," Luis said, "for if he loved you and prized you as I do you wouldn't be in this situation, nor would you have been the cause of such misfortune."

"That's true," I agreed, "but tell me, how did you get here?"

"Looking for you, and determined to kill the man who's brought you so low. With this intention I managed to enter his service."

"Don't ever say that again! That would ruin me forever! Even though don Manuel is treacherous and false, my life depends on his. I must regain my lost honor and his death would only bring about my own, for the moment you killed him I would kill myself," I said, to keep him from executing his intention. "Luis, what's happened to my mother?"

"What do you think?" he answered. "I think she must be as hard as a diamond because she hasn't ended her life from all the trouble she's had. When I left Zaragoza she was making arrangements to return to Murcia. She's taking with her the body of my master, your father, to keep her grief close by her side."

"And what were people saying about my mad behavior?" I asked.

"That don Manuel carried you off," Luis answered, "because Claudia told the whole story and your mother took some solace for your loss thinking that you've gone with your husband. She thinks there's no reason to feel as sorry for you as for her because all she has left is her husband's lifeless body. I chose not to stay with her but to follow you instead, as I was deeply affected by your absence and I knew all too well that don Manuel hadn't carried you off but instead was fleeing from you. You

know my purpose. I've just explained it to you, but I shall suspend it until I see whether don Manuel behaves as a gentleman should. If he doesn't you'll have to pardon me, for though it may ruin me and ruin you I shall avenge your affront and my own. Please understand that I consider myself fortunate indeed to have found you and to merit your trust, seeing that you reveal your secret to me before you do to him."

"I'm grateful to you," I said. "Go now with God so the other servants don't get suspicious because of our lengthy conversation. There will be plenty of time for us to talk together. If you need anything, you have only to ask me because fortune hasn't taken everything from me. I have a little money I can give you, if not as much as you deserve or as I owe you."

Saying this, I gave him a doubloon and took my leave. It's true that Luis had never looked so good to me as at this time, for now I had some support, someone on my side, someone with honorable and proper intentions.

It took the galleys some time to make port. One day when my mistress and the other maids were out leaving me at home alone, don Manuel came to the house seeking my master or, most likely, seeking me, trying to satisfy his curiosity. He entered, looked at me, and said dryly:

"What kind of a disguise is this, doña Isabel? How can a lady of your standing, who's wanted and hoped to be my wife, degrade herself thus? It is so unworthy that, if ever I did have the least intention of marrying you, I've lost it now because of the bad name you've earned for yourself, for me, and for anyone else who finds out."

"Oh you vile deceiving traitor and cause of my ruination! Aren't you ashamed to take my name on your lips, you who are responsible for this degradation you accuse me of! I am as you see me because of your unprincipled and evil behavior! Not only have you brought me to this, you also brought about the death of my dear father. So that you should pay for your treachery at heaven's hands and not my father's own, heaven took away his life with the sorrow of my loss. Zelima I am and not doña Isabel; slave I am and not a lady; Moor I am because deep within my being I harbor a renegade Moor like you, because the man who breaks his promise to God to be my husband is not a gentleman, is not noble, is not Christian. You have seared this brand on my face and the brand of dishonor on my good name. Do what you like. If you no longer wish to

make me your wife, there's a God in heaven and a king on earth and if they don't punish you, there are daggers and I have two hands and the courage to take your foul life so that noblewomen can learn from me how to punish false and thankless men. If you don't want me to do what I'm saying, then get out of my sight!"

Seeing me so enraged and impassioned, he tried to calm me with sweet words and caresses, perhaps to keep me from some greater folly or maybe because he did feel troubled by the affront and the deception he had done me. He was to do worse. For a long time I resisted believing his promises to remedy everything, but I loved him deeply and so I had to believe him. (Pardon the license I take in saying that I was more concerned to restore my honor than to castigate his behavior.) Finally we made up and I recounted to him everything that had happened up to that moment. He said that since things were the way they were, they should continue that way until we got to Sicily. There he would find a way for my desire and his own to reach a happy fulfillment. With that promise, we separated. While not believing his deception, I felt happy; for the first time I hadn't negotiated badly.

The galleys arrived and we embarked. Much to my delight and Luis's dismay, don Manuel accompanied my master and my mistress on the same ship I was on and I could see him and speak with him at all hours. Luis was very depressed to see my happiness, which confirmed my suspicion that he was really don Felipe, but I said nothing to him so as not to encourage him to some aggressive act.

We got to Sicily and took lodging in the palace. I spent several months getting to know the land and grew very fond of it. When I decided that it was time for don Manuel to give the command to remove me from slavery and keep his word to me, again he began to smother me with his irritation and coldness. He wouldn't even look at me. He had taken up gambling and wenching and it was clear that he felt no love for me. My suffocation and torture grew so burdensome that day and night I kept drying my sad tears. I could no longer hide my sorrow from Leonisa, the maid who'd become such a close friend and she was beside herself when she found out the secret of who I was and the story of my tragedy.

My mistress had grown so fond of me that she would grant any favor I asked of her. One afternoon I wanted to speak with don Manuel undisturbed and tell him of my feelings, so I asked permission, which was

granted, for Leonisa and me to have a picnic by the sea. Then I asked Luis to tell his master that some ladies were waiting for him by the marina, but not to tell him it was I, for fear that he wouldn't come. We went there and hired a small boat to take us to a little island some three or four miles out which promised to be a charming and delectable spot. Don Manuel and Luis arrived. When don Manuel recognized us, he hid his anger and so the trick worked. The four of us got into the boat with the two sailors who were to row. We reached the island and went ashore, while the sailors stayed with the boat to take us back when it was time (they were more fortunate than the rest of us).

We took a seat beneath some trees and I spoke of the reason which had brought me there. I complained to don Manuel and, as usual, he lied and made hollow excuses. Now, at the other end of the island a galliot of Moorish corsairs from Algiers had anchored in an inlet, or cove, and they had spied us from afar. The captain came ashore with his Moors and they sneaked up behind the place where we had settled. They attacked us so suddenly that neither don Manuel or Luis could make a defense, nor could we women flee. They took us back to the galliot as prisoners, and now that they had booty they made out to sea. Fortune had not contented herself with making me slave to my lover; now I was slave to the Moors as well. My captivity did not sadden me overmuch since my lover was with me. Our oarsmen, who had seen the whole event, escaped by rowing full out, as they say, to carry back the news of our unfortunate capture.

These Moorish corsairs are experienced in dealing with Christians and they understand and speak our language quite well. Their captain, seeing that I wore a brand, asked me who I was. I told him I was Moorish, my name Zelima, that I'd been taken captive six years before, that I was from Fez, and that the gentleman was my master's son and the other man his servant, as was the maid. I asked him to treat them well and to set a ransom. The moment the gentleman's parents learned the price they would send that amount. I said all this trusting in the money and jewels I wore on my person. I said it very loud so the others would hear and not belie my words.

The captain was pleased with the money his booty would bring and even more pleased because he believed he'd done Mahomet a great service in freeing me, a Moor, from the Christians. He made it clear by being very kind to me and by treating the others well.