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Don Carlos Infante of Spain

A Dramatic Poem

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER
TRANSLATED BY FLORA KIMMICH

DON CARLOS

Don Carlos Infante of Spain

A Dramatic Poem

By Friedrich Schiller

*Translation and Notes to the Text by Flora Kimmich
Introduction by John Guthrie*



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Translator's Note

This translation of Schiller's *Don Carlos* joins *Fiesco*¹ and *Wallenstein*² in a continuing series of translations, with commentary, of Schiller's major plays which Open Book Publishers makes freely available to a wide readership.

Like those translations, this one addresses itself to young people in college-level instruction and to the general reader. The endnotes therefore undertake to ease a student's way through an old text. At a basic level, they identify people and places and provide modest amounts of other historical information. Less basically, they draw attention to the motifs and other forms of internal reference the poet has embedded in the text, and they excavate what remains unsaid—but is present—in the best of Schiller's representations of speech and thought. Importantly, they point to the structures in the architecture of the play.

Schiller never finished *Don Carlos* to his satisfaction, and passages of great prolixity survive. Here I have refrained from expanding—or inflating—the English text with what to my ear are otiose repetitions and tautological modifiers present in the German original. I aim for a gain in felicity at no expense of meaning.

Translation enables deep acquaintance with a literary work and that acquaintance has raised my estimation of *Don Carlos*. This great

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- 1 Friedrich Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*. Translation by Flora Kimmich. Introduction and Notes to the Text by John Guthrie (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0058>
 - 2 Friedrich Schiller, *Wallenstein: A Dramatic Poem*. Translation and Notes to the Text by Flora Kimmich. Introduction by Roger Paulin (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0101>

patchwork of a young man's play may not be Schiller's greatest—that distinction surely belongs to *Wallenstein*—but it is, with reason, his best loved.

I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Gerhard Kluge, editor of the edition *Deutsche Klassiker*, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, the text on which my translation is based, whose commentary and other materials proved a rich resource for the end notes. Roger Paulin read the text with a fine ear and wide knowledge, and his comments greatly strengthened the translation.

Additional Resources

Readers can freely access the original German text of Schiller's *Don Carlos*, *Don Karlos: Infant von Spanien* (Leipzig: Georg Joachim Göschen, 1804) at The Internet Archive Library, <https://archive.org/details/donkarlosinfant00schigoog>

Introduction

John Guthrie

Don Carlos is the fourth play written by Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805). It was begun in March 1783 while he was still working on the domestic drama *Louise Millerin* (later called *Kabale und Liebe, Intrigue and Love*) and the historical domestic drama, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*. It was published in fragmentary form in the following year and in a first complete version in 1787. Schiller returned to the play several times after this protracted and interrupted four-year period of writing and published a final version in 1805, the year of his death. The writing and re-writing cost him much effort and reflects the struggle involved with changing his style and combining history and grand tragedy. *Don Carlos* is in all respects a transitional play. It combines many of the themes of his youthful period with the forward-looking idealism of his later plays, and it is the first in which he adopts a more formal, classical style using iambic metre, and aims to achieve greater unity of time and place. It is considerably longer than anything he had written before, its plot is involved and complex, full of twists and turns, but equally, full of striking dramatic characters and powerful theatrical moments. It is several plays rolled into one: a family portrait of a royal household in which tensions erupt, a historical play dealing with the struggle of the Spanish Netherlands as they were emerging from despotic Spanish rule and demanding human rights, and finally it is a play of ideas in which the fate of humanity and political idealism are to the fore.

Schiller's main source for the plot was a late seventeenth-century French novella by the Abbé de Saint-Réal, which was based loosely on historical facts. There he found all his main characters apart from Philip's confessor Domingo. Saint-Réal's work gave him the idea of an amorous attachment between Elisabeth of Valois and Carlos, which had existed before her betrothal to Philip. The Marquis of Posa is a minor figure in St. Réal and in Louis Sebastien Mercier's play *Portrait de Philippe II, Roi d'Espagne* (1785) that Schiller makes into the play's leading spokesman of Enlightenment humanism. Schiller also turned to Robert Watson's *History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain*, which gave a more detailed and accurate historical portrait of Philip. But Schiller's main interest was indeed not historical accuracy. He was keen to suggest parallels between the struggle for religious freedom in the sixteenth century and the surge towards liberty in his own age.

Schiller's starting point was the figure of the youthful Don Carlos with whose youthful ardour he identified. The father-son conflict and the love of the same woman is exacerbated by the conflict between different political attitudes. Philip II represents the Age of Despotism and is surrounded by intriguers, while the love-sick and melancholy Carlos, lacking friends at court, allies himself with the Marquis Posa, whose ideals are those of the liberal Enlightenment and closer to republicanism. But the focus of Schiller's interest changed in the course of writing and shifted more towards the figure of Marquis Posa. The political themes became more important to him, but the crisis which emerges was to show, ironically, how difficult it was to achieve those political aims in Schiller's lifetime. In the middle of the main writing period Schiller was deeply interested in political idealism. He writes the *Ode of Joy* in 1785, proclaiming the brotherhood of man and endorsing the notion of a higher force guiding humanity towards freedom. He studies Montesquieu and Adam Ferguson. When Posa first greets Carlos, it is in the spirit of the brotherhood of man, intoxicated with joy: 'A delegate of all humanity /Embraces you in me.' Posa is guided by the liberal cosmopolitan ideals of the Enlightenment. In one of the most famous set-pieces in German drama, the central audience scene with King Philip (Act III, scene 10), freely invented by Schiller, he demands freedom of thought and religious tolerance. The King pricks up his ears

and listens. King Philip is a lonely and proud despot who lacks a friend in whom he can confide. Philip is not inhuman and Schiller does not disparage the institution of monarchy as such, but he will be betrayed by the Posa who has gained his trust. Posa's plan is complex and dangerous: it is to have his friend Carlos imprisoned and then sacrifice himself so that Carlos can pursue his political aims. He has to pretend in letters that are discovered by his opponents that he is in love with the queen. He does not divulge this to Carlos and the plan predictably misfires. It is not that his political aims are intrinsically flawed or rely too much on abstract ideas, but rather because of the over-reliance on feeling, intuition and passion (*Schwärmerei*) which makes him an easy target for his opponents at court. His plans founder on the rock of circumstances and human weakness. The idea that Carlos will continue the struggle for freedom and contribute to the liberation of humanity is for the time being doomed to failure because the Spanish Inquisition will step in, suppress rebellion and restore the status quo. Thus the play ends in tragedy: Carlos's love for Elisabeth comes to nothing, Posa's political ideals are thwarted and he is killed, the King weeps for having been betrayed and the friendship which had seemed such a noble ideal and the seed of political freedom ends in death and despair.

The premiere of *Don Carlos* in Hamburg on 29 August 1787, with the leading actor Friedrich Ludwig Schröder playing Philip, was a great success. The play was performed in various versions during Schiller's lifetime, including a prose version which he devised for the stage in Riga. In the nineteenth century it became a staple of the repertoire and has held its place on the German stage into the twentieth-first century. In English-speaking countries *Don Carlos* has been seen on major stages and with leading actors. A 2005 version by Mike Poulton at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre transferred to London's West End. Poulton's adaptation was based on a literal prose translation. The present translation by Flora Kimmich is of the full text of the 1805 version. It preserves much of the original metre of Schiller's play at the same time as conveying its spontaneity and powerful theatrical qualities in modern English. It brings us closer to Schiller's original in English than ever before.



Friedrich Schiller. Steel engraving by Johann Leonhard Raab from a drawing by Friedrich Pecht. Friedrich Pecht, *Schiller-Galerie. Charaktere aus Schillers Werken, gezeichnet von Friedrich Pecht und Arthur von Ramberg. Fünfzig Blätter in Stahlstich mit erläuterndem Text von Friedrich Pecht* (F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schiller-Galerie_komplett_Bild_01.jpg

DON CARLOS INFANTE OF SPAIN

Characters

PHILIP the SECOND, King of Spain

ELISABETH of VALOIS, his wife

DON CARLOS, the Crown Prince

ALEXANDER FARNESE, Prince of Parma, nephew of the King

INFANTA CLARA EUGENIA, a three-year-old child

DUCHESS OLIVAREZ, chief lady-in-waiting

MARQUISE MONDEKAR

PRINCESS EBOLI

COUNTESS FUENTES

} ladies-in-waiting to the Queen

MARQUIS POSA, a Knight of Malta

DUKE ALBA

COUNT LERMA, captain of the Bodyguard

DUKE FERIA, Knight of the Golden Fleece

DUKE MEDINA SIDONIA, admiral

DON RAIMOND of TAXIS, postmaster general

} grandees of Spain

DOMINGO, the King's confessor

the GRAND INQUISITOR of the KINGDOM

the PRIOR of a Carthusian cloister

a PAGE of the Queen

DON LUIS MERCADO, the Queen's physician

Ladies and Grandees, Pages, Officers, the Bodyguard, silent figures



Don Carlos. Steel engraving by Johann Leonhard Raab from a drawing by Friedrich Pecht. Friedrich Pecht, *Schiller-Galerie* (Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schiller-Galerie_komplett_Bild_15.jpg

Act One

*The Royal Gardens at Aranjuez*¹

Scene One

Carlos. Domingo.

DOMINGO. Our lovely days here at Aranjuez
Are at an end. Your Royal Highness goes
From here no happier. We have come here
In vain. Do break this baffling silence, Prince;
Open your heart to meet your father's heart.
Never too dearly can the Monarch purchase
Peace for his son, his one and only son.

(Carlos gazes downward in silence.)

Can there be yet a wish that Heaven would
Deny the most beloved of its sons?
10 I stood as witness at Toledo when,
As Crown Prince, Karl received the homage of
His lieges, when the princes pressed to kiss
His hand, and in *one* bending of the knee
Six kingdoms laid themselves before his feet—²
I stood as witness, saw the proud young blood
Color his cheeks, saw his breast rise with princely
Decision taken, his enraptured eye sweep
Over the gathered company, well up
In joy. This gleaming eye, my Prince, confessed,
20 "I am content."

(Carlos turns away.)

This still and solemn sorrow,
Prince, that we read for eight months now in your
Regard, this bafflement for all the Court,

The fear of all the realm, has cost His Majesty
Much-troubled nights, your mother many tears.

CARLOS (*quickly turning toward him*).

My mother? Heaven grant that I forgive him
Who made of her my mother!³

DOMINGO. My good Prince?

CARLOS (*bethinks himself and rubs his forehead*).

Right Reverend Sir, I've such misfortune with
My mothers. My first act when I emerged
Into the light of day was to commit
A matricide.⁴

DOMINGO. Can this be, Gracious Prince?

Can this reproach yet weigh upon your conscience?

CARLOS. And my new mother—has she not cost me

My father's love? My father scarcely loved me.

My one claim was to be his only son.

She's given him a daughter now. And who

Knows what's still sleeping in the depths of time?

DOMINGO. You're mocking me, my Prince. All Spain adores

Its Queen. And you should look askance at her?

In contemplating her, should listen to

The voice of reason? Loveliest in all

The world, and queen—at one time *your* intended?

Not possible, unbelievable, cannot be!

Beloved of all the world, and Karl should hate her?

Karl does not contradict himself so strangely.

Be on your guard, my Prince, that she not ever

Discover how displeasing she is to

Her son. This news would cause her pain.

CARLOS. Indeed?

DOMINGO. Your Highness perhaps still recalls the recent

Tourneys at Saragossa?⁵ Where the King

Received a splinter broken from a lance?⁶

The Queen watched with her Ladies from the center

Tribune. And suddenly a shout goes up:

"The King is bleeding!" Great confusion.

A broken rumor reaches her. "The Prince?"
 She cries, and moves to throw herself from her
 High place. "The King himself!" one answers. She
 Sighs deeply, orders: "Send for doctors then."

(A silence.)

You're lost in thought?

CARLOS. In admiration of
 The King's high-spirited confessor, who
 Commands such skill in telling clever stories.
(Grave and dark.)

60

I've often heard that those who watch us narrowly
 And carry stories do more worldly harm by far
 Than poison in the murderer's hand and knife blades.
 You might have spared yourself the trouble, Sir.
 And if it's thanks you want, go to the King.

DOMINGO. My Prince, it's well you're on your guard, but with
 Discretion: Do not rebuff a friend along
 With hypocrites. For I mean well with you.

CARLOS. Mind you don't let my father see that. Or
 You've forfeited your purple.⁷

70

DOMINGO *(starts)*. What's that?

CARLOS. Well, yes.
 Has he not promised Spain's first purple to you?

DOMINGO. You're making fun of me, Prince.

CARLOS. God forbid
 That I make fun of one so terrible
 That he can bind and loose my father's soul!

DOMINGO. I'll not presume to penetrate the worthy
 Secret of your unhappiness, my Prince.
 I only ask Your Highness to recall
 The Church is an asylum for the troubled
 Conscience to which a monarch has no key,
 Where misdeeds even are protected under
 The seal of sacrament. You understand me,
 Prince. I have said enough.

80

CARLOS. No! Far be it

From me to tempt the keeper of the seal!

DOMINGO. Prince, this mistrust! How you mistake your most
Devoted servant.

CARLOS (*taking his hand*). Give me up then rather.

You are a holy man, as all the world

Well knows. Therefore admit: For me you are

Too busy. You've a long way to go, most Reverend

Father, before you seat yourself upon

90 Saint Peter's throne.⁸ Much knowledge might but hinder

You. Tell that to the King, who sent you to me.

DOMINGO. Sent me to you?

CARLOS. That's what I said. For I

Know all too well that I'm betrayed here at

This Court; one hundred eyes have been suborned

To keep a watch on me. I know King Philip

Has sold his son, has sold his only son to

The lowest of his menials and rewards each

Syllable carried back more handsomely

Than ever he rewarded a good deed.

100 I know — Enough! No more of this! My heart

Is full to bursting. I have said too much.

DOMINGO. The King's disposed to go back to Madrid

Before the evening and the Court is gathering.

Have I the honor, Prince —

CARLOS. Yes, fine. I'll follow.

(*Domingo goes off. Short silence.*)

Most pitiable Philip, like your son,

Most pitiable! I already see

Your soul bleed, bitten by suspicion's viper.

Your ill-starred wish to know will overtake

Dreadful discoveries; they will drive you wild.

Scene Two

Carlos. Marquis Posa.

110 CARLOS. Who's coming? What a sight! Oh, you good angels!
My Roderick!

MARQUIS. My Carlos!

CARLOS. Can it be?
Can it be really true? You? Oh, it's you!
I press you to my heart and feel how yours is
Beating all-powerfully against my own.
Now everything's all right. In this embrace
My ailing heart restores itself. I'm clasped
In my own Roderick's arms.

MARQUIS. Your ailing heart?
And what is now all right? What needed to
Be made all right? You hear what startles me.

CARLOS. What
120 Brings you so unexpectedly from Brussels?⁹
To whom do I owe this surprise? But then
How could I ask? Forgive one drunk with joy,
Thou highest Providence, this blasphemy!
Who, if not you, most gracious one? You saw
That Carlos had no angel and you sent
Me this one. I could ask?

MARQUIS. Forgive me, Prince. I
Receive these stormy raptures with amazement.
This was not how I thought to find Don Philip's
Son. An unnatural red flares on your cheeks,
130 Your lips are quivering as if in a fever.
Why, what am I to think, dear Prince? That's not
The lion-hearted youth to whom I'm sent
By an oppressed, heroic people. For
I stand before you not as Roderick now,
Not as the playmate once of Carlos the boy.

A delegate of all humanity
 Embraces you in me. In me it is
 The Flemish provinces that weep in your
 Embrace and beg you solemnly for rescue.
 140 For all is lost to their beloved country
 If Alba, hangman and fanatic, should
 Beleaguer Brussels with his Spanish laws.¹⁰
 On Emperor Charles' illustrious grandson¹¹ rest
 The last hopes of these noble lands. That hope
 Will fall in ruins if his most noble heart has
 Forgotten to beat for all humanity.

CARLOS. It falls in ruins.

MARQUIS. But no! What can this mean?

CARLOS. You speak of times that now are long, long past.

I too once dreamt a Karl whose cheeks glowed hot
 150 To hear men speak of freedom. He's long dead.
 The one whom you see here is not the Karl
 Who parted from you once at Alcala,¹²
 Who in sweet raptures boldly believed he'd be
 Creator of another Golden Age
 In Spain. The notion! Child-like and yet god-like!
 These dreams are done.

MARQUIS. Dreams, Prince? They were but dreams?

CARLOS. Let

Me weep, weep hot tears on your breast, you my
 One friend. Oh, no one—in the whole wide world
 There's no one; no one do I have. No place,
 160 As far as Philip's scepter rules, as far
 As galleons carry Spanish flags, no place
 Where I can find relief, can shed these tears, none
 But here. By all that you and I yet hope
 Of Heaven, Roderick, don't send me away.

(The Marquis, touched, bends over him in silence.)

Imagine that I am an orphan child
 That you picked up in pity at the Throne.
 I still don't know what "father" means: I am

A king's son. Oh, but if it should be given,
 As my heart says, that you among the millions
 170 Have been sought out to know and understand me,
 If it should be that Nature, in creating,
 Repeated Roderick once again in Carlos
 And in the morning of our lives tuned our
 Souls' tender strings together and alike,
 And if a tear that brings me comfort should
 Mean more to you than does my father's favor—¹³

MARQUIS. Oh, more than all the world.

CARLOS. Oh, so deep have

I fallen now, so poor have I become
 That I must call to mind our earliest years
 180 Of childhood; I must ask that you repay
 Debts that you've long forgotten, debts you made
 In sailor suit. When we were growing up
 Together, two wild boys and like two brothers,
 No pain oppressed me but to see myself
 So darkly overshadowed by your brilliance.
 I finally vowed to love you boundlessly,
 Because I'd lost all hope of matching you.
 So I began to torment you with acts of
 Kindness, a thousand shows of boyish love;
 190 You, proud of heart, rebuffed them with all coldness.
 I often stood there, my eyes welling up—
 You never noticed—when you skipped me to
 Embrace less ranking boys. "Why these?" I cried.
 "Don't I like you as much as they do?" You,
 However, knelt before me, cold and joyless.
 "Just this," you said, "is what is owed a king's son."

MARQUIS. No more, Prince, no more of these childish tales.

They turn me scarlet now; I'm deeply shamed.

200 CARLOS. This I had not deserved of you. Disdain me
 And lacerate my heart, these you could do,
 But not remove me. Three times you dismissed
 The prince and three times he returned to beg
 Your love as your petitioner, to force

His love upon you with all violence.
 Mere chance put right what Carlos never could have.
 In games your shuttlecock once struck my aunt,
 Queen of Bohemia, in the eye.¹⁴ She thought
 It done on purpose, took it weeping to
 The King. All the young people of the palace
 Are summoned to denounce the guilty party.
 The King swears he'll avenge this piece of treachery
 Most fiercely, and should it be on his own son.
 I saw you lingering, frightened, at a distance.
 So I stepped forward, knelt before the King,
 And cried, "I did it. Punish me." He did!

MARQUIS. The things that you'd have me remember, Prince!

CARLOS. Before the Court's entire assembled household,

Watching in sympathy, he did. The way
 A slave is thrashed. I fixed on you, I shed
 No tear. In pain I ground my teeth and shed
 No tear. My royal blood flowed shamefully to
 Merciless blows. I fixed on you and shed
 No tear. You came then, weeping loudly,
 Fell at my feet. "My pride is overcome,"
 You cried. "I shall repay you when you're king."

MARQUIS (*extending his hand*).

And so I shall, Karl. I renew this boyish
 Avowal as a man. I shall repay you.
 My hour may yet strike, too.

CARLOS. Oh, now, just now—

Don't hesitate—the hour has struck just now.
 The time has come for you to keep your promise.
 I need your love. A dreadful secret burns in
 My heart. It must come out. I want to read
 My condemnation writ in your pale looks.
 So listen—freeze in horror—but say nothing:
 I'm in love with my mother.

MARQUIS. God in heaven!

CARLOS. Don't spare me.¹⁵ Go ahead and say—I wish it—
 That on this earth's great orb no wretchedness

Can border on my own. So speak! Can I
 Not guess, not know what you can say to me?
 240 A son who loves his mother. World-wide custom
 And Nature's order, Roman law condemn this
 Passion. My claim affronts my father's rights.
 I know these things, and nonetheless I love.
 This way lies madness or the scaffold. I
 Love hopelessly, profanely, fearing death,
 In mortal danger; nonetheless, I love.
 MARQUIS. The Queen's aware of this affection?
 CARLOS. Could I
 Disclose it to her? She is Philip's wife
 And she is queen and this is Spanish ground;
 250 Watched over by my father's jealousy,
 Hedged in on every side by etiquette—
 How could I have approached her without witness?
 Eight hellish, anxious months have passed now since
 The King took me from the academy,
 Since I'm condemned to see her daily and
 Keep silent, silent as the grave. And for
 Eight hellish, anxious months this fire has raged in
 My breast, avowal reached my lips a thousand
 Times and, affright, crept back into my heart.
 260 Oh, Roderick, just a moment, a few moments
 To be *alone* with her.¹⁶

MARQUIS. Your father, Prince?

CARLOS. Why would you speak of him just at this moment?

Tell me of all the terrors of bad conscience

But of my father not a word.

MARQUIS. You hate your father?

CARLOS. No! Oh, no indeed!

I do not hate him. Rather, I am seized

With fear and guilt, as if I had done something

Wrong, at the mention of this fearsome name.

Is it my fault if schooling like a slave's

270 Stamped out the tender shoots of love in my
 Young heart? I was already six years old

When first the fearsome man who was, they told me,
 My father, came into my life. He had
 That very morning doomed—without ado—
 Four men to death. And ever after I saw
 Him only when some punishment had been
 Announced for a bad deed of mine. Oh, God!
 I feel how I'm becoming bitter. Off!
 Off and away! Away from here!

MARQUIS. Oh, no.

280 Open yourself, Prince. Words relieve the heart.

CARLOS. I've often struggled with myself. At midnight,
 My Watch asleep, I'd throw myself in tears
 Before the Blessed Virgin, beg a child's
 Pure heart. And I'd stand up unheard. Oh, solve
 This mystery of Providence, Roderick:
 Just why, among a thousand fathers, *this* one
 For me? Among a thousand better sons,
 This one for him? A pair worse matched than he
 And I cannot be found in Nature's circuit..
 290 How could she force together two such ends,
 Remote ends of the human race, force me
 And him into a bond so holy? Why should
 Two men who always shun each other meet
 In *one* such wish? Why did this have to happen?
 Two hostile stars, set perpendicular, crash
 Together once, then speed apart again
 For all eternity.

MARQUIS. I fear no good
 Can come of this.

CARLOS. And so do I.

300 Like Furies from the deep, most dreadful dreams
 Pursue me. Full of doubt, my better spirits
 Wrestle with horrible designs; my hapless
 Wits, star-crossed, fumble their way forward through
 A labyrinth of sophistries, halt only
 On the sheer brink of the abyss. Oh, Roderick,

If I no longer saw in him my father —
Your pallor tells me you have understood —
What care would I have of the King?

MARQUIS (*after a silence*). May I
Presume to make this one request of Carlos?

310 Whatever you are of a mind to do,
Just promise me you'll venture nothing without
Your friend. You promise me this?

CARLOS. All things, all things,
All that your love would have me do. I throw
Myself into your arms.

MARQUIS. The Monarch is
About to go back to Madrid. Our time
Is short. If you would see the Queen in secret,
It can be only in Aranjuez:
The stillness here, the unforced manners—

CARLOS. That was
What I had hoped—in vain!

MARQUIS. No, not entirely.
I go now to present myself to her.
320 If she is here in Spain the self-same one
That she once was at Henri's court in France,
I'll find her open-hearted. And if I
See Carlos' hopes reflected in her eyes,
Find her inclined toward such an interview,
If her attendants can be called away—

CARLOS. They're mostly well-disposed toward me. I have
Won Mondekar especially: I chose
Her son to serve me as a page.

MARQUIS. So much
The better. You, my Prince, should be nearby
330 And show yourself when you have seen my signal.

CARLOS. I shall, I shall! Go now. Be quick about it.

MARQUIS. And I'll not lose a moment. We'll meet there!

(They go off to different sides.)

The Queen's Court at Aranjuez

*A simple rural setting intersected by an avenue ending at the Queen's
country residence¹⁷*

Scene Three

*The Queen. The Duchess Olivarez. The Princess Eboli and the
Marquise Mondekar, who come up the avenue.¹⁸*

QUEEN (*to the Marquise*).

It's you I would have with me, Mondekar.
The bright eyes of the Princess here have pricked me
All morning. Look at her. She's scarcely can
Conceal her joy to leave the country.

EBOLI. My Queen,
I'd not deny it. I have endless joy
To see Madrid again.

MONDEKAR. Your Majesty
Not too? You hate to leave Aranjuez
Behind?

QUEEN. To leave—the lovely spot at least.
This world's as if my own, this place long since
My favorite. I'm greeted by the countryside,
The dearest friend of my first childhood years;
I find my childhood games again here, too;
Here blow the breezes of my much-loved France.
Do not hold it against me. All our hearts
Are drawn back to home country.

EBOLI. But how lonely,
How still and sad it all is here! You'd think
You're at la Trappe.¹⁹

QUEEN. Why, quite the opposite.
I find Madrid is still.²⁰ What says our Duchess
About these things?

OLIVAREZ. Your Majesty, I believe
It's customary that we pass here one month,
The next one in the Pardo,²¹ winter in
The Residence, since there've been kings in Spain.

QUEEN. Well, Duchess, you must know that I've long since
Abandoned any quarreling with you.

MONDEKAR. How lively it will soon be in Madrid!

The Plaza Mayor's being fitted for a

Corrida, an auto-da-fe is promised—²²

360 QUEEN. Is promised! That from gentle Mondekar?

MONDEKAR. Why not? It's heretics that we'll see burnt.

QUEEN. I hope my little Eboli thinks different?

EBOLI. I? Why, Your Majesty, I bid you think

Me no worse Christian than the good Marquise.

QUEEN. And I forget just where I am.²³ Let's speak

Of other things. The country was our topic.

The month, I find, has gone past very quickly.

I promised myself much of our days here

And have not found what I had hoped for. Is

370 It so with all our hopes? And yet I can't

Discover any wish that's disappointed.²⁴

OLIVAREZ. You've not yet told us, Princess Eboli, whether

Gomez can hope? Shall we see you a bride soon?

QUEEN. Thanks, Duchess, for reminding me.

(*To the Princess.*)

I'm asked

To intercede for him. And yet how can I?

The man to whom I give my Eboli must

Be worthy of her.

OLIVAREZ. That, Your Majesty,

He is. A very worthy man, a man whom

Our gracious Monarch publicly distinguished

380 With royal favor.

QUEEN. That will make the man

Most happy. We would know, however, if he

Can love and if he merits to be loved.

I ask you, Eboli.

EBOLI (*stands silent and confused, her gaze lowered, then falls to her knees*).

Most Gracious Queen, do

Have pity on me. Don't let me—for God's sake—

Don't let me— Don't let me be sacrificed.

QUEEN. Be sacrificed? I need no more. Stand up.

It's a hard thing to know one's sacrificed.

I believe you. Do stand up. Has it been long

That you've rejected Gomez' suit?

EBOLI (*getting to her feet*). Quite long. Prince

390 Carlos was still at the academy.²⁵

QUEEN (*starts and examines her sharply*).

And do you also know your reasons?

EBOLI (*with some vehemence*). Never

Can I agree, my Queen, not for a hundred,

A thousand reasons.

QUEEN (*very grave*). More than one is quite

Enough. You can't think well of him. That's quite

Enough. We'll speak of this no more.

(*To her other Ladies.*) I've not

Seen the Infanta yet today. Marquise, go

And bring her to me here.

OLIVAREZ (*looking at her watch*). Your Majesty,

It is not yet the hour.

QUEEN. Not yet the hour

When I'm permitted to be mother? A pity.

400 Do tell me when the hour is come.

(*A Page enters and speaks softly with the Duchess,
who turns to the Queen.*)

OLIVAREZ. The Marquis

Posa, Your Majesty.

QUEEN. The Marquis Posa?

OLIVAREZ. He comes from France and the Low Countries, begs

The honor of permission to deliver

Letters of the Queen Regent.²⁶

QUEEN. That's allowed?

OLIVAREZ (*with reserve*).

My protocol does not make mention of

The special case of a Castilian grandee

Entering the bower of the Queen of Spain to

Deliver letters from a foreign court.

QUEEN. I dare to do it then at my own risk!

410 OLIVAREZ. Your Majesty, in that case grant that I
 Remove myself so long as—
 QUEEN. Duchess, you are
 Free to conduct yourself as you see fit.

(The Duchess goes off. The Queen signals the Page, who goes out.)

Scene Four

Queen. Princess Eboli. Marquise Mondekar and Marquis Posa.

QUEEN. I welcome you on Spanish ground, brave Knight.²⁷
 MARQUIS. Which I have never called my fatherland
 With pride as justified as now.
 QUEEN *(to the two Ladies)*. The Marquis
 Posa, who broke a lance in tourney with my
 Father at Reims and took my colors three times
 To victory. First of his nation, who
 Taught me to feel the glory that is being
 420 Queen of the Spanish.
(Turning to the Marquis.) When we last met in
 The Louvre, Knight, you'd not have dreamt that you'd
 Yet be my guest in Castile.
 MARQUIS. No, great Queen,
 For then I didn't dream that France would lose
 To us the one thing we had envied it.
 QUEEN. Proud Spaniard! The one thing? That to a daughter
 Of the great House Valois?
 MARQUIS. That I may say
 Your Majesty, for you're now one of ours.
 QUEEN. Your journey, so I hear, led you through France.
 What do you bring me from my honored mother
 430 And from my much-loved brothers?
 MARQUIS *(handing her the letters)*. Madame the
 Queen Mother I found lying ill, renouncing
 All worldly pleasure but to see her daughter
 Happily established on the Spanish throne.

QUEEN. Mustn't she be, now she's remembered by
 Such loving kin, now she remembers—²⁸ You,
 Brave Knight, have visited many courts along
 Your way, seen many lands, known customs and
 Men's manners. Now, I hear, it's your intention
 To live but for yourself in your home country,
 A greater prince within your quiet walls
 Than Philip on the Throne—a free man, a
 Philosopher! I doubt you'll be content
 Here in Madrid. One's—quiet—in Madrid.

MARQUIS. That's more than all the rest of Europe now
 Enjoys.

QUEEN. Yes, so they say. I've quite forgot all
 Worldly exchange—almost forgot the memory.
(To Princess Eboli.)
 I seem to see a hyacinth blooming there.
 Princess, do gather it.

*(The Princess goes to bring the flower. The Queen speaks
 more softly.)*

If I am not
 Mistaken, Knight, your coming here has made one
 More happy man at Court?

MARQUIS. I found a sad one
 Whom but one thing can—

(The Princess returns with the flower.)

EBOLI. Since the Knight has seen
 So many lands, won't he have marvels to
 Tell us?

MARQUIS. Indeed he will. For knights must seek
 Adventure. That's well known. But their most sacred
 Duty is to protect young ladies.

MONDEKAR. Against
 Giants! But now there are no giants left.

MARQUIS. Force
 Is at all times a giant for the weak.

QUEEN. Quite right. We still have giants, but no knights.

460 MARQUIS. Just now, on my return from Naples, I
 Was witness to a touching tale, which friendship's
 Most sacred legacy has made my own.
 Did I not fear to tire Your Majesty
 Relating it—

QUEEN. Have I a choice? The Princess'
 Inquiring gaze admits of no suppression.
 Now down to business, for I, too, love stories.

MARQUIS. Two noble houses in Mirandola,
 Wearied of jealousy and enmity
 Passed down from Guef and Ghibelline for centuries,²⁹
 Resolved to join in peace eternal, bound
 470 By tender bonds of kinship to each other.
 Mighty Pietro's sister's son, Fernando,
 And the divine Mathilda, Colonna's daughter,
 Were picked to bind this lovely band of union.
 Never had Nature made two better hearts
 For one another, never deemed the world,
 Never a match so very fortunate.
 Until this time Fernando had adored his
 Amiable mistress only in her likeness,
 And how he trembled whether he'd find true
 480 What his most fiery expectations dared
 Not trust themselves to believe about the picture!
 In Padua, where his studies held him fast,
 Fernando waited only to be granted
 The moment when he'd kneel before Mathilda
 And make a first confession of his love.

*(The Queen becomes more attentive. The Marquis pauses,
 then continues, directing himself, as far as the presence of the
 Queen allows, more toward Princess Eboli.)*

Meanwhile, his consort's death leaves Pietro free.
 With youthful ardor the graybeard consumes
 The brilliant rumors being spread abroad
 About Mathilda's many excellences.
 490 He comes! He sees! He loves! This new emotion
 Drowns out the softer voice of Nature. Thus

The uncle sues for the intended of
His nephew, seals his theft before the altar.

QUEEN. What of Fernando now?

MARQUIS. On wings of love,
Unknowing of this terrible reversal,
He hurries to Mirandola, ecstatic.
His speedy beast attains the gates by starlight.
Bacchantic music, drums and violins,
Comes thundering from the lighted palace to
500 Receive him. Trembling up the stair, abashed,
He enters a tumultuous wedding hall un-
Noticed. Amid the drunken feasting of
His guests Pietro sits, flanked by an angel,
One whom Fernando knows, who never seemed
So brilliant even in his wildest dreams.
One glance tells him what he has once possessed,
Tells him what he now has forever lost.

EBOLI. Unfortunate Fernando!

QUEEN. Is your story
Now ended, Knight? It surely must be ended?

510 MARQUIS. Not yet entirely.

QUEEN. Didn't you tell us
Fernando was your friend?

MARQUIS. I have none dearer.

EBOLI. Oh, do continue with your story, Knight.

MARQUIS. It now becomes quite sad. And thinking of it
Renews my pain. Let me not have to end it.³⁰

(General silence.)

QUEEN *(turning to Princess Eboli).*

It's surely granted me now to embrace
My daughter. Princess, go and bring her to me.

(Eboli goes off. The Marquis signals a Page in the background, who disappears. The Queen opens the letters that the Marquis has given her and seems surprised. The Marquis meanwhile converses softly with Marquise Mondekar. The Queen has read the letters and turns to the Marquis with a searching gaze.)

You've told us nothing of Mathilda? Perhaps

She doesn't know how much Fernando suffers?

MARQUIS. No one has ever plumbed Mathilda's heart.

520 But great souls suffer silently.

QUEEN. You look about? What is it you are seeking?

MARQUIS. I thought how happy one whom I can't name

Would be here in my place.

QUEEN. Whose fault that he

Is not?

MARQUIS (*in quick rejoinder*).

Am I free to construe this as

I wish? He'd find forgiveness if he came now?

QUEEN (*startled*). Just now, Marquis? Now? What do you intend?

MARQUIS. He's grounds for hope? He has?

QUEEN (*in growing confusion*). You frighten me,

Marquis. He surely would not—

MARQUIS. Here he is.

Scene Five

*The Queen. Carlos.*³¹

Marquis Posa and Marquise Mondekar step into the background.

CARLOS (*kneeling before the Queen*).

It's come at last, the moment longed for so,

530 And Karl at last can touch this cherished hand!

QUEEN. A step like this! What criminal presumption!

You're mad! Stand up! We'll be found out! My Court's here.

CARLOS. I'll not stand up. I shall kneel here forever.

I'll lie here, rooted to the spot, bewitched—

QUEEN. Why, you are raving mad! What cheek! Are you

Aware it is the Queen, it is your mother,

To whom you dare speak so? Are you aware

That I myself can tell the King—

CARLOS. And I

Must die! Let them take me from here straight to

CARLOS. And your husband.

QUEEN. Who gives you,

As heir, the greatest realm in all the world.

CARLOS. And *you* for mother.

QUEEN. God above! You're raving.

CARLOS. And does he know how rich he is? Has he

A feeling heart that knows to value yours?

I'll not complain; indeed, I will forget

The boundless happiness I would have known

Having your hand, if only *he* is happy.

But he is not. And this is hellish torment!

580 He's not, he'll never be. And you, and you—

You took my heaven and destroyed it in

His arms.

QUEEN. Vile notion!

CARLOS. Oh, I know who was

The maker of this marriage, know how Philip

Can love, know how he courted. What are you in

This kingdom? Come, let's hear it. Reigning queen

Perhaps? No, not in life! How could—where *you*

Are queen—the Albas rage and murder? How

Could Flanders bleed for its confession? Or are

You Philip's wife? Not possible! Don't believe it.

590 A wife possesses a man's heart. And who

Has his? Why every stroke of tenderness that

Escapes him in a moment of arousal—

Must he not beg it of the scepter and

Of his gray hair?

QUEEN. And just who told you to

Lament my lot at Philip's side?

CARLOS. My heart,

Which knows, at mine, how it would be content.

QUEEN. Vain man! If *my* heart told me differently?

If Philip's tender honoring me should touch me

More intimately than his proud son's bold

600 Facility with words? If the considered

Devotion of an aged—

CARLOS. Oh! that is different.

Why, then—forgiveness. It escaped me that
You love the King.

QUEEN. I'm pleased to honor him.

CARLOS. You've never loved?

QUEEN. Strange question!

CARLOS. You've never loved?

QUEEN. I love no longer.

CARLOS. That

Because your heart forbids it? Or your vows?

QUEEN. Take leave of me now, Prince, and never come
Again in hope of such an interview.

CARLOS. Because your vows forbid it, or your heart?

610 QUEEN. Because my duty— Oh, unhappy Carlos,
Why this grief-struck dissection of a fate
That you and I must heed?

CARLOS. We? *Must* heed? Must?

QUEEN. What would you say by such a tone?

CARLOS. This much:

That Carlos is not minded to say "must"
Where he can "will," that he's not minded to
Be the unhappiest man in this wide realm
When it costs but the overthrow of all
The laws to be the happiest.

QUEEN. Have I heard you

620 Correctly? You still hope? You dare to hope
When all, all, all—all has long since been lost?

CARLOS. For me the dead alone have all been lost.

QUEEN. And it's for me, your mother, that you hope?

(She gives him a long, penetrating look. Then, with dignity and gravity)

Why not? The new king, just installed, can do
Yet more: can burn the last instructions of the
Deceased, pull down his statues, he can even—
Who hinders him?—can snatch the last remains
Of the dead man from rest in the Escorial³²
Out into light of day and blithely scatter
His desecrated dust to the four winds;

630 At length, to reach a fitting end—
CARLOS. For love of God, do not complete that thought!
QUEEN. Can bind himself in marriage to his mother.
CARLOS. Accursed son!
(He stands for a moment frozen and speechless.)
Yes, it's all over. It's all
Over now. I see all too clearly what
Was to remain obscure eternally.
You're lost to me. Lost, lost. Forever and
Forever and forever! The die is cast
And I have lost you. It's a feeling full of
Pure hellishness, and hellish, too, the other:
640 The feeling of possessing you. I can
Not grasp it and my nerves are giving way.
QUEEN. Most pitiable, dearest Karl, I feel—
Feel it so deeply—all the nameless pain
That's raging in your breast. As boundless as
Your love is this, your suffering. Boundless, too,
Though is the glory won by conquering pain.
Attain that glory, my young hero, a prize
That's worthy of its high contender, of
The youth through whose veins courses all the virtue
650 Of hosts of kingly forebears. Be a man,
My noble Prince. The grandson of great Charles
Begins the fight where common mortals end it.
CARLOS. Too late! Dear God, it is too late!
QUEEN. To be
A man? Oh, Karl, how great our virtue is
When our heart breaks in our pursuit of it!
You were placed high by Providence, placed higher
Than many millions of your brothers. Partial,
She gave her favorite what she took from them,
And millions ask: Does he deserve from birth
660 To count for more than other mortals? Rise up!
And prove this disposition right and proper!
Deserve your precedence on all the world
And sacrifice what no one's ever done!

CARLOS. That I can do. I have unbounded strength to
Do battle *for* you. To lose you I have none.

QUEEN. Admit it, Carlos. It's defiance, it
Is bitterness and pride that draw your wishes
So wildly toward your mother. Love and longing
You throw away on me by right belongs to the
670 Kingdoms that will be yours to rule one day.
Just look how you are squandering your ward's³³
Entrusted assets. Love is your great office.
Till now, it's wandered toward your mother. Bring
It to, oh, bring it to your future kingdoms
And feel, instead of pain of conscience, the transports
Of being god! Elisabeth was your
First love. Your second love be Spain! How gladly
Would I step back before that better love.

CARLOS (*throwing himself at her feet*).
How grand you are and how divine! Oh, all
680 That you desire—this will I do. So be it!
(*He stands up.*)
I stand here in the hand of the Almighty
And swear—swear you eternal—Oh! Eternal
Silence, but not forgetting.

QUEEN. How could I
Require of Carlos what I find no will
To do myself?

MARQUIS (*hurrying from the avenue*).
The King!

QUEEN. Dear God!

MARQUIS. Away,
Away from here, my Prince!

QUEEN. If he should see you!
His terrible suspicion!

CARLOS. I shall stay!

QUEEN. And who shall be the victim?

CARLOS (*drawing the Marquis with him*). Off! Away!
Come quickly, Roderick.
(*He stops and turns back.*) What may I take with me?

690 QUEEN. The friendship of your mother.
 CARLOS. Friendship! Mother!
 QUEEN. And these tears sent me from the Netherlands.

*(She gives him a handful of letters.³⁴ Carlos and the Marquis go off.
 The Queen, uneasy, looks about for her Ladies. None appears. As she is
 about to move into the background, the King arrives.)*

Scene Six

*King. Queen. Duke Alba. Count Lerma. Domingo.³⁵ A few Ladies and
 Grandees who remain in the distance.*

KING *(looks about astonished and in silence)*.
 What do I see? You here! Alone, Madame?
 And not *one* Lady to accompany you? This
 Astonishes me. Where are all your women?
 QUEEN. My gracious husband—
 KING. Why are you alone?
(To his Attendants.)
 An unforgivable mistake for which I
 Demand the strictest possible accounting.
 Who's charged with keeping the Queen's Court today?
 Whose turn was it to be in her attendance?
 700 QUEEN. My Lord, do not be angry. I myself,
 I am the guilty party. On my orders
 The Princess Eboli went out to call—
 KING. On
 Your orders?
 QUEEN. —call the waiting-lady because
 A longing seized me to embrace the Infanta.
 KING. And that is why you sent away your Ladies?
 But that excuses only the first Lady.
 Where was the second one?
 MONDEKAR *(who has returned, steps out from among the other Ladies)*.
 Your Majesty,
 I feel that I am culpable—

KING. That's why
 I grant you ten years' time far from Madrid
 To think about these things at leisure.

(The Marquise steps back, in tears. General silence. All those present, startled, look to the Queen.)

QUEEN. Dear
 Marquise, *who* do you weep for?
(To the King.) If I have erred,
 My gracious Lord, at least the Crown, which I
 Have never reached for, should spare me this shame.
 Is there a law here in this kingdom that
 Summons a monarch's daughter into court?
 Does force alone keep watch on Spanish women?
 Do witnesses protect them more than virtue?
 Now, by your leave, my husband, it is not
 My custom to dismiss in tears one who
 Has served me gladly. Mondekar!

(She looses her girdle and gives it to the Marquise.)

It is
 The King you've angered, not me. Take this then
 As token of my favor and this hour.
 Avoid this realm; yours is a Spanish crime.
 In my beloved France one dries such tears
 With pleasure. Must these thoughts forever haunt me?
(She supports herself on her Chief Lady and covers her face.)
 In my dear France it was quite different.³⁶

KING *(rather shaken)*. Could a
 Reproach caused by my love so sadden you?
 A word so sadden you that only tenderest
 Affliction could have laid upon my lips?
(He turns toward the Grandezza.)
 Here stand the vassals of my Court and Kingdom.
 Has ever sleep descended on my eyelids
 But that I had at evening every day
 Considered how the hearts of all my peoples
 Beat in the furthest reaches of my realm?
 Should I be yet more anxious for my throne
 Than for the helpmeet of my dearest heart?

For all my many peoples my sword vouches,
My eye alone can vouch for my wife's love.

QUEEN. Do I deserve this mistrust, Sire?

KING. I'm called

740 The richest man in all of Christendom;
The sun has never set on my great State.
All this another once possessed before me,
And many who come after will possess it.
This belongs to me alone. The King's possessions
Belong to fortune; Elisabeth is Philip's.
*This is the spot where I am mortal.*³⁷

QUEEN. You're

Afraid, my Lord?

KING. Should my gray head not be?

And if I once begin to fear, my fears
Are at an end.³⁸

(*To the Grandees.*) I count the Grandees of
750 The Court and find the first one missing. Where's
Don Carlos, my Infante?

(*No one answers.*)

The boy Don Karl
Begins to stir my fears. Since he returned
From Alcala, he shuns my very presence.
His blood is hot; why is his gaze so cold?
So measured and so formal his comportment?
Be vigilant, I urge you.³⁹

ALBA. That I am.

As long as my heart beats against this breastplate,
Don Philip may lie down and sleep in peace.
Like God's own cherub stood before His Eden,
760 Duke Alba stands before the Throne.

LERMA. May I

Most humbly dare to contradict the wisest
Of kings? For I revere the Majesty of
My King too deeply to condemn his son
So hastily and harshly. I fear much
Of Karl's hot blood but nothing of his heart.

KING. Count Lerma, you speak well to soothe the father;
 The Duke remains the mainstay of the King.
 Enough of this.
(He turns to his Suite.) I hasten to Madrid.
 My royal office calls me. Heresy
 770 Is spreading like the plague among my peoples,
 Unrest is growing in my Netherlands.
 The time has come. A terrible example
 Is to convert those who have lost their way.
 Tomorrow I shall keep a solemn oath
 To which all Christian kings have sworn⁴⁰ by an
 Assize without example, to which I
 Now summon all the members of my Court.

(He leads the Queen away; the others follow.)

Scene Seven

Don Carlos, carrying letters;⁴¹ Marquis Posa from the opposite side.

CARLOS. My mind's made up and Flanders must be saved.
 She wishes it. Enough for me.

MARQUIS. Then there's
 780 No time to lose. Duke Alba, it is said,
 Has been named governor.

CARLOS. Tomorrow I'll
 Request an audience with my father and
 Demand this office for myself. This is
 The first demand I've dared to make of him.
 He can't refuse me. He has long resented
 My presence in Madrid. A welcome pretext,
 This, to remove me, keep me at a distance!
 Shall I admit to you that I hope more?
 Perhaps, once we've come face to face, I can
 790 Restore myself to his good graces. He
 Has never lent an ear to Nature's urgings.
 Let's see if he'll heed *my* appeal to Nature!

MARQUIS. At last I hear my Carlos speak again.
 You are your old self now once more.

Scene Eight

As above. Count Lerma.

LERMA. The Monarch

Has just departed from Aranjuez.

He gave me orders—

CARLOS. Very well, Count Lerma,

I'll reach Madrid beside the King.

MARQUIS (*as if taking leave; with ceremony*). Your Highness

Has nothing more he would require of me?

CARLOS. Nothing, Knight. I wish you god speed on your

800 Arrival in Madrid. You'll tell me more

Of Flanders when we meet again.

(*To Lerma, who is waiting.*) I'll follow

In just a moment.

(Lerma goes off.)

Scene Nine

Don Carlos. The Marquis.

CARLOS. I have understood you.

My thanks. But this restraint we'll practice only

Before third persons. We—are we not brothers?

This comedy of rank is to be banished

In future from our bond! Imagine we

Have met in masquerade: you as a slave

And I—on whim—concealed in royal purple.

As long as Shrovetide lasts we keep this pretense,

810 True to our roles with comic gravity,

All to preserve the gaiety of the crowd.

Behind the mask, though, Karl will signal you,

And you in passing press my hand, so that

We understand each other.

MARQUIS. What a dream! But

Will it not vanish? Is my Karl so sure he'll

Fend off the charms of kingship without limit?

850 That beg before the Throne? Does gold charm you?
 You are a richer subject than as king
 I'll ever be. You covet honor? No.
 In boyhood you had more than its full measure.
 Which one will be the lender? Which the debtor?
 You're silent? Tremble at the prospect? You
 Are no more sure of yourself?

MARQUIS. All right. I yield.

My hand on it.

CARLOS. You're mine?

MARQUIS. Both now and always,

In the most reckless meaning of the word.

CARLOS. As warm and true as now to the Infante
860 In future also to the King disposed?

MARQUIS. I swear to you.

CARLOS. Then, too, if flattery wrapped

Itself around my badly guarded heart?

And if this eye forgot the tears that it

Once wept? This ear locked out entreaty? Will

You, fearless keeper of my virtue, seize

Me firmly, call my genius by its great name?⁴²

You will? Then one more favor! Call me brother.⁴³

I've always envied those like you because you

Enjoy a right to easy intimacy.

870 This word as between brothers soothes my ear,
My heart with dreams that we are like and equal.
No protest. I can guess what you would say.
For you it is a small thing—that I know;
For me, a king's son, it is much. Shall we
Be brothers now?

MAROUIS. Your brother!

CARLOS. To the King!

Now I have nothing more to fear.

With our arms linked I'll call out all this age.

(They go off.)



Philip II. Steel engraving by Johann Leonhard Raab from a drawing by Arthur von Ramberg. Friedrich Pecht, *Schiller-Galerie* (Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schiller-Galerie_komplett_Bild_13.jpg

Act Two

In the Royal Palace, Madrid

Scene One

*King Philip under a baldachin. Duke Alba at some distance from the King, hatted.*⁴⁴ *Carlos.*

CARLOS. The realm has precedence. Most gladly Carlos

Yields to His Majesty's first minister.

880 He speaks for Spain. I'm but son of the house.

(He steps back with a bow.)

PHILIP. The Duke remains, and the Infante may speak.

CARLOS *(turning to Alba)*.

And thus I must request the King as gift

Of *your* great magnanimity, Duke Alba.

A child, as you well know, can carry much

At heart intended only for his father,

Ill-suited to the witness of third persons.

The King will not be taken from you, Duke;

I merely seek a moment with my father.

PHILIP. He is your father's friend.

CARLOS. Have I deserved

890 To think I see my own here in the Duke?

PHILIP. Or wanted to deserve? I've little love

For sons who know to choose more wisely than

Their fathers.

CARLOS. Can Duke Alba, knight and courtier,

Be witness to a scene like this one? I,

As surely as I live, would not accept—

Not for the world, not for a diadem—

The role of the importunate who little

Scruples to interject himself between son

And father, uninvited, who thus has

900 Condemned himself to stand there in the full

And pungent knowledge of his nullity.

PHILIP (*leaves his seat with an angry glance at the Prince*).

Remove yourself, Duke!

(The Duke turns to the main doors, where Carlos entered; the King indicates another door.)

Into my private study,

Until I call you.

Scene Two

King Philip. Don Carlos.

CARLOS (*approaches the King as soon as the Duke has gone out and kneels before him; with heightened feeling*).

Father once again,

Mine once again. My warmest thanks for this
Great favor. Let me have your hand, my father.
What happiness! The pleasure of this kiss
Was long not granted to your child. And why
Banish me from your heart so long, my father?
What is it I have done?

PHILIP. Infante, your heart

910 Knows nothing of such arts. No more. They irk me.

CARLOS (*getting to his feet*).

There! There I hear your courtiers. But, my father,
It is not good, not all is good, not all
A priest says, not all a priest's creatures say.
I am not wicked, Father. Hot blood is
My wickedness, youth is my crime. But truly,
Wicked I never was. Though wild eruptions
Accuse my heart, that heart is good.

PHILIP. Your heart

Is pure, I know this, pure as is your prayer.

CARLOS. It's now or never! We're alone. The anxious

920 Barrier of etiquette has tumbled down
Between us. Now or never! Hope begins
To glimmer in me, a sweet premonition
Flits through my heart. All Heaven bends toward us
With bands of angels. Touched, the Three-Times-Holy

One contemplates this grand scene! Father, let's

Make peace! (*He falls at the King's feet.*)

PHILIP. Leave off! Stand up!

CARLOS. Oh, let's make peace!

PHILIP (*resisting Carlos's approach*).

I find this clowning forward—

CARLOS. Forward, your

Child's love?

PHILIP. Now tears ! Unworthy sight! Be gone, you!

CARLOS. It's now or never! Peace, my father!

PHILIP. Out of

930 My sight! Come from my battles covered with
Disgrace—my arms will open to receive you.
Not *this* way. Only craven guilt would wash
Itself in waters such as these. A man
Who does not scruple to repent will not
Be sparing with repentance.

CARLOS. Who is this?

By what misunderstanding did this stranger
Stray in among humanity? Tears are
The timeless guarantor of humanness.

940 *His* eye is dry. Oh, he's not born of woman.
Force your unwetted eyes to learn tears now,
Or you might do so at a bitter moment.

PHILIP. Do you presume to shake your father's doubts
With pretty words?

CARLOS. His doubts? I'll crush these doubts.

I'll hang myself on Father's heart and rip
And rip until I've torn doubt from around
This father's heart. Who are they, those who've driven
Me from the grace and favor of my King? The
Monk bid what monkish price to father for
His son? And Alba offers what to redeem
950 A life made trivial by childlessness?
It's love you want? Here in this breast a spring
Surges more fresh, more fiery than in all
The sad and swampy vessels that alone
King Philip's gold can tap.⁴⁵

PHILIP. Impertinent boy!
 Silence! The men whom you dare to despise are
 The proven servants of my choosing. You
 Will show them honor.

CARLOS. No, indeed, I won't.
 I feel my strength. What all your Albas do,
 This Karl can do, and Karl does more. What is
 960 The Kingdom to a hireling? He'll not inherit.
 What's it to *him* when Philip's gray hair whitens?
 Your Carlos would have loved you. The very thought
 Of sitting on a *throne*, alone—all, all
 Alone—fills me with dread.

PHILIP (*affected by these words, stands lost in thought. Pause*).

I *am* alone.⁴⁶

CARLOS (*going to him, warm and vivid*).

You have been. Do not hate me anymore;
 I want to love you like a child, with ardor;
 Just leave off hating me. How glad it is
 To feel ourselves made glorious in one
 970 Sweet soul and know our pleasure warms another's
 Cheek, that our fear quakes in another's breast,
 Our sorrows wet another's eyes! How sweet
 It is to wander back along youth's rose-
 Strewn way, to dream again life's dream, go hand
 In hand with a dear, much-loved son! How sweet
 It is to last, immortal, undecaying,
 In one's child's virtue, doing good for centuries!
 How sweet to plant, the son to gather, to harvest
 What flourishes for him, to know his bright thanks!
 Father, your monks say nothing of this earthly
 980 Eden, and they do well not to.

PHILIP (*not without feeling*). My son,
 You speak your own damnation, paint with charm
 A joy that you have never given me.

CARLOS. We'll let all-knowing God be judge of that.
 Yourself—*you* closed your father's heart to me
 And my participation in your rule.
 Up to this very day. Was this well done?
 In Spain, Spain's own Crown Prince was made a stranger,

- A prisoner on the ground where he'll be king.
And this was just, was kind? How often, Father,
990 Did I look down in shame to learn Court news at
Aranjuez from foreign consuls, news sheets!
PHILIP. Blood runs too hot through all your veins, my son.
You'd only wreck things.
- CARLOS. Give me things to wreck,
My father. High time! Twenty-three years old
And nothing done for immortality!
I've woken up, I feel my strength; my calling
Knocks; like a creditor it rouses me;
And all lost time from early years reminds
Me loudly of my debts of honor. It's there,
1000 The august moment that demands of me
The interest owed on all my high endowments:
World history calls to me and renowned forebears
And the resounding trumpet blast of fame.
The time has come to open glorious gates
Of reputation to me. Now, my King, may
I dare pronounce the plea that brings me here?
- PHILIP. Yet more required? Let's hear.
- CARLOS. The uproar in
Brabant has now grown threatening. Stubborn rebels
Call for intelligent and firm resistance.
1010 To tame this rage the Duke's to lead an army
To Flanders, furnished with full royal mandate.
How honorable this office is, how suited
To introduce your son into Fame's temple!
Give me, my King, give me this army. I'm loved
In the Low Countries. With my blood I'm bold to
Vouch for their loyalty.
- PHILIP. You're talking like
A dreamer. Such an office wants a man
And not a youngster.
- CARLOS. Wants a human being,
Father, the one thing Alba never has been.
- 1020 PHILIP. Terror alone will tame this insurrection.
A show of mercy is pure madness. You are

Soft-hearted and the Duke is feared, my son.

Do not insist.

CARLOS. Dispatch me with your army
 To Flanders. Take a chance with my soft heart.
 The King's son's very name there, flying before
 My banners, will make conquest; Alba's hangmen
 Can only ravage. On my knees I beg you.
 The first request in all my life. My father,
 Entrust me Flanders.

PHILIP (*with a penetrating look*).

 And entrust as well

1030 My strongest force to your ambition? A
 Keen blade for my assassin?

CARLOS. Oh, my God!
 I've got no further? Can this be the yield of
 A moment I've long hoped for, long requested?
 (*After reflecting, with milder earnestness.*)
 Give me a softer answer; don't send me
 Away like *this*! To be dismissed with such
 An answer, be dismissed with heavy heart—
 Treat me more graciously. This is my urgent
 Request, it is my last, despairing try.

1040 I cannot believe, cannot endure with firmness
 That you refuse me all, all, all I've asked.
 I go from you deceived in all my feelings.
 Your Albas, your Domingos throne in glory
 Where your child weeps in deep humiliation.
 Legions of courtiers, all your fluttering Grandezza,
 Your guild of monks as pale as sinners—these
 Were witness to your solemn grant of audience.
 Don't shame me, Father, wound me mortally,
 Expose me to this Court crowd's laughter, seeing
 That strangers batten on your favor, Carlos,
 1050 However, can arrive at nothing. Make
 A gesture proving you would honor me
 And send me with your army into Flanders!

PHILIP. No more of this, on pain of your King's anger!

CARLOS. I'll risk the pain of my King's anger, I
 Will ask one final time: Entrust me Flanders.
 I ought, I must leave Spain. I live here in
 The shadow of the gallows. Skies above
 Madrid bear down on me like knowledge of
 A murder. Only a quick change of sky
 1060 Can make me well. If you would save me— Send
 Me right away to Flanders.

PHILIP (*with forced calm*). You are ill.
 Affliction such as yours, my son, requires
 Good care and watchful presence of physicians.
 You'll stay in Spain; the Duke will go to Flanders.

CARLOS (*beside himself*).

Stand by me now, you kindly spirits.

PHILIP (*taking a step back*). Halt!

What does this mean?

CARLOS (*his voice trembling*). That's your last word, my father?

PHILIP. You heard it from your King.

CARLOS. And that is that.

(*He goes off, beside himself.*)

Scene Three

Philip stands a while, reflecting darkly, then takes a few steps.

Alba approaches, ill at ease.

PHILIP. Expect your orders to depart for Brussels
 At any moment now.

ALBA. All matters stand
 1070 In readiness, my King.

PHILIP. Your mandate lies
 Sealed in my study. Meanwhile take leave of
 The Queen, present yourself to the Infante.

ALBA. With all the gestures of a man enraged
 I just now saw him going out of here.
 Your Royal Majesty is quite beside

Yourself and seem to be affected deeply.
Perhaps the content of your conversation?

PHILIP (*having walked up and down*).

The content was Duke Alba.

(*Fixing Alba darkly.*) Gladly I

Would hear that Carlos *hates* my counselors, with
Annoyance, though, that he *despises* them.

ALBA (*blanches; about to fly into a rage*).

PHILIP. No need to answer now. You have my leave
To reconcile the Prince.

ALBA. Sire!

PHILIP. Tell me, now,
Who was it warned me first of my son's treachery?
I listened then to *you* and not to *him*.
I'll risk a trial. Henceforth, Duke Alba, Carlos
Stands closer to my throne. You are dismissed.

(*The King retires to his study. Alba goes out by another door.*)

An antechamber to the Queen's apartment

Scene Four

*Don Carlos comes through the center door in conversation with a Page.⁴⁷
The Courtiers in the antechamber scatter into adjacent rooms.*

CARLOS. A letter for me? And what's this key for?
And both passed on to me so secretly?
Come here. Where did you get these things?

PAGE (*mysterious*). The lady
Gave me to understand she would be guessed
And not described.

CARLOS (*startled*). The lady?
(*He examines the Page more closely.*) Who are you?

PAGE. A page who serves Her Majesty the Queen.

CARLOS (*shocked, puts his hand over the boy's mouth*).
Now, on your life! Stop there! I know enough.

(He tears off the seal and goes to the far end of the hall to read the letter. Duke Alba enters meanwhile, goes past him unnoticed and into the Queen's apartment. Carlos begins to tremble, reddens, then blanches. When he has finished the letter, he stares at it, speechless. Finally, he turns to the Page.)

She gave you this herself?

PAGE. With her own hands.

CARLOS. She gave you this herself? Oh, do not mock me!

I've never seen a thing that's in her hand.

I have to believe you if you swear to it.

If you were lying, tell me freely now.

Don't make a mockery of me.

PAGE. Of you?

CARLOS *(looks again at the letter, then examines the Page narrowly. He takes a turn through the hall).*

1100 You still have parents? Yes? Your father serves
The King and is a loyal Spanish subject?

PAGE. He fell at Saint Quentin, a colonel in
The Duke of Savoy's cavalry.⁴⁸ He was
By name Alonzo Count of Henarez.

CARLOS *(taking him by the hand and staring into his face).*
The King gave you this letter?

PAGE *(hurt).* Gracious Prince,
Have I deserved this mistrust?

CARLOS *(reading the letter).* "This key opens
The rearward doors in the pavilion of
The Queen. The farthest of them all gives sideways
On a retreat no listener can creep up on.
1110 Here love can confess freely and aloud what
It long confided to mere gestures only.
Timidity will find a hearing here and
Modest endurance meet a rich reward."

(As if coming to his senses.)

I am not dreaming, I've not lost my mind. This
Is my right hand, this is my sword, and these
Are written words. It is both real and true:
I'm loved; I am; indeed I am; I'm loved!

(Beside himself, he rushes through the room, his arms held high.)

PAGE. Then come, my Prince, and let me show the way.

CARLOS. One moment; let me first come to myself.

1120

Am I not shaken by all Fortune's terrors?
Had I the pride to hope? Or trust myself
To dream? What mortal ever learned so fast
To be a god? Who was I once? Who now?
This is a different sky, another sun.
She loves me!

PAGE (*trying to lead him away*).

Prince, Prince! You forget. Not here—

CARLOS (*freezes*).

The King, my father!
(*He lets his arms fall, looks around timidly, and begins to compose himself.*)

This is dreadful. Yes,
Quite right, my friend. I thank you. I was not
Myself. Suppress it, wall up so much happiness
Inside this breast—it's dreadful. Listen, now.
(*He takes the Page by the hand and leads him aside.*)

1130

What you have seen and have not seen—you hear—
Sink like a coffin deep into your breast.
Go now. I'll find the way. Go. We cannot
Be seen here. Go.

(*The Page is about to go.*)

But wait! There's something more—

(*The Page comes back. Carlos lays a hand on his shoulder and looks him solemnly in the face.*)

You're carrying a terrible secret that,
Like powerful poison, bursts the vial that holds it.
Be careful of your looks, your gestures; your head
Never discover what your bosom harbors.
Be like a speaking tube: receive the sound
And pass it on and never hear it spoken.
You're just a boy. That's not to change now. Go on
Playing the merry child. She chose you well,
The clever author of this letter. *Here*
The King will not go searching for his vipers.

1140

PAGE. And I, my Prince, I'm going to be proud
 To know I have a secret that the King
 Does not—

CARLOS. Why, you conceited little dunce,
 Precisely *that* is what you have to fear.
 If you and I should meet in public, you
 Approach me shyly, with submission. Let
 1150 Your vanity not lead you to give signs
 Of how you stand with the Infante. No graver
 Crime, Son, can you commit than pleasing *me*.
 Whatever you pass on in future, never
 Put it in words or frame it with your lips.
 Your news is not to take the common path
 Of thought. Speak with your lashes, index finger;
 I'll listen to you with my glances. Air
 And light around us belong to Philip, the walls
 Are in his pay. What's that?

*(The door to the Queen's apartment opens and Duke Alba
 emerges.)*

Be gone! Adieu!

1160 PAGE. Don't miss the room you're looking for, my Prince! *(Exit.)*

CARLOS. The Duke! Oh, no. No, no! Well, let it be!
 I'll find a way.

Scene Five

Don Carlos. Duke Alba.

ALBA *(intercepting him)*. Two words, my Gracious Prince.

CARLOS. Quite right—it's fine—another time.

(He tries to pass.)

ALBA. The place

Is not ideal. Perhaps Your Royal Highness
 Would rather hear me in your rooms?

CARLOS. What for?

That can be done here, too. But quickly and
 In brief.

ALBA. What brings me here, in fact, is to
 Render Your Highness humble thanks for something
 Known to us both.

CARLOS. What thanks? For me? From Alba?

1170 ALBA. For as you left the Monarch's presence, I had
 Word to depart for Brussels.

CARLOS. Brussels! Well!

ALBA. To whom, my Prince, ought I ascribe it other
 Than to your gracious application to
 His Royal Majesty, the King?

CARLOS. Mine? No!

 Not mine at all. No, truly, not to mine.

 You're leaving? Go with God!

ALBA. And nothing more?
 That comes as a surprise. Your Highness would have
 No further charge to lay on me for Flanders?

CARLOS. What further? Where?

1180 ALBA. Not long ago it seemed
 The destiny of all these lands required
 Don Carlos' personal presence.

CARLOS. How was that?

 Oh, yes. Yes, right. But that was then. And now

 It's also right, quite right—in fact, it's better—

ALBA. I hear this with astonishment.

CARLOS (*without irony*). You are a
 Great general. Who does not know this? Envy
 Of you is proof. And I? I'm but a young man.
 That's what the King thought, too. And he is right,
 Quite right. I see that now and am content.
 Enough of this. I wish you a safe journey.

1190 Just now, I cannot, as you see— I'm rather
 Busy—tomorrow more—or when you like—or
 When you come back again from Brussels—

ALBA. What?

CARLOS (*after a silence, when he sees that the Duke is lingering*).
 The season favors you. Your journey goes
 Over Milan, Lorraine, and Burgundy,

And Germany, yes, Germany; it was
 In Germany! They know you there!⁴⁹ It's April;
 May, June; then in July, quite right, or at
 The latest early August, you'll reach Brussels.
 No doubt, we'll hear quite soon about your victories.
 1200 You'll know to make yourself deserving of
 Our gracious confidence.

ALBA (*with meaning*). And do so with full
 And pungent knowledge of my nullity?⁵⁰
 CARLOS (*after a silence, with poise and dignity*).
 You feel offended, Duke, and you are right. It
 Was less than sparing on my part, I must
 Confess, to use against you weapons you
 Are little able to reply to.

ALBA. Little
 Able?

CARLOS (*offering his hand with a smile*).
 A pity that I have no time to
 Fight out this worthy match with Alba now.
 Another time—

ALBA. Prince, we are wrong about
 1210 Each other in two ways. You, for example,
 Would see yourself at twenty years from now,
 I, you exactly that much earlier.

CARLOS. And?

ALBA. And it occurs to me to ask: How many
 Nights passed beside his lovely Portuguese,
 Your mother, had the Monarch given to
 Gain for his Crown an arm like *this* one?
 It will not have been lost on him how much
 More easily one propagates a monarch
 Than monarchies, how much more quickly one
 1220 Supplies a world with kings than kings with worlds.

CARLOS. Most true, Duke Alba. Yet?

ALBA. And how much blood,
 Blood of *your* people, had to flow before
 Two drops could make of *you* a king.

CARLOS. Most true,
 By God! In two words, all pride of desert
 Has earned a right to say to pride of fortune.
 The application now, Duke Alba?

ALBA. Woe
 Betide the cradled child called Majesty that
 Would mock its nurse! How sweetly one can sleep
 Among the cushions of *our* victories! On
 1230 The Crown pearls glimmer only, not the battle
 Wounds by which it was won. This sword inscribed
 The laws of Spain on foreign nations, it
 Shone in the vanguard of the Crucified,
 Our Lord, turned over bloody furrows for the
 Seed corn of Faith throughout this hemisphere.
 God ruled in Heaven, Alba ruled on Earth.

CARLOS. God or the Devil, it's all one. You were
 His right arm. That is known to me. And now
 No more of this, I bid you. I'll protect
 1240 Myself from certain memories. I'll honor
 My father's choice. My father needs an Alba;
That he needs one is nothing that I envy.
 You are a great man. That may be. I rather
 Believe it. I fear, however, you have come
 Too early by at least a thousand years.
 For I would think an Alba were the man to
 Appear among us at the End of Days,
 Then when iniquity had eaten up
 God's patience, the rich harvest of misdeeds
 1250 Stood in full ear, required a reaper like
 None other. Then *you'd* be in your true place.
 Oh, God, my paradise! My Flanders! But
 I should not think of that, not speak of that.
 They say you're carrying advance supplies of
 Death warrants signed already? That is prudent.
 No need to fear chicanery. O, Father,

How badly I have understood you! I thought
 You hard denying me where Albas excel?
 It was your way to do me honor.

1260 ALBA. Prince,
 This word would merit—
 CARLOS (*angry*). What?
 ALBA. But *there* the King's son
 Is safe.
 CARLOS (*reaching for his sword*).
 That's fighting words! Draw, Duke!
 ALBA (*cold*). On you?
 CARLOS (*bearing down on him*).
 Draw, or I'll run you through.
 ALBA (*drawing*). If it must be—

(*They fence.*)

Scene Six

The Queen. Don Carlos. Duke Alba.

QUEEN (*emerging from her rooms, alarmed*).
 Bare swords here!
 (*To the Prince, unwilling and commanding.*)
 Carlos!
 CARLOS (*transfixed by the sight of the Queen, lets his arm sink, stands motionless, stupefied, then rushes to the Duke and kisses him*).
 Peace, Duke! We'll forgive all!
 (*He throws himself at the Queen's feet, stands up, and plunges out.*)
 ALBA (*staring after him, astonished*).
 What in God's name! Is that not strange!
 QUEEN (*stands for a moment, anxious and uncertain, then goes slowly toward her door; on the threshold, she turns*).
 Duke Alba!

(*The Duke follows her through the door.*)

Princess Eboli's boudoir

Scene Seven

*The Princess, beautifully and simply dressed, in keeping with her fancy,
playing a lute and singing. Then the Queen's Page.*

PRINCESS (*jumping up*).

He's coming!

PAGE (*hurried*). You're alone? I thought I'd find

Him here already. He must come this minute.

PRINCESS. Must he? He *wants* to then. It's all decided —

PAGE. He's coming right behind me. Gracious Princess,

How you are loved! As loved as you, so loved,

1270 No one can be or ever could have been.

I saw a scene!

PRINCESS (*pulling him toward her, impatient*).

Quick! Tell me all about it!

You spoke with him? Come, tell me! What he said!

And what he did! And what his exact words were!

He seemed embarrassed? He seemed startled? Guessed

The one who'd sent the key to him? Quick, say!

Or didn't guess? Or guessed the wrong one? Well?

Nothing? You tell me nothing? Shame on you!

You've never been so wooden until now.

PAGE. How can I get a word in, Gracious Lady?

1280 I handed him the key and note in the

Queen's antechamber. I let slip a lady'd

Sent me; he started and he stared at me.

PRINCESS. He started? Excellent! Bravo! What else?

PAGE. I wanted to say more, but he turned pale

And snatched the letter from my hand, looked at

Me threateningly and said that he knew all.

He read the letter with amazement and

Began to tremble.

PRINCESS. Said that he knew all?

Said he knew all? That's what he said?

- PAGE. And asked
1290 Three times, four, if you'd—you, yourself—had given
Me the—
PRINCESS. I'd given you the letter? Named me?
PAGE. Named? No. No name. He said that lurking spies
Might hear us, tell the King.
PRINCESS (*caught off-guard*). *That's* what he said?
PAGE. He said the King was greatly interested,
Immensely, really hugely interested
In finding out about this letter.
PRINCESS. Said
The King— Did you hear right? He said the King?
That was exactly what he said?
PAGE. Oh, yes.
He said this was a dangerous secret, warned
1300 Me to be on my guard in word and gesture,
So that the King would not become suspicious.
PRINCESS (*having reflected, astonished*).
It all makes sense. It can't be otherwise. He
Must know about it.⁵¹ Unimaginable!
Who would have told him? Who? Who sees so sharp,
So deep—who but the falcon eye of love?
What else? Then what? He read the note?
PAGE. The note,
He said, contained a happiness that made
Him tremble. Never had he dared to dream such.
But then the Duke came in. We had to—
PRINCESS (*annoyed*). What
1310 In all the world was the Duke doing there?
Where is he, though? What's keeping him? Why's he
Not come? You see! It's tales he's telling you!
How happy he'd have been in just the time
It took to tell me that he wanted to be!
PAGE. The Duke, I fear—
PRINCESS. The Duke again? What business
Has *he* here? What's this hero have to do



Princess Eboli. Steel engraving by Conrad Geyer from a drawing by Arthur von Ramberg. Friedrich Pecht, *Schiller-Galerie* (Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schiller-Galerie_komplett_Bild_17.jpg

1320 With my untold desires? Why, he could walk
 Away! Send *him* away! Who can't one? Truly,
 This Prince of yours—he understands the ways
 Of love as badly as he understands
 The ways of ladies' hearts. He doesn't know
 How minutes count— Still! Footsteps. It's the Prince!

(The Page slips out.)

Yes, go. Now where's my lute? He's to surprise me.
 My song will be a signal for him.

Scene Eight

The Princess. Then Don Carlos.

The Princess has thrown herself on an ottoman and is playing.

CARLOS *(bursts in. He recognizes the Princess and stands thunderstruck).*

God!

Where am I?

PRINCESS *(lets her lute drop and rises to meet him).*

Why, Prince Carlos? Yes. In truth!

CARLOS. What is this? Where am I? Is this a trick?

I've missed the room.

PRINCESS. My! How well Carlos knows
 To find where ladies are alone.

CARLOS. Princess—

1330 Forgive me, Princess— I just found—I found
 The entry open.

PRINCESS. How can that be? I

Thought I myself had closed it and locked up.

CARLOS. You only thought that. Yes. You thought. For sure,
 You're wrong. You wanted to lock up. Yes, quite.
 That I admit. I believe it, too. But locked up?
 No. Not locked up. No, truly not. I hear

A lute—yes, someone playing on a lute. Was
It not a lute? (*Looking around uncertainly.*)

Right! There's one over there—
And lute—God knows—lute I love madly. I
Am all ears, I forget myself entirely,
1340 Burst in the room to look the charming artist
Who touched me so, enthralled me, in the eye.

PRINCESS. Now *there's* a charming curiosity.
You've stilled it rather quickly, I would say.⁵²
(*After a silence, with meaning.*)
Oh, I must cherish one so modest as
To spare a woman shame by snaring himself
In such a web of lies.

CARLOS (*sincerely*). Princess, I feel
Myself that I am only making worse
Where I would make amends. Release me from
A role that I'm so unfit to go on with.
1350 You only wanted refuge from the world.
Unheard, and known by none, you wanted to
Live for the silent wishes of your heart.
Then I, son of misfortune, show up—and
This lovely dream's disturbed. For that, a quick
Departure should remove me from this—
(*He is about to go.*)

PRINCESS (*surprised and hurt, then quickly composed*).
Prince—
Oh, that was naughty.

CARLOS. Princess, I know well
What *that* glance means in this boudoir. I honor
This chaste embarrassment. Woe to the man whom
A lady's blush encourages! I am
1360 Confounded to see women tremble at me.

PRINCESS. It's possible? An unexampled conscience
In a young man and king's son! Well, my Prince,
Now you must truly stay. Myself, I bid you.
At such restraint, a girl's cured of her fears.
And did you know, your coming in so sudden
Startled me out of my best aria?

(She leads him to a sofa and picks up her lute again.)

The aria I'll just have to play again.

Your price is that you'll have to hear me.

CARLOS *(seats himself with some constraint beside the Princess).*

At

A price as favorable as my offense.

1370 Truly, the story was so fine, so welcome,

I'd like to hear it sung a—third—time.

PRINCESS. What!

You heard it all? Atrocious, Prince! It was,

I even believe, a tale of love?

CARLOS. If I'm

Not wrong, of happy love. A lovely text

And in this lovely mouth. More lovely than true,

I have to fear.

PRINCESS. Not true? You have your doubts?

CARLOS *(grave)*. I rather doubt that Carlos and the Princess

Can both agree where love's the subject.

(The Princess starts; he notices and offers a gallantry.)

Who, then,

Would believe of roses in these cheeks that passion

1380 Had ever writhed within this breast? A Princess

Of Eboli should run the risk of sighing

In vain, without a hearing? Love is known

To him alone who's loved without a hope.

PRINCESS *(having recovered her gaiety)*.

Oh, quiet! That sounds dreadful. And, indeed,

This fate appears to torment *you* above

All others, and today of all days.

(Taking him by the hand, coaxing.) No,

You are not happy, Prince. You're suffering. God knows,

You're suffering positively. Can this be?

Why suffer, Prince, called as you are to enjoy

1390 The world? With every gift of spendthrift Nature

And every claim to worldly pleasures? *You*,

A great king's son and *more*, far more than that,

Decked out already in the royal cradle

With gifts that eclipse even royal rank?
 You who have captured judges sitting in the
 Strict court of women, who alone decide
 On men, their world, and reputation, and,
 Having decided, brook no contradiction?
 Who, where he only *notices*, has conquered;
 1400 Enflames where he stays cold; where he'd glow warm
 Must deal in paradises and dispense
 The gods' own happiness; the man whom Nature
 Has graced with the same gifts to make the fortunes
 Of thousands and of *few—himself* should be
 Unhappy? Heaven, you who gave him all things,
 All, why deny him eyes with which to see
 His conquests?

CARLOS (*sunk in deep distraction this long time, rouses himself, startled, at the silence*). Oh, most excellent, superb,
 Princess! Do sing this passage once more.

PRINCESS (*astonished*). Carlos,
 Where were you all this time?

CARLOS (*leaping up*). Quite right, by God!
 1410 It's good that you remind me. I must go.
 Go right now.

PRINCESS (*holding him back*). Where to?

CARLOS (*terribly anxious*). Out! To open air.
 It seems the world is bursting into flames
 Behind me. Let me go!

PRINCESS (*holding him back forcibly*).
 What's wrong? Why act
 This way, so strange, so alien?

(*Carlos stands still and reflects; she seizes the moment and draws him to her on the sofa.*)

You need rest,
 Dear Karl. Your blood's in uproar. Sit down here
 Beside me. No more gloomy fever dreams!
 If you ask yourself honestly, does your
 Head know what's weighing on your heart? And if
 It knows, is none of all the knights at Court,

- 1420 Of all the ladies, *not* a single one
 Worthy to heal—I mean, to understand—
 You? None?
- CARLOS (*unthinking*). Perhaps the Princess Eboli?
- PRINCESS (*quickly, delighted*).
 In truth?
- CARLOS. Just give me a petition, a
 Proposal for my father. They say you
 Have influence.
- PRINCESS. Who says? (Ha! So *this* suspicion
 Kept you from speaking!)
- CARLOS. Probably you’ve heard
 Already. I am taken with the notion
 Of going to Brabant—to earn my spurs.
 My father is against it. My good father’s
 1430 Afraid, if I commanded armies—that
 Could harm my singing.
- PRINCESS. Carlos! You are shamming.
 Admit it now! You used this snaky writhing
 To try to get away from me. You look
 Here, you dissembler! Eye to eye! Would one
 Who dreams of knightly deeds stoop so low as to
 Steal ribbons ladies lost and—you’ll forgive me—
 (*With a fingertip she flicks away his ruff and pulls out a ribbon hidden
 there.*)
 And safeguard them so precious? Would he?
- CARLOS (*stepping back, offended*).
 No, Princess. This now goes too far. I feel
 Betrayed. You can’t be fooled. You’ve made a pact
 1440 With spirits and with demons.
- PRINCESS. That’s a surprise?
 What shall we bet, Prince? Shall I call up tales to
 Your heart, tales— You just try me. Question me.
 If a mere play of mood, a broken sound
 Breathed out, a smile wiped out by a quick frown,
 If moments, gestures unremarked by you
 Have not escaped me, you judge if I knew you
 In just the way you wanted to be known.

CARLOS. That's daring much. Your bet is good. You promise
 Discoveries on my own heart that I've
 1450 Not even known about.

PRINCESS (*a bit hurt; in earnest*). Not ever, Prince?
 Oh, think again. And look about you. This
 Is not one of the galleries of the Queen where
 One possibly admired that bit of masquerade.
 You start? You turn bright red?⁵³ Oh, who indeed
 Would be so bent on spying and so idle,
 So bold as to observe Don Carlos when
 He believes that he's not seen or heard? Who saw
 How he forsook his lady on the dance floor—
 The Queen at the Court ball—and forced his way
 1460 Into the nearest couple to extend
 His hand to Princess Eboli? A faux pas
 Not lost, Prince, on the Monarch, who'd come in
 That very moment!

CARLOS (*smiling ironically*). Even *him*? Yes, Princess,
 For *him* precisely this was not intended.⁵⁴

PRINCESS. As little as that scene in chapel that
 Prince Carlos has forgotten. You were kneeling
 Before the Holy Virgin, lost in prayer,
 When certain ladies' skirts—no fault of yours—
 Rustled behind you. Whereupon Don Philip's
 1470 Heroic son began to tremble like
 A heretic before the Holy Office.⁵⁵
 All prayer died on his lips and, overcome
 By passion—such a touching comedy—
 You seize the hand of Virgin Mary, rain
 Down fiery kisses on cold marble.

CARLOS. You do

Me an injustice, Princess. That was worship.

PRINCESS. That's something else, then. And it was just fear of
 Losing when Carlos, playing with the Queen
 And me, adroitly stole this glove of mine

(*Carlos leaps up, astonished.*)

1480 And played it promptly like a card?

CARLOS. Oh, God!

Oh, God! Oh, God! What have I done?

PRINCESS. Not what you'd

Recant, I hope. A fine surprise to find

A little note you'd hidden in this glove, the

Most touching short romance, Prince—

CARLOS (*breaking in*). Poetry,

Pure poetry! My musings blow such bubbles.

Soap bubbles that all burst as soon as they are

Blown. Trifles! We'll pass over them in silence.

PRINCESS (*astonished, moves away and observes him from a distance*).

I am exhausted. All my probes glance off

This snaky odd one.

(*She falls silent for a moment.*)

1490 What if it were no more
Than manly pride costumed as simpleminded
Just to amuse itself the better—what if?

(*She approaches the Prince and observes him, undecided.*)

Prince, you tell me; I stand before a locked

Door; all my keys have failed me.

CARLOS. So do I.

PRINCESS (*walks away quickly, then walks up and down, apparently considering something important; after a pause, serious and solemn*).

All right. I'll do it—force myself to speak.

I choose you as my judge. You're honorable:

A man, a prince, a knight. I turn to you.

You'll rescue me; if I'm beyond rescue,

Quite lost, you'll weep for me in sympathy.

(*The Prince moves closer, sympathetic and expectant.*)

1500 A shameless favorite of the Monarch is
Suing for me. Ruy Gomez, Count of Silva.

The King's inclined; they've reached agreement; I'm

As good as sold.

CARLOS (*much affected*). You're sold? And sold again,

Again by him, famed Merchant of the South?

PRINCESS. Wait, let me tell you all. It's not enough

That I am sacrificed to politics;

My chastity they're after, too. Here, read this.

It'll tear the mask from that great saint.

(*Carlos takes the sheet but does not read it; he hangs on her words.*)

Where should

I find protection, Prince? Till now my pride saved

My virtue, then—

CARLOS. You fell? You fell? Oh, no!

PRINCESS (*proud and noble*).

1510 To *whom*? What sophistry! How small of these
Great minds to think that woman's favor, prize
Of love, is bought and sold like common wares!
This is the one thing on this earth that can be
Acquired but by itself alone. Love is
The price of love. This is the priceless diamond
That I'll *bestow* or, unenjoyed, I'll *bury*
Forever, like that merchant: unimpressed
By the Rialto's gold, disparaging
All kings, he gave his pearl back to the sea,
1520 Too proud to sell it *under* its true value.

CARLOS. (God is my witness! Is this woman fine!)

PRINCESS. Just call it notions, vanity—who cares!

I'll not *divide* my favors. To the man,
The *one* whom I have chosen, I'll give all in
Return for all. I give but once, forever.
My love will make one sole man happy, but this
One like a god. The harmony of souls,
A kiss, the feast of pleasure at the twilight
Hour, beauty's high and heavenly magic—these
1530 Are all the sister colors of *one* beam,
The petals of *one* flower. I'd madly give
Away one petal wrested from its chalice?
I'd mutilate a woman's majesty,
The Godhead's greatest single masterpiece,
To make a wastrel's evening hours sweeter?

CARLOS. (Unbelievable! Madrid had such a girl
As this and I find out just now?)

PRINCESS. I'd long
 Have left this Court, have left the world, had buried
 Myself in sacred walls, but one bond binds
 1540 Me to this world, a fantasy perhaps,
 But one I cherish. This: I love and I—
 Am not loved in return.

CARLOS (*going to her, ardently*). You are, you are!
 I swear by God in heaven, you are, you
 Are, beyond words.

PRINCESS. It's you who swear it? You?
 That was my guardian angel's voice! If you
 Would swear it, Karl, why then I believe it, then
 I am.

CARLOS (*taking her into his arms, full of tenderness*).
 You sweetest girl, so full of soul!
 Adorable creation! I'm all ears,
 All eyes, and all enchantment, admiration.
 1550 Who could have seen you, who on earth, and claim
 He's never loved? But here at Philip's Court—
 What are you doing here, you angel? Here
 Among priests and their kind? These are no skies
 For flowers such as you. They want to break them?
 They want to, yes, I believe it. As I live, no!
 I'll put my arm around you, take you in
 My arms across a hell that's full of devils!
 Yes, let me be your angel.

PRINCESS (*with an open look of love*). Carlos! Oh!
 How little I have known you! How your heart
 1560 Rewards the labor spent to understand it!
 (*She takes his hand; about to kiss it.*)

CARLOS (*withdrawing his hand*).

Princess, where are you now?

PRINCESS (*fine and graceful, gazing into his hand*).
 How lovely is
 This hand! How rich! This hand, Prince, has two gifts
 To give: a diadem and Carlos' heart.
 And both to give *one* mortal? Only *one*?

A grand and godlike gift! For *one* perhaps
 Too great! How would it be, should you decide to
 Divide it? Queens love badly. Women who
 Can love well have no feeling for a crown.
 Prince, better to divide, to do so now, right
 Now. Or have you already? Have you really?
 So much the better! Do I know her?

1570

CARLOS. You shall.

To you, to you, I'll tell. To innocence, to
 A pure, undesecrated nature I'll
 Reveal it. You're the first here at this Court,
 The only worthy one to understand
 My soul. It's true. I love.

PRINCESS. You naughty boy!
 Confession is so hard for you? I had to
 Make myself pitiable for you to find
 Me lovable?

CARLOS (*starts*). What's this?

PRINCESS. To toy with me

1580

That way! That was not handsome, Prince. And to
 Deny you had the key—

CARLOS. The key!

(*A baffled silence.*)

The key!

So that was it. The key! The— Oh, my God!

(*His knees give way. He supports himself on a chair and covers his face.*)

(*Another silence.*)

PRINCESS (*with a loud cry, falls*).

Atrocious! What *have* I done?

CARLOS (*standing straight again; in great pain*).

To fall so deep

From all my dreams! It's awful.

PRINCESS (*her face against a cushion*). Must I hear this?

CARLOS (*kneeling before her*).

It's not my doing, Princess. Passion only—

A terrible misunderstanding— God!

It's not my doing.

PRINCESS (*pushing him away*). Out! Out of my sight!

For God's sake—

CARLOS. Never! I should leave you in such

A state?

PRINCESS (*pushing him away with force*).

For mercy, pity, out of my

1590 Sight! Do you want to murder me? I hate

The sight of you!

(*Carlos is about to go.*)

My letter and my key.

And where's the other letter?

CARLOS. Other letter?

What other letter?

PRINCESS. From the King.

CARLOS (*stunned*). From *who*?

PRINCESS. The one that I just gave you.

CARLOS. From the King?

Who to? To you?

PRINCESS. Dear God! What have I said!¹⁵⁶

The letter! I must have the letter!

CARLOS. Letters

To you, and from the King?

PRINCESS. The letter! By all

That's holy!

CARLOS. That would unmask someone? This one?

PRINCESS. I'm lost! I'm dead! Just give it me.

CARLOS. This letter—

PRINCESS (*wringing her hands*).

1600 What have I done? What have I done?

CARLOS. This letter

Came from the King? That, Princess, changes every-

Thing. *That's*

(*holding the letter triumphantly aloft*)

a priceless, weighty, costly letter

That all the crowns of Philip are too light,
 Too trivial to redeem. *This letter I*
 Shall keep. (*He goes off.*)

PRINCESS (*trying to block his way*).

Dear God in heaven! I am lost!

Scene Nine

The Princess alone

*She stands still stunned, beside herself; when he has left, she hurries
 after, to call him back.*

PRINCESS. Prince, one more word! Prince, hear me! He is gone!

That, too, now. He despises me. And here
 I am, in terrible solitude, cast off,
 Rejected—

(*She sinks into a chair. Pause.*)

No! I'm only pushed aside, pushed

1610

Aside; I have a rival. He loves someone.
 No doubt at all. He said as much himself.
 But *who's* the lucky one? This much is clear:
 He loves what he ought not. He fears discovery.
 He hides his passion from the King. But why
 From him, who'd only wish it? Or perhaps
 It's not his father whom he fears in Father?
 When he learned of his father's amorous aims, he
 Was overjoyed, beside himself. How came his
 Strict virtue to fall silent here? Precisely
 Here? What does *he* gain if the King betrays—

1620

(*She stops suddenly, surprised by a thought. She quickly pulls
 the ribbon Carlos has given her from her bodice, examines it,
 and recognizes it.*)

Why, what a fool I've been! Where were my wits? Now
 I see. Why, they loved one another long
 Before the King chose her. The Prince came only

When she was there. Then only. So *she* was meant—
 And I was so sure I was loved!⁵⁷ What a
 Deceit! And I've betrayed my weakness to her.

(*Silence.*)

Am I to believe that he loves without hope?
 That can't be true. A hopeless love cannot
 Hold out in such a contest. To feast where
 1630 The world's most brilliant monarch, unheard, must
 Go hungry — Hopeless love's not equal to
 That quest. How fiery his kiss was! How tender
 That clasp against his heart! That sample was
 Almost too daring for romantic⁵⁸ trueness
 That's to go unrequited. He takes the key
 He believes the Queen has sent him—really believes
 In such a giant step of love; he comes,
 Comes truly, comes—thinks Philip's wife would fix
 On such a deed — How could he, if he does
 1640 Not have real proofs that bolster his resolve?
 It's clear as day. This love is heard. She loves him!
 Heaven and earth! This saintly one has feelings!
 Is she not sly! Before this paragon of
 Virtue, myself, I trembled. Like a higher
 Being she towered over me. Her brilliance
 Eclipsed me. I begrudged her beauty all
 That calm, that freedom from all mortal passion.
 And all this calm was no more than apparent?
 She'd want to feast at both those tables? Would
 1650 Have made a great display of all that virtue
 And dared to nibble secretly crime's sweetmeats?
 Could get away with that? And unavenged?
 Since there was no avenger? No, by God!
 I worshipped her. And this demands revenge!
 The King should know of this deceit — The King?
 (*She stops to think.*)
 Yes, right—that is one way to reach his ear.⁵⁹ (*She goes off.*)

A room in the Royal Palace

Scene Ten

Duke Alba. Father Domingo.

DOMINGO. What did you want to tell me?

ALBA. Of important

Discoveries I've just made. Some explanation—

DOMINGO. Discoveries? What?

ALBA. At noon today I meet

1660 Prince Carlos in the Queen's reception room. There
I am insulted. We exchange words and
Our quarrel becomes noisy; we draw our swords.
The Queen, at this disturbance, opens her door
And puts herself between us, throws the Prince
A look of pure despotic intimacy—
A single look. He drops his arm, flies to
Embrace me—I still feel his kiss—and he
Is gone.

DOMINGO (*after a silence*).

I find that most suspicious. Duke, you
Remind me— Similar thoughts have long been sprouting
1670 In my mind. I've avoided them, said nothing.
There're double-edged swords and unreliable friends.
I fear them. To distinguish men is hard,
And harder still is it to plumb men's depths.
An ill-considered word will turn on you.
I buried my secret—till time bring it to light.
There're certain services one does not render
Kings; risky throws that, if they miss their target,
Spring back upon the thrower. What I say
I'd swear upon the Host. Eye-witness, though, a
1680 Word overheard, a scrap of paper: all fall
Heavier into the scale than sharpest instincts.
Our luck to stand on Spanish ground!

ALBA. And why?

DOMINGO. At any other court a passion can
 Forget itself. It's cautioned here by frightening
 Laws. Spanish queens have trouble wandering off
 The straight and narrow, true enough—but our
 Bad luck is, it is just exactly here
 That, with best luck, we'd take them by surprise.

1690 ALBA. There's more yet. Carlos had an audience with
 The King today. It lasted a full hour.
 He wanted the command of the Low Countries.
 He pleaded loud and long. I heard it from
 The private study. When I met him at
 The door his eyes were red with weeping. Then,
 At midday, I find him triumphant, charmed
 The King has seen fit to give me his preference.
 He thanks him. All is changed, he says, and better.
 He never could dissemble. How to rhyme this?
 The Prince is jubilant to be passed over,
 1700 And I receive a royal favor with
 A full display of rage! What should I think?
 Why, this new rank of mine has every mark
 Of banishment.

DOMINGO. So it has come to this?
 An instant wrecks what we've been building now
 For years? And you so calm and so composed?
 Do you know him, this youngster? Have you thought
 Of what awaits us when he's king? The Prince—
 I'm not his enemy. I've other cares,
 Cares for the Throne, for God and Church. The Prince—
 1710 I know him, I see through his soul—is nursing
 A dreadful plan, a madness: he as regent
 Plans to renounce our sacred faith—renounce it!
 His heart is all alight for a new⁶⁰ virtue
 A virtue, proud, assured, and self-sufficient,
 That nothing asks of any faith. He *thinks*.
 He's full of fire from a chimera, Duke:
 He honors human beings. That as king?

ALBA. Oh,

Pooh! It could also be just youthful pride
That longs to have a role. Has he a choice?

1720 This will all pass when it's his turn to rule.

DOMINGO. I have my doubts. He's proud of all his freedom,

Little accustomed to compulsion, which
Is how one buys a right to use compulsion.
This overbearing turn of mind will break through
The lines of all our statecraft. This as king?
I tried without success to drain his willful
Spirit on the keen pleasures of our times. He
Withstood the test. This mind in such a body
Is terrible—and Philip turning sixty!

1730 ALBA. You're looking far into the future.

DOMINGO. He and

The Queen agree. This innovator's venom
Seeps, still concealed, into both breasts. Soon enough,
If it gains ground, it'll seize the Throne.⁶¹ Well do
I know these Valois. We must fear this silent
Woman's revenge if Philip shows a weakness.
Luck's on our side. Let us anticipate.
We'll catch the two of them in *one* net. Let's give
The King a signal. Proven or unproven,
We've gained much if he hesitates. *We* have
No doubt, and when one is convinced, one can
Convince. This cannot fail. And we'll discover
More, knowing that we must discover.

1740

ALBA. The most

Important question last: Who undertakes
To tell the King?

DOMINGO. Not you, not I. Learn now
What I've long worked in secret. To complete
Our league we need a third, essential person.
The King's in love with Princess Eboli.
I feed this passion, fodder for my wishes.
He's made me his ambassador. I'll dress

1750 Her for our plans. In this young woman, if
 My scheme succeeds, an ally blossoms for
 Us and a queen. She's summoned me herself
 To meet her here. I have great hopes of this.
 Those lilies of Valois⁶²—a little Spaniard
 Perhaps will break them in a single midnight.
 ALBA. Amazing! I can hardly believe what I
 Have heard. This blow will do it. I admire you,
 Dominican. We've won!
 DOMINGO. Still! Who is coming?
 She's here. In person.
 ALBA. I'm in the next room—
 1760 If you should—
 DOMINGO. Excellent! I'll call you.

(Duke Alba goes off.)

Scene Eleven

The Princess. Domingo.

DOMINGO. At your
 Service, my Gracious Princess.
 PRINCESS *(with curiosity, following the departing Duke with her eyes).*
 Are we not
 Alone? You've brought a witness?
 DOMINGO. How so?
 PRINCESS. Who is
 It has just left you?
 DOMINGO. It's Duke Alba, Princess,
 Who asks leave also to be heard.
 PRINCESS. Duke Alba?
 What's *he* want? What *can* he want? You'd know?⁶³
 DOMINGO. I? Without
 Knowing what weighty change of fortune secures
 For me at last the privilege of approaching

My gracious Princess Eboli once more?

(Pause, in which he expects her answer.)

Perhaps at last a circumstance presents

1770

Itself, one favorable to our Monarch's wishes?

If I hoped rightly that mature reflection

Would reconcile you to an offer refused

Out of caprice? I am all expectation—

PRINCESS. You brought the King my recent answer?

DOMINGO. I

Refrained from wounding him so fatally. You've

Yet time, my Gracious Princess, to relent.

PRINCESS. Inform the King that I expect him.

DOMINGO. I

May take your words for truth, my lovely Princess?

PRINCESS. Most surely not for jest? You frighten me.

1780

What have I done that even *you* blanch?

DOMINGO. The

Surprise, Princess. Who'd grasp—

PRINCESS. Your Reverence should

Not grasp. I would not have you grasp it. It's

Enough for you that it is so. Do spare

Yourself the trouble puzzling out exactly

Whose eloquence to thank for this departure.

Be reassured: *You* have no part in this sin,

And just as little does the Church; though you've

Proved me that there'd be cases where the Church

Knew, even she, to use the *bodies* of her

1790

Young daughters for her higher purposes.

No, not the Church. Such pious grounds, your Reverence,

Escape me.

DOMINGO. I retract them gladly when

They prove superfluous.

PRINCESS. Entreat the Monarch

In my behalf not to mistake me here.

What I once was I am yet. Circumstances

Merely have changed. When I repulsed his offer,

Insulted, I yet believed him *happy* in

- Possession of the best of Queens, thought her
 A faithful consort worth my sacrifice.
 1800 I believed that *then*; now I know better.
- DOMINGO. Princess,
 Say more, say more. I'm listening. You and I,
 We understand each other.
- PRINCESS. Enough that she's
 Been caught. For I'll spare her no longer. Now
 The thief's been caught. The King, all Spain, and I—
 We've been deceived. She loves. I know full well
 She loves. I've proofs to make her tremble. The King's
 Deceived. Let him not be so, unavenged.
 Her mask of highest superhuman, saintly
 Renunciation I shall tear away
 1810 And show the world the face of sin. It costs me
 A monstrous price but—here's my triumph—*her*
 One greater yet.
- DOMINGO. The time is ripe. Permit me
 To call the Duke. (*He goes out.*)
- PRINCESS (*astonished*). What is this?

Scene Twelve

The Princess. Duke Alba. Domingo.

- DOMINGO (*leading in the Duke*). Our great news,
 Duke Alba, comes a little late. The Princess
 Reveals to us a secret that she was
 Supposed to learn from us.
- ALBA. My presence then will
 Surprise her that much less. *My* eyes are worthless.
 Discoveries such as this require a woman's.
- PRINCESS. Discoveries that you speak of—
- DOMINGO. We would know,
 1820 Most Gracious Princess, a better place and better
 Hour to—

PRINCESS. That, too! Then I'll expect you noon
 Tomorrow. I have reason to withhold
 My secret from the King no longer.

ALBA. That's
 What brings *me* here. The King must know this promptly,
 Princess, know it through you. Who should he believe
 If not the watchful intimate of his wife?

DOMINGO. Who more than you, who, wishing to, shall have full
 Dominion over him?

ALBA. I am the Prince's
 Declared foe.

DOMINGO. That's assumed of me as well.
 The Princess Eboli is free. Where *we* must
 Keep silent, duty says that you must speak. If
 That works, we have the King. *We'll* do the rest.

ALBA. But it must happen soon. At any moment
 I can be ordered to march out—

DOMINGO (*after considering; to the Princess*).
 Can letters

Perhaps be found? From the Infante? That'd have
 Effect. I believe you sleep in her same room?

PRINCESS. Right next to hers. Why ask?

DOMINGO. Someone who's good
 With locks! You've noticed where she keeps the key to
 Her casket?

PRINCESS (*reflecting*). That could work. The key—it could
 Be found, I think.

DOMINGO. For letters there are bearers.
 The Queen has a large retinue. If one
 Got on the track— Gold would go far—

ALBA. Who's seen
 If the Infante has intimates?

DOMINGO. None. In all
 Madrid, not one.

ALBA. Now, that is strange.

DOMINGO. Trust me. He
 Despises the whole Court. I have my proofs.

ALBA. Can that be right? It seems to me I saw
 Him standing with a page of hers. I had
 Just left the Queen. The two spoke secretly—

PRINCESS (*breaking in*).

Oh, no. That can't be right. That's something else.

DOMINGO.

Can

1850

We know that? No. It sounds suspicious. (*To the Duke.*) Did
 You recognize the page?

PRINCESS.

Tom-foolery!

What else can it have been? Enough; I know
 All that. We'll meet again before I see
 The King. Meanwhile, much will emerge.

DOMINGO (*taking her aside*).

The Monarch

Can hope? And may I tell him so? Quite sure?
 And what well chosen hour might bring his wishes
 To consummation? This, too?

PRINCESS.

In a few days

I shall fall ill. One separates me from
 The Queen. That's customary, as you know.
 I'll keep my room.

1860

DOMINGO.

Most excellent! And our

Great game is won. Defiance to all queens—

PRINCESS. Listen! They're calling me. The Queen wants me.

(*She hurries out.*)

Scene Thirteen

Alba. Domingo.

DOMINGO (*after a pause in which his gaze follows the Princess*).

These roses, Duke, your battles—

ALBA.

And your God—

Thus I await the bolt that'd topple us!

(*They go off.*)

In a Carthusian cloister

Scene Fourteen

Don Carlos. The Prior.

CARLOS (*entering, to the Prior*).

Already been here, you say? What a pity!

PRIOR. Three times since just this morning. It has been
An hour now since he left.

CARLOS. He'll come again,
I hope? He left no message?

PRIOR. Before noon,
He promised.

CARLOS (*looking out from the window*).

Walls set back far from the road.

1870 The towers of Madrid there in the distance.
Quite right. The Manzanares flowing past.⁶⁴
A perfect landscape. Everything is still,
Just like a secret.

PRIOR. Like the entrance to
The next life, Prince.

CARLOS. Your probity protects,
Most Reverend Father, what to me remains
Most precious and most holy. Mortal man is
Never to know *who* I have met here and
In *secret*. I have every reason to

1880 Deny him to the world. That's why I chose
This cloister. We're safe from betrayal here?

PRIOR. Trust us, my Lord. Suspicious kings won't sift
Through *graves*. And curious ears press only doors
To pleasure and to passion. Inside these walls
The world is at an end.

CARLOS. You think this caution,
This shyness shield a guilty conscience?

PRIOR. I think
Nothing at all.

CARLOS. You would be wrong to think
 So, Reverend Father. My secret hides from men
 But not from God.

PRIOR. My son, *we* little care. This
 Refuge shields crime no less than innocence.
 1890 If good or evil, just or unjust, your
 Intention must be squared with your own heart.

CARLOS (*warmly*).
 What we keep secret cannot smirch your God.
 It's His own work. To you I can disclose it.
 PRIOR. And to what end? Spare me, dear Prince! The world
 With all its chattels lies long since packed up
 For that great journey. Why in this brief space
 Before departure break the seals again?
 One needs so little for salvation. I hear
 The bell for Hora strike!⁶⁵ I'm called to prayer.

(*The Prior goes off.*)

Scene Fifteen

Don Carlos. Marquis Posa enters.

1900 CARLOS. At last, at last, at last—
 MARQUIS. And what a test for
 A friend's impatience! Twice the sun has risen,
 Twice set since all has been decided. Only
 Now do I get to hear it. Tell me, then—
 You're reconciled?
 CARLOS. Who?
 MARQUIS. Why, you with King Philip.
 With Flanders it's decided, too?
 CARLOS. The Duke's
 To go tomorrow—that's decided, yes.
 MARQUIS. This cannot be. Can't be. And all Madrid's
 Deceived? You had a private audience. The King—
 CARLOS. Remained unmoved. And we're divided now
 1910 Forever, more than ever—

- Perverse luck! Wicked chance! Deceived by my
 Rash glances, she had let herself believe *she* was
 The object of my gaze. Touched by my suffering,
 Her generous heart impulsively responds.
 1940 Respect for her, I find, imposes silence;
 She's bold to break it and lays her heart open—
 MARQUIS. You tell me this so calmly? She saw through you.
 No doubt about it: she has pierced your secret.
 She's mortally insulted. And she rules
 The King.
 CARLOS (*confident*). She's virtuous.
 MARQUIS. Because it serves
 Her love. This virtue, I regret to say,
 I know it; know how little it attains
 To that Ideal, conceived in grace, that springs from
 The fruitful seedbed of the soul and, with
 1950 No gardener's help, blooms with extravagance.
 This is an alien branch forced with shammed warmth
 In colder, rawer latitudes. Call it
 Good manners or high principle, it is
 An *innocence acquired*, rung from hot blood
 By struggle and by guile, ascribed with care
 And conscience to whatever heaven fosters
 It and makes it worthwhile. Decide yourself:
 Can she forgive it of the Queen that a man
 Went past her hard-fought virtue to consume
 1960 Himself in hopeless love for Philip's wife?
 CARLOS. Do you know Princess Eboli that well?
 MARQUIS. I've hardly seen her twice in life. I'll just say:
 I found her skilled in skirting signs of vice
 And noticed she *knew* all about her virtue.
 And then I saw the Queen. Karl, what a difference!
 In native, natural quiet glory, so with
 Heedless frivolity as with decorum's
 Hair-splitting calculations unacquainted,
 As far removed from rashness as from fear,
 1970 Firm like a heroine, she keeps the narrow

Middle way of what is *becoming*, never
 Knowing how she compels devotion, she who
 Has never dreamt that she would be applauded.
 Does my Karl recognize his Eboli
 In such a mirror now? The Princess held firm
 Because she loved. Love was expressly a
 Condition of her virtue. You refused. She
 Will fall.

CARLOS (*emphatically*). Oh, no! No!

(*After walking up and down.*) No, I tell you. If
 Roderigo only knew how it befits him
 To rob his Karl of his most god-like joy,
 His belief in human excellence!

1980

MARQUIS. Do I

Deserve that? No, my soul's beloved, that I
 Did not intend. This Eboli, though— Were she
 An angel, honorable like you, I'd kneel
 Before her, had she not found out your secret.

CARLOS. No need to fear. Does she have proofs that do
 Not shame her? Would she let revenge cost her
 Her honor?

MARQUIS. Others have redeemed a shame by
 Disgracing themselves.

CARLOS (*jumping to his feet*). No, that is too hard!
 She's proud and noble. I know her and I
 Fear nothing. You'll not scare away my hopes.
 I'll see my mother.

1990

MARQUIS. Now? And to what purpose?

CARLOS. I've no need to forbear now. I must know
 My fate. Arrange for me to see her.

MARQUIS. You'd
 Show her this letter? Would you?

CARLOS. Do not ask.
 A way to see her!

MARQUIS (*with meaning*). Did you not say you *loved* her?
 And you'd show her this letter?

(*Karl looks down in silence.*)

- 2000 Karl, I see
 Something in you— It's new, not seen till now.
 You turn away? Why turn away? It's true?
 Did I read right? Let's have a look—
(Carlos gives him the letter. He tears it up.)
- CARLOS. You're mad!
(Less irritated.)
 Truly. I counted on that letter.
- MARQUIS. That's why
 I tore it up.
(The Marquis lets his eyes rest on the Prince, who returns his gaze uncertainly. Long silence.)
- Just tell me now: What exactly
 Have desecrations of the royal bed
 To do with you—and with this love of yours?
 Was Philip dangerous to you? What can
 Connect the husband's violated duty
 With your audacious hopes? Has he offended
 There where you love? At last I see you. And
 How badly have I grasped your love till now.
- 2010 CARLOS. How, Roderick? What's your meaning?
- MARQUIS. Now I feel
 What I must live without. Once it was different.
 You were so rich, so warm. A world entire
 Had room in your great heart. That's gone, devoured by
 One single passion, a bit of self-seeking.
 Your heart has died. No tear for the hard fate of
 The provinces, no tear! Oh, Karl, how poor
 You have become, how very poor, now that you
 Love no one but yourself!
- CARLOS *(throws himself into a chair. Pause. On the verge of tears).*
 I know you don't
 Respect me anymore.
- 2020 MARQUIS. Not so, dear Karl!
 I know these feelings—worthy feelings gone wrong.
 The Queen had belonged to you; the Monarch robbed you.

CARLOS. Straight to town?

MARQUIS. To town.

CARLOS. Just one word more. How easily
Forgotten! Most important: Letters to
Brabant are opened by the King. Be careful!
The imperial post has secret orders—

MARQUIS. How
Do you know this?

CARLOS. Don Raimond Taxis is
My friend.

MARQUIS (*after a silence*).

That, too! They'll go by way of Germany.

(*They go off by different doors.*)



Marquis Posa. Steel engraving by Albrecht Fürchtegott Schultheiss from a drawing by Friedrich Pecht. Friedrich Pecht: *Schiller-Galerie* (Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schiller-Galerie_komplett_Bild_16.jpg

Act Three

The King's bedroom

Scene One

Two lights burn on a night table. In the background, Pages on their knees, fast asleep. The King, half undressed to the waist, stands at the table, one arm braced on a chair, in an attitude of reflection. A medallion lies before him and some papers.⁶⁷

KING. She's always been excitable—that's clear.

I couldn't give her love, but did she miss it?

It's proven: She is false.

(He makes a motion that brings him to himself and looks about, startled.)

Where was I? Is

2060

No one awake here but the King? What's this?

The candles all burnt down and not yet day?

I've lost the night. It belongs to you now, Nature.

A king has no time to retrieve lost sleep.

Now I'm awake; let it be day.

(He puts out the candles and opens a curtain. As he walks up and down, he notices the sleeping boys and stops to consider them; then he pulls the bell.)

Asleep,

Too, in my anteroom, perhaps?

Scene Two

The King. Count Lerma.

LERMA *(startled on seeing the King)*. Why, is

Your Majesty not well?

KING. Fire in the left

Wing. You heard the alarm?

LERMA. No, Majesty.

KING. No? I'd have only dreamt it? That's not chance.

The Queen, I believe, sleeps in that wing?

LERMA. She does,

2070 Your Majesty.

KING. The dream has frightened me.

In future let the Watch be doubled there.

You hear? At nightfall. But in secret. I'll

Not have it that— Do you examine me?

LERMA. I see a burning eye that longs for sleep.

Dare I remind Your Majesty how precious

Your life? Of subjects who will note the trace

Of sleepless nights with deep misgiving? Only

An hour or two of troubled sleep—

KING (*with wild eyes*). Of sleep?

Sleep I shall find in my Escorial. Kings

2080 Who sleep will lose their crowns and husbands lose

Their wives. No, that is a slander. Was is not

A woman told me that?⁶⁸ Her name is slander.

The crime's unproven till a man has said it.

(*To the Pages, who have woken up.*)

Call for Duke Alba!

(*They go out.*)

One step closer, Count.

It's true? (*He stands before the Count and fixes him.*)

One heartbeat's worth of certainty!

Your oath! It's true? I am deceived?

LERMA. My great,

My best of Kings—

KING (*stepping back*). Oh, king and king again!

No better answer than an empty echo?

I strike this rock, want water for my fever,

2090 And get but glowing gold.

LERMA. If what were true,

My King?

KING. Oh, nothing, nothing. Leave me. Go.

(*The Count is about to go. The King calls him back.*)

You're married? Father? Yes?

LERMA. Yes, Majesty.

KING. You're married and would dare to watch the night
Through for your master? Silver-gray and not
Ashamed to believe your wife is honest? Oh,
Go home. You'll find her in the incestuous arms of
Your son. Just believe your King and go. You're startled?
You look at me with meaning, since my hair, too,
Is gray? Bethink yourself. No queen will smirch
2100 Her honor. You're lost if—

LERMA (*heated*). Who doubts? Who can?
In all my King's estates, who'd dare to stain
This virtue by suspicion? She, the best of—

KING. The best? And your best, too? She has warm friends
About me here, or so it seems to me.
That must be costly. More, I'd thought, than she
Can give. You are dismissed. Admit the Duke.

LERMA. I hear him in the anteroom. (*About to go.*)

KING (*more mildly*). Count! What you
Remarked just now is true—true after all.
My head's aglow with sleeplessness. Forget
2110 What I said in a waking dream. You hear?
Forget it. I'm your Very Gracious King.

(*He offers his hand for Lerma's kiss; Lerma opens to the Duke and goes off.*)

Scene Three

The King and Duke Alba

ALBA (*approaching the King uncertainly*).⁶⁹

An order so surprising for me at
This unaccustomed hour, my Liege?
(*Taken aback on observing the King more closely.*)

What a sight!

KING (*has sat down and picked up the medallion on the table.*
He regards the Duke silently.

It's true? I have no faithful servants?

ALBA (*stops short, shamed*). How's that?

KING. I'm mortally insulted. They know it and
No one who warns me!

ALBA (*with a look of astonishment*).

Insult that intends
My King and it escaped my notice?
KING (*showing him the letters*). This hand
Is known to you?

ALBA. It is Don Carlos' hand.

(*Pause in which the King observes him sharply.*)

2120 KING. You can't yet guess what's here? You warned me of his
Ambition? Was ambition all I had
To fear of him?

ALBA. Ambition is a big—
A broad word. It means many, many things.

KING. You've nothing more specific to disclose?

ALBA (*after a silence, with a closed face*).

2130 It is the realm Your Majesty laid on
My vigilance, the realm to which I owe my
Most secret knowledge and my insight. What I
Presume or believe, know otherwise, is mine
Alone. For slave or vassal these things are
Inviolable, may be withheld from all
The kings on earth. Not everything that I see
Clearly is ripe to tell my King. Would he be
Contented, I bid him not question me
As master.

KING (*giving him the letters*).

Read!

ALBA (*reads and, alarmed, turns to the King*).

What madman played this in-
To my King's hands?

KING. Aha! I see you know
Who is intended here? And yet I know
The name has been suppressed.

ALBA (*starting back, caught*). I was too hasty.

KING. You know?

ALBA (*after hesitating*). I've let it slip. My lord commands;

There's no retreat. It's true: I know this person.

KING (*getting to his feet, very aroused*).

Help me invent a new death, god of vengeance!

2140 So clear, notorious, and public, this

Collusion; one sees it at first glance. Too much!

I didn't know. Not I! I am the last

Man in my Kingdom to find out.

ALBA (*throwing himself at the King's feet*). Yes, I

Admit my guilt, my Gracious King, shamed by

A timid cleverness that counseled silence

Where my King's honor, justice, truth demanded

Loudly enough my speaking. Since all others

Fall silent and the magic spell of beauty

Binds all men's tongues, let it be dared: I'll speak.

2150 For well I know that a son's flattering avowals,

A wife's seductive charms, her tears—

KING (*swift and emphatic*). Stand up.

You have my royal word. Stand up. Speak freely.

ALBA (*standing*). Your Majesty perhaps remembers in

The garden at Aranjuez: you found

The Queen abandoned by her Ladies, all

Alone, distraught in a far bower.

KING. Ha!

What's coming? Yes?

ALBA. The Marquise Mondekar

Was banned because she quickly, generously

Came forward to protect her mistress. Now

2160 We're told the Marquise did no more than she was

Ordered: the Prince had been there.

KING (*incensed*). Been there? Well, then—

ALBA. A man's tread in the sand was found between

The bower and a grotto, there a hand-

Kerchief he'd lost—a gardener met him just

Exactly as Your Majesty reached the bower.

KING (*emerging from dark reflections*).

And she shed tears at my displeasure! Shamed me
Before my Court! Before myself! I stood
Like one convicted by her virtue—
(*Long silence. He sits down and covers his face.*)

Yes,

2170 Duke Alba. You are quite right. That could lead me
To something terrible. You'll let me be
Alone a moment.

ALBA. That does not decide
The case, my King.

KING (*reaching for the papers*). And this does not? And this?
And this as well? And how these things all prove
One thing? It's clear as day. I've always known it.
The crime began as I received her from
Your hands here in Madrid.⁷⁰ I see her still,
Gazing, white as a ghost, at my gray head,
At my gray hair. There it began, this falseness!

2180 ALBA. Don Carlos lost a bride when he acquired his
Young mother. They had shared their dreams and wishes,
Reached understanding in fiery feelings their
New status now forbade. But shyness such as
Attends a first confession—that was past.
Seduction spoke more plainly in shared pictures
Of things they could recall without offense.
Akin by harmony of thought and years,
Enraged by one compulsion forced on both,
They gave themselves to passion the more boldly.
But politics took precedence on preference:
2190 Are we to believe, Your Majesty, that she
Conceded to the State such primacy?
And mastered lust that she might test more closely
Decisions that your Cabinet had taken?⁷¹
She had expected love and she received—
A diadem.

KING (*injured and bitter*).

Distinctions you make—wisely,
 Duke. I admire your eloquence. And thank you.
 (*Getting to his feet, cold and proud.*)
 You're right. The Queen was much in error to
 Conceal such letters from me, to make secret
 The Prince's presence in the garden. It was
 False magnanimity.⁷² I'll find meet punishment.
 (*He pulls the bell.*)

2200

Who else is in the antechamber? I've
 No further need of you, Duke Alba. You
 May go.

ALBA. I'd have offended once again,
 Your Majesty, by eagerness to serve?

KING (*to an entering Page*).

Send for Domingo. (*The Page goes off.*)
 I forgive you that for
 Almost two minutes you'd have made *me* fear a
 Crime that can be committed against *you*.

(*Alba goes off.*)

Scene Four

The King. Domingo.

KING (*walks up and down, collecting himself*).

DOMINGO (*enters a few minutes after the Duke's departure, approaches
 the King, and regards him in solemn silence*).

How happily astonished I am to see
 Your Majesty so resolute and calm.

2210

KING. Astonished—

DOMINGO. Providence be thanked, my fear
 Was quite without foundation! I may hope now.

KING. Your fear? Your fear of what?

But there are cases where the people's belief
 Becomes no less important than the truth,
 Unproved as ever it may be.

KING. By God!

And it would be perhaps just here—

DOMINGO. Good name

Is the most precious single good for which
 The Queen competes with burghers' wives.

KING. For which,

2250 I hope, we have no grounds to tremble?
(He gazes at Domingo doubtfully. A silence.)

Chaplain,

I am to get bad news from you. Delay
 No longer. I can read it there in your
 Funereal face. So out with it, whatever
 It is, and torment me no longer! What
 Is it they believe?

DOMINGO. The people, Sire, may err.
 Most certainly, they err. And what they say
 Ought not to shock the King. But *that* they dare
 To say such things—

KING. What things? Must I ask you
 At endless length for bitter medicine?

2260 DOMINGO. The people think back on the month that brought
 Your Majesty so close to death. They learned
 Thirty weeks after that of the successful
 Delivery—

(The King stands up and pulls the bell. Duke Alba enters.)

DOMINGO *(startled)*. I'm astonished, Sire!

KING *(going toward the Duke)*. Toledo!

You are a man. Protect me from this priest.

DOMINGO *(exchanging uneasy glances with Duke Alba)*.

If we'd known in advance the messenger
 Would have to bear the punishment—

KING. Bastard, you say?

I was, you say, not yet returned from death's door

Just when she knew herself with child? That was,
 If I am not mistaken, when you praised
 Our good Saint Dominic in every church
 For miracles he'd wrought on me? What was
 A miracle then now is one no longer?
 Or then or now you lied to me. Which is it?
 Oh, I see through you. If your plot had been
 Ripe then, the saint had lost his fame.

ALBA. Our plot!

KING. You

Two come together in such harmony,
 Such unexampled harmony, sameness of
 Intention, and have not agreed among
 Yourselves? You would persuade me so? Me? I
 Should not have noticed with what eagerness
 And greed you stoop upon your quarry? How
 You feast upon my pain and bursts of anger?
 I should not see the way the Duke burns hot
 To intercept the favor given my son?
 And how this pious man here armed his many
 Petty resentments with my giant's rage?
 I am the bow, you seem to think, that one
 May bend at pleasure? *I* still have a will,
 And if I am to entertain a doubt,
 I'll start with you.

ALBA. Our loyalty did not
 Expect quite this construction.

KING. Loyalty!
 Loyalty warns us of impending crimes,
 Vengeance of those already long committed.
 Just tell me: What has all your eagerness
 To serve then gained me? If what you claim is true,
 What choice have I but separation? And
 The sad triumph of vengeance? Oh, no. *You*, you
 Tell me, you merely fear; you offer me
 Surmises, leave me hanging on the brink
 Of Hell, and scatter.

DOMINGO. Can proof be adduced
In absence of eye witnesses?

KING (*after a long pause; turned to Domingo; solemnly*).

I shall

Convene the Grandees of my Kingdom, myself sit
In judgment. You come forward there before
The world—if you have courage—name her an
Adulteress. She shall die the death—no mercy—
She and the Prince. But! Take note! Should she clear
Her name, then you shall die. You'll honor truth
By such a sacrifice? Make up your minds!
Or not? Do you fall silent? Liars' courage.

ALBA (*who has stood at a distance; now cold and calm*).

2310 I'll do so.

KING (*wheels around and stares at the Duke*).

That is bold! But I recall

You've risked your life in battle for far less,
Risked it, like throwing dice, to win fame's rubbish.
What is your life to you? I'll not stake royal
Blood on a madman with no higher hope
Than to give up a trivial life sublimely.
Your offer is contemptible. Go! Await
My further orders in the presence chamber.

(*They both go off.*)

Scene Five

*The King alone*⁷⁵

KING. Give me a man now, kindly Providence.

2320 Much have you given. Now give me a man.
You—you who are alone and singular,
For your eyes see and test the hidden things,
I bid you send me a good friend, for I
Cannot know all, like you. The aides you have
Accorded me—you know what they amount to.

What they are worth, that they have meant to me.
 Their feeble vices, hedged about, have served
 My purposes, as your storms cleanse the world.
 It's truth I need. Uncovering its source
 In all the rubble error pitches up
 Is not the lot of kings. Give me the rare
 Man with pure open heart, clear mind, sharp eyes
 Who'll help me find it. I heap up
 The lots; among the thousands fluttering about
 A lofty sun let me find *one*.

(He opens a casket and takes out a writing tablet, which he leafs through.)

Mere names.

Mere names stand here, not even the deserts
 That brought them here. Forgetful gratitude!
 This other tablet though shows the offense
 Recorded each time with precision. Vengeance
 Requires such aids to memory? *(Continuing to read.)*

Count Egmont?

What is he doing here? Saint Quentin is long
 Undone.⁷⁶ I toss him in among the dead.
(He erases the name, writes it on the other tablet, goes on reading.)

The Marquis Posa? Posa? Posa? Can scarce
 Remember anything about the man!
 Twice underlined: I meant him for great things!
 This man kept from my presence until now?
 Escaped the notice of his royal debtor?
 In all the ambit of my States, by God,
 The only one who has no need of me!
 If he were greedy or ambitious, he'd

Have shown himself before my throne long since.
 Risk it with such an odd one? A man who
 Can live without me will have truth for me.⁷⁷

(He goes off.)

The presence chamber

Scene Six

Don Carlos in conversation with the Prince of Parma. Dukes Alba, Feria, and Medina Sidonia. Count Lerma and other Grandees carrying papers. All waiting for the King.

MEDINA SIDONIA (*conspicuously avoided by all present, turns to Duke Alba, who is walking up and down, solitary and self-absorbed*).

You've spoken to our Liege, Duke Alba— How
Did you find him disposed?

ALBA. Extremely badly
For you and for the news you bring.

MEDINA SIDONIA. The fire
Of all the English battery was less hard
On me than standing here upon these tiles.⁷⁸

(Carlos, who has noticed him sympathetically, approaches and presses his hand.)

Have

My best thanks for this generous gesture, Prince.

You see how they avoid me. Surely my

2360 Undoing's been decided.

CARLOS. Hope for the best of
My father's mercy and your blamelessness, friend.

MEDINA SIDONIA. I lost a fleet for him like none seen on the
High seas. What's such a head as this against
Seventy sunk galleons? But five sons, Prince, hopeful
As you—it breaks my heart—

Scene Seven

The King enters, in his robes. As above.

All remove their hats. They step back on both sides and form a semicircle before the King. General silence.

KING (*with a fleeting look about the circle*). Cover yourselves!

(Don Carlos and the Prince of Parma approach first to kiss the King's hand. He turns to Parma in friendly fashion, ignoring his son.)

Your mother, Nephew,⁷⁹ would know how we like
You in Madrid.

PARMA. Let her not ask before my
First battle's been decided.

KING. Be content.

Your turn will come when this branch fails.

(Turning to Duke Feria.)

What have

You brought for me?

FERIA (*dropping to one knee*). The Knight-Commander of
The Calatrava Order died this morning.

His Cross returns to you.⁸⁰

KING (*taking the medal and surveying the circle before him*).

Who is most worthy

To bear it after him?

(He signals Alba, who drops to one knee before him, and hangs the cross around his neck.)

Duke Alba, you are

My foremost field commander. Be no more.

My favor then will never fail you.

(He notices Duke Medina Sidonia.) Here is

My admiral!

MEDINA SIDONIA (*approaches uncertainly and kneels before the King, his head down*).

This, great King, is all I bring back

Of Spanish youth and the Armada.

KING (*after a long silence*). God

Stands over me. I sent them against men,

Not storms and reefs. Be welcome in Madrid.

(He extends his hand to be kissed.)

2380

My thanks that you've preserved *this* worthy servant
For me! My Grandees, it is thus I know him;
It's thus I wish that he be known to you.

(He signals Medina Sidonia to stand and cover himself, then turns to the others.)

What else is there?

(To Don Carlos and the Prince of Parma.)

My thanks to you, my Princes.

(They go off. The other Grandees approach and extend petitions, kneeling. The King looks through them fleetingly and passes them to Duke Alba.)

Present these in my study. Is this all?

(No one responds.)

How is it then that among all my Grandees
No Marquis Posa shows himself? I know
Full well that he has served me with distinction.
Is he perhaps no longer with us? Why
Does he not come?

LERMA. The Knight is just returned

2390

From travels through all Europe. He awaits but
The Public Day⁸¹ to kneel before his King.

ALBA. The Marquis Posa? Right! That is the bold
Maltese, esteemed King, whose romantic exploit
Lives on in reputation.⁸² When at the
Grand Master's levy, the knights returned to Malta,
Besieged by Soliman, there vanished, too,
From Alcala an eighteen-year-old youth.
Unsummoned, he came to Valette. "They bought
A cross for me," he said, "and now I'll *earn* it."

2400

And he was one among those forty knights
Who held the castle at Saint Elmo at
High noon against three storms by Ulucciali,
Mustafa, Hassem, and Piali. When
The castle falls at last, and all the knights
Around him, he throws himself into the sea

And comes, the lone survivor, to Valette.
 After two months the enemy vacates
 The island, and the knight comes back, completes
 The studies he has interrupted.

FERIA. And

2410 This Marquis was the one discovered the
 Conspiracy in Catalonia. He
 By his great skills was able to preserve for
 The Crown its most important province.

KING. I am

Amazed. What kind of man is this to've done
Such things and found among the three I ask
 Not one who speaks of him with envy? Quite sure,
 He has a most unusual character
 Or none at all. For wonder, purely, I
 Must see him. (*To Duke Alba.*)

2420 After Mass has ended bring
 Him to me in my private study.

(*The Duke goes off. The King calls Feria.*)

You'll take
 My place today before the Privy Council.
 (*He goes off.*)

FERIA. Our master is most gracious.

MEDINA SIDONIA. Rather say
 He is a god. That's what he was for me.

FERIA. How you deserve your great good fortune! I
 Am happy for you, Admiral.

A GRANDEE. So am I.

A SECOND. And I am, too.

A THIRD. My heart beats high for you.
 Such a deserving general!

THE FIRST. Why, the King
 Was hardly gracious toward you, merely just.

LERMA (*leaving, to Medina Sidonia*).

How rich two words have made you of a sudden!

(*All go off.*)

The King's private study

Scene Eight

Marquis Posa and Duke Alba

MARQUIS (*entering*).

2430 It's me he wants? Me? That's not possible.
You have the name wrong. What can he then want
Of me?

ALBA. He wants to get to know you.

MARQUIS. That's

Mere curiosity. So much for these lost Moments. Life runs its course so quickly.

ALBA. I
Deliver you to your good stars. The King
Is in your hands. Avail yourself now of this
Moment as best you can, and blame yourself
If it is lost. *(He goes off.)*

Scene Nine

The Marquis alone

2440

Well said, Duke. One must use
The moment that will come but *once*. In truth,
This courtier teaches me a useful lesson—
If not in his sense useful, then in mine.
(He walks up and down.)
What is it brings me here? Perversity
Of moody chance, and nothing more perhaps,
Would let me see my image in *these* mirrors?
Would seize on me, one of a million and
The most improbable? Was that which could
Revive me in the memory of the King?
Mere chance? Might it not have been more? Much more?
For what is chance if not the unhewn stone

2450 That takes on life beneath the sculptor's hand?
It's Providence provides a chance. It's man
Must furnish it with form. Well, then: Whatever
The King may want with me, it's all the same.
I know what's up to me—me—with the King,
And if it be a flare of truth, no more
Than that, flung boldly into that despot's soul—
How fruitful in the hand of Providence!
What seemed mere whimsy could turn out to be
Most purposeful and well thought out. Could be
2460 Or not. All one! I'll act in this conviction.

(He walks up and down, then pauses calmly before a painting. The King appears in an adjacent room, gives a few orders, and enters. Unnoticed, he pauses on the threshold to observe the Marquis.)

Scene Ten

The King and Marquis Posa

The Marquis notices the King and approaches. He bends one knee and stands again, giving no sign of confusion.

KING (*with a look of astonishment*).

Already come before me?

MARQUIS. No.

KING. You made
Yourself deserving of the Crown. Why then
Evade my thanks? There're many men who crowd
My memory. There's but One knows all. It was
Your place to seek the notice of your King.
Why did you not?

MARQUIS. I've been but two days in
The Kingdom, Sire.

KING. I'm of no mind to stand
Indebted to my subjects. Beg a favor
Of me.

MARQUIS. I have protection of the laws.

2470 KING. So does the murderer.

KING (*expectantly*). And so?

MARQUIS. I am not one to serve a prince.

(*The King regards him with astonishment.*)

I'll not

Deceive the buyer, Sire. For if you think
Me worthy of employment, you will want
Of me deeds previously decided solely.
You'll want my arm, my courage in the field,
And my good head in council. Not the deeds
Themselves, approval they find at the Throne
Would be the purpose of my deeds. For me,
However, virtue is its own reward.

2510 The happiness the King creates with my hand
I'd make myself; I'd choose, myself take pleasure
In what becomes mere duty in king's service.
Is this your disposition, Sire? Can you
Endure a foreign worker in your workshop?
Am I to be the chisel, no more, there
Where I could be the sculptor? I love all
Humanity. In monarchies I may
Love no one but myself.

KING. An admirable

2520 Fire. You can do much good. Just how can be
Indifferent to the wise and patriotic.
Choose for yourself a post in all my Kingdoms
That lets you satisfy these noble urgings.

MARQUIS. I find none.

KING. How's that?

MARQUIS. What Your Majesty

2530 Gives men by my hand—is that happiness?
Is that the happiness that my pure love
Would grant mankind? *This* happiness would make
Majesty tremble. No! Crown politics
Made a new happiness, a happiness
That *it* is rich enough yet to distribute,
Made in men's hearts new needs and urgings that let
Themselves be stilled by just this happiness.

And it lets truth be struck in its own coin,
 Such truth as it is able to endure,
 And throws away the stamps that don't match this one.
 What serves the Crown—is that enough for me?
 May brother-love be used to harm one's brother?
 I'd find him happy when he may not think?
 I'm not the one to choose, Sire, to distribute
 Such happiness as *you* stamp us. I must
 2540 Decline to circulate such coin as this.
 I am not one to serve a prince.

KING (*somewhat hasty*). You are
 A Protestant.

MARQUIS (*after reflecting*).

Your faith, my Liege, is mine.⁸³

(*After a pause.*)

I've not made myself clear. That's what I feared.
 You see my hand expose the secrets kept
 By Majesty. Who guarantees I'll still
 Revere what I have ceased to fear? I seem
 A threat, for I reflect upon myself.
 I'm not, my King. My wishes perish here.

(*His hand on his breast.*)

2550 This rage to renovate, so laughable
 Because it seals the chains that it would break,
 Will never warm *my* blood. The century
 Is not yet ripe for my ideal. I live
 A citizen of centuries yet to come.
 Can a mere painting spoil your peace? You can
 Erase it with one breath.

KING. Am I the first
 To know you from this side?

MARQUIS. From this one— Yes!

KING (*stands up, takes a few steps, and pauses before the Marquis.*
To himself).

At least this tone is new! No use for flattery.
 A man of parts scorns imitation. Now an
 Approach the other way. Why not? Surprise

2560

Prepares good fortune.

(To the Marquis.)

If you understand

It thus, then fine. I shall address myself

To a new service to the Crown—to one

For gifted minds.

MARQUIS.

I note, my King, how small,

How lowly you think human dignity—to

Hear even in the speech of a free man

Just artful flattery, and I think I know what

Gives you the right to. Men have forced this on you.

They've given up their nobleness, have freely

Descended to this lower level, flee

2570

In fear before the ghost of inner greatness,

Pleased to be poor and to festoon their chains

With timid wisdom, thinking it a virtue

To carry them politely. It was thus

The world came down to you, and thus it was

Transmitted to the King, your noble father.

Thus maimed, what claim had men on honor from you?

KING. There's truth in what you say.

MARQUIS.

A pity though!

When you received man from his Maker's hand

And changed him into your own handiwork,

2580

Then gave yourself to this new-molded creature

As god—you overlooked one thing: that you

Yourself stayed human, from the hand of God.

Mortal, *you* suffered still and still desired.*You* are in need of sympathy, but to a

God one can only sacrifice or tremble,

Or raise a prayer! Regrettable, unnatural

Exchange! Now you've reduced man to a mere stringed

Instrument, who'll sing harmony with you?

KING. (By God, he grips me in my soul!)

MARQUIS.

To you

2590

This forfeiture means nothing. You, instead, are

Unique, one of a kind—that is the price
 You pay for being God. The worse were it
Not so, if for the trampled happiness
 Of millions you'd won nothing! But what if
 The freedom you've destroyed were the one thing
 That's fit to realize your wishes? Sire,
 I ask you to dismiss me. For my subject
 Has overcome me and my heart is full,
 The urge too strong, as I stand here before
 The *one* to whom I would disclose it.

2600

*(Count Lerma enters and speaks softly with the King, who
 then signals him to go and remains seated as before.)*

KING *(to the Marquis when Lerma has gone off)*. Go on!

MARQUIS *(after a silence)*.

I feel, my Liege, how great the honor—

KING.

Finish!

There's more you want to say to me.

MARQUIS.

My King,

I've just arrived from Flanders and Brabant—
 So many rich and blooming provinces!
 A strong, great people, also a good people—
 God-like, I thought, to be this people's father!
 But then I came upon men's charred remains—

*(He falls silent, gazing at the King, who tries to return his
 gaze but looks down instead.)*

You're right. You *must*. And that you *can* do what you
 Have seen you must, filled me with wonder. It's a
 Pity, though, that the victim, soaked in blood,
 Is little suited to begin a hymn
 In praise of who performed the sacrifice!
 That men, mere men, not higher beings, write
 World history! Gentler centuries to come
 Will push aside King Philip's times and usher
 In milder forms of wisdom. Civic contentment

2610

Will go about at one with princely greatness,
 The stingy State not throw away its children,
 And human, too, will be necessity.

2620 KING. When, do you think, would these so human centuries
 Appear, if I had trembled at the curse
 Of this one? Look about here in my Spain.
 Civic contentment blooms in cloudless peace here.
This quiet I would grant to all the Flemings.

MARQUIS (*quickly*).

The quiet of a graveyard! You would hope
 To end what you've begun? Would hope to stop change
 Now ripe and due in Christendom? To stop
 The spring that now renews the world? Alone in
 2630 Europe, *you'd* throw yourself against the wheel
 Of universal destiny in full turn?
 Throw your mere human arm into its spokes?
 You'll not succeed! Already thousands have fled
 Your countries, poor and happy. Citizens lost
 To Spain for their confession were your noblest.
 With open arms Elizabeth receives them,
 The arts of our land blossom there—for Britain.
 Granada lies deserted by its busy
 New Christians, and all Europe laughs to see
 Its old foe bleed from self-inflicted wounds.

(The King is moved; the Marquis notices and moves closer.)

2640 You want to plant for all eternity,
 And you sow death? So forced an enterprise
 Will not survive its author's spirit. You've
 Built everything for thanklessness; in vain
 You've struggled with unyielding Nature and
 In vain you've sacrificed a great king's life
 Upon designs that only can destroy.
 Mankind is more than you have believed of it.
 For it will break the bonds of its long sleep,
 Demand return of its most sacred rights,
 2650 And toss your name among the *Neros* and
Busiris.⁸⁴ That—pains me, for you were good.

KING. Just who has made you all that sure of this?

MARQUIS (*very fiery*).

Yes, by almighty God. Yes, I repeat:
 Return to us what you have taken! And,
 Magnanimous, becoming to the strong, let
 Men's happiness stream from your horn of plenty.
 Minds are maturing in your universe!
 Return to us what you have taken. Become
 Among a myriad of kings, a king.
 (*He approaches the King boldly, with a steady, fiery gaze.*)

2660 Oh, if I could but have the eloquence
 Of all the thousands who have part in this great
 Moment, to flame the spark that I see flashing
 In your eyes ! Oh, abandon the unnatural
 Idolatry that crushes us. Become
 A model of the True and Lasting. Never
 Was mortal, god-like, so free to use so much.
 All Europe's kings revere the Spanish name.
 Put yourself in the van of Europe's kings.
 One pen stroke and the world is made anew. Grant
 2670 Us freedom of thought—
 (*Throwing himself at the King's feet.*)

KING (*surprised, his face turned away from, then toward the Marquis*).

Curious enthusiast!

But—stand up—I—

MARQUIS. Just look about in His
 Grand Nature. Freedom is its basis. And
 How rich it is through freedom! He, the great
 Creator, puts a worm into a dewdrop,
 Lets willfulness disport itself in dead
 Wastes of decay. But *your* creation, how
 Poor and how narrow! Rustling of a leaf
 Alarms the lord of Christendom. How *you*
 Must tremble before every virtue. *He*, not
 2680 To spoil a charming show of freedom, would
 Let evil's grisly army rather rage
 In all his universe. Of Him, the artist,

We never are aware: He wraps himself
 In His eternal laws. *These* a free thinker
 Sees, not Him. Wherefore God? says he. The world's
 Enough. No Christian's devotion can do Him
 More honor than free thinkers' blasphemy.

KING. And you would undertake to imitate this
 Exalted pattern in my mortal states?

MARQUIS. You,

2690 You can, who else? Commit your ruling power
 That's prospered but to serve the Throne to your
 Own people's happiness, restore mankind's
 Lost nobleness. Let citizens become
 Again what they once were: the Crown's first purpose,
 Bound by no duty but their brothers' same rights.
 When man, restored to himself, feels his worth,
 When freedom's virtues, proud, sublime, grow strong,
 When you have made your realm the happiest, then, Sire,
 Your duty is to conquer all the world.

KING (*after a great silence*).

2700 I've let you finish speaking. Unlike others',
 I understand full well, is this man's vision,
 Nor would I force on you a faulty standard.
 I am the first to whom you say these things;
 I believe it since I know it's so. Now for
 This reticence, for keeping silent until
 This day convictions like these, framed in fire,
 For modest prudence such as yours, young man,
 I shall forget that I have heard them, how I
 Heard them. Stand up. I would disprove this hasty
 2710 Youngster as an old man and not as King—would
 Because I would. I find that even poison
 Becomes benign in goodly natures. But
 Beware my Inquisition. I'd regret—

MARQUIS. Really? You would regret it?

KING (*lost in contemplating him*). Never have I
 Seen such a man. Oh, no, Marquis! You do
 Me too much honor. I would not be Nero.

I'll not be that, will not be that toward you.
Not every happiness should wither under
Me. You yourself—*you*, under my gaze, should go
2720 On being human.

MARQUIS (*quickly*). And my fellow citizens?
Oh, not for me, Sire, not for *my* cause have
I pleaded. And your subjects, Sire?

KING. If you
Are so sure how the time to come will judge me,
We'll let it see in you just how I dealt
With *men* when I found one.

MARQUIS. Let the most just
Of kings not be at once the most unjust.
In Flanders there are thousands better far
Than me. And *you*—may I confess it—*you*
Perhaps see freedom now in softer image?

KING (*with milder seriousness*).
2730 No more of this, young man. I know that you'll
Think differently, once you know men as I do.
I don't want to have seen you for the last time.
How shall I bind you to me?

MARQUIS. Let me be
Just as I am. What would I be to you, Sire,
If you could bribe me, too?

KING. I'll not endure
Such pride. From this day on you're in my service.
No protest! I would have it so. (*A pause.*) But then,
Was it not truth I wanted? Here I find
Yet more. You've found me out here on my throne,
2740 Marquis, and not yet in my house?

(*The Marquis seems to hesitate.*)

I know.
But even were I the unhappiest of
All fathers, could I not be happy as
A husband?

MARQUIS. A son full of promise, the
 Most lovable of consorts—if these things
 Give mortals right to such a name, you are
 The happiest in both.

KING (*darkly*). No, I am not!
 And that I'm not I've never felt more deeply
 Than now. (*He regards the Marquis sorrowfully.*)

MARQUIS. The Prince thinks nobly, he is good.
 I've never found him otherwise.

2750 KING. But I have.
 What he has taken from me no crown can
 Make good. So virtuous a queen!

MARQUIS. Who'd dare,
 My Liege?

 KING. The world! Its slander! I myself!
 I have here evidence that damns her; there's more
 That makes me fear the worst. And yet it's hard, hard
 For me to believe *one* thing. Who will accuse her?
 Could *she* dishonor herself so, then how
 Much more am I entitled to conclude
 An Eboli is slandering her. The priest—
 Does he not hate my son and her, too? And
 2760 Do I not know that Alba's hatching vengeance?
 My wife's worth more than the whole lot of them.

MARQUIS. And something lives in woman's soul, Sire, that
 Is pure beyond appearances and slander—
 They call it woman's virtue.

 KING. That I say, too.
 To sink as low as one accuses her
 Is costly. Easily as they hope to
 Persuade me, sacred bonds of honor do
 Not break. Marquis, you know men. Such a man
 I've long lacked. You are good and cheerful and know
 2770 Men, too. It's thus that I have chosen you—



Elisabeth of Valois. Steel engraving by Moritz Lämmel from a drawing by Arthur von Ramberg. Friedrich Pecht, *Schiller-Galerie* (Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arthur_von_Ramberg_gez,_Schiller-Galerie,_Friedrich_von_Schiller,_Sammelbild,_Stahlstich_um_1859,_Elisabeth_von_Valois_aus_Don_Carlos,_M_Lämmel_Carl_Karl_Moritz_Lemmel.jpg

Act Four

Hall in the Queen's apartments

Scene One

*The Queen. The Duchess Olivarez. The Princess Eboli.
The Countess Fuentes and other Ladies.*

QUEEN (*getting to her feet; to her Chief Lady-in-Waiting*).

2780

The key's not to be found? The casket must

Be broken open then. And right away—

(*She notices Princess Eboli, who approaches and kisses her hand.*)

Welcome, dear Princess! I am pleased to see

You well again—though still quite pale—

FUENTES (*a bit malicious*).

Fault of

The wicked fever. It attacks the nerves so.

Doesn't it, Princess?

QUEEN.

How I wished to visit

You, dear. But that, you know, is not permitted.

OLIVAREZ. The Princess Eboli, however, suffered

No want of company—

QUEEN.

That I can believe.

What's wrong? You're trembling.

EBOLI.

Nothing, Madame, nothing

2790

At all. I beg permission to withdraw—

QUEEN.

You've

Not told us just how ill you are? You find

It hard to stand? Here, Countess. Help her to

A tabouret.⁸⁵

EBOLI.

I need fresh air. (*She goes off.*)

QUEEN.

Go with

Her, Countess. What a change in her!

(*A Page enters and speaks with the Duchess,
who turns to the Queen.*)

2810 Eccentric! What's the use of that? One who
Would make himself of use to mankind must
Try to make himself equal to them first.
Why wear the showy costume of a sect?
What if— Who is so free of vanity
That he would not solicit for his beliefs?
What if I went about with the intention
Of setting mine upon a throne?⁸⁶

QUEEN. Oh, no. Not
Even in jest, Marquis, would I want to
Impute this boyish fantasy to you.

2820 You're not the dreamer who'd begin something
That never can be ended.

MARQUIS. That precisely
Would be the question, it would seem.

QUEEN. The most
I could impute to you, Marquis—what could
Estrange me from you almost, would be—would be—

MARQUIS. Duplicity. Could be.

QUEEN. Unforthrightness,
At least.⁸⁷ The King, I doubt not, didn't send
You here for what you're going to say.

MAROUIS. No.

QUEEN. Tell me:

Can a good cause ennoble doubtful means?
And can—forgive me my uncertainty—
2830 Your noble pride lend itself to this office?
I scarcely believe it.

MARQUIS. Nor do *I*, assuming
The matter here were to deceive the King.
That's not what I intend. Instead, I think
To serve him so more honestly than he
Has charged me.

QUEEN. In that I recognize you. But
Enough of these things! What is on his mind?

MARQUIS. The King's? It seems that I'll soon be avenged
On my most stringent judge. What I'm in no

- Great hurry to relate, Your Majesty,
 2840 It seems, is in much smaller hurry yet
 To hear. Heard, however, it must be!
 The Monarch calls upon Your Majesty
 Not to receive the French ambassador
 Today. This was my charge. It's now discharged.
- QUEEN. That,
 Marquis, is all you have to tell me from him?
- MARQUIS. It is more or less all by which I have
 A right to be here.
- QUEEN. I shall be content not
 To know what must perhaps be kept from me —
- 2850 MARQUIS. It *must*, my Queen. Were you not *you*, I'd hasten
 To tell you a few things, to warn of certain
 Persons. That needn't be in your case, though.
 Danger may dawn and set around you, you need
 Know nothing of it. None of this deserves
 To chase sweet sleep from your angelic eyelids.
 That, furthermore, is not what brings me here.
 Prince Carlos —
- QUEEN. How did you leave him?
- MARQUIS. Why, like
 The only wise man of his time for whom
 It has been made a crime to worship truth,
 His high heart no less fixed than was that man's⁸⁸
 2860 On dying for his love. I bring few words;
 Here *he* is. (*He gives the Queen a letter.*)
- QUEEN (*having read the letter*).
 He must speak with me, he says.
- MARQUIS. I say so, too.
- QUEEN. Will it make him more happy
 To see with his own eyes that I am not?
- MARQUIS. Not happier but more active, more determined.⁸⁹
 (*The Queen makes a questioning gesture.*)
- Duke Alba has been named for Flanders.
- QUEEN. Named. So
 I hear.

MARQUIS. The King can never countermand.
We know him. This is also true: the Prince
Cannot remain here, certainly not now,
And Flanders can't be sacrificed.

2870 QUEEN. Can you
Prevent it?

MARQUIS. Yes. Perhaps. The means perhaps is
No better than the threat—a desperation.
I know none other.

QUEEN. Name it me.

MARQUIS. To you
And you alone, my Queen, dare I reveal it.
Only from you can Carlos hear it, un-
Appalled. The name it will acquire, however,
Sounds rather rude—

QUEEN. Rebellion—

2880 MARQUIS. The Prince
Must fall away from Philip. He's to go
To Brussels secretly, where Flanders awaits
Him. All the Netherlands will rise up at
His word, and their good cause is strengthened by a
King's son. Let his arms shake the Spanish throne.
And what the King refused him in Madrid
He'll grant him once in Brussels.⁹⁰

QUEEN. You have spoken
To him today and you can say that?

MARQUIS. Because
I spoke to him today.

QUEEN (*after a pause*). The plan that you
Propose alarms and— charms me. You, I believe,
Are not mistaken. The idea is bold—
That's why it pleases me. I'll mull it over.
The Prince knows it?

2890 MARQUIS. I thought he'd hear it first
From you.

QUEEN. A grand idea, no question! If
His youth—

MARQUIS. Will do no harm. He'll find an Egmont,
 A Prince of Orange⁹¹ there, Emperor Charles' fine fighters,
 Clever in Cabinet, fearsome in the field.

QUEEN (*vivid*). No! The idea is grand and fine. The Prince
 Must act. I feel that keenly. For the role
 One sees him play here in Madrid oppresses
 Me in his place. France I can promise him,
 Savoy, too. I'm of your opinion, Marquis:
 He must take action. But the scheme takes money—

2900 MARQUIS. That too is ready—

QUEEN. I know ways—

MARQUIS. You'll let me
 Encourage him about a meeting?

QUEEN. I'll give
 It thought.

MARQUIS. He presses me for a reply,
 Your Majesty. I promised not to come
 Back empty. (*Offering his writing tablet.*)
 Two lines? That's enough—

QUEEN (*after she has written*). Shall I
 See you again?

MARQUIS. As often as you command.

QUEEN. As often as I—Marquis, how am I
 To understand this freedom?

MARQUIS. Harmlessly,
 As you are wont to. We enjoy it. That's
 Enough. For you, my Queen, enough.

2910 QUEEN (*concluding*). What joy,
 Should freedom find this refuge yet in Europe!
 Find it through *him*! Count on my silent support.

MARQUIS (*with fire*). I knew it—knew I'd meet with understanding.
 (*Duchess Olivarez appears in the doorway.*)

QUEEN (*stiffly*). All things that reach me from my lord the King
 I humbly honor with the force of law.
 Go now. Assure him of my deep submission.
 (*She signals him to go.*)

A gallery

Scene Four

Carlos and Count Lerma

CARLOS. Here we'll not be disturbed. What would you tell me?

LERMA. Your Highness had a friend here at this Court.

CARLOS (*startled*). Unknown to me? What is it that you mean?

LERMA. I beg your pardon that I heard more than

2920 I ought. To reassure Your Highness, I
Have it from trusted hands, that is, my own.

CARLOS. Who're

We speaking of?

LERMA. Of Marquis Posa—

CARLOS. Well?

LERMA. If he should know more of Your Highness than

He ought, as I must almost fear—

CARLOS. How fear?

LERMA. He saw the King.

CARLOS. So?

LERMA. Two full hours it lasted—

A very private conversation.

CARLOS. Really?

LERMA. And no small matter.

CARLOS. That I believe.

LERMA. Your name

Was often mentioned.

CARLOS. No bad sign, I hope.

LERMA. This morning in his Majesty's bedchamber

2930 The Queen was mentioned too, was mentioned strangely.

CARLOS (*taking a step back*).

Count Lerma?

LERMA. When the Marquis went away, I

Was ordered to admit him henceforth un-

Announced.

CARLOS (*pauses in surprise*). Truly that is much.

LERMA. Without

Example, Prince, in all my royal service.

CARLOS. Much! Truly much! And how—how did you say
The Queen was mentioned?

LERMA (*stepping back*). No, Prince. That's against
My duty.

CARLOS. Strange! You tell me one thing and
Withhold another?

LERMA. I owed you the first, the
Second I owe the King.⁹²

CARLOS. Quite right.

LERMA. The Marquis

2940 I've always known as man of honor.

CARLOS. You
Have known him well, then.

LERMA. Every virtue, though,
Is spotless, till it's tested.

CARLOS. Here and elsewhere.

LERMA. A great king's favor, I should think, deserves
The question. On this golden hook strong virtue
Itself is captured.

CARLOS. That is true.

LERMA. And it is
Wise to disclose what cannot be kept secret.

CARLOS. Yes, wise. But, as you say, you've known the Marquis
As man of honor?

LERMA. If he *still* is, then
My doubts make him no worse, and you, my Prince,
Win doubly. (*He is about to go.*)

2950

CARLOS (*follows him, touched, and presses his hand*).

Triply, worthy noble man.

I'm richer by one friend and it does not
Cost me the one I had already.

(*Lerma goes off.*)

Scene Five

Marquis Posa comes through the gallery. Carlos.

MARQUIS. Karl! Karl!

CARLOS. Who's calling? Oh, it's you. Quite right. I'll rush
Ahead and see you in the cloister. *(About to go.)*

MARQUIS. Stay!

Two minutes only.

CARLOS. And if they surprised us?

MARQUIS. They won't though. All we need is just two seconds.

The Queen —

CARLOS. You've been to see my father? Have you?

MARQUIS. He summoned me, yes.

CARLOS *(expectantly)*. And?

MARQUIS. It's all arranged:

You'll see her.

CARLOS. And the King? What is it that

2960 The King wants?

MARQUIS. Him? Not much. Just curious. Wanted

To find out who I am. Unbidden zeal

Of some good friends. Whatever. Offered me

His service.

CARLOS. You refused?

MARQUIS. Why not?

CARLOS. How did

You part?

MARQUIS. On good terms.

CARLOS. And no talk of me?

MARQUIS. Of you? Oh, yes. In general.

(He takes out his notebook and gives it to the Prince.)

For the moment,

Two lines the Queen has sent you. I'll know when

And where tomorrow —

CARLOS *(reads, distracted, pockets the notebook, and is about to go)*.

We'll meet at the priory?

MARQUIS. But what's your hurry? No one's coming.

CARLOS (*with a forced smile*). Have

We really switched our roles? Today it's you

2970 Who feel so safe.

MARQUIS. Today? But why today?

CARLOS. What does the Queen write me?

MARQUIS. But you've just read

What she has written.

CARLOS. Have I? Oh, yes.

MARQUIS. What's

The matter? What is this?

CARLOS (*reads the note again; charmed and fiery*).⁹³

Oh, heavenly angel!

I will be—will be—worthy of you. Love

Makes great souls greater. Be it what it may,

What *you* bid me, I do. She writes me to

Prepare for great decisions. What's her meaning?

Do you know?

MARQUIS. If I know, Karl, are you of

A mind to hear?

CARLOS. I have offended you?

2980 I was distracted. Do forgive me, Roderick.

MARQUIS. Distracted? And by what?

CARLOS. By—I don't know.

The notebook is now mine?

MARQUIS. Well, not exactly.

Rather, I've come to ask for yours.

CARLOS. For mine?

But why?

MARQUIS. For every little thing you have

That can't fall into strangers' hands—for letters,

Drafts, too, in short for your whole note case—

CARLOS. But why?

MARQUIS. It's just in case. Who's sure against surprise?

I'll not be searched. Give here.

CARLOS (*very uneasy*). This is too strange.

Why suddenly this—

- 2990 MARQUIS. Do not worry. I'm
Not hinting anything. It's caution *before*
The danger. I have no wish to alarm you.
CARLOS (*surrendering his note case*).
Do keep it safe.
- MARQUIS. Indeed I shall.
- CARLOS (*with a meaningful glance*). Roderick,
I give you much.
- MARQUIS. Less than I have already.
And here, the rest. For now, farewell! Farewell!
(*He is about to go.*)
- CARLOS (*struggling with himself, calls after him*).
Give me the letters just a moment. There
Is one from her to me at Alcala, when
I nearly died. I kept it ever after.
To part with it just now is more than hard.
Just leave me that one. You can take the rest.
(*He takes out the letter and returns the note case.*)
- 3000 MARQUIS. Unwillingly, Karl. Just this letter is
The one I wanted most to keep.
- CARLOS. Farewell!
(*He moves away slowly. On the threshold he stops and turns;
bringing back the letter.*)
Here. Take it.
(*His hand shakes. He bursts into tears and falls into the Marquis's
embrace.*)
- He can't do it, can he, Roderick?
My father cannot do it, can't do *that*?
(*He goes off quickly.*)

Scene Six

The Marquis looks after him, astonished.

It's possible? Could this be? I'd have known him
But incompletely? Not entirely? In
His heart I'd missed this wrinkle? Truly missed it?

Mistrust toward his one friend? But no. Not that.
 That's calumny. What has he done that I,
 The weakest of the weak, should fault him for it?
 3010 What I blame him for, that I shall— (*Pause.*) Put off— It
 May put him off. That I can believe. But when
 Did he assume this closed demeanor toward
 His friend? (*Pause.*) And cause him pain. That I can't spare you.
 I must go on tormenting your good soul, Karl.
 The King gave credence to the vessel where he'd
 Conferred his sacred secret; credence lays claim
 To gratitude. And what would chatter count for,
 Say, if my silence didn't cause you pain?
 It spares you pain perhaps? Why show the sleeper
 3020 The thundercloud that hangs above his head?
 I make it pass. You, waking, see bright skies.⁹⁴
 (*He goes off.*)

The King's private study

Scene Seven

The King, seated in a chair; beside him, the Infanta Clara Eugenia.

KING (*after a deep silence*).

No. It is nonetheless my daughter. How
 Can Nature lie with such a show of truth?
 Blue eyes like these are mine. Do I not see
 Myself expressed in each one of these features?
 Child of my love is what thou art. I press
 Thee to my heart. Th'art my own blood.

(*He stops suddenly.*) My blood!

Is that not what I fear the most? My features,
 Are they not *his* no less than mine?

(*He has picked up the medallion and looks from it into a mirror opposite.*
He finally throws it on the floor, stands up, and pushes the Infanta away.)

Off! Off!

3030 In this abyss I'll founder.

Scene Eight

Count Lerma. The King.

LERMA. Just at this moment
Her Majesty the Queen has come into
The antechamber—
KING. Now?
LERMA. —and begs the favor
Of kind admission.
KING. Now though? Now? At such
An unaccustomed hour? Oh, no! Now I
Can't see her—not now—
LERMA. Here is Her Majesty— *(He goes off.)*

Scene Nine

The King. The Queen enters. The Infanta.

*The child flies to embrace her mother. The Queen falls to her knees
before the King, who stands silent and confused.*

QUEEN. My Lord and my most honored husband, I am
Forced to seek justice at your throne.
KING. Justice?
QUEEN. For here at Court I'm met unworthily.
My casket has been broken into—
KING. What?
3040 QUEEN. And objects of great value to me vanished—
KING. Great value to you—
QUEEN. By the meaning someone
Brazen and uninformed were able—
KING. Brazen—
And uninformed— But stand up.
QUEEN. Not until
You've bound yourself by promise to extend
Your royal arm and to my satisfaction
Produce the doer of the deed. Which failing,

To separate me from a household that
Harbors a thief—

KING. Stand up, I say— In this
Position— Stand up—

3050 QUEEN (*stands up*). That he is of rank
Is clear. The casket held both pearls and diamonds.
He was content with letters—

KING. That I'd like—

QUEEN. Gladly, my husband. Letters and a medallion
From the Infante.

KING. From—

QUEEN. The Infante, your son.

KING. To you?

QUEEN. To me.

KING. From the Infante? And you'd
Say that to *me*?

QUEEN. Why not to you, my husband?

KING. You'd have the face—

QUEEN. What do you mean? I'd think

3060 That you'd remember still the letters that
Don Carlos sent to me at Saint Germain⁹⁵
In keeping with the wishes of both Crowns?
Whether the portrait that accompanied them
Was stipulated in this liberty
Or if his fervent hope permitted him
This step, I'll not make bold to judge myself.
If this was excess, the most innocent—
That I can warrant. At the time he'd have had
No way of knowing it was for his mother—
(*She notices how affected the King is.*)
What's wrong?

(*The Infanta meanwhile has found the medallion on the floor
and played with it. She now brings it to the Queen.*)

INFANTA. Look, Mother! The pretty picture—

QUEEN. Why, my—

(*She recognizes the medallion and falls silent. They gaze at
one another long and steadily. A great silence.*)

- In truth, my Lord! *This* means to test a consort
Seems noble to me and quite kingly. But I'll
3070 Allow myself yet one more question.
- KING. It's
My turn to question.
- QUEEN. My suspicion, at least,
Should cause no injury to guiltless persons.
Thus if this theft was at your orders—
- KING. Yes.
- QUEEN. Then I have no one accuse or to
Regret but *you*, to whom that consort was not
Given with whom such means succeed.
- KING. *That language,*
Madame, is known to me. It'll not deceive
Me yet again as at Aranjuez.
The Queen, all innocence, so proud in her
3080 Defense, I know her better—
- QUEEN. What would you say?
- KING. In brief, Madame, and with all clarity:
It's true, still true, you spoke with no one there?
With no one? True?
- QUEEN. I spoke with the Infante
There, yes.
- KING. So now we know. Such insolence!
So little sparing of my honor!
- QUEEN. Honor?
If honor was endangered there, it was
A greater one than Castile brought me as
A morning gift.⁹⁶
- KING. And why deny it to me?
- QUEEN. Because I'm not accustomed, Sire, to being
3090 Interrogated in presence of your courtiers,
As if I had done wrong. I'll not deny
The truth if it's demanded decently.
Was that the tone I heard Your Majesty
Adopt with me there in Aranjuez?

The lords of Spain compose a fitting tribunal
 Before which queens account for their small deeds?
 I gave the Prince the meeting he'd requested
 With urgency. I did it, Husband, because
 I wanted to, because I'll not set custom
 As arbiter of what I know is blameless.
 And I concealed it there because I had no
 Desire to quarrel with Your Majesty
 For such a liberty before my suite.

KING. You're speaking boldly, Madame, very—

QUEEN. Also,

I want to add, because his father's heart scarce
 Affords the Infante fairness he deserves.

KING. That he deserves?

QUEEN. For why should I conceal it,
 Sire? I prize him and love him as my dearest
 Kin, once found worthy of a name more dear still.
 I've not yet learned to understand why he
 Should now be stranger to me than all others
 Because he once was dearer than all others.
 If your state maxims would forge bonds just as
 They choose, they ought find it harder to
 Dissolve them. I'll not hate whom I'm appointed
 To. Now I'm finally forced to speak, I'll not—I'll
 Not see my choice as bound.

KING. Elisabeth!

You've seen me at weak moments. That makes you
 So bold. You trust in powers you have tested
 Often enough on my firm will. Thus you
 Should fear the more. For what's brought me to weakness
 Can also bring me to unbridled rage.⁹⁷

QUEEN. What is my crime?

KING (*taking her hand*). If it should be—and is
 It not already?—if the measure of
 Your heaped up fault should grow by one hair's breadth,
 If I'm the one's deceived— (*He lets her hand fall.*)

I can stamp out this
 Last weakness, can and will. Then woe betide
 Us both, Elisabeth!

QUEEN. What is my crime?

KING. Then let blood flow —

QUEEN. It's come to that? God!

KING. Myself

3130 I hardly know, no custom do I honor,
 No voice of Nature and no treaty of
 The nations —

QUEEN. I lament Your Majesty.

KING (*beside himself*). Lament? The sympathy of a loose woman —

INFANTA (*clinging to her mother*).

The King is angry and my mother's weeping.

(*The King pushes the child roughly away from her mother.*)

QUEEN (*gently and with dignity, her voice trembling*).

I'll not let this child be mishandled. Come,
 My daughter. (*She picks up the child.*)

If the King won't know you, I must

Call sureties from beyond the Pyrenees to
 Defend our cause. (*She is about to go.*)

KING (*abashed*). My Queen?

QUEEN. I'm at a loss.

This is too much.

(*She moves toward the door and falls at the threshold, the child in her arms.*)

KING (*rushing to her, dismayed*).

What's this?

INFANTA (*cries out, frightened*). My mother's bleeding! (*She runs out.*)

KING (*anxiously attending her*).

3140 How dreadful! Blood! Have I deserved this? Stand up.
 Collect yourself. They're coming! Do stand up!
 Is my whole Court to see this spectacle?
 I have to beg you to stand up?

(*She gets up, helped by the King.*)

Scene Ten

As above. Alba, Domingo enter, alarmed. Ladies follow.

KING. The Queen's

Not well. Let her be brought to her apartments.

(The Queen goes off, accompanied by her Ladies. Alba and Domingo approach the King.)

ALBA. The Queen in tears, blood on her face—

KING. Amazing

The devils who've misled me.

ALBA, DOMINGO. Us?

KING. Who've said

Enough to make me wild and nothing to

Persuade me.

ALBA. What we know, we said.

KING. May Hell

Give you its thanks. I rue what I have done.

3150 Was that the language of a guilty conscience?

MARQUIS POSA *(still behind the scene)*.

May one approach the King?

Scene Eleven

Marquis Posa. As above.

KING *(rising quickly on hearing the Marquis's voice and going toward him)*.

Ah! There he is!

I welcome you, Marquis. Duke Alba, I've

No further need of you now. Leave us.

(Alba and Domingo look at one another in wonderment and leave the scene.)

Scene Twelve

The King and Marquis Posa

MARQUIS. Sire!

The old man who faced death for you in twenty
 Battles will find it hard to be dismissed
 In such a fashion!

KING. Marquis, it behooves

You to *think* so, to *act* so behooves me.

What you've become to me in a few hours

He'd not become in a whole generation.

3160 I make no secret of my grace and favor;

The seal and signal of your King's good will

Shall shine both far and wide from your bright forehead.

The man I've chosen for a friend—I'll see

Him envied.

MARQUIS. Even if obscurity

Alone has made him worth that name?

KING. What brings

You to me?

MARQUIS. As I crossed the antechamber

I heard a rumor that I could not believe—

A quarrel—blood—the Queen—

KING. You come from there?

MARQUIS. Appalling, were the rumor not mistaken,

3170 Had something taken place here— Most important

Discoveries I have made change all.

KING. Well?

MARQUIS. I found

Occasion to remove the Prince's note case,

With papers that, I hope, throw light—

(He gives Carlos's note case to the King.)

KING *(searching the case eagerly)*. A letter

From Emperor Charles, my father— How's that? I

Don't think I've ever known of it till now?

(He skims it, lays it aside, hurries through the other papers.)

Plans for a fortress— Tacitus in excerpts—
 What's this now? I should know this hand! It's from
 A lady.

(He reads attentively, softly and aloud by turns.)

"This key—rearward doors—pavilion—
 The Queen"— What's this? "Here love can confess freely—
 A hearing—rich reward"— Satanic treachery!
 Oh, now I know. It's her. It's *her* hand.

MARQUIS. Not

The Queen's? Impossible that—

KING. Of the Princess

Of Eboli—

MARQUIS. It would be true, then, what

The page Henarez told me recently,
 Who brought the letter and the key.

KING *(seizing the Marquis's hand, much aroused)*.

Marquis!

I find myself in the most frightful hands!
 This wench—I do confess it— Marquis, hear
 Me: this wench forced the casket of the Queen.
 She was the first to come and warn me. Who knows
 How much the monk may know about this. I
 Have been misled by pure malicious roguery.

MARQUIS. Then it is well that—

KING. Marquis, I begin

To fear I've gone too far here with my wife.

MARQUIS. If there has been a secret understanding
 Between the Crown Prince and the Queen, it was
 Of far, far different nature than was said.
 I have reliable report the Prince's
 Wish to be sent to Flanders leads back to
 The Queen.⁹⁸

KING. I've always thought it did.

MARQUIS. The Queen's

Ambitious. If I may say more: She sees
 Herself deceived in her proud hope, sees herself

Excluded from a part in ruling. There
The Prince's fervid youth gave her the means
For her far-reaching plans. Her heart, however —
I doubt, I truly doubt that she can love.

KING. Her great plans for the State don't frighten me.

MARQUIS. If she is loved? If something worse is to
Be feared of the Infante? This question seems
To me worth a pursuit. For here, I think,
3210 A stricter vigilance is needed —

KING. You
Must answer for him.

MARQUIS (*after reflecting*). If Your Majesty
Should find me fit to exercise this office,
Then I must ask that it be put *entirely*
In my hands.

KING. That shall be.

MARQUIS. At least that no
Assistant, of whatever name, disturb me
In undertakings I'd consider needful —

KING. There'll be none. That I promise. You were my
Good angel. How much thanks I owe you for what
You tell me!

(*To Lerma, who enters at these last words.*)

How did you last find the Queen?

3220 LERMA. Deeply exhausted still from having fainted.
(*He gives the Marquis a doubtful look and goes out.*)

MARQUIS (*after a pause*).

One more precaution would, I think, be called for.
The Prince, I fear, can yet receive a warning.
He has good friends in number, contact, too,
Perhaps with Ghent and the rebellion. Fear could
Lead to his undertaking desperate designs.
Thus I'd advise preventive measures —

KING. Quite right.
But what?

MARQUIS. A secret warrant for arrest
In my possession, to be used in an
Emergency, a royal warrant—

(The King seems to hesitate.)

It

3230

Would be state secret until—

KING *(going to his writing desk)*. The whole realm
Is now at risk. Extraordinary measures
In face of urgent danger. Here, Marquis.
I needn't tell you to use caution—

MARQUIS *(receiving the warrant)*. In
Extremis, Majesty.

KING *(laying a hand on his shoulder)*. Now go, Marquis,
Restore peace to my heart, sleep to my nights.

(They go off to different sides.)

Scene Thirteen

A gallery

Carlos enters in great anxiety. Lerma comes to meet him.

CARLOS. It's you I'm looking for.

LERMA. And I for you.

CARLOS. It's true? In God's name, is it true?

LERMA. What then?

CARLOS. That he unsheathed his dagger at her and
That she was carried bleeding from the room?

3240

By all that's sacred answer me!

LERMA. She fell
Fainting and grazed herself in falling, that
Is all.

CARLOS. And otherwise she's not in danger?

LERMA. The Queen is not. But you are all the more.

CARLOS. My mother's not! Oh, God be praised! I heard
The King was raging against child and mother,
Some secret was exposed.

LERMA. That last can well

Be true—

CARLOS. Be true? How so?

LERMA. My Prince, *one* warning

I've given you today, which you despised.

Use this one better.

CARLOS. How?

LERMA. If I'm not wrong, Prince,

3250 I saw you recently, a letter case

Of sky blue velvet in your hand, all worked

With gold thread.

CARLOS (*uneasy*). Such a one is mine. And so?

LERMA. A silhouette encased in pearls as cover?

CARLOS. Exactly.

LERMA. Just now when I entered the

King's private study unannounced, I thought

I saw the same one in his hand. The Marquis

Was standing there beside him.

CARLOS (*after a stunned silence, brusquely*).

That is not true.

LERMA (*insulted*). Then I'm a liar.

CARLOS (*staring at him*). You are one.

LERMA. I forgive that.

CARLOS (*walks up and down, much aroused, then halts before Lerma*).

How has he ever harmed you? What have bonds

3260 Like ours done you that you should want to break them?

LERMA. I honor pain that makes you unjust, Prince.

CARLOS. Oh, God protect me from suspicion!

LERMA. I

Recall the King's own words: What thanks, he said

As I came in, I owe for what you tell me.

CARLOS. Oh, quiet! Quiet!

LERMA. Duke Alba's fallen, they say,

And Prince Ruy Gomez stripped of the Great Seal;

It's been awarded the Marquis—

CARLOS (*baffled*). And I

Heard nothing? Why'd he tell *me* nothing?

Must warn her, must prepare her. Who to send?
 Do I have no one anymore? Aha!
 There *is* someone. Thank God for that! *One* friend.
 And I have nothing more to lose. (*He rushes off.*)
 LERMA (*follows him and calls*). Prince! Where to? (*Exit.*)

Scene Fourteen

A room in the Queen's apartments

The Queen. Alba. Domingo.

ALBA. If it is granted us, my Gracious Queen—

QUEEN. What would oblige you?

DOMINGO. True alarm about

The noble person of Your Majesty

Forbids us to conceal an incident

3300 That threatens your security.

ALBA. We rush

To warn you, break up a complot against you—

DOMINGO. To lay our zealous service at your feet.

QUEEN (*looking at them with wonderment*).

Most Reverend Father, and you, noble Duke,

You take me by surprise, for I did not

Suspect the presence of devotion of

This order in Domingo and Duke Alba.

I know to value it. You speak of a

Complot? Am I to know—

ALBA. We bid you take

Precaution with a Marquis Posa, who serves

3310 His Majesty the King in secret things.

QUEEN. I'm pleased to hear the Monarch's chosen well.

The Marquis is long known to me as a

Good man, indeed a great one. Never was

The very highest favor shown more justly—

DOMINGO. More justly? Oh, no. We know better.

ALBA. It's no

Secret how this man lets himself be used.

QUEEN. What?

May I know more? You make me curious.

DOMINGO. Has

Your Majesty looked in your casket lately?

QUEEN. What?

DOMINGO. Did you miss nothing there of value?

QUEEN. How so?

3320 What I miss there is known to my whole Court.

But Marquis Posa? What's he doing here?

ALBA. Rather a lot, Your Majesty. The Prince, too,

Has missed important papers, seen today in

The King's hands, when the Knight had secret audience.

QUEEN (*having reflected*).

Most strange, by God, and very odd! I find

A foe here whom I never dreamt and friends

I don't recall I ever had. For truly,

(*with a penetrating gaze at both*)

I must confess I was in danger of

Forgiving you the bad turn done me with

3330 My Lord.

ALBA. Us?

QUEEN. You.

DOMINGO. Duke Alba! Us!

QUEEN (*still gazing at them*). How glad

I am to've seen my haste in timely fashion.

Still, I'd resolved to ask His Majesty to

Bring forward my accuser here today.

So much the better now! I can now cite

Duke Alba's witness,

ALBA. Witness? Mine?

QUEEN. Why not?

DOMINGO. Undo the hidden service—

QUEEN. Hidden service?

(*Proud and grave.*)

I'd like to know, Duke Alba, what it is

That your King's wife would have to settle with you,

Or with *you*, Priest, of which her husband's to

3340 Know nothing. Am I innocent or guilty?

DOMINGO. You ask!

ALBA. And if the King were less than just?

At least in this case,

QUEEN. I must wait then till

He's just again. A blessing on the one

Who benefits when he once more becomes so!

(She bows to them and goes off. They go off to the other side.)

Princess Eboli's room

Scene Fifteen

Princess Eboli. Then Carlos.

EBOLI. Can it be true—the extraordinary news

That fills the Court?

CARLOS (*entering*). Don't let me startle you,

Princess. I'll be as gentle as a child.

EBOLI. Prince—this *surprise*—

CARLOS. Are you offended still?

Yet still?

EBOLI. Prince!

CARLOS (*insistent*). Are you still offended, Princess?

3350

Please tell me.

EBOLI. How am I to understand this?

You seem to have forgotten, Prince— What do

You want of me?

CARLOS (*seizing her hand*). Can you hate me forever?

Offended love cannot forgive?

EBOLI (*trying to pull back her hand*). What you

Make me remember, Prince!

CARLOS. Your kindness, Princess,

And my ingratitude. I know, I know!

I've hurt you, Girl, I forced tears from these angel's

Eyes. And I've not come now to say I'm sorry.

EBOLI. Prince, let me go—

CARLOS. I've come because you are
 A gentle girl, because I'm counting on your
 3360 Sweet nature, on your goodness. Listen, my girl,
 I have no friend in all the world but you.
 You liked me once, and you'll not always hate me,
 Be always unforgiving.

EBOLI (*turning her face away*). Oh, be quiet!
 No more, for God's sake, Prince.

CARLOS. Let me remind
 You of that Golden Age, remind you of
 Your love for me and my unworthy answer.
 Let me make good what I once meant to you,
 My girl, and what your heart's dreams gave me. This once,
 This once, imagine me as I was to
 3370 You then and give this figment what you never
 Can give to me again.

EBOLI. Oh, Carlos, how
 You toy with me!

CARLOS. Be greater than your sex⁹⁹
 And do what woman never did before you
 And never will again. I ask of you
 Unheard of things, on bended knee I ask:
 Forget the insults, let me see my mother,
 Two minutes, for two minutes. (*He kneels before her.*)

Scene Sixteen

As above. Marquis Posa bursts into the room, followed by two Officers of the Royal Bodyguard.

MARQUIS (*throwing himself between them, breathless*).

What has he

Admitted? Do not believe him.

CARLOS (*still on his knees, raising his voice*). I entreat you

By all—

MARQUIS (*vehemently*). He's mad! Don't listen to this madman.

CARLOS (*louder and more urgent*).

3380

It's life or death. Just bring me to her.

MARQUIS (*pulling the Princess away with force*). If

You hear him, I shall murder you. In the

Name of the King. (*He shows the warrant.*)

(*To one of the Officers.*) Count Cordua, the Prince is

Your prisoner.

(Carlos stands thunderstruck. The Princess screams and tries to escape. The Officers show astonishment. A long pause. The Marquis, trembling and hardly in command of himself, turns to the Prince.)

I request your sword. You, Princess,

Must stay. (*To the Officer.*) You warrant that His Highness speaks

To no one—even you—on pain of death!

(*He speaks a few words with the Officer, then turns to the others.*)

I go to give account before the King (*to Carlos*)

And you. Expect me in an hour, my Prince.

(Carlos, wordless, lets himself be led away. He casts one dying glance at the Marquis, who conceals his face. The Princess tries once more to escape; the Marquis leads her back by the arm.)

Scene Seventeen

Princess Eboli. Marquis Posa.

EBOLI. By all that's sacred, let me go! Oh, let

Me leave this place, let go!

MARQUIS (*bringing her far forward, with deadly earnest*).

What did he tell you,

3390

Unhappy creature?

EBOLI. Nothing. Let me go—

MARQUIS (*holding her back by force; yet more earnest*).

How much have you found out? You will not get

Away from me. And you'll not tell it to

Another living soul, no more.

EBOLI (*looking him in the face, frightened*). Dear God!

What do you mean by that? You wouldn't kill me—

MARQUIS (*drawing a dagger*).

In fact, I am much minded to do so.

Be quick now.

EBOLI. Me you'd kill? Me? What have *I* done?

Oh, God of Mercy!

MARQUIS (*holding the dagger against her breast*).

There's still time. You've not

Spilled anything just yet. I'll smash the jar

And all remains the same. That's how it is:

3400 The fate of Spain against a woman's life!

(*He holds his position, still uncertain.*)

EBOLI (*sinks against him and looks him square in the face*).

What are you waiting for then? I'll not beg

For mercy. I've deserved to die, deserve

To and I want to.

MARQUIS (*drops his hand and reflects briefly*).

That's as craven as

It is barbaric. No, oh no, indeed.

Praise be to God! There are yet other means!¹⁰⁰

(*He drops the dagger and rushes out.*

The Princess rushes through another door.)

A room in the Queen's apartments

Scene Eighteen

The Queen to Countess Fuentes.

Oh, what is all this uproar in the palace?

This clatter here today makes me uneasy.

Countess, do go. See what's the matter and

Come tell me what it means.

(*Countess Fuentes goes out and Princess Eboli plunges into the room.*)

Scene Nineteen

*The Queen. Princess Eboli.*EBOLI (*breathless, pale, disfigured, kneeling before the Queen*).

My Queen, oh, help!

3410 He's taken prisoner.

QUEEN. Who?

EBOLI. The Marquis Posa

Just took him prisoner. Orders from the King.

QUEEN. But who? Who then?

EBOLI. The Prince.

QUEEN. Are you quite mad?

EBOLI. They've just now taken him away.

QUEEN. Who took

Him prisoner?

EBOLI. Marquis Posa.

QUEEN. Well, then. God

Be praised that it was Marquis Posa took

Him prisoner!

EBOLI. You can say that, Queen, so calm,

So cold? Oh, God! You've no idea—

QUEEN. Why he

Was taken prisoner? For some foolishness,

I'd think; he's young, impulsive—

EBOLI. No, oh no!

3420 I know much more. Oh, Queen! A deed too awful!

He's lost! No saving him! He'll die!

QUEEN. He'll die?

EBOLI. And I have murdered him!

QUEEN. He'll die! But this

Is madness! What can you be thinking?

EBOLI. And why,

And why he'll die! If I had only known

That this is what it'd come to!

QUEEN (*taking her kindly by the hand*). Princess! Hear me!

You're still beside yourself. Collect your feelings.

And then speak calmly. Not in dire expression

That makes me shudder. What has happened here?

What is it that you know?

EBOLI. No more of such

3430 Angelic condescension, oh, my Queen!

No more such kindness! It burns in my conscience

Like flames of Hell. I am not worthy to raise

My sullied gaze up to your glory. Crush

The wretched one, contrite with rue and shame

And self-contempt, that writhes here at your feet.

QUEEN. Child, what would you confess to me?

EBOLI. Oh, angel

Of light, great saint, you don't suspect the demon

You've smiled on. Learn to know him now. I was

The one who robbed you.

QUEEN. You?

EBOLI. And then turned over

3440 Those letters to the King.

QUEEN. You?

EBOLI. I made bold to

Accuse you—

QUEEN. You, you could?

EBOLI. Revenge. Love. Madness.

I hated you, loved the Infante—

QUEEN. It was

Because you loved him?

EBOLI. Because I told him and he

Did not return my love.

QUEEN (*after a silence*). Oh, now it all

Makes sense. You loved him. I've forgiven all.

Forgotten all. But do stand up. (*She offers her arm.*)

EBOLI. No! No!

I have a terrible confession still

To make. Great Queen, until I—

QUEEN (*attentive*). What shall I

Be yet obliged to hear? Come, speak.

EBOLI. The King—

3450 Seduction— Do not turn away— I see

Repugnance on your face. The crime that I

Accused *you* of—is what I have committed.

(She presses her glowing face against the floor. The Queen goes off. Long pause. Duchess Olivarez comes from the adjoining room, where the Queen has gone, and finds the Princess in her same position. She approaches her without speaking. Hearing her approach, the Princess straightens up, then leaps wildly to her feet when she does not see the Queen.)

Scene Twenty

Princess Eboli. Duchess Olivarez.

EBOLI. God! She's abandoned me! It's over!

OLIVAREZ (*coming closer*). Princess—

EBOLI. Duchess, I know why you have come. The Queen

Has sent you to tell me my fate. Be quick!

OLIVAREZ. The Queen commands me to receive your Cross

And keys.

EBOLI (*removing the cross of a religious order and handing it to the Duchess*).

It's granted me to kiss her hand

Once more?

OLIVAREZ. You'll hear what's been decided in

The Cloister of Our Lady.

EBOLI (*bursting into tears*). I'll not see

3460 The Queen again?

OLIVAREZ (*embraces her without looking at her*).

May you live happily!

(She goes off quickly. The Princess follows her to the door of the adjoining room, which falls to after the Duchess. The Princess kneels before the door, silent and unmoving, then stands up abruptly and hurries away, covering her face.)

Scene Twenty-One

The Queen. Marquis Posa.

QUEEN. At last, Marquis! How good that you have come!

MARQUIS (*pale, his features distorted, his voice unsteady, solemn and deeply moved throughout the scene*).

Your Majesty's alone? No one can hear us
In the adjoining rooms?

QUEEN. No one. But why?

What news have you?

(*She looks at him more closely and steps back, startled.*)

But how you've changed! What's this?

You frighten me, Marquis. Yours is the face
Of death—

MARQUIS. You know already, I presume—

QUEEN. That Karl's been taken prisoner, and by you,

They say. It's true? I'll believe it only if

You say so.

MARQUIS. It is true.

QUEEN. And at your hand?

3470 MARQUIS. At mine.

QUEEN (*gazing at him, puzzled*).

I honor all your actions, no

Less those I cannot grasp. But do forgive

An anxious woman: Isn't this a daring

Gamble?

MARQUIS. Which I have lost.

QUEEN. Dear God in heaven!

MARQUIS. Be reassured, my Queen! Provision's made

For *him*. I've lost it for myself.

QUEEN. What must

I hear! Dear God!

MARQUIS. For who said I should risk

It all—all—on a single throw? Should tempt

The gods so desperately, so confidently?

3480 Who is the man who would make bold to take
The helm of chance—and not be one who knows all?
Oh, it is right and proper. But why speak
Of me? For time is precious, like a man's life!
Who knows if from the Judge's grudging hand
The last drops are not falling for me?

QUEEN. Judge's

Hand? What a solemn tone! I can't conceive
What this talk means. It scares me—

MARQUIS. He's been saved!

Saved at what price—who cares! But only for
Today. He has but little time. Tonight
Yet he must leave Madrid.

QUEEN. Tonight yet?

MAROUIS. All

3490 Arrangements have been made. The Mail awaits him
At the same Charterhouse that served our friendship
As refuge. Here are notes for all the wealth
This world has given me. The rest *you* will
Provide. And I'd have much to say to him
That he must know. But I may not have leisure
To say all. You will see him here this evening,
And so I turn to you.

QUEEN. To spare my peace
Of mind, Marquis, speak clearly. No more talk
In riddles. What has happened?

3500 MARQUIS. I still have
A great confession to confide in you.
A happiness that's known to few was mine:
I loved a prince's son. My heart, devoted
To one alone, embraced the world entire!
In my Karl's soul I built a paradise
For millions. Oh, what dreams were mine! But it
Pleased Providence to call me early from
My plantings. He'll not have his Roderick long. His
Friend passes the baton to his Beloved.

3510 Right here, upon this sacred altar, his
 Queen's heart, I lay my last, most prized bequest,
 That he may find it there when I'm no more—
 (He turns aside, his voice breaking.)

QUEEN. That's how the dying speak. I hope it's just
 Excitement. Or does it have sense?

MARQUIS *(has tried to collect himself and now speaks more resolutely)*.

Tell him—

The Prince—that he is to recall the oath
 That we swore in those rapturous days upon
 A Host we shared. My own I've kept, been true
 To him till death. It's his turn now —

QUEEN. Till death?

MARQUIS. Let him—oh, tell him so—make that dream true, the
 Heroic dream of a new state, the godlike
 3520 Child of our friendship. Let him lay first hand
 On this yet unhewn stone—to finish it
 Or not, let that not matter. He lay hand on.
 When centuries have flown past, Providence
 Will set a prince's son, like him, upon
 A throne, like his, inspire him with the same
 Enthusiasm. Tell him to respect
 The dreams of youth when he's a man, not open
 This godly blossom to the deadly insect
 3530 Of vaunted better reason, that he should
 Not falter when mere mortal wisdom maligns
 Enthusiasm, daughter sent from Heaven.
 I told him once before —

QUEEN. How's this, Marquis?
 Where does it lead—

MARQUIS. And tell him, too, that I
 Lay human happiness upon his soul,
 That dying I require it of him, require!
 And was entitled to. It would have been
 For me to lead in a new morning for
 These realms. The King gave me his heart. He called

3540 Me his own son. I am the bearer of
His seals; his Albas are no more.
(He stops and gazes silently at the Queen.)
You're weeping?
I know these tears, you lovely soul. It's joy
That makes these tears flow. But what's done is done.
It's Karl or me. The choice was swift and terrible.
And one was lost. *I want to be this one,*
Better me. Question me no further.

QUEEN. I now
Begin to understand. What *have* you done?

MARQUIS. Spent

3550 Two evening hours to save a summer's day. I
Give up the King. What can I be for him?
In that hard soil no rose will ever bloom.
The fate of Europe ripens in my great friend!
Spain I commend to him. Till then we'll let
It bleed in Philip's hand! But woe betide us,
Both me and him, if I should once regret,
Should find I'd chosen wrong! But no. I know
My Carlos. That will never be. And you,
Queen, are my guarantor!

(After a silence.) I saw it sprout,
This love, saw the most dire of all the passions
Strike root in his young heart. Then it was in
My power to oppose it. I did nothing.

3560 I fostered it; it favored me. The world
May judge it otherwise; I've no regrets.
My heart does not accuse me. I saw life
Where they see death—in this flame without hope
I early saw a beam of hope. I wanted
To lead him on to greatness, raise him to
The highest beauty. Mortalness denied me
An image, language, words, and I turned him
Toward *this*. All my direction aimed to make
His love more clear to him.

QUEEN. Marquis, your friend filled

3570 You so that, over him, you took no thought of
 Me. Could you truly believe me loosed from all
 My womanness when you made me into
 His angel? And added virtue to his weapons?
 You'll not have thought what we risk for our hearts
 When we ennoble passion with such names.

MARQUIS. True of all women save one. I swear by one.

Or are you shamed by the noblest of desires:
 To be creator of a hero's virtue?
 Whatever is it to King Philip if his
 3580 Transfiguration in the Escorial
 Enflames a painter with eternity? The
 Sweet harmony in a stringed instrument,
 Does it belong to the buyer who safeguards it
 With deaf ears? He's acquired the right to smash it,
 But not the art to call forth its sweet tone
 And lose himself in its ecstatic song.
 Truth's there for wise men, beauty for hearts that feel.
 You two belong to be one for another.
 No craven notions will destroy this belief.
 3590 Promise me to love him forever, not
 Tempted by fear of men, false heroism, to
 Contemptible denial: always, ever
 To love him. Do you promise me, my Queen,
 And give your hand?

QUEEN. My heart, I promise you,
 Alone and ever, rules my love.

MARQUIS (*withdrawing his hand*). Now I

Can die in peace. My work is done.
 (*He bows to the Queen and is about to go.*)

QUEEN (*following him with her eyes*). You'd go,
 Marquis, and not tell me when we—how soon—
 Shall see each other next?

MARQUIS (*retraces his steps, his gaze averted*).

Why, certainly!

We'll meet again.

3600 QUEEN. I've understood you, Posa—
Have understood you clearly. Why have you
Done this to me?
MARQUIS. It's him or me.
QUEEN. Oh, no!
You've flung yourself into this deed, which you
Think is exalted. Don't deny it. I
Know you! You've hungered for this—hungered! Break
A thousand hearts, what do you care, as long
As your own pride is satisfied. Oh, now
I've seen you! Paying court to admiration.¹⁰¹
MARQUIS (*startled, to himself*).
That I was not prepared for. No.
QUEEN (*after a silence*). Marquis!
Is nothing to be saved here?
MARQUIS. Nothing.
QUEEN. Nothing?
3610 Consider carefully. Not possibly?
Not through me either?
MARQUIS. Not through you.
QUEEN. You know
Me only half. I have much courage.
MARQUIS. That
I know.
QUEEN. No saving anything?
MARQUIS. None.
QUEEN (*quitting him and covering her face*).
Go, then!
I value no man anymore.
MARQUIS (*deeply moved, kneeling before her*).
My Queen!
Oh, God! Oh, life is beautiful!

(*He leaps up and goes off quickly.*
The Queen goes into the adjoining room.)

The King's antechamber

Scene Twenty-Two

*Duke Alba and Domingo stand apart and walk silently up and down.
Count Lerma emerges from the King's private study. Then Don
Raimond Taxis, postmaster general.*

LERMA. No sign of the Marquis? Still none?

ALBA. Still none.

(Lerma is about to go in again.)

TAXIS *(entering)*. Count Lerma, please announce me.

LERMA. No one sees

The King.

TAXIS. Say then that I *must* see him. Matters

Of last importance to His Majesty.

3620 Be quick. It suffers no delay.

(Lerma goes into the study.)

ALBA *(approaching the Postmaster General)*.

Dear Taxis,

Accustom yourself to great patience. You'll

Not see the King—

TAXIS. And why not?

ALBA. —had you not

The prudence to agree admission with

The Knight of Posa, who's made prisoners of

Both son and father.

TAXIS. Posa? Who? Quite right!

The man from whose hand I received this letter—¹⁰²

ALBA. Letter? What letter?

TAXIS. That I was to forward

To Brussels—

ALBA *(alert)*. Brussels?

TAXIS. That I bring now to

The King—

ALBA. You heard that, Chaplain? Brussels!

DOMINGO (*joining them*). That
3630 Is most suspicious.
TAXIS. And how urgently,
How anxiously was it pressed—
DOMINGO. Anxiously? So!
ALBA. To whom is it addressed?
TAXIS. The Prince of Nassau
And Orange—
ALBA. William? Chaplain, this is treason!
DOMINGO. What else! Oh, yes, indeed. This letter must be
Turned over to the King. What faithful service
Rendered our King!
TAXIS. Most Reverend Father, I
Did no more than my duty.
ALBA. You did well.
LERMA (*emerging from the study, to the Postmaster General*).
The King will see you.

(*Taxis goes in.*)
The Marquis's not come?
DOMINGO. They're looking everywhere.
ALBA. Most strange, most odd.
3640 The Prince a prisoner of the State, and even
The King's uncertain why?
DOMINGO. He didn't once
Present himself to give him an account?
ALBA. How did the King receive all this?
LERMA. The King has
Not said a word.

(*Noise in the study.*)
ALBA. What was that? Still!
TAXIS (*from the study*). Count Lerma!

(*Both go in.*)
ALBA (*to Domingo*).
What's going on here?

DOMINGO. This tone of pure fright!

 This intercepted letter — Duke, I see

 No good to come of this.

ALBA. Lerma he calls!

 And has to know that you and I are waiting —

DOMINGO. *Our time is past.*

ALBA. Am I not still the one

3650 For whom all doors once opened? Now how changed

 It is, how strange it's all become —

DOMINGO (*has gone quietly to the door and stands listening*).

 Shh!

ALBA (*after a pause*). It's

 As still as death in there. You hear them breathe.

DOMINGO. The double tapestry — it dampens sound.

ALBA. Back! Someone's coming!

DOMINGO (*moving back from the door*). All's so tense and still —

 This moment will decide some —

Scene Twenty-Three

*The Prince of Parma, Dukes Feria and Medina Sidonia, with other
Grandees, enter. As above.*

PARMA. Is the King

 Receiving?

ALBA. No.

PARMA. No? Who is with him?

FERIA. Marquis

 Posa, no doubt?

ALBA. He's momentarily

 Expected.

PARMA. We have only just come in

 From Saragossa. All Madrid is thunder-

3660 Struck. Is it true?

DOMINGO. Alas!

FERIA. True? He's arrested?

By the Maltese—

ALBA. It's so.

PARMA. And why? What's happened?

ALBA. Why ask? It's known to none but to the King
And Marquis Posa.

PARMA. No consulting with
The Cortes of the realm?¹⁰³

FERIA. Woe to whoever
Took part in this sedition.

ALBA. So say I. Woe!

MEDINA SIDONIA. And I.

THE OTHER GRANDEES. We all.

ALBA. Who'll follow me into
The study? I shall throw myself at the
King's feet—

LERMA (*plunging from the study*).

Duke Alba!

DOMINGO. Finally! Praise God!

(*Alba hurries in.*)

LERMA (*breathless, agitated*).

The Maltese, when he comes—the Master's not
Alone just now. He'll have him summoned—

3670

DOMINGO (*to Lerma, as all gather around him curiously*).

Count,

What's happened? You're white as a sheet.

LERMA (*about to hurry away*). Infernal!

PARMA and FERIA. What is? What?

MEDINA SIDONIA. How's the King?

DOMINGO (*simultaneous*). Infernal? What?

LERMA. The King wept.

DOMINGO. Wept?

ALL (*together, embarrassed and astonished*).

He wept? The King? He wept?

(*A bell rings in the study. Lerma runs in.*)

DOMINGO (*after him, to hold him back*).

Count, one more word. One moment, please. He's gone!

(*They all stand frozen, horrified.*)

Scene Twenty-Four

*Princess Eboli. Feria. Medina Sidonia. Parma.
Domingo and other Grandees.*

EBOLI (*in haste, beside herself*).

Where is the King? I have to see him. Where?

(*To Feria.*)

You, Duke. You'll bring me to him. Now!

FERIA.

The King

Cannot oblige just now. No one's to be
Admitted.

EBOLI. Has he signed the warrant yet?

Oh, he's been lied to. I can prove it. Lied

To!

3680

DOMINGO (*signaling her from a distance*).

Princess Eboli!

EBOLI (*approaching him*). You here? Priest, you're

The one I need. You'll vouch for me.

(*She seizes his hand to pull him with her into the study.*)

DOMINGO.

Me, Princess?

Are you in your right mind?

FERIA.

Stay back. The King will

Not hear you. Not now. No.

EBOLI.

He *must* hear me.

He *must* hear truth—hear simple truth, and be he

Ten times a god.

DOMINGO. Stay back! Stay back! Or you

Put everything at risk. Keep yourself back!

EBOLI. Look! You can tremble at your idol's rage. I

Myself risk nothing.

(*As she is about to enter the study, Duke Alba plunges out.*)

ALBA (*his eyes shining, his gait triumphant, hurrying to Domingo and embracing him*).

Order a Te Deum

In all the churches. Victory is ours.

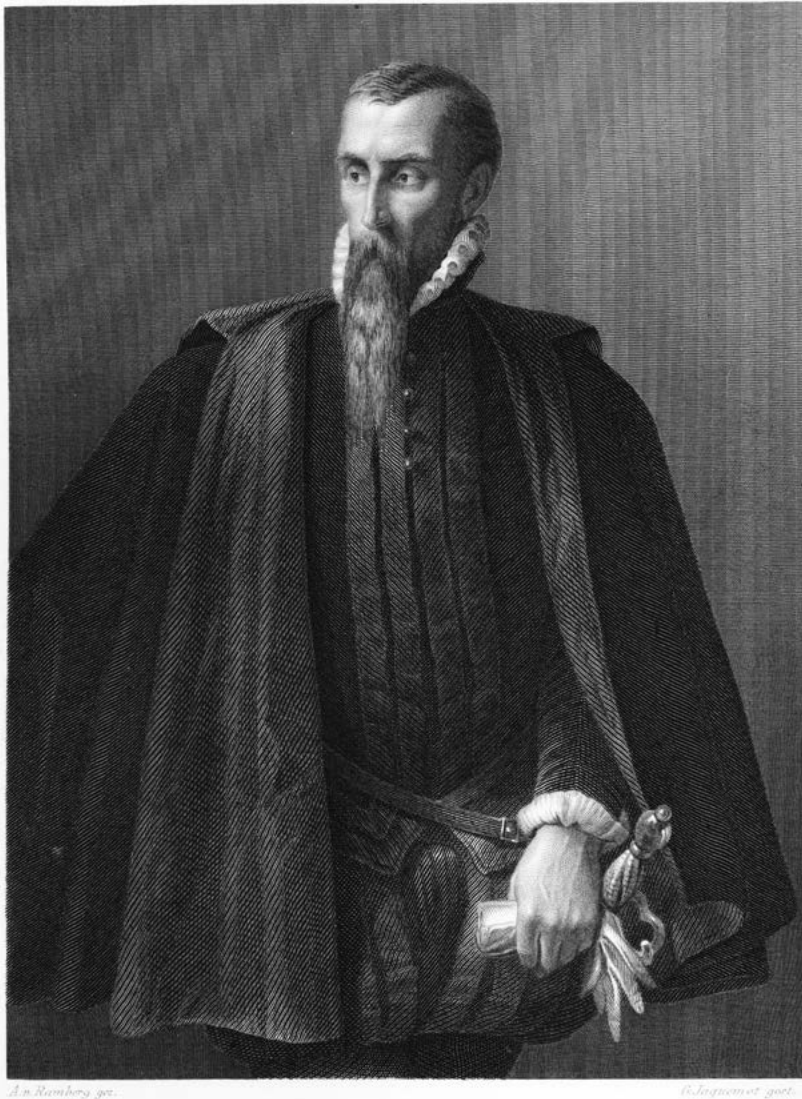
DOMINGO.

Ours?

ALBA (*to Domingo and the other Grandees*).

3690

You'll yet hear more from me. Now to the King.



Duke Alba. Steel engraving by Georges François Louis Jaquemot from a drawing by Arthur von Ramberg. Friedrich Pecht, *Schiller-Galerie* (Leipzig, 1859), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schiller-Galerie_komplett_Bild_18.jpg

Act Five

A room in the Royal Palace, separated by an iron grating from a large courtyard in which Guards walk up and down

Scene One

Carlos sitting at a table, his head resting on his arms, as if he were asleep. In the background, a few Officers locked in with him. Marquis Posa enters quietly and speaks with the Officers, who remove themselves. He approaches Carlos, who is unaware, and observes him silently and sadly. He finally makes a motion that rouses Carlos.

CARLOS (*stands up, notices the Marquis, and starts. He gazes at him as if uncomprehending, then sweeps his hand over his forehead, as if recovering a memory.*)

MARQUIS. It's me, Karl.

CARLOS (*offering his hand*). You have even come to me?

That's good of you.

MARQUIS. I thought that you could use

A good friend here.

CARLOS. You did? You really thought so?

I'm glad. I'm truly glad. I thought—I knew—

We were still friends.

MARQUIS. And I've deserved it of you.

CARLOS. Oh, yes! We understand each other still.

I like that. Gentleness and mildness become

Great hearts like yours and mine. We'll grant that one

Of my demands was proud and wrong—must you

Deny me right ones? Virtue can be hard

But never cruel, never inhumane.

It cost you much! I think I understand

How much it hurt your heart as you prepared

Your victim for the sacrifice.

MARQUIS. Carlos!

How do you mean that?

CARLOS. You will now complete what
I should have and could not. You'll give the Spaniards
The golden days they hoped from me. I've lost
My chance, lost it forever. You saw that.
This dreadful love swept all my mind's first bloom
Away. I failed of your great hopes. Then chance
Or Providence brings you the King. It costs
My secret, and he's yours; you can become
His angel. There's no saving me now—Spain,
Perhaps. Oh, nothing here's detestable but
My raving blindness—not to have seen until
This day that you're as great as you are kind.¹⁰⁴

MARQUIS. No, that I'd not foreseen: not that a generous
Friend could be more inventive than my worldly
Scheming. My edifice comes crashing down,
For I forgot your heart.

CARLOS. Could you have just
Spared *her*! I would have thanked you endlessly.
Could I not bear it all alone? She had
To be the second victim? But enough!
I'll not reproach you. What's the Queen to *you*?
Do *you* love her? Your stringent virtue should
Consult *my* love's small cares? I was unjust.

MARQUIS. You are. But not for this reproach. If I
Deserved one, I deserved all—and I'd not be
Standing this way before you.

(*He takes out his letter case.*) Here are letters
You gave me—

CARLOS (*looks, amazed, from the letters to the Marquis*).
What?

MARQUIS. Returned because they're safer
In your hands now than mine.

CARLOS. What's this? The King's
Not read them? He's not even seen them?

MARQUIS. These?

CARLOS. You didn't show him all?

MARQUIS. Who said I'd shown
Him any?

CARLOS (*astonished*). Why, Count Lerma—

MARQUIS. *He did? Now*
It all makes sense. Who'd have foreseen it? Lerma!
He's never learned to lie. But yes, that's right:
It's other letters in the King's possession.

CARLOS (*stares at him, speechless*).

What am I doing here, then?

MARQUIS. A precaution.

3740 Before you choose an Eboli to be
Your confidante again—

CARLOS (*as if waking from a dream*). Ha! Now at last I see. It's clear as day.

MARQUIS (*moving toward the door*). Who's coming there?

Scene Two

Duke Alba. As above.

ALBA (*approaches the Prince respectfully; his back is turned to Posar throughout the scene*).

Prince, you are free. The King has sent me here
To tell you.

(Carlos looks at the Marquis in wonderment. All are silent.)

I consider myself favored
That I should be the first—

CARLOS (*regards them both with utter amazement. After a pause, to the Duke*).

I am imprisoned
And then set free and don't know why I have
Been either?

ALBA. A mistake, my Prince, to which,
I believe, some—cheat—induced the King.

CARLOS. But it
Is at the Monarch's orders that I find
Myself here?

ALBA. By an error of the King.

3750 CARLOS. I'm truly sorry, but—when the King errs,
It falls to him alone to mend the error.
*(He seeks Posa's gaze and toward the Duke observes a proud
disparagement.)*

They call me here Don Philip's son. On me
The eyes of calumny and prying rest. What
His Majesty has done me out of duty
I'll not appear to owe to royal grace.
I'm quite prepared to go before the Cortes.
I'll not accept my sword from such a hand.

ALBA. The King will have no scruple to admit
Your justified desire, if you will grant that
3760 I might accompany you—

CARLOS. I shall stay here
Until the King—or his Madrid—conduct
Me from this jail. Bring him this answer from me.

*(Alba removes himself. One sees him in the courtyard
giving orders to the Guard.)*

Scene Three

Carlos and Marquis Posa

CARLOS *(astonished and expectant, once they are alone)*.

But what is this? Are you not minister?

MARQUIS. I was once, as you see.

(Going to him, very moved.) Dear Karl, success!

Praise God! It has succeeded.

CARLOS. What's succeeded?

I don't know what you're saying.

MARQUIS *(seizing his hand)*. You are saved,

You're free. And I— *(He stops.)*

CARLOS. And you?

MARQUIS. And I—I press

You to my heart, the first time with good right.

I purchased it with everything that's dear

3770 To me. How sweet the moment for me, Karl.
 I am content with myself.

CARLOS. What sudden change
 In you! I've never seen you so. You stand
 More proudly and your eyes shine.

MARQUIS. We must part,
 Karl. Don't be startled. Promise me, whatever
 You hear, you'll not make parting harder by
 Unbridled grief, unworthy of great souls.
 You'll lose me, and for years. A fool would say
 Forever.

(Carlos withdraws his hand, stares at him, and says nothing.)

 Be a man. I've counted on you.
 I've not avoided passing this fraught hour
 3780 That's called the *last* with you. Should I confess it?
 I have looked forward. Come, let's sit together.
 I feel exhausted.

*(He moves close to Carlos, who is still frozen and
 numbly lets himself be seated.)*

 You don't answer? Where
 Are you? Just hear: When we'd met at the cloister,
 Next day the King sent for me. The outcome
 Is known—to you and all Madrid. What you
 Don't know is that your secret had been betrayed
 To him, that letters found in the Queen's casket
 Witnessed against you, that I heard this from
 Himself, and I became his confidant.

(He pauses, expecting Carlos's answer.)

3790 True, Karl. I broke good faith by words I said.
 I also led the plot that undermined you.
 The deed was all too clear; it was too late
 To exculpate you. I could only draw
 His vengeance down on me. Thus I became
 Your enemy to serve you all the better.¹⁰⁵
 Are you not listening?

CARLOS. I am listening. Go on.

MARQUIS. I'm guiltless to this point. But soon the un-
 Accustomed warmth of royal favor betrays
 Me. You hear of these things, as I foresaw.
 3800 But I, seduced by false consideration,
 Blinded, conceited, thinking I can finish
 This piece of daring all alone, conceal
 My dangerous secret from our friendship. That
 Is where I overstepped! A great mistake.¹⁰⁶
 My confidence was madness. I relied
 On your eternal, never wavering friendship.

(He falls silent; Carlos is now alert and attentive.)

What I feared, happens. Baseless rumors scare you.
 The Queen in her own blood, the palace loud
 With frightful echoes, Lerma's hapless zeal,
 3810 My baffling silence: all this storms your feelings.
 You waver, then despair. Too noble, though,
 To doubt your friend's good faith, you glorify
 His breach of faith and dare to call him faithless
 Because you can admire him, faithless, still.
 Abandoned by your only friend, you throw
 Yourself at Eboli — she was the one
 Betrayed you!

(Carlos stands up.)

I see you go, rush after — too late!
 You're kneeling at her feet, you've confessed all,
 No saving you —

CARLOS. No! She felt touched. You're wrong!

3820 MARQUIS. And everything goes black for me. I'm trapped! Quite
 Helpless! Despair turns me into a beast, a
 Fury! I draw my blade upon a woman.
 But then I see a ray of light:¹⁰⁷ If I
 Should dupe the King? Myself appear the guilty
 One? Believable or not, it's believable
 Enough for Philip, bad enough for him. I
 Dare do it. A thunderbolt perhaps will stop him.
 He hesitates and Karl escapes to Flanders.

CARLOS. You'd do a thing like that?

MARQUIS. I write to William

3830 Of Orange, say I loved the Queen, escaped
 Suspicion when the King suspected you,
 Gained liberal access to the Queen through him.
 I say I fear discovery, that you, knowing
 These things, have gone to Eboli, perhaps
 To warn the Queen, and that I took you prisoner.
 Since all is lost, I write, I'd come to Brussels.
 This letter—

CARLOS (*interjecting*). You did not give to the post?

You know all letters to Brabant and Flanders—

MARQUIS. Are opened by the King. It seems that Taxis
 3840 Has done his duty.

CARLOS. God! Then I am lost!

MARQUIS. Why you?

CARLOS. And you're lost with me. This deception
 My father never can forgive.

MARQUIS. Deception?

Who'll say it was deception?

CARLOS (*staring at him*). Who, you ask?

I shall. (*About to leave.*)

MARQUIS. You're mad! Stay here.

CARLOS. Away! Away!

He's hiring his assassins as we speak.

MARQUIS. Our time is the more precious. We've much to say.

CARLOS. While he's already—

(*He tries again to go. The Marquis holds him back by the arm
 and gives him a meaningful look.*)

MARQUIS. Listen, Carlos—I

Was not in such a hurry, was I, when you—

A boy—took punishment for me?

CARLOS (*touched and full of admiration*). Good angels!

3850 MARQUIS. Oh, save yourself for Flanders! See! The realm
 Is your appointed task. To die for you
 Was mine.

CARLOS (*takes him by the hand, deeply moved*).

Oh, no. He can't, he won't resist a
Deed so sublime. We'll go together to him.
Father, I'll say, see what a friend's done for
His friend. And he'll be touched. He's not without
Humanity, my father isn't. He'll shed
Warm tears, and he'll forgive us.

(*A shot through the grating. Carlos leaps up.*)

Who was that for?

MARQUIS. I think for me. (*He collapses.*)

CARLOS (*with a shriek of pain, falls next to him*).

Oh, merciful God!

MARQUIS (*his voice breaking*). He's swift,

The King — I'd hoped for longer — Save yourself —

3860

You hear? Your mother knows of all — It's over —

(*Carlos remains lying beside the body. After a while the King enters, accompanied by many Grantees. He starts back at the sight.*¹⁰⁸ *A long pause. The Grantees stand in a semicircle around father and son, looking from one to the other. Carlos lies without a sign of life. The King observes him thoughtfully.*)

Scene Four

*The King. Carlos. The Dukes Alba, Feria, and Medina Sidonia.
The Prince of Parma. Count Lerma. Domingo and many Grantees.*

KING (*speaking kindly*).

Your wish is met, Infante. I've come, myself,
With all the Grantees of the realm, to set
You free.

(*Carlos looks up and around as if waking from a dream. His eyes rest on the King, then on the body. He does not answer.*)

Receive your sword back. One was hasty.
(*He offers Carlos his hand and helps him stand up.*) My
Son's not in his right place. Stand up. Come into
Your father's arms.

CARLOS (*receives the King's embrace, then catches himself and looks at him more closely*).

You smell of murder. I'll not
Embrace you.

(*He pushes him back; a movement ripples through the Grandees.*)

Don't be so appalled! Say, what's
My dreadful deed? Well? Touching God's anointed?
No need to worry. I'll not lay hand on him.
Can you not see his forehead's marked? God's marked him.

KING (*breaking off*).

3870 My Grandees, follow me.

CARLOS. Not from the spot, Sire—

(*He holds him back with both hands. One hand falls on the sword the King has brought; the sword slips from its scabbard.*)

KING. A sword drawn on your father?

ALL THE GRANDEES (*drawing their swords*). Regicide!

CARLOS (*holding the King with one hand, the bare sword with the other*).

Put up! What is this? You think I am mad?
I'm not. And if I were, you'd do well not to
Remind me I hold him at sword's point. Keep
Your distance. Temperaments like mine, they must
Be soothed. My business with the King is no
Concern of vassals and their fealty. See!
'See how his fingers bleed! Just look at him!
You see? And now look here. *That's* what he's done,
3880 This artist.

KING (*to the Grandees, who want to surround him*).

All step back! What's to be feared?
Are we not son and father? I'll just see what
Crime Nature—

CARLOS. Nature? I know none. The password's
Murder. The bonds that bind us all are broken.
You've torn them, Sire, in all your kingdoms. I
Should honor what you scorn? Oh, look! Look here!¹⁰⁹
No murder such as this has ever been.
Is there no God? May kings camp so in His

Created world? I ask, is there no God?
 Since mothers have borne young, but one alone,
 But one has died so undeservedly.
 And do you know what you have done? Why, no.
 He doesn't—doesn't know that he has stolen
 A life from this world, dearer, nobler, more
 Important than is he with all his century.

KING (*mildly*). If I have been too hasty, ought you, for whom
 I was, to call me to account?

CARLOS. What's this?
 You cannot guess what this man was to me?
 Oh, tell him! Help his great mind solve the riddle.
 The dead man was my friend. Why did he die?
 It was for me he died.

KING. What I suspected!

CARLOS. Forgive me, dead friend. I profane what I
 Pronounce to ears like these. Let this great judge
 Of men sink down in shame that a smart youth
 Outwitted all his hoary wisdom. Sire!
 Brothers is what we were to one another,
 Brothers by bonds more noble than those forged
 By Nature. His life's course was love, and love
 For me his grand and handsome death. He belonged
 To me, was *mine*, while *you* made show of his
 Esteem and while his jesting eloquence
 Played games with your monstrous intelligence.
 You thought that you ruled him—and were the pliant
 Tool of his higher plans. Captivity
 For me was his deliberate work of friendship.
 To save me he wrote Orange that letter—his
 First lie in life. To save me he threw himself
 Into the death he suffered. You heaped favor
 On him; he died for me. You forced your love
 And friendship on him, and your scepter was his
 Plaything. He tossed it all away and died
 For me.

*(The King stands motionless, staring at the floor. The
 Grantees look toward him, frightened and uneasy.)*

And you could believe so crass a lie?
 How he must have despised you as he set
 Out to suffice you with his bag of tricks!
 You dared to court his friendship and you failed
 This simple test! Oh, that for you was not
 A man. He knew that very well when he
 Tossed you aside with all your crowns. You broke
 This lute with brazen hands, you who could only
 Kill him.

*ALBA (has not let the King out of his sight and has observed the motions of
 his face with growing unease; he now approaches him, fearful).*

3930 Sire, not this deathly silence. Look
 About you. Speak to us.

CARLOS. Oh, you were not
 Indifferent to him. No. He looked on you
 With sympathy. Perhaps! He could have made
 You happy. So rich was his heart, he could
 Have fed you with its excess. Fallen shards of
 His spirit had made you a god. You've robbed
 Yourself. What will you offer to replace
 A life like this one?

*(Deep silence. Many Grandees avert their gaze or cover their
 face with their cloak.)*

3940 Oh, you who stand here silent with amazement
 Or horror, don't condemn the youth who speaks
 So to his father and his king. Just look here!
 He died for me! Do you have tears? Does blood
 Flow in your veins, not red-hot iron? Look here
 And don't condemn me!

(He turns to the King with greater composure.)

You perhaps are waiting
 To see how this unnatural story ends?
 Here is my sword. You are my king again.
 You think I tremble at your vengeance? Murder
 Me, too, the way you murdered one so noble.
 My life is over. What is life to me? I
 Renounce all that awaits me. Go and find
 3950 A son among strange peoples. Here lie my kingdoms.

*(He sinks down on the body and takes no part in what now follows.
One hears a distant tumult: voices and a mob. All is still around the
King. He surveys the circle and no one meets his gaze.)*

KING. Well? No one speaks? Averted eyes! Veiled faces!
My judgment's pronounced. My subjects all condemn me.

*(Silence still. The tumult comes nearer.
A murmur and exchange of gestures courses through the
Grandeess; Count Lerma finally goes to Alba.)*

LERMA. In truth! We're stormed!

ALBA *(softly)*. That's what I fear.

LERMA. They're up
The stairs. They're coming in.

Scene Five

An Officer of the Bodyguard. As above.

OFFICER *(urgent)*. Rebellion!

Where is the King?

(He works his way through the crowd and arrives before the King.)

Madrid is up in arms!

Thousands surround the palace—soldiers, mob.

Prince Carlos, they are saying, is arrested,

His life in danger. They would see him still

Alive or put the torch to all Madrid.

ALL GRANDEES *(moving about)*.

3960 Protect, protect the King!

ALBA *(to the King, who is calm and unmoved)*.

Take flight, my King!

There's danger. No one knows who's armed the mob—

KING *(wakes from his numbness and stands up straight;
he goes among them with majesty)*.

My throne still stands? I am still King of Spain?

No more. Faint hearts shed tears here, softened by

A boy. One only waits to hear the word to

Abandon me. Betrayed by rebels!

ALBA. Sire,

What fantasy!

KING. There! Bow down over there!

Before the young king in full flower! I am

Nought. Powerless. A graybeard.

ALBA. This is what

It's come to! Spaniards!

(All gather around the King and kneel before him, swords drawn. Carlos remains beside the body, forsaken and alone.)

KING *(tears off his mantle and tosses it away)*.

Clothe *him* with this royal

3970 Ornament, carry him upon my trampled

Corpse— *(He faints in Alba's and Lerma's arms.)*

LERMA. Help! Oh, God!

FERIA. God! What mischance!

LERMA. He's fainted—

ALBA *(leaving the King in Lerma's and Feria's hands)*.

Bring him to bed directly. I meanwhile

Go to restore peace to Madrid.

(He goes off. The King is carried off, accompanied by all Grandees.)

Scene Six¹¹⁰

Carlos remains alone with the body. Luis Mercado appears, looks about timidly and remains standing behind the Prince, who does not notice him.

MERCADO. I come from

Her Majesty the Queen. I'm called Mercado.

(Carlos looks away and gives no answer.)

I am Her Majesty's physician. My

Credentials—

(He shows a seal ring. Carlos remains silent.)

Madame wishes to see you

Today yet—matters of importance—

CARLOS. Nothing

Is of importance to me in this world.

MERCADO. A charge, she says, that Marquis Posa left—

CARLOS (*leaps to his feet*).

3980 What? Right away. (*He is ready to go with him.*)

MERCADO. Not now, my Prince. You must

Wait for the night. The entrances are guarded

And Watches doubled. That wing can't be entered

Unseen.

CARLOS. But how—

MERCADO. One way remains. The Queen

Proposes it. It's bold and strange—

CARLOS. And is?

MERCADO. You know the story that at midnight under

The cloistered arches of the castle wanders

In monk's attire the ghost of our late Emperor.

The people believe this story and the Watches

Take up their posts with horror. You, if you

3990 Assume this guise, can pass all Watches untouched

And reach the chamber of the Queen, which this

Key opens. You will find the robe and mask in

Your rooms. But I must bring the Queen your answer

Immediately.

CARLOS. The time then?

MERCADO. Is at midnight.

CARLOS. Your Mistress may expect me at that hour.

(Mercado goes off.)

Scene Seven

Carlos. Count Lerma.

LERMA. Save

Yourself, my Prince. The King is raging at you.

Your freedom's threatened, or your life. I've stolen

Away to warn you. Ask no questions. Take flight!

CARLOS. A mighty hand shields me.

4000 LERMA. The Queen tells me you're
To flee Madrid tonight for Brussels. Don't
Delay. The uproar favors you. That's why
The Queen has raised it: You're now safe from force.
The Mail awaits you at the cloister; here
Are weapons—
(*He gives him a dagger and pistols.*)

CARLOS. Thanks, Count Lerma!

LERMA. What I saw
Today has touched me. Friends no longer love
That way! Our patriots all weep for you. More
I cannot say.

CARLOS. Count Lerma, my late friend
Called you a noble man.

LERMA. Farewell, my Prince!
There're better days to come—days I'll not see.
4010 Receive my homage here. (*He drops to one knee.*)
CARLOS (*tries to stop him, very moved*). Not so, not so, Count.
You touch me and I'll not be weak.

LERMA (*kissing his hand*). King of
My children! Oh, my children shall be able
To die for you. Not I. Remember me
In these, my children. Come to Spain again
In peace. Bring humanness to Philip's throne.
You, too, have learned to suffer. Nothing bloody
Against your father, Prince. No. Nothing bloody.
Philip the Second forced his father from
The throne; today this Philip trembles before
4020 His son! Remember these things; go with God!

(*He goes off quickly. Carlos is about to go off to another side. He turns
and throws himself on the body once more, then goes off quickly.*)

The King's antechamber

Scene Eight

Duke Alba and Duke Feria enter, in conversation.

ALBA. The town is still. How did you leave the King?

FERIA. In the most dreadful mood. He's locked himself in,
 Refuses to admit a soul. The Marquis's
 Treason has altered his whole nature. We
 Don't know him anymore.

ALBA. I have to see him.
 No sparing him. A new discovery.

FERIA. New
 Discovery?

ALBA. A Carthusian monk who'd stolen
 Into the Prince's rooms, heard Posa's death
 Recounted there, attracts my Guards' attention.
 He's questioned. Frightened, he surrenders to us
 Papers of greatest interest the deceased
 Had charged him give the Prince, should he himself not
 Appear before sundown.

FERIA. And?

ALBA. Letters there
 Say Carlos is to leave Madrid between
 Midnight and morning.

FERIA. What?

ALBA. A ship at Cadiz
 Lies under sail and bound for Flushing¹¹¹ where
 The Netherlandish states await him to
 Throw off their Spanish chains.

FERIA. Ha! What is this?

ALBA. Letters there also tell us that a fleet
 Of Soliman has sailed from Rhodes in league
 For an attack upon the Spanish king.

FERIA. That's possible?

ALBA. And now I understand
The travels of this Maltese throughout Europe.
These were to arm all northern powers, no less, in
Behalf of Flemish freedom.

FERIA. That was him!

ALBA. And, last, there is a detailed plan of war
To separate the Netherlands from Spain
Forever. Nothing is omitted: force and
Resistance calculated; sources, powers
Enumerated; orders to be followed,
Alliances to be concluded. Devilish,
This project. But in truth, it's no less god-like.

FERIA. What an impenetrable traitor!

ALBA. This
Same letter cites a secret meeting that
The Prince is to keep with his mother on
The evening of his flight.

FERIA. But that's tonight.

ALBA. This midnight. I have given orders for this
Event. You see we cannot lose a moment.
Admit me to the King.

FERIA. There's no admission.

ALBA. I'll enter. This is urgent.

(As he approaches the door, it springs open and the King emerges.)

FERIA. Ha! Himself!

Scene Nine

The King to join the others. All shrink back at the sight of him and respectfully let him pass among them. He moves in a waking dream, like a sleepwalker. His figure and his dress reflect the disorder in which his faint has left him. He walks slowly past the Grandees, stares at each without seeing. He stops, gazing downward, until his feelings frame themselves in words.

KING. Deliver this dead man to me. I want
Him back again.

DOMINGO (*softly to Duke Alba*).

Say something to him. Speak.

KING. He thought me little and he died. I want
Him back. He must think otherwise of me.

ALBA (*approaches him fearfully*).

Sire—

KING. Who is speaking here? (*Looking about slowly*.)

Have you forgot

Who I am? Why not on your knees? I am
Still king. Submission's what I want. Do all
Now put me last, since *one* despised me?

ALBA. Speak

No more of him, my King! A new foe, graver,
Far graver, rises in the land.

FERIA. Prince Carlos—

KING. He had a friend who died for him—for him!

With me he would have shared a kingdom.¹¹² How he
Looked down on me! That proudly one does not look
Down even from a throne. Could one not see
How much *that* conquest raised his sense of worth?
His pain acknowledged what he'd lost. One does
Not mourn that way for a mere mortal. (*Pause.*) Were
He still alive!¹¹³ I'd give an India!

Wretched Omnipotence that cannot reach
Into the grave, correct a bit of haste
With human life! The dead shall not arise.

Who'd say I'm happy? In the grave lies one who

Refused me deference.¹¹⁴ What are living men
To me? A spirit, *one* free man, arose in
This century — one. He despises me
And dies.

ALBA. We've lived in vain! Let's seek our graves,
Spaniards. In death, no less, this man steals our
King's heart!

KING (*seating himself and propping his head on his hand*).

Had he but died for *me*! I loved him,
Loved him like my own son. In him a new
4090 Dawn broke for me. Who knows what I'd kept open
For him! He was my first great love. All Europe
Curse me! Curse me it may. From him I have
Earned thanks.

DOMINGO. What evil spell—

KING. Who did he do

4100 This for? That little son of mine? Oh, no. I'll
Not believe that. No Posa dies for a mere boy.
Friendship's poor flame can't fill a Posa's heart.
It beat for all humanity. His bent
Was all the world and coming generations.
To meet it, he should find a throne—and pass
It up? He should forgive himself this treason
On his humanity? I know him better.
Oh, he did not choose Carlos over Philip.
He chose the young man, his disciple, over
The old. The father's setting sun's not worth his
New labors. These he saves for the son's rising.
Oh, they just wait for me to go.

ALBA. You'll find
That said quite clearly in these letters, Sire.

KING (*getting to his feet*).

Perhaps he has miscalculated. I'm
Still here. I feel a young man's strength in my
4110 Sinews. I'll make of him a laughing stock. His
Virtue be idle dreams. May he have died
A fool. His fall take down his friend, his century!

FERIA, TAXIS, DOMINGO (*together*). How very strange!

KING. What's this?

FERIA. Sire, a report one cannot believe—

DOMINGO. Swiss Guards come from their posts—ridiculous—

One can't repeat it—

KING. Well?

ALBA. They say that in

The left wing of the palace they have seen

The Emperor's ghost go past them solemnly.

4140 And all the Watch throughout the wing concur

And add the wraith then vanished in the Queen's

Apartments.

KING. What form did he take?

OFFICER. The habit

Of a monk of Jerome that he took at

San Yuste.¹¹⁵

KING. Of a monk? How did the Watch then

Know him as Emperor? They did not know him

In life.

OFFICER. The scepter that he carried told them.

DOMINGO. They say he's often seen in just this form.

KING. And no one spoke to him?

OFFICER. We didn't dare.

The Watch pronounced its prayers and let him pass

4150 Straight through.

KING. And disappeared into the Queen's rooms?

OFFICER. The antechamber of the Queen.

(*General silence.*)

KING (*turning swiftly*). What say you?

ALBA. We're dumbstruck, Sire.

KING (*after reflecting, to the Officer*).

Put my Guard under arms,

Block every entrance in that wing. I'd like

A word with this our ghost.

(*The Officer goes off. A Page enters.*)

PAGE. The Cardinal

Inquisitor, Sire!

KING (*to those present*). Leave us.

(The Cardinal Inquisitor, ninety years old and blind, leaning on a staff and led by two Dominicans. As he goes through the rows, all Grandees kneel and touch his hem. He blesses them. They all go off.)

Scene Ten

The King and the Grand Inquisitor

Long silence.

GRAND INQUISITOR. Do I stand
Before the King?

KING. Yes.

GRAND INQUISITOR. I had not thought so.

KING. Here I renew a scene from bygone years.

The Infante Philip seeks good counsel from
His teacher.

GRAND INQUISITOR. Your great father, Charles, my pupil,
Never sought counsel.

KING. He was that much happier.

I have committed murder, Cardinal. No peace —

GRAND INQUISITOR. The reason why you murdered?

KING. A deception

Unequalled —

GRAND INQUISITOR. Well I know.

KING. You know?

GRAND INQUISITOR. For years,

What you found out at sundown.

KING (*deeply startled*). He was known

To you?

GRAND INQUISITOR. His life lies mapped from first to last in
The holy registers of Santa Casa.¹¹⁶

KING. And he went free?

GRAND INQUISITOR. He fluttered on a long,
Strong string.

KING. Beyond my borders, too?

GRAND INQUISITOR. Where he
Was, I was, too.

KING (*walking up and down, annoyed*).

4170 They knew whose hands I lay
In—and said nothing?

GRAND INQUISITOR. I give you this question
Back: Why did *you* not ask before you threw
Yourself at him? You knew him! *One* glance showed you
The heretic. What licensed you to hide
This victim from the Holy Office?¹¹⁷ Does
One play with us this way? If Majesty
Would deal in stolen goods, bargain with our
Worst enemies, what's to become of us?
If *one* is spared, what right to sacrifice
One hundred thousand?

KING. *He is sacrificed—*

4180 GRAND INQUISITOR. He's murdered! Shamefully! Disgracefully!
The blood that was to flow to our great glory
Was wasted at a foul assassin's hand.
That man was ours. What authorized *you* to
Lay hand on holy assets of our Order?
To die by our hand he was there. God gave
Him as a gift to our time's penury,
In order to expose to common view
The sacrilege of his mind's vainglorious reason.
That was my well-considered plan. It's lost now,
4190 This labor of long years! We have been robbed,
And you are left with bloody hands.

KING. It's passion
Drove me to do it.

GRAND INQUISITOR. Passion? Infante Philip
Answers, and I'm the only old man here?
Passion indeed!

(Shaking his head indignantly.)

Release all consciences
In lands you rule when you have put yourself
In chains.

KING. I am a child in this. Have patience.

GRAND INQUISITOR. I'm ill-content with you. To blacken all
Your previous rule! Where was the Philip whose
Firm soul stood like the polar star, unchanging,
4200 Turning eternally about itself?
The past entire had disappeared? The world
Was not the same when you gave him your hand?
Poison not poison? Had the wall between
Evil and good and true and false collapsed?
What's men's good faith? What constancy? What is
Resolve, if one weak moment melts a rule
Of sixty years like women's moods?

KING. I looked
Into his eyes. Forgive this lapse into
Mere mortalness. The world has one less passage
4210 To reach your heart: Your eyes admit no light.

GRAND INQUISITOR. Why did you want this man? What new thing could
He bring, to've caught you unprepared? Do you know
Fantastics, new order they invent so little?
You'd never heard the boastful speech of world
Reform? The house of your convictions, if
It falls before mere words, with what effrontery,
I ask, did you condemn one hundred thousand
Poor souls who climbed the pyre for nothing worse?

KING. I longed to have a man. Domingo here—

4220 GRAND INQUISITOR. Why men? Men are for you mere numbers, no more.
And I must hear my graybeard scholar here
Recite the elements of kingly rule? May
The world's own god learn not to be in need
Of what can be refused him! If *you* whine
For sympathy, have you not deemed the world
Your equal? What right can you claim then to
Command your peers?

KING (*throwing himself into a chair*).

I am a little man,

I feel it. Of the creature you require

What only the Creator can attain.

4230 GRAND INQUISITOR. No, Sire. One doesn't go behind my back.

You are perceived. You wanted to evade us.

Our Order's heavy chains chafed you. And you,

You wanted to be free and peerless.

(*He stops. The King remains silent.*)

We are

Avenged. Be grateful to a Church that is

Content to punish you as would a mother.

The choice that you made blindly was chastisement

Enough, and you have learned your lesson. Now

Return to us. Did I not stand so now

Before *you*, as God lives, tomorrow you'd

4240 Have stood so before me.

KING. Don't speak to me

That way! Restrain yourself, Priest! Such a tone

I will not suffer.

GRAND INQUISITOR. Why invoke the shade of
Samuel?¹¹⁸ I gave the Throne two kings and hoped.

To leave behind a firmly founded work.

I see my life's work lost. Don Philip shakes

My building. (*Pause.*) Tell me, Sire, just why have I

Been called? What would you have me do? I've no

Desire to come again.

KING. One task remains,

The last. And then you may depart in peace.

4250 The past is past. Let us be reconciled.

We are at peace?

GRAND INQUISITOR. If Philip is contrite.

KING (*after a pause*).

My son is planning insurrection.

GRAND INQUISITOR. What

Have you decided?

KING. All or nothing.

GRAND INQUISITOR. "All" is—

KING. To let him flee if I cannot condemn him.

GRAND INQUISITOR.

Yes?

KING. Can you found a new religion for me

That justifies the murder of one's child?

GRAND INQUISITOR. To reconcile eternal justice God's own

Son died upon the Tree.

KING. You'll spread this notion

Throughout all Europe?

GRAND INQUISITOR. As far as the Cross

4260 Is honored.

KING. I commit a crime against all

Nature. This fearsome voice you'll silence?

GRAND INQUISITOR. There's

No voice of Nature where there's faith.

KING. I lay

My judge's office in your hands. May I

Step back entirely?

GRAND INQUISITOR. Give him to me.

KING. He is

My only son. For whom have I then gathered?

GRAND INQUISITOR. For putrefaction better than for freedom.

KING (*rising*).

We are at one. Come.

GRAND INQUISITOR. Where to?

KING. To receive

The sacrifice now from my very hands.

(*He leads him away.*)

Final Scene

The Queen's apartments

Carlos. The Queen. Then the King with retinue. Carlos in monk's habit, behind a mask that he removes; an unsheathed sword under his arm. It is very dark. He approaches a door, which opens. The Queen emerges, in night dress, carrying a light. Carlos drops to one knee.

CARLOS. Elisabeth!

QUEEN (*contemplating him with quiet sadness*).

It's thus we meet again!

4270

CARLOS. It's thus we meet again.

(*A silence.*)

QUEEN (*composing herself*). Stand up, Karl! We'll not

Show weakness to each other. The great Dead

Would not be celebrated by feckless tears.

One weeps for smaller sorrows! He gave himself

For you: he bought your life with his.¹¹⁹ This blood

Was shed for a phantasm? Carlos! I

Myself have vouched for you. My surety let

Him go from us in greater peace. You'll not

Make me a liar?

CARLOS (*with great warmth*). I shall set for him

A monument like none set for a king.

4280

A paradise shall bloom upon his ashes!

QUEEN. That's how I wanted you! That was the great

Intention of his death. And he made me

Executor of his last will. I caution

You: I'll hold to fulfillment of this oath.

Dying, he laid another legacy

Upon me. I gave him my word. I'll tell

You. He entrusted Karl to me. And I'll

Defy appearances: I'll fear no man,

Will be as bold as friend can be. My heart

4290

Shall speak. He called our love a virtue? This

I believe of him. And never shall I let

My heart—

CARLOS. You needn't finish, Queen. I've lain
 In a deep sleep, a dream. I loved. And now
 I have awakened.¹²⁰ We'll forget what's past.
 Here are your letters back. Destroy my own.
 You needn't fear my feelings. It is over.
 A purer fire has purged my being. My
 Passion lies in the grave beside the dead.
 No mortal longing can divide my heart.
(After a silence, taking her hand.)

4300 I've come to take my leave. I see at last,
 Mother, there is a higher good than to
 Possess you. One short night gave wings to my
 Slow run of years, made me so soon a man.
 I have no further task in life than memory
 Of him! My harvests are all done.

(He approaches her; she covers her face.)

You're silent,

Mother?

QUEEN. Pay no attention to my tears, Karl.
 There is no help for them. But I admire you,
 Believe me.

CARLOS. You were our league's sole confidante.
This name makes you my dearest in the world.
 4310 My friendship's yours alone, as yesterday
 My love. And I shall deem the royal widow
 Sacred, should Providence lead me to take
 The Throne.

*(The King, accompanied by the Grand Inquisitor and by his
 Grantees, appears in the background, unnoticed.)*

I now go out of Spain. My father
 I'll never see again, not in this life.
 I value him no more. My heart is dead
 To Nature. Be a wife to him again.

He's lost his son. Take up your duties. I fly
To lift my hard-pressed people's tyranny.
Madrid sees me again as king or never.
4320 And now a last farewell! (*He kisses her.*)
QUEEN. Oh, Karl, what is
It that you make of me? I dare not lift
Myself to such men's greatness. But still, I'm able
To understand you and I can admire you.

CARLOS. Am I not strong, Elisabeth? I hold
You in my arms and do not falter. From
This spot death's pressing terrors had not torn
Me yesterday. (*He releases her.*)
That is now over. I
Defy all fate that mortal man encounters.
I held you in my arms and did not falter.
4330 Still! Do you hear?

(*A clock strikes.*)

QUEEN. I hear the clock that tolls
Our parting knell.

CARLOS. Good night, then, Mother. From Ghent
You will receive a letter that announces
The secret of all our contacts. I go now
To undertake a *public* round with Don
Philip. I would that there be nothing secret
Among us now. *You* needn't fear the world's
Inquiry. May this be my last deception.

(*He reaches for the mask. The King steps between them.*)

KING. Your last indeed!

(*The Queen falls fainting.*)

CARLOS (*rushes to her and receives her in his arms*).

She's dead? Oh, God in heaven!

KING (*cold and calm to the Grand Inquisitor*).

I've done my part here, Cardinal. Do yours now!

(*He goes off.*)

Notes

1. Aranjuez, south of Madrid, was the summer residence of the Spanish kings.
2. Toledo, southwest of Madrid, was the summer residence of the kings of Castile. There, in 1560, the estates of Castile and Aragon paid homage to Prince Carlos, recognizing him as heir to the Spanish throne.
3. The crux of the domestic drama in *Don Carlos*. Elisabeth of Valois had been betrothed to Prince Carlos when King Philip, widowed for the second time, took her as his wife instead.
4. King Philip's first wife, Maria of Portugal, died soon after the birth of Prince Carlos, Philip's first son.
5. The capital of Aragon.
6. Schiller's transposition of a historical event. Elisabeth's father, Henri II of France, received a splinter in the eye at a tourney held to mark her betrothal to King Philip. The wound proved fatal.
7. "Purple" is the color of a cardinal, a rank to which King Philip could propose a candidate to the pope.
8. Saint Peter's throne is the seat of the pope.
9. Brussels at the time was the seat of the governors general of the Spanish Netherlands.
10. Duke Alba was known then, as now, for his zeal and cruelty.
11. The Emperor Charles V, Carlos's grandfather, who ceded the Spanish throne to his son Philip in 1556.
12. Alcala, east of Madrid, was the foremost Spanish university at the time.

13. Carlos's friendlessness and his fatherlessness, both mentioned here, are recurrent motifs in the play and important motivators of the action.
14. King Philip's sister Maria, married to the German emperor Maximilian II.
15. The beginning of a rhetorical crescendo intended to underscore the gravity of the domestic crime.
16. Carlos's request to meet the Queen will set the plot into motion.
17. The rural setting of the Queen's residence contrasts with the formal royal gardens of scene 1 and reflects the tastes and qualities of the Queen.
18. The tightly composed conversation that follows characterizes the Queen, Princess Eboli, and Duchess Olivarez.
19. A monastery in Normandy, famously under a rule of silence.
20. The stillness of Madrid—and elsewhere—returns as a motif.
21. A summer residence built by Philip north of Madrid.
22. Auto da fe is Latin *actus fidei*: act of faith. It was an elaborate execution of condemnation by the Inquisition, most notoriously, by fire.
23. Elisabeth of Valois is not happy in Spain. She longs for France, and her French loyalties will inform her role in the play.
24. The Queen cannot name the source of her sense that something is lacking.
25. Eboli's mind, no less than the Queen's, is running on more than one track. Schiller is a master of representing buried mental operations in inadvertencies of speech.
26. Catherine de' Medici, widow of Henri II, was regent for her minor son.
27. Marquis Posa is a Knight of the Order of Malta.
28. The Queen refrains from pursuing her memories.
29. Guelf and Ghibelline were two parties in medieval Italy, loyal to the pope and to the German emperor, respectively, and famously at war with one another in the cities. The piquancy of Posa's tale lies in its running on two levels, one for young Princess Eboli, the other for the Queen.
30. Posa is satisfied that the Queen has understood.
31. This is the interview Carlos has never had with the Queen (see above, lines 260–261). After a long exposition, it marks the beginning of the action.

32. A palace and a monastery northeast of Madrid, burial site of the Spanish kings.
33. That is, the lands that Carlos will hold in custody.
34. These are the letters Posa brought her (scene 4).
35. Scenes 1 through 5 have belonged to Carlos, the Marquis, and the Queen. Now King Philip enters, accompanied by Duke Alba and Domingo. The presentation of contenders in the coming contest is complete.
36. The Queen finds herself caught in a conflict between French manners and Spanish protocol.
37. This is the great motif of Philip the man versus Philip the king.
38. The sense of this assertion is that Philip will take proper measures against any fear that he has cause to feel.
39. Philip's second great motif: just as Carlos finds himself fatherless, Philip feels himself childless
40. Philip had sworn to defend the Inquisition against apostates and to force his subjects to obey its orders.
41. These are the letters the Queen handed him (scene 5).
42. "Genius" in this usage denotes a native spirit, in-born qualities, a guiding force, a better self.
43. To this point, Posa has addressed Carlos, who is royal, as *Sie*, while Carlos has addressed Posa as *du*, as he did when they were school boys. Carlos now offers parity. That desire reflects the loneliness of royal rank and Carlos's sense of friendlessness. The parity established here enables further development of the plot.

Act Two

44. The privilege of wearing one's hat in the presence of the king was the mark of the very highest nobility and of the king's particular favor.
45. The contrast made here is between the King's son and his paid—or bribed—courtiers.
46. Philip, too, is marked by the solitude of royalty and by friendlessness. The motif will return.

47. The comedy that follows here is a variant on the set piece of the misdirected letter and a further complication of the plot.
48. The Duke of Savoy commanded the Spanish troops that defeated the French at Saint Quentin in 1557.
49. Alba had been present in the Schmalkaldic War, a confessional conflict in eastern Germany (1547), where he became known for his cruelty.
50. See Act II, scene 1, lines 900–901.
51. What Eboli is thinking will be disclosed at the end of this episode.
52. Eboli is expressing doubt about the truth of Carlos's elaborate lie. We know from her early mention of Carlos (Act I, scene 3, lines 389–390) that she has long been interested in him; her belief that he is interested in her prompted her to write him and informs her responses here to his evasions.
53. Carlos feels himself exposed, and Eboli, seizing her advantage, adopts a tone of raillery.
54. Eboli has misconstrued the first incident she recounts.
55. The Holy Office is the Inquisition.
56. Eboli has just betrayed her unspoken thought at scene 7, above, lines 1302–1303: "He must know about it."
57. Eboli is now in a position to understand Carlos's abandoning the Queen on the dance floor when the King appeared (scene 8, above, lines 1457–1461).
58. "Romantic" here in the sense of belonging to the literary genre called "romance."
59. Eboli's unspoken thought becomes concrete in the figure of the first speaker in the next scene.
60. The word "new," and its synonyms, occurs frequently in the text henceforth. New things are deeply inimical to a conservative regime such as Spain's Catholic monarchy during the Counter-Reformation. Latin *nova res* (new thing) denotes what is new in the sense of being revolutionary, and that meaning is present here.
61. The mixed metaphor is present in the German.
62. The lily was the heraldic device of the house of Valois.

- 63. Eboli had thought she was embarking on an amorous intrigue in the private sphere, urged by a pandering priest. She wonders why the King's first minister keeps turning up.
- 64. The river of Madrid.
- 65. For hourly prayer. Latin *hora* is "hour."
- 66. Posa's long sifting of Carlos's motives prepares the way for a new departure of the plot. The focus of the play has begun to shift from the figure of Carlos to that of Posa.

Act Three

- 67. These are items from the Queen's casket and place the scene in the early morning hours after Eboli's visit to the King.
- 68. The King is remembering the night just past.
- 69. Alba is uncertain of the result of his conspiracy with Domingo to send Eboli to the King.
- 70. Elisabeth of Valois had been married to Philip II by Alba's proxy and then brought to Madrid.
- 71. Alba is contrasting a marriage for political reasons and a love match.
- 72. The Queen's concealing Carlos's presence was indeed magnanimity—a truth the King does not recognize.
- 73. A half-truth, at best. See Act III, scenes 10–12.
- 74. Philip's appealing to Domingo for truth shows just how friendless and exposed he is at his own court.
- 75. The soliloquy that follows is the hinge of the play.
- 76. Egmont led the Spanish cavalry in Spain's victory over France at Saint Quentin.
- 77. Philip's tragedy is that his search for truth about his slandered wife will lead him to fall into another trap.
- 78. The destruction of the invincible Spanish armada actually took place much later (1588).

79. Philip's half-sister Margaret was married to Ottavio Farnese, Duke of Parma. Historically, she was governor general of the Spanish Netherlands, 1559–1567. Alba succeeded her.
80. Calatrava was a prestigious knightly order of which the King was grand master.
81. The day of public audience.
82. Alba relates an incident in the Turkish siege of Saint Elmo, stronghold of the Knights of Malta, 1565. La Valette is the grand master of the order. Soliman is the Turkish sultan, Piali one of the commanders of the Turkish fleet, Ulucciali a corsair, Mustafa the commander of the Turkish army, and Hassem, king of Algiers. The German for Posa's "romantic" exploit is *schwärmerisch*: effervescent, enthusiastic, spirited, vaporous, slightly mad. The word was used commonly in Schiller's time to describe a certain personality type, usually a young woman, sometimes a young man.
83. Posa's reply to the King's question about his confession is open to more than one interpretation.
84. As examples of cruel tyrants.

Act Four

85. A high stool on which certain noblewomen were permitted to be seated in the presence of a queen.
86. Posa's hypotheticals are not altogether without basis in fact. The passage bears close reading.
87. The Queen's first expression of her reservations about Posa.
88. Galileo is meant here.
89. What follows here is Posa's suppressed thought toward the end of Act II: "a wild thought, a bold and happy one" (lines 2039–2041).
90. This thought, mentioned only here, would seem to be the intention of Posa's attempt to reorient the King's thinking in scene 12, below, but the point is not developed.
91. William, Prince of Orange, champion of the Protestant cause in the Netherlands.
92. Lerma is distinguished by his loyalty.

93. Posa has finally succeeded in changing the subject.
94. Posa has said much the same thing to the Queen. See above, scene 3, lines 2852–2853.
95. At the time, just outside Paris and a residence of the French kings.
96. A morning gift is brought a bride by her new husband on the morning after the wedding night.
97. The King said much same thing to Alba at the outset of this marital crisis. See Act III, scene 3, lines 2169–2170.
98. But see above, scene 3, lines 2876–2881.
99. These unpleasant sentiments belong to an ancient catalogue of commonplaces about the nature of women.
100. Another turning of the plot, again suppressed. It will be disclosed in Posa's long narrative of events to Carlos, Act V, scene 3.
101. See the reservations the Queen expresses at scene 3, above, lines 2828–2830.
102. To advance the action quickly, Schiller resorts to a remarkably indiscreet postmaster general.
103. The Cortes was a court council composed of noblemen and churchmen.

Act Five

104. The Queen assesses Posa rather differently. See Act IV, scene 21, lines 3602–3607.
105. We hear this sentiment from Posa for a second time. See Act IV, scene 3, lines 2833–2835.
106. Posa's earlier word for his concealments was "duplicity" (*Zweideutelei*), Act IV, scene 3, line 2825.
107. This is the turning of the plot suppressed at Act IV, scene 17, line 3405.
108. It seems the order did not come from Philip. See the stage direction for Alba leaving the prison at the end of scene 2, above.
109. Carlos's tribute to Posa is an *Ecce homo* (Behold the man), spoken by Pilate showing Jesus to his accusers (John 19, 5). The elevation of Posa to tragic stature begins here.

110. Here begins a long coda that will bring the action to an end. It is composed of brilliant scenes (scene 9, scene 10) connected by extended passages that are more narrative than dramatic and more prosaic than poetic. Here the writing is colored by the poet's impatience to be done at last with a sprawling play over which he has lingered too long.
111. Cadiz is a Spanish port in Andalusia, Flushing a Dutch port and scene of rebellion.
112. "He" is Carlos.
113. "He" is Posa.
114. Philip's eulogy to Posa begins here. Carlos's eulogy has preceded, the Queen's will follow.
115. When Emperor Charles V abdicated in 1556, he retired to the monastery San Jeronimo de Yuste, where he died in 1558.
116. The Santa Casa was the prison of the Inquisition.
117. The Holy Office is the Inquisition.
118. King Saul, facing defeat in battle and hearing nothing from his appeal to the Lord, had the Witch of Endor summon the shade of Samuel (1 Samuel 28). The analogues, while obscure, seem to be Saul's calling up the shade of Samuel and Philip's resorting to Posa.
119. This is the vocabulary of Crucifixion and Redemption.
120. Carlos's transformation—and that of his love—follows Posa's elevation.

This book need not end here...

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Don Carlos Infante of Spain

A Dramatic Poem

Friedrich Schiller

Translated by Flora Kimmich

Introduction by John Guthrie

Schiller's *Don Carlos*, written ten years before his great *Wallenstein* trilogy, testifies to the young playwright's growing power. First performed in 1787, it stands at the culmination of Schiller's formative development as a dramatist and is the first play written in his characteristic iambic pentameter. *Don Carlos* plunges the audience into the dangerous political and personal struggles that rupture the court of the Spanish King Philip II in 1658. The autocratic king's son Don Carlos is caught between his political ideals, fostered by his friendship with the charismatic Marquis Posa, and his doomed love for his stepmother Elisabeth of Valois. These twin passions set him against his father, the brooding and tormented Philip, and the terrible power of the Catholic Church, represented in the play by the indelible figure of the Grand Inquisitor.

Schiller described *Don Carlos* as "a family portrait in a princely house." It interweaves political machinations with powerful personal relationships to create a complex and resonant tragedy. The conflict between absolutism and liberty appealed not only to audiences but also to other artists and gave rise to several operas, not least to Verdi's great *Don Carlos* of 1867. The play, which the playwright never finished to his satisfaction, lives on nonetheless among his best-loved works and is translated here with flair and skill by Flora Kimmich. Like her translations of Schiller's *Wallenstein* and his *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, this is a lively and accessible rendering of a classic text. As with all books in the Open Book Classics series, it is supported by an introduction and notes that will inform and enlighten both the student and the general reader.

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