

DUKE

At last we have arrived at our destination. This is the Ducal Palace, and it is here that the Grand Inquisitor resides. As a Castilian hidalgo of ninety-five quarterings, I regret that I am unable to pay my state visit on a horse. As a Castilian hidalgo of that description, I should have preferred to ride through the streets of Venice; but owing, I presume, to an unusually wet season, the streets are in such a condition that equestrian exercise is impracticable. No matter. Where is our suite?

LUIZ

(coming forward) Your Grace, I am here.

DUCHESS

Why do you not do yourself the honour to kneel when you address His Grace?

DUKE

My love, it is so small a matter! *(To LUIZ)* Still, you may as well do it. *(LUIZ kneels)*

CASILDA

The young man seems to entertain but an imperfect appreciation of the respect due from a menial to a Castilian hidalgo.

DUKE

My child, you are hard upon our suite.

CASILDA

Papa, I've no patience with the presumption of persons in his plebeian position. If he does not appreciate that position, let him be whipped until he does.

DUKE

Let us hope the omission was not intended as a slight. I should be much hurt if I thought it was. So would he. *(To LUIZ)* Where are the halberdiers who were to have had the honour of meeting us here, that our visit to the Grand Inquisitor might be made in becoming state?

LUIZ

Your Grace, the halberdiers are mercenary people who stipulated for a trifle on account.

DUKE

How tiresome! Well, let us hope the Grand Inquisitor is a blind gentleman. And the band who were to have had the honour of escorting us? I see no band!

LUIZ

Your Grace, the band are sordid persons who required to be paid in advance.

DUCHESS

That's so like a band!

DUKE

(annoyed) Insuperable difficulties meet me at every turn!

DUCHESS

But surely they know His Grace?

LUIZ

Exactly—they know His Grace.

DUKE

Well, let us hope that the Grand Inquisitor is a deaf gentleman. A cornet-à-piston would be something. You do not happen to possess the accomplishment of tootling like a cornet-à-piston?

LUIZ

Alas no, your Grace! But I can imitate a farmyard.

DUKE

(doubtfully) I don't see how that would help us. I don't see how we could bring it in.

CASILDA

It would not help us in the least. We are not a parcel of graziers come to market, dolt! *(LUIZ rises)*

DUKE

My love, our suite's feelings! *(To LUIZ)* Be so good as to ring the bell and inform the Grand Inquisitor that his Grace the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Count Matadouro, Baron Picadouro—

DUCHESS

And suite—

DUKE

And suite—have arrived in Venice, and seek—

CASILDA

Desire—

DUCHESS

Demand!

DUKE

And demand an audience.

LUIZ

Your Grace has but to command.

DUKE

(much moved) I felt sure of it—I felt sure of it! *(Exit LUIZ into Ducal Palace)* And now, my love—*(aside to DUCHESS)* Shall we tell her? I think so—*(aloud to CASILDA)* And now, my love, prepare for a magnificent surprise. It is my agreeable duty to reveal to you a secret which should make you the happiest young lady in Venice!

CASILDA

A secret?

DUCHESS

A secret which, for State reasons, it has been necessary to preserve for twenty years.

DUKE

When you were a prattling babe of six months old you were married by proxy to no less a personage than the infant son and heir of His Majesty the immeasurably wealthy King of Barataria!