

# ACT I

## SCENE 1. *Pleberio's garden.* *Calisto, Melibea.*

CALISTO: In this, Melibea, I see the goodness of God!

MELIBEA: In what, Calisto?

CALISTO: In His giving nature the power to endow you with such perfect beauty and in granting me, unworthy, the boon of seeing you in this hidden spot where I might declare my secret love. My reward is incomparably greater than I deserve for the services, sacrifices, devotions, and pious works I have offered Him to admit me to this place, for no other power could have done so. What mortal body ever attained such glory! Surely the blessed saints who delight in the Divine Presence know no such happiness! Only, alas!, they and I differ in this: they in their purity enjoy their ecstasy without fear of falling from their lofty eminence, while I in my corruption live in dread of the cruel torment which absence from you will bring.

MELIBEA: Do you consider your reward so great, Calisto?

CALISTO: So great indeed that if God in His heaven were to offer me a seat above His saints I should count it no such felicity!

MELIBEA: Well, if you persist, I'll give you a more fitting reward.

CALISTO: Oh my blessed ears, to hear such words!

MELIBEA: Your unlucky ears, rather, when you hear me out, for your punishment will be as sharp as your mad insolence deserves! Your purpose, Calisto, worthy offspring of such a wit, has come to naught

against my virtue! Get out, get out, you obscene scoundrel! It is intolerable that any man should think he might speak to me of the pleasures of unlawful love!

CALISTO: I'll go, but as one whom hateful fortune is determined to destroy!

SCENE 2. *Calisto's house.*  
*Calisto, Sempronio.*

CALISTO: Sempronio! Sempronio! Sempronio! Where is that accursed rascal?

SEMPRONIO: Here, sir, in the stable.

CALISTO: Why did you leave the room?

SEMPRONIO: The falcon got off his perch and I went to put him back.

CALISTO: The devil take you! May you perish in some sudden calamity or spend eternity in intolerable torment, which I trust will be even more painful than the disastrous death that awaits me! Out, you villain, and make my bed!

SEMPRONIO: Sir, it is done.

CALISTO: Close the shutters and let darkness accompany the wretched and blindness the unlucky! My thoughts are not fit for the light. Oh happy death that comes to the afflicted! If Galen and Hippocrates were living today, could they diagnose my malady? Merciful heaven, fill Pleberio's heart with pity, lest he send this lost and hopeless soul to suffer with the unfortunate Pyramus and the ill-fated Thisbe!

SEMPRONIO: What's the matter?

CALISTO: Get out! Don't speak to me, unless you have a mind to die by these hands before your time!

SEMPRONIO: Very well, I'll go, since you want to weep alone.

CALISTO: The devil go with you!

SEMPRONIO: *How could the devil go with me if he's staying with you? What sudden accident, what evil mischance, has robbed this man of his spirit? And worse yet, of his wits? Shall I leave him or go in to him? If I stay he'll kill me; if I go he'll kill himself. Well, what's it to me? It's better for him to die whose life is a burden than for me who enjoy it. I should stay alive if it's only to see my Elicia again. On the other hand, if he kills himself and I'm the only witness, they'll hold me accountable. I'd better go in. Still, he doesn't want my advice or comfort. It's a sign of death when they don't want to get well. I'll let him fester a while and come to a head. I've heard that it's dangerous to open or press a boil while it's green, for it only gets the more inflamed. I'll leave him alone for a bit. Let him weep who's in pain, for tears and sighs greatly relieve the troubled heart. Besides, if he sees me it will only make him angrier. The sun shines hottest where it's reflected; the eye tires if it hasn't got an object to rest upon, and it gets sharper when it has. I'll wait a bit. If he kills himself meanwhile, well, let him die! Maybe he'll leave me something in his will and change this bad luck of mine. And yet, it's a wicked thing to hope to gain by another's death. Maybe the devil's deceiving me and if he dies I'll be hanged, and that will be the end of Sempronio! On the other hand, wise men say it's a great comfort to the afflicted to have someone to share their troubles, and that a hidden wound is more dangerous. Of these two doubtful extremes it will be better to put up with him and console him. It's possible to get well without method or apparatus, but it's quicker to heal with them.*

CALISTO: Sempronio!

SEMPRONIO: Sir?

CALISTO: Fetch me my lute.

SEMPRONIO: Here it is, sir.

CALISTO (singing): *What pain so great as equals mine!*

SEMPRONIO: Sir, your lute is out of tune.

CALISTO: How can one who is himself out of tune, tune it? How can one who is full of discords have any sense of harmony? Or one whose will is not his own? Or one whose breast is crowded with spur-pricks,

peace, war, truce, love, hatred, outrage, worry, suspicion, and all from the same cause? Here, you take the lute and sing me the saddest song you know.

SEMPRONIO (singing).

*Nero, from the Tarpeian Rock,  
Gazed upon burning Rome;  
The screams of young and old,  
They moved him not!*

CALISTO: The fire that consumes me is greater, and the pity of her of whom I spoke is smaller!

SEMPRONIO: *I was right! This master of mine is crazy!*

CALISTO: What are you muttering there, Sempronio?

SEMPRONIO: Nothing, sir.

CALISTO: Tell me; don't be afraid.

SEMPRONIO: I was saying, sir, how can a fire be greater that torments only one living being than one that burns a whole city and such multitudes of people?

CALISTO: How? I'll tell you. Greater is the fire that lasts for eighty years than one that passes in a day, and greater is the fire that kills a soul than one that burns a hundred thousand bodies. There's as great a difference between appearance and reality, between a living thing and its painted counterfeit, as there is between the fire you speak of and the one that's consuming me! If Purgatory is as bad as this, I'd rather my soul went to oblivion with the dumb brutes than to heaven by such a means!

SEMPRONIO: *I said it! This business isn't going to stop here! He's not only mad, but a heretic!*

CALISTO: Haven't I told you to speak up? What are you saying?

SEMPRONIO: I was saying, God forbid!, for what you've just said is a kind of heresy.

CALISTO: What's that got to do with me?

SEMPRONIO: Aren't you a Christian?

CALISTO: Me? I'm a Melibeian! I worship Melibea! I believe in Melibea! I love Melibea!

SEMPRONIO: *It's your funeral. Melibea's too big for my master to hold down and she comes spewing up out of his mouth. But enough of this. I know what's ailing you. I'll cure you.*

CALISTO: Impossible!

SEMPRONIO: On the contrary, it's easy. The beginning of a cure is to recognize the disease.

CALISTO: How can you put order into something that has no order?

SEMPRONIO: *Ho, ho, ho! So this is the fire that consumes Calisto? These are his troubles? Does he think that love shoots his arrows at him alone? Almighty God, how deep are Thy mysteries! What force didst Thou give to love that it should create such disturbance in a lover? How rarely didst Thou set a limit to it! The lover thinks he's left behind in the race. All others pass him; all break away like swift bulls which, pricked and stung with darts, leap over the barriers. Thou didst command man to leave father and mother for his wife; but now they do not only that, but abandon Thy law, as Calisto does. But I'm not astonished, for wise men, saints, and prophets have forgotten Thee for love.*

CALISTO: Sempronio?

SEMPRONIO: Sir?

CALISTO: Don't leave me.

SEMPRONIO: *This bagpipe's playing another tune!*

CALISTO: What do you think of this sickness of mine?

SEMPRONIO: You're in love with Melibea. But it's a sad thing to see you held captive by one lone woman.

CALISTO: You know little of constancy.

SEMPRONIO: Perseverance in evil is not constancy; rather, in my country they call it stubbornness or pig-headedness. You philosophers of Cupid may call it what you will.

CALISTO: It's a wicked thing to lie when you pretend to be teaching another. Don't you praise your mistress Elicia?

SEMPRONIO: Follow my good advice and not my bad example.

CALISTO: What fault in me are you reproving?

SEMPRONIO: That you're submitting your man's dignity to the frailty of a woman.

CALISTO: A woman, you clod? A goddess!

SEMPRONIO: Do you really believe that, or are you making game of me?

CALISTO: Making game of you? I believe in her as I believe in God, and I say there's no higher sovereign in heaven!

SEMPRONIO: Ha, ha, ha! Did you ever hear such blasphemy? Or see such blindness?

CALISTO: What are you laughing about?

SEMPRONIO: I'm laughing because I don't think worse sins were invented even in Sodom!

CALISTO: How's that?

SEMPRONIO: The Sodomites tried to commit abominations with unknown angels, but you with one you hold to be a goddess!

CALISTO: Damn you! You've made me laugh, a thing I hadn't expected to do this year.

SEMPRONIO: Oh come! Were you going to weep the rest of your life?

CALISTO: Yes.

SEMPRONIO: Why?

CALISTO: Because I love one I'm unworthy of, one I cannot hope to possess.

SEMPRONIO: *Oh the cowardly son of a whore! What a Nimrod, what an Alexander the Great, who thought themselves worthy, not only to rule the world, but heaven as well!*

CALISTO: I didn't hear you. Say that again.

SEMPRONIO: I was saying that you, who are braver than Nimrod or Alexander, despair of possessing a mere woman. Why, many women of great estate have submitted themselves to the embraces and stinking breaths of vile muleteers, and others to brute beasts! Haven't you read of Pasiphae and the bull? Or of Minerva and the dog?

CALISTO: Those are old wives' tales. I don't believe them.

SEMPRONIO: Was that affair of your grandmother and the ape an old wives' tale? Your grandfather's knife is my witness!

CALISTO: Curse this fool! How he babbles!

SEMPRONIO: Did I pink you? Read your histories; study your philosophers; read your poets. Their books are full of stories of wicked women who destroyed men, men who like yourself held them in high esteem. Listen to Solomon where he says that women and wine make men deny God. Take counsel with Seneca and you'll see what *he* thinks of them. Consult Aristotle or St. Bernard. Gentiles, Jews, Christians, and Moors are all of one mind in this. Not that what they say is true of all women, for there are, and have been, many saintly, virtuous, and noble women whose shining crowns belie the general opinion. But the others! Who could tell you their lies, their tricks, their changes, their fickleness, their sniveling, their bad temper, their impudence? Their deceits, their gossiping, their ingratitude, their inconstancy, their presumption, their boastfulness, their false humility, their folly, their scorn, their servility, their gluttony, their lust, their filth, their cowardice, their insolence, their sorcery, their gibes, their scolding, their want of shame, their whoring? Consider the giddy little brains concealed behind those long and delicate veils! Or within those fine and sumptuous gowns! What corruption, what cesspools, beneath those gaudy temples! They are called limbs of Satan, the fountainhead of sin, and the destroyers of Paradise. Haven't you read in St. John, where he says: "This is woman, the ancient curse that drove Adam out of the delights of Eden; she it was who sent the human race to hell; she it was whom the prophet Elijah rebuked?" And so on.

CALISTO: Tell me then; this Adam, this Solomon, this David, this Aristotle, this Virgil, all those you name, how is it they succumbed to women? Am I stronger than they?

SEMPRONIO: I would have you imitate those who conquered women, not those who were conquered by them. Fly their tricks! Why, don't you know what they do? Things you'd hardly believe! They have no method, no reason, no purpose. They offer themselves to men because they can't help themselves. They let you in through a hole in the wall and then insult you in the street. They invite, they dismiss, they beckon, they ignore. They make you think they love you, and it turns out they hate you. They're quick to anger and quick to make peace. They expect you to guess what's in their mind. What a plague, what an annoyance, what a bore it is to be with them longer than that brief moment when they're disposed to love!

CALISTO: Go away! The more you say against her and the more obstacles you put in my way, the more I love her. I don't understand it.

SEMPRONIO: My advice, I'm beginning to see, is wasted on children who won't listen to reason and who can't govern themselves.

CALISTO: What do you know about it? Who taught you all this?

SEMPRONIO: Who? Why, they themselves! Once they've revealed themselves to men they lose all sense of shame and teach you this and a great deal more besides. Weigh yourself on the scales of honor and strive to be more worthy than you're reputed to be. It's a worse folly for a man to fall from his proper station of his own doing than to raise himself to a higher place than he deserves.

CALISTO: What's all that got to do with me? Who am I?

SEMPRONIO: Who? First of all you're a man! Moreover, a man of wit endowed with nature's best gifts, namely, beauty, grace, a fine body, strength, and agility. Besides, she shared her wealth with you so liberally that your inward gifts shine no less brightly than those without. Lacking these outward gifts, of which fortune is mistress, no one in this life can be fortunate. Finally, you were born under such a lucky star that everyone loves you.

CALISTO: But not Melibea! In everything you've said of me, Sempronio, Melibea is beyond compare my better. Consider the nobility and antiquity of her family, her great patrimony, her excellent wit, her shin-



ing virtue, her high and ineffable grace, her sovereign beauty; and of this I beg you to let me speak a little for my comfort; but I'll speak only of those parts that are visible to the eye, for if I could speak of what is hidden, it would be useless for us to exchange these miserable words!

SEMPRONIO: *What lies and idiocies will this benighted master of mine utter now?*

CALISTO: What are you saying?

SEMPRONIO: I said, say on, for I'll greatly enjoy hearing you. *And may God reward you as I'll enjoy your sermon!*

CALISTO: What?

SEMPRONIO: I said, may God bless me as I'll be pleased to hear it!

CALISTO: Well then, just to please you, I'll describe her to you in detail.

SEMPRONIO: *God help us! I'm in for it! But his fit won't last forever!*

CALISTO: I'll begin with the hairs of her head. Have you ever by chance seen the skeins of golden threads they spin in Araby? Hers are more beautiful and shine no less. They reach to the very soles of her feet. And then, when they're curled and tied with a fine ribbon, as she wears them, they turn men into stones!

SEMPRONIO: *Into asses, rather!*

CALISTO: What's that?

SEMPRONIO: I said her hairs could hardly resemble asses' bristles.

CALISTO: What a vile figure! What an idiot!

SEMPRONIO: *If I'm an idiot, what is he?*

CALISTO: Her eyes, green and wide; her lashes, long; her brows, dainty and high; her nose, neither too large nor too small; her mouth, little; her teeth, small and white; her lips, red and plump; her face, somewhat longer than it is round; her bosom, high; her breasts, so full and firm, who can describe them? How a man will stretch himself when he sees them! Her skin, smooth and lustrous, and so white it darkens the snow; her color, varied, as she would have chosen it for herself . . .

SEMPRONIO: *This fool has got the bit in his teeth!*

CALISTO: Her hands, small, but not too small, and sweetly fleshed; her fingers, long; her nails likewise, and so pink they seem like rubies among pearls. And from what I could see of her hidden parts, she's incomparably fairer than the most beautiful of the goddesses whom Paris judged!

SEMPRONIO: Have you done?

CALISTO: As briefly as I could.

SEMPRONIO: Well, even if everything you say of her is true, you, being a man, are still more worthy.

CALISTO: How's that?

SEMPRONIO: Because she is imperfect and in her imperfection she desires and lusts after you. Haven't you read what the philosophers say, that as matter desires form, so woman desires man?

CALISTO: Wretch that I am! When will Melibea desire me?

SEMPRONIO: It could happen, even though you hated her as much as you love her now, and when you possessed her you'd see her with eyes cured of their present squint.

CALISTO: With what kind of eyes?

SEMPRONIO: With clear eyes.

CALISTO: And how do I see her now?

SEMPRONIO: Through a magnifying glass, which makes everything seem bigger than it is. . . . However, to keep you from despair I'll undertake to get her for you.

CALISTO: May God reward you! Even though I don't believe you, it's wonderful to hear!

SEMPRONIO: On the contrary, I'll certainly do it.

CALISTO: God bless you! That brocaded doublet I wore yesterday, take it, Sempronio, it's yours!

SEMPRONIO: *And God bless you for it and for the many more you're going to give me! I've got the best of this joke! A few prods like that and*

*I'll bring her to his very bed! I'm on the right track! My master's gift did it! If you want to get something done you've got to pay for it!*

CALISTO: Don't be lazy now!

SEMPRONIO: Don't *you* be! A lazy master can't have a diligent servant.

CALISTO: How do you plan to go about this pious work?

SEMPRONIO: I'll tell you. A good many days ago I met, out toward the edge of this quarter, a bewhiskered old beldame who calls herself Celestina, a witch, astute and wise in all evil things. They say the number of maidenheads broken and repaired under her authority in this city passes five thousand. She can move the very stones to lechery if she sets her mind to it!

CALISTO: Could I see her?

SEMPRONIO: I'll bring her to you. Be cordial and liberal with her, and while I'm gone cook up a good story, so she'll prescribe the proper medicine for you.

CALISTO: Well, what are you waiting for?

SEMPRONIO: I'm off, and God be with you!

CALISTO: And may He guide your steps! . . . Almighty and everlasting God, Thou who guidest the lost and led'st the Orient Kings to Bethlehem by the star, and by it led'st them back again, humbly I beseech Thee to guide my Sempronio in such wise that he may change my sorrow into gladness and bring me my heart's desire!

SCENE 3. *Celestina's house. Celestina,  
Sempronio, Elicia, Crito.*

CELESTINA: Good news, Elicia! It's Sempronio! Sempronio!

ELICIA: Hush!

CELESTINA: Why?

ELICIA: Crito's with me.

CELESTINA: Hide him in the broom closet! Quickly now! Tell him your cousin's coming!

ELICIA: Crito, hide in here! My cousin's coming! I'm ruined!

CRITO: It's all right. Don't worry about me.

SEMPRONIO: My blessed mother! How I've missed you!

CELESTINA: My son! My king! You've upset me quite! I can't speak! Kiss me again! Three whole days away? How could you? Elicia, Elicia, look who's here!

ELICIA: Who, mother?

CELESTINA: Sempronio!

ELICIA: Oh dear! How my heart is thumping! How is he?

CELESTINA: Come and see for yourself. He's here. But I'll kiss him, not you!

ELICIA: Oh you accursed traitor! I hope you die of ulcers and tumors, or that your enemies kill you, or you get hanged for your wicked crimes! Oh, oh!

SEMPRONIO: Ho, ho, ho! What's the matter with my Elicia? What's eating you?

ELICIA: Three days without coming round? Be damned to you! What a poor fool I was for trusting you!

SEMPRONIO: Hush, my dear. Do you think that distance can quench the fire, the deep love in my heart? You're always with me, wherever I go. Don't torture yourself as I've been tortured. . . . But tell me, whose footsteps do I hear upstairs?

ELICIA: It's one of my lovers!

SEMPRONIO: I believe you!

ELICIA: By my faith, it's true! Go up and see for yourself!

SEMPRONIO: I will.

CELESTINA: Come, come! Pay no attention to the silly thing. She's all upset by your neglect. She'll say anything. Come here and talk to me. Let's not waste time.

SEMPRONIO: But who is upstairs?

CELESTINA: Do you really want to know?

SEMPRONIO: Yes.

CELESTINA: It's a girl that a friar left with me.

SEMPRONIO: What friar?

CELESTINA: Don't ask.

SEMPRONIO: On my life, mother, what friar?

CELESTINA: Do you insist? The fat one.

SEMPRONIO: Oh the poor girl, and what a load she's going to carry!

CELESTINA: We all have to carry one, but you haven't seen many saddle galls on a horse's belly, have you?

SEMPRONIO: Maybe not saddle galls, but heel prints a-plenty!

CELESTINA: You Wag!

SEMPRONIO: Never mind my being a wag and show me the girl.

ELICIA: You lout! So you want to see her, do you? I hope your eyes pop out when you do! You're not satisfied with one, but you want us both? Go up and see her and never let me see your face again!

SEMPRONIO: Hush! My goodness, and did she get angry with me? I don't want to see that girl or any woman alive. Leave us now, for I've got business with our mother.

ELICIA: Get out, you stranger! Go away and stay three more years, and don't come back!

SEMPRONIO: Mother, you must trust me and believe I'm serious. Get your shawl and come with me. I've got some good news for you that

I'll explain on the way. It would cost us money if I took the time to explain things here.

CELESTINA: Good-bye, Elicia! Lock the door. Good-bye, my house!

SCENE 4. *A street.*  
*Celestina, Sempronio.*

SEMPRONIO: Now, dear mother, put everything else out of your mind and listen to me. Don't let your attention wander off in all directions, for he who puts his mind on many things keeps it on nothing. You'll gather my meaning from my words. But first I want you to know something about me, and that is, that ever since I put my trust in you I've never desired any good thing for myself without wishing to share it with you.

CELESTINA: May God be good to you, my son, if only for your charity toward this sinful old woman! But speak plainly; don't hold back. We know each other too well to have need of preambles and corollaries and beating about the bush. Come to the point, for it's foolish to say in many words what can be understood in few.

SEMPRONIO: You're right. Well, it's this. Calisto is burning up with love of Melibea and he needs our help. And, since he needs us both, let's both make something out of it. What makes men prosperous is to recognize the proper moment and take advantage of it.

CELESTINA: I see what you mean. All you need to do with me is tip me a wink. I mean I'm as pleased over your good news as a surgeon is over a broken head, and just as a surgeon will inflame a wound in order to prolong the treatment, so shall I do with Calisto and keep him uncertain of his cure. As the saying goes, hope deferred maketh the heart sick, so the more hopeless he gets, the more we'll promise him. Do you follow me?

SEMPRONIO: Quiet now! We're at his door and, as they say, the walls have ears.

CELESTINA: Knock.

SEMPRONIO: (Knocks.)

SCENE 5. *Calisto's house. Calisto,  
Parmeno, Sempronio, Celestina.*

CALISTO: Parmeno!

PARMENO: Sir?

CALISTO: Are you deaf, you accursed dummy?

PARMENO: What is it, sir?

CALISTO: Someone's knocking at the door! Run!

PARMENO: Who's there?

SEMPRONIO: Open the door for me and this good old lady.

PARMENO: Sir, Sempronio and an old painted whore were making all that racket.

CALISTO: Silence, you villain! She's my aunt! Run and open! I've always noticed that when a man flies from one danger he runs into a worse one. To cover up this mistake of Parmeno, who spoke out of love or fidelity or fear, I've fallen into the bad graces of her who has no less power over my life than God himself!

PARMENO: What's the hurry, sir? Why are you worried? Do you think she was insulted by the name I called her? Don't believe it! Why, she puffs up as much when she hears it as you do when someone says: "What a fine horseman is Calisto!" Besides, that's her proper title and the one she goes by. If she's among a hundred women and someone says "Old Whore!" with no embarrassment whatever she turns her head and answers with smiling face. At parties, festivals, weddings, guild meetings, funerals, at every kind of gathering, she's the center of merriment. If she walks among dogs, that's the name they bark. If it's

birds, they sing nothing else. If it's a flock of sheep, they bleat her name. If it's asses, they bray "Old Whore!" The very frogs in their puddles croak it. If she passes a smithy, the smiths' hammers pound it out. Carpenters and armorers, farriers, tinkers, and fullers—every kind of instrument fills the air with her name. Farmers in their fields, at their plowing, in the vineyards, or at harvest, lighten their labors with her. When gamblers lose at the gaming table, then you should hear her praises ring forth! All things that make a noise, wherever she is, proclaim her. Oh what a consumer of roasted eggs her husband was! What else would you know, save that when one stone strikes against another, together they cry "Old Whore!"

CALISTO: How do you know all this?

PARMENO: I'll tell you. Many years ago my mother, who was a poor woman, dwelt in her neighborhood, and this Celestina begged me of her for a servant, although she doesn't know me now, for I worked for her only a short time and I've changed a good deal.

CALISTO: What did you do?

PARMENO: Sir, I went to market with her and carried her provisions and did such other chores as my tender strength would allow. But in the short month I was with her I learned things I've never forgotten! This good woman used to have, on the outskirts of town near the tanneries, a house somewhat removed from the street, half tumbled-down, badly repaired and worse furnished. She had six trades, to wit: laundress, perfumer, a master hand at making cosmetics and replacing damaged maidenheads, procurress, and something of a witch. Her first trade was a cover for the rest, and with this excuse many servant girls went to her house to do their washing. None of them came without a sausage, or some wheat or flour, or a jug of wine, or provisions stolen from their mistresses. And many other little thefts were there concealed. She was a great friend of students, purveyors, and priests' servants, and sold them the innocent blood of those poor girls which they had foolishly risked for the repair she had promised them. She flew even higher and through her girls reached the most sheltered females, this on honest occasions, such as the Stations of the Cross, nocturnal processions, early Mass, and other secret devotions. I've seen many such enter her house, their faces covered, with men behind



them, barefoot, penitent, muffled, their shoes unlatched, who were going there to do penance for their sins! You can't imagine the traffic she carried on. She was a baby doctor; she picked up flux in one house and brought it to be spun in another—all this as an excuse to get in everywhere. One would say, "Mother, come here!" Another, "Mother, go there!" Or, "There goes the old woman!" Or, "Here comes the mistress!" Everyone knew her. And yet, in spite of her many duties, she always found time to go to Mass or vespers; nor did she neglect the monasteries and nunneries, where she peddled her sweetcakes and her services.

In her house she manufactured perfumes and counterfeited storax, benjamin, anime, amber, civet, powders, and musk. She had a room full of retorts and flasks, with vessels of earthenware, glass, tin, and brass, of a thousand different shapes. There she made mercury sublimate, skin lotions, jars of ointment, and eyebrow pencils; skin-fillers, salves, cleansers, fresheners, clarifiers, bleaches, and other waters for the face; grated asphodel, senna pods, tarragon, gall, new wine, and must, all distilled and sweetened with sugar. For softening the skin she used lemon juice, turpeth, deer and heron marrow, and other confections. She made perfume from roses, orange flowers, jasmine, clover, honeysuckle, and carnations, all powdered and mixed with musk and wine. For bleaching the hair she made rinses of vine shoots, holm oak, rye, and horehound, with saltpetre, alum, yarrow, and sundry other ingredients. It would be tiresome to recite all the oils and fats she extracted: from cows, bears, camels, snakes, rabbits, whales, herons, bitterns, chamois, wild cats, badgers, squirrels, porcupines, and otters. It would astonish you to learn of all the things she used for her medicinal baths, with herbs and roots which she had hanging from her roof, to wit: camomile, rosemary, marshmallow, maiden's hair, melilot, alder, mustard, lavender, white laurel, *tortarosa*, *gramonilla*, *flor salvaje*, psoralea, *pico de oro*, and *hoja tinta*. The oils she used for the face you would hardly believe: storax, jasmine, lemon, melon seed, benjamin, pistachio, pine nut, grape seed, jubejube nut, fennel, lupine, vetch, *carilla*, and chickweed. She also kept a bit of balsam in a flask with which she used to treat that scar she has across her face. For the repair of maidenheads she used bladders, or she stitched them up. In a small painted box on a platform she kept a supply of furrier's needles and waxed silk, and hanging under it she had roots of *hojaplasma* and

*fuste sanguino*, squill, and horsetail. She did wonders with all this apparatus. When the French ambassador was here, why, she sold him one of her girls for a virgin three times running!

CALISTO: Too bad it wasn't a hundred!

PARMENO: Holy God, yes! Besides, out of charity she took care of many orphans and shut-ins who gave themselves into her hands. In another room she kept her love philtres made of the bones from stags' hearts, serpents' tongues, partridge heads, asses' brains, caul of newborn foals, babies' fat, French beans, lodestones, the rope of a hanged man, ivy flowers, hedgehog bristles, badgers' feet, fern seeds, the stone from an eagle's nest, and a thousand other things.

Numbers of men and women came to see her. From some she demanded a bit of the bread they had nibbled; from others, a garment; from others, a strand of hair. On the hands of some she wrote letters in saffron, on others, in vermilion. To some she gave hearts of wax stuck full of broken needles, or images made of clay or lead, very horrible to see. She would paint figures on the ground and speak words over them. In short, who could tell you all the things this old woman did? And it was nothing but lies and mockery.

CALISTO: Very well, Parmeno. Leave the rest for some other time. You've told me enough for the present and I'm obliged to you. But let's not keep her waiting any longer. After all, I invited her to come and we've kept her too long already. And I beg you, Parmeno, not to let your envy of Sempronio interfere with what he's doing for me. He's serving me well. I gave him a doublet, but I'll give you a coat. And don't think I despise your counsel. Things spiritual take precedence over things temporal; the beast of burden works harder than a man and is fed and cared for, but not as a friend. That's how you stand with me as against Sempronio. Keep this to yourself, but I think of you as my equal and my friend.

PARMENO: It grieves me, sir, after your offer and advice, to see you doubting my service and my loyalty. When did you ever see me envious, sir, or put my own interest or resentments above your welfare?

CALISTO: Don't feel badly, Parmeno. Your good manners and courtesy raise you in my esteem above all my servants; but in this difficult

case, in which my health and life are at stake, I must provide for all contingencies. Your gentleness is the fruit of a good nature, just as a good nature is the foundation of excellence. But enough of this. Let's go down and see our physician.

CELESTINA: I hear footsteps. Someone's coming down. Let on you don't hear it, Sempronio. Just keep still and let me say what needs to be said.

SEMPRONIO: Very well, talk.

CELESTINA: Don't plague me! Don't insist! It's like spurring a tired horse to put so much on me. You take your master's troubles so hard that one would think you were he, and he, you, and that you have but one body between you. You may be sure that I didn't come here to fail him in his suit. I'll succeed or die in the attempt!

CALISTO: Be quiet now, Parmeno, and listen to what they're saying. Let's see what they're up to. . . . Oh wonderful woman! Oh worldly goods, unworthy of being possessed by such a high heart! Oh my true and faithful Sempronio! Did you hear, my Parmeno? Was I right? What do you say now, you keeper of my secrets, my dear counsellor?

PARMENO: I protest my innocence of your first suspicion and I'll speak to you loyally as a friend, since you granted me that honor. Listen to me, sir, and don't let your mind be dulled by love or blinded by the thought of pleasure to come. Be patient, not hasty. Don't be so anxious to hit the bull's eye that you miss the target altogether. I may be young, but I've seen a good deal, and good sense and the sight of many things have ripened my experience. These two have either seen you or heard you coming down the stairs, and they've trumped up this little comedy for your benefit.

SEMPRONIO: I don't like what Parmeno's saying, not a bit!

CELESTINA: Hush, for by my sainted mother wherever the ass goes he'll wear his pack-saddle! You leave Parmeno to me and I'll make him one of us. We'll give him a share of whatever we earn. We'll all make money; we'll all share it; we'll all be happy together. I'll bring him to you tamed and gentle and eating out of my hand, and we'll all three ride that donkey!

CALISTO: Sempronio!

SEMPRONIO: Sir?

CALISTO: Why are you waiting out there, you who hold the key to my life? Open the door! . . . Oh Parmeno, I see her! I am well! I live again! Mark what a reverend person she is! What modesty! Inward goodness usually shows in one's face. Oh virtuous old age! Oh aged virtue! Oh glorious hope of my desired purpose! Oh purpose of my happy hope! Oh relief of my suffering, end of my torment, my regeneration, my new life, my resurrection! Let me approach and kiss those healing hands! But I'm unworthy! Let me kneel, rather, and worship the ground you walk upon and kiss it out of reverence for you!

CELESTINA: Sempronio, I live on words! The old bones I've gnawed, this silly master of yours thinks he can give me to eat! Well, I've got something else in store for him which hell discover when he begins to fry! Tell him to shut his mouth and open his purse, for I don't even trust his deeds, much less his words. Ho, I'll curry you, you lame ass! You should have got up earlier in the morning!

PARMENO: *Woe to the ears that hear such words! Oh unlucky Calisto, beaten and blind! Kneeling down and worshipping the most ancient and whorish piece of earth that ever rubbed her shoulders in the stews! He's undone, conquered, fallen! Beyond redemption, counsel, or effort!*

CALISTO: What was our mother saying, Sempronio. Does she think I'm offering her words instead of money?

SEMPRONIO: That's what I gathered.

CALISTO: Come with me, then. Bring the keys and I'll end her doubt.

SEMPRONIO: You'll do well. Let's go at once. Weeds shouldn't be allowed to grow in the wheat or suspicions in the hearts of friends, but should be instantly cleared out with the hoe of good works.

CALISTO: Wisely said. Come at once.

CELESTINA: Parmeno, I'm glad of this chance to show you how much I love you and what you mean to me, although you're not worthy of it. And I say not worthy because of what I heard you say just now; but I'll not hold it against you, for virtue advises us to suffer temptations and