

ACT I

Scene 1 (TRAG.) - Stage (Street)

Note: Try giving Spanish accents to the Tragedy characters to distinguish between reality and play.

[Enter Pere (Salazar)]

(Pere appears, garbed in a doublet of black trimmed with gold. The large feather on his hat flutters back and forth as he strides out from off stage, and his scabbard swings back and forth with every step. He raises his hand, and his half-cape flourishes as he reaches for a wall sconce, lighting it. The orange glow of the flame fills the stage, and Pere moves to center, shaking his flint.)

PERE (SALAZAR): A god-awful woman, she is.

[Enter Nazario (Garcia)]

(Pere stands, pondering, then spins around to look up at the buildings and their windows. Nazario enters through the door to the building and approaches. He wears a long coat that sweeps the ground, so that it looks as if he is floating. It is purple, ornamented with silver. As he reaches Pere, a frown touches his face. Pere tilts his head.)

PERE (SALAZAR): Garcia, my friend, how wonderful it is to see you.

(Nazario (Garcia) bows slightly, reaching into his coat to search for something as Pere continues to speak, watching as he does so.)

PERE (SALAZAR): This night is cold, but my wife is colder. I would sooner keep the company of the passing vagrants than that woman. *Dios mio!*

(Nazario takes a scroll from his pocket, unraveling it as Pere looks on in confusion.)

NAZARIO (GARCIA): What a life, you live, Salazar. Perhaps I may sweeten it.

(He looks around, ensuring there are none listening. His gaze passes over the audience, and he takes Pere's shoulder, moving him farther down the stage before reading.)

NAZARIO (GARCIA): (Reading) The lords Lopez and Martin have conspired with the Jewish heretics, harboring families in their homes. By order of King Ferdinand of Spain, they must be destroyed, but by someone close to them, for any attempts by the Inquisitors will result in their flight.

(Pere fingers his chin as he listens. At the mention of the names and the charges, his eyes widen. Nazario continues.)

NAZARIO (GARCIA): Lord Salazar of Castile, a friend of the crown, should be asked first before any, for his trustworthiness has been proved... Let us not read further. I have faith in your ability, and so does His Majesty.

(Nazario looks up from his paper, rolling it in his hands. He turns, striding out a ways before turning back to face Pere, who is waiting, his fingers still playing with his chin.)

NAZARIO (GARCIA): So, Salazar, do you accept His Majesty's proposal?

(He approaches, standing close to Pere as he speaks his next line.)

NAZARIO (GARCIA): (Cont.) The prize, I have not mentioned... two thousand reals for their heads.

(Pere turns away from Nazario and paces a bit before gazing up at the wall sconce. He ponders, then turns round as he hears a clamour from inside the building beside them.)

PERE (SALAZAR): Lopez and Martin are my closest friends, you must understand.

(Nazario nods his head.)

PERE (SALAZAR): (Cont.) But... two thousand reals? My wife would certainly shut her lips if I came home a rich man instead of a poor one.

NAZARIO (GARCIA): (Frowning) But you are not poor.

(Pere smiles and strides back to his friend.)

PERE (SALAZAR): I am a poor magnate among magnates, my friend. Though my pockets twinkle, they could twinkle brighter.

(He pauses, thinking.)

PERE (SALAZAR): (Cont.) Yes, I think I may take your offer... Tell King Ferdinand that Lopez and Martin will be dead before the month is out.

(Pere smiles a haughty smile, then pats Nazario on the shoulder. With a last glance up at the window of his house, he saunters to the door, opening it.)

PERE (SALAZAR): *Un hombre rico seré.* A rich man I will be..

[Exit Pere]

(He passes through it, then shuts it behind him. The stage lights darken as Nazario looks to the door, staring, alone in the street.)

[Exit]

Scene 2 (REAL) - Dressing

[Enter Leticia, Sarafina, Stane, Angelos, Nazario]

(The actors move about the dressing room, some to their vanities, where they begin to take off their makeup and costume pieces. As they do this, Leticia moves to stand in the corner, fingering her chin. She takes a breath and fixes her hair, then waits until the chatter dies down.)

LETICIA: A competent performance... Angelos, Stane, Nazario, Sarafina *(Beat)* Pere – where is he?

(The actors pause to look up at her, then they continue, confused looks on their faces. Angelos keeps his gaze locked onto her, his hands fumbling with a bottle.)

ANGELOS: Yes, I agree. You especially, Leticia, what wonderful dialogue you deliver. Pere is out on the stage...

(Stane harrumphs, and Angelos glares at him.)

STANE: Stop flirting, Angelos. Our lives are miserable enough without your damn voice ringing in our ears all day long.

(Leticia turns around to face Angelos, and he glances at her before returning his gaze to Stane. The other actors are listening now, no longer paying attention to their bottles and wipes. Stane takes out a cigar, lighting it with emphasis – the melodrama is fully broken here.)

ANGELOS: I'm not flirting, I assure you. I'm just complimenting my co-stars – is that so wrong?

STANE: Depends what you plan to get from them in return for your compliments... especially from one in particular.

(Stane finishes at his table, then rises from his seat, taking his cigar out from between his lips and pinching it between two fingers. He reaches for a towel and pulls it angrily from its rack, wiping his face with it before throwing it aside onto a table. Meanwhile, Pere is gesticulating on stage, practicing his movements. He turns, striding through the door to the dressing room.) [Enter Pere]

PERE: Did you see how they cheered? My god, how wonderful it is to hear such a sound every night.

(He moves into the room, glancing about at the actors, absorbing the obvious tension, then he continues, ignoring it. When he sees Leticia standing, he removes his hat, setting it down, moving over to her. She smiles as he approaches; he bows his head.)

PERE: Wonderful, girl, just wonderful. You are a star, just like me; now give me a kiss.

(She blushes, looking down at the ground, then she kisses his cheek. Angelos is watching, jealousy painted clear across his face. He turns around and continues to fumble with his bottles, reaching up to wipe makeup from his face.)

LETICIA: (Flirty) Thank you, sweet. You're not too bad yourself.

(Pere bows to her as he floats over to his table, gazing at himself in the mirror. He begins to gesticulate once more. Stane harrumphs again, then crosses the room, leaving the dressing room, cigar still in hand.) [Exit Stane]

(Leticia moves back to her table, delicately taking her bottles and wipes and cleaning her face as Sarafina watches from her vanity. When Leticia notices, Sarafina rises, approaching.)

SARAFINA: Your acting... could you teach me?

(Leticia is confused. She sets her bottle down.)

LETICIA: Pardon?

SARAFINA: I want to know how you do it, how you speak such dialogue... with such realism.

(Leticia chuckles, slightly irritated. Nazario rises from his table, smiling at his fellows before crossing the room. Before he leaves, however, he stops, turning.)

NAZARIO: Let us not forget, friends – the Recognition... will be awarded soon. Goodnight.

[Exit Nazario]

(Pere is still gazing into the mirror.)

PERE: As if we need reminding. He's just bragging about how wonderful his chances are... Man of a Thousand Faces, My God. Thinks he's the next Victor Vinicus.

(The other actors say nothing, but Sarafina seems intrigued. Leticia is clearly annoyed, yet the woman heeds not.)

SARAFINA: What is the Recognition?

(The other actors all turn around in sync, as if she has just spoken blasphemy. Pere takes it upon himself to explain, his tone brusque and judgemental.)

PERE: (Arrogant) Why are you even here, then? You have no idea? Earth to Sarafina, everyone from America to the Orient knows about it. *(Pause)* It's an award, and it's given to the best actors in the world... *(Beat)* Like myself.

LETICIA: And our theatre is the chosen playhouse for this year. Pere and I are... bickering about which of us is most likely to get it.

(Pere stops his fumbling and grows slightly vexed.)

PERE: (Irritated) Yes, and we settled this.

(Awkward silence for a moment. Sarafina breaks it.)

SARAFINA: So... your acting – could you teach me?

LETICIA: (Collecting herself) What is there to teach?

(Sarafina frowns, now realizing her fellow's irritation.)

SARAFINA: Sorry... I'm... just forget it, then. I know you probably want the Recognition.

(Sarafina moves away, exiting the stage, Leticia uncaring as she does so.) [Exit Sarafina]

(Now there is only Leticia, Pere, and Angelos. They are silent, gazing up occasionally to glance at each other, then returning their gazes to their tables. After a time, Angelos rises, sliding his chair under his vanity and glancing at both his fellows before nodding briskly. He leaves the room.) [Exit Angelos]

(Pere gets up, placing his hands on his table and peering over the mirror at Leticia. She looks up.)

PERE: They want the Recognition... maybe not that Sarafina girl – she doesn't even know what it is – but the others...

LETICIA: Of course they do. Why would they not? What other prize is there in an actor's life; even Sarafina, sweet, will want it, just as soon as she begins to understand it.

(Leticia goes back to her bottles, but Pere persists. His voice is quiet, but laden with irritation and haste. He is trying to plot, but Leticia seems uninterested.)

PERE: Nazario is the most likely to get it... Out of most of us, he is the best, or in any case, the most shrewd.

LETICIA: And? What are you implying?

PERE: We kill him.

(Leticia stops, holding onto her bottle as if frozen there, gaping up at her fellow. He is smiling, but that smile soon fades as he realizes her manner is not one of agreement and excitement.)

PERE: Well... perhaps...

(He sits, his thought unfinished. When he does, Leticia rises instead, peering over at him now. He looks up, frowning.)

LETICIA: Kill him? But how? How would we hide his death? He is part of The Tragedy... all of us are. We can't act if there's no play.

(Pere smiles.)

PERE: His character is insignificant. If he dies of sickness – an illness of some kind – he will be replaced. The play will go on.

(Leticia turns to see if there is anyone listening. After, she rises and moves around the tables, leaning to kiss Pere on the cheek. She crosses the room and leaves.) [Exit Leticia]

(Pere continues to gesticulate in the mirror. When he is done, he rises, finding his bottle of sangria and taking a long draft of it before setting it down again and leaving the stage.)

[Exit]