

THE NAIL
To be set to music

Russel Atkins

adapted from the short story of
the same name written by
Pedro Antonio de Alarcon

This adaptation was written at
the suggestion of and for
composer Hale Smith in 1957

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SCENE One

Malaga on the seacoast. Expressionistic setting of lonely Inn in Spain. Stage dark. Dim - lamp burns on table as it is late night. Ominous wind outside. Music of prelude commences as window shudders. Suddenly it bursts open. Wind rushes through the room. Lamp goes out and the sound of autumnal waves increases.

Sound of approaching coach and the drawing up of horses. Sudden banging on inn door. After a moment, light appears at stairs, left stage.

Voice of GUARD OF GUARDIA CIVIL

Granada- Malaga!

Banging again.

Light appears carried by innkeeper, a white-haired old man coming down steps.

INNKEEPER

Coming. Coming.

Unlocks door and goes over and closes window. Enter Guard. Behind him out of the whirling dark, a woman enters the inn. She holds her cloak tightly about her throat. Behind her another attendant brings in her luggage.

GUARD

Senor Innkeeper, the lady would wait upon her coach to Seville.
It will be coming soon for her.

INNKEEPER

I didn't think *your* coach would be coming tonight.

GUARD

We are some late.

On the lifting of her veil the woman is shown to be very beautiful. She appears weary. A man enters now. He is handsome and rather elegantly dressed and wind-swept. He takes off his gloves, pulls the cord of his cloak and speaks.

FELIPE

This wind devils the night so!
What about the coach from Malaga to Cordoba?

GUARD

In a few days, señor. Now, goodnight.
Goodnight now, Innkeeper.

*Bows out hurriedly with
attendants*

INNKEEPER

closing door

You and the lady are together, señor?

FELIPE

No. We were the only passengers on the coach
from Granada
But as the lady understands I am concerned for
her comforts.
Could we have anything to drink? Perhaps cocoa?

INNKEEPER

I will tell my wife to prepare cocoa.

exit Innkeeper

FELIPE

after pause

Business?

BLANCA

My husband's business. He held a little land
He is dead.

FELIPE

Ah, a pity. But I am not all sad.

BLANCA

It is not sad. I scarcely refer to him.
Do not concern yourself with me.

FELIPE

I have told you I must be true to courtesies.
We have wearied over the long and drawn;
Carriaged together from evening to dawn;
Looked lone from the window over the wan;
Cast eyes of thought, sighed without sound.

BLANCA

You must not concern yourself with me, señor.

FELIPE

Your name's Blanca?

BLANCA

My name is known to you?

FELIPE

The guard read it from your credentials.
Even as you are I likewise am passed by
Lone-standing cactus on some shadow's dry;
The up the down the on and on again;
The whole sorrow of it complained
Around us both, lady.

BLANCA

You do not understand me, señor. I am done!
All-through! You see me an at-last of a woman!

FELIPE

This trip will end and you have said so little I
could hope on.

BLANCA

What would you hear spoken?
You say I have spoken so little? Be glad.

FELIPE

Be glad?

BLANCA

I could say only the as-dark-as-night.
Since mine is a dead woman's plight.

FELIPE

You are lonely and thus melancholy.

BLANCA

Lonely? I'm afraid we can't be one in that distress.
I have too many memories that press.
I beg you, don't trouble yourself longer.

FELIPE

I'll have no memories beyond this trip.

BLANCA

You are a fool then. Many a nightmare,
Call'd up starked, screams to remember,

-

Agonies, drear hours are my memories, señor.
To me the world must always be something of a
stranger!

FELIPE

I have been too careful I see. I must speak what I
feel
Will you laugh?

BLANCA

Perhaps.

FELIPE

Think of us during the carriage'd long;
Our nervous hands, our sighs, the feints;
Think of them, of our many times together'd eyes.

BLANCA

Yes, yes you are all such antics!
A wracked journey bores you and you wax romantic.
Ah, and so you speak of the woe'd weather;
Of the Alhambra, or of a sister or a brother.
All of you, you come at last to "love"!
You disappoint me, and once is enough.
To your sex love is just joust.
To me it is nothing if it is not trust.

FELIPE

I mean this that I say. I really do,

BLANCA

I have known one man who said the truth, señor,
Who said things and meant them.

FELIPE

Wouldn't you care to know such another?

BLANCA

Go quickly please, you have bored us.

*She goes over by the window and looks out. Felipe
stands contemplatively. Enter Innkeeper with
cocoa. Felipe sits down at table.*

INNKEEPER

Would the lady take any?

BLANCA

I don't want any, thank you.

*Innkeeper pours out coca. Felipe adjusts himself
turning occasionally to watch Blanca. Innkeeper*

leaves. Blanca remains silent at window. Music descriptive. Felipe stirs cocoa.

FELIPE

What a hideous toad you must be, Felipe
The lady stands room'd far away
Eagering her look out of the café.
Into the huge unrolled of night.
Better that than Felipe in the light?
Ah, what sees she? The broken edge of Malaga
And hears the mad rehearsal of the sea
And hopes chat her coach will be
Appearing and disappearing from me!

BLANCA

You are conceited, senor. something I know how to
bear.
But it's the late coach that I despairs.

FELIPE

You are not used to traveling?

BLANCA

On the contrary. The past year of my life has been
Spent in some coach's keep;
The jostling lamps, the baggage heap;
The tower of uprear on oncoming;
The avaunted hills of leaving
The coach in a blue of arriving
The coach in a shadow of leaving
The whole narcotic of the ride
Is something at least or I
Would have been made memory-mad
And have died.

FELIPE

So let your coach pass you tonight and take
Memory (for Gods sake) over the nearest brake.

BLANCA

In inns, in restaurants from France to Cordoba
I shall praise or damn living as much as I may.

FELIPE

Ha, from the ruins of Alhambra?

BLANCA

Smile at things, ironies of shade!

FELIPE

Then look away to drear at a wall?

BLANCA

That, if that must be all.

FELIPE

And you will not pass up this 'business'
for a day ever? What good can coaches be
To the inquisition of memory?

Sound of approaching coach

BLANCA

Listen. Thrumming our numb stones
Senor, with the ho-ing of the Guard -
"Dead" Blanca's hearse. I must leave you, senor.

*Sound of horses being drawn up.
Coach stops with a ho!*

FELIPE

You will not say where I can find you?

BLANCA

No.

FELIPE

And we cannot meet again?

BLANCA

I would say no.

*Comes the pounding of the coach
Guard on the door after which he opens it and
enters without waiting.*

FELIPE

There is more than the dead "no!"
There is "perhaps", "I hope", "as things may go"
No you will not sit; no, you will stand;
No, no Cocoa. No, no hope; so no, Felipe!

Enter Innkeeper.

GUARD

Malaga-Seville!

BLANCA

You have been. kind, senor. I do thank you.
There's much to commend you.
Goodnight and goodbye. Guard,
I am the lady for Seville.

GUARD

to attendant

The lady's bags.

Attendant hurries over as Blanca, taking as last look at Felipe, moves out into the blowing gloom. Felipe watches at window as the sound and the departing coach take Blanca away. Felipe and Innkeeper are alone. Felipe sits down. stage lights dimming.

INNKEEPER

More cocoa, señor?

FELIPE

No.

SCENE Two

A chamber of council. There is a table surrounded with chairs. Papers on table, ink well, etc... Furniture hard and sparse. Secretary writing. Prosecuting attorney paces about thoughtfully. Through door upstage comes another official. He wears a black juror's habit and carries a folder. He is an older man than Felipe, but very aristocratic looking and darkly handsome. He has a small beard. He is Judge Zarco. He sits, unfolds papers. Rises.

ZARCO

So there has been no news about the case?
I see the dole of it in every face.
You have done all now, I suppose?
Saddened into places suspect?
Moved quick at the suspicious?
Exhausted ledgers in small towns?
Readied your ears where hearsay blows
Of strangers more unknown
Who to-and-fro with few words and alone?

POLICE CHIEF

That has been done, your Honor.

ZARCO

And this Dona Gabriela Zahara
Has not been found?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Found guilty is the nearest thing to it.

ZARCO

Yes, yes, it looks that way. Read the summary
you have, sir.

POLICE CHIEF

reading

Case objects presented hereof as disclosed to the department October 2nd, 9 a.m. 1846. Place: Aldea-pequeno in the cemetery of San Sabastian. Exposed condition of bodies noted. Institution of burials in accord with civil ordinances made advisable the redistribution of plots. Senor Guitterez del Romeral's body warranted to careful exhumation. Revealed hidden heretofore by the hair of the victim, an ordinary builder's nail thrust into the occipital bone. Thereupon this evidence delivered to the medical examiner, some investigation was necessary. On October 15th, said cause of death, appoplexy, was waived. Senor's Romeral's death was de-

clared an act of murder. His widow, Dona Gabriela Zahara del Valle, unavailable for summons as of now, is under a specification of charges as described thus:

ZARCO

Ah yes, the charges horror it in full:
A nail in her husband's skull.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Gabriela Zahara had her husband's wealth to gain,
had she not?

ZARCO

Gentlemen, I have examined the collection of
reports
Profounded myself to the task these last few nights
And at the very latest bell, low of sorts
And headached, out'd the last light
Around. On the relax of the pillow
These difficulties wrapped me deep
In everything but sleep. I conclude with you:
This Gabriela Zahara's to blame.
That we..have not found her's the shame.

POLICE CHIEF

Your Honor, this Romeral has been dead two years.
We have just forthwith'd to discover
This most of murders. Gabriela Zahara
Is in the before of us of sometime
A hundred farewells of ships from our confines
Could have taken her here, there, heavens know
where!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

My words are not aimed as index of the less so:
More scroll'd a judge nowhere presides.
I mean this woman shrewds about.
She will not so soon be urged out.
We need something that can touch her.

ZARCO

Let's sentence her in absence to death
Unless she breadths access to her dens.
And if she really is guilty - really?
And what doubts have I that she is? -
We'll take some of the sharp out of her.
Then we will set it in indelible:
Gabriela Zahara del Valle's name we'll post in
the public places
And if in two months we do not hear,
We will be sentencing?
Judicium in Absentia, an old law of Spain.
She'll have the garrote to fear and I
Trust she's a woman of sense

And will appear in self-defense.
Until tomorrow, sirs.

*They all leave except Zarco who stands brooding.
Strokes beard. Comes out from behind desk.
Takes off robe. Drapes it over chair. Has on
garb of gentleman. Music. Enter Guard with
note. Hands it to Zarco who reads it. His
face brightens.*

ZARCO

Felipe! Of course, bring him immediately.
I have no dearer friend than Felipe.

*Zarco drops robe on chair. Goes over and takes
decanter out of cabinet. Takes out two goblets.
Enter Felipe as he arranges goblets, chooses a
wine.*

FELIPE

Zarco!

*Zarco goes over. They take each other
by the shoulder shaking hands.*

ZARCO

Friend, my old friend, how excited I am to see you!
Not since the university at Granada.
I have already poured your drink. So!
Our favorite – Lagrimas!

FELIPE

You have made your world. The judge Zarco!
I knew you would. Yes, I knew it.

ZARCO

Ha, there is something in it I find.
I devote all of my time to it.

FELIPE

I trust you remain merciful of stand,
Unmonster'd by the book: a just hand --
Not horror'd with document's ink, that is,
Spilling the worse no matter what offense?

ZARCO

I dare not be a judge a century-gray,
One of those year'd of them, Felipe,
Half tomb'd, withering live men with Law
(Which is a catacombs, sir, I should know.)

FELIPE

I have known regions where the judge there throws

Harrows of dunning where he moves,
Looking skull-eyes at small offense:
The scourge, his "law", of common sense.

ZARCO

Do not let us talk Law, Felipe. You have come!
Let me look at you. Can I assume?
You have been traveling wholesomely;
Breakfasted on Guadaljara honey;
Seen only joys of scenes, balm'd by a sea,
Or so it seems - !

FELIPE

These excited spirits, Zarco, are mine in that
most human:
I have met a beautiful woman!

*At this, Zarco's expression changes to troubled.
He places his glass thoughtfully on the desk.
He forces a smile.*

ZARCO

Now that is like you, Felipe. That is like you.
Another drink?

*Zarco pours out a glass for himself and Felipe.
Pause.*

FELIPE

suddenly sitting on the desk

Oh come now, friend, what is it, funerals?
A hearse passes?

ZARCO

Forgive me. Of course a woman. That is like you.

FELIPE

Her name is Blanca. But wait -! Zarco!
I remember!
You have married? Ah yes, you have walked it;
Come down among the frowns of pews;
Been threatened by the around'd holy;
Vowed up to whose obedience is whose?

ZARCO

We did not marry, Mercedes and I.
I haven't seen or heard from Mercedes.

FELIPE

But your letter made it imminent enough that year.
You didn't marry? Why? Why not?

ZARCO

Imminent it certainly was. Ah, Felipe hush!
Don't speak to me of marriage or woman.
You would not marry something darkly uncoiling,
Or swiftness wasping in a thick
A laugh summering supposes!

FELIPE

You aren't happy! Oh, this is bad. Quite bad.

ZARCO

Love - ah! A fig! too ghastly overripe!
I could many times since have laughed
But for the memory of her. Love!
How it nauseates me, Felipe!
Acrids the likeable and sours
Or as lilacs on a coffin, unders with corpse!

FELIPE

That irony in things, Zarco. A day breaks
Succeeding you at court while gloom elsewhere
Rues about you.

ZARCO

When Mercedes dropped our engagement I
Opened the luminous pages of the Law. I
Want only the perfection of The Law.
My solace, Felipe. I'll execute it without a flaw.

FELIPE

You use the Law. Some people use coaches.
I am in love nevertheless.

ZARCO

Another kind of doom, Felipe.

FELIPE

You are bitter for now, and make "The Law"
Part of your private war. I fear for you.

ZARCO

Private war? Ha! when thousands of cases
All stage it on the stands?
Mercedes promised to wait in Madrid.
I had a few unravels of business.
I stayed away a week. She abandoned me!
Has there been even a once echo?
One miserable leaf of a letter?
How, how deceived I was!
It is, to me, my stake. I burn at it!
I'm yet in love with her. Will always be.
I have thought I have seen her in theatres.
I've grim'd at the hag I saw later.

I have thought I have seen her in gardens.
Rushed up to strange women,
And had to ask ignominious pardon.
Of course, needless to utter
My dreams, sleep or wake, are of her.
Her doved of eyelids close over!
Ha! If you think I am not justified,
In both woman and The Law for what I do,
Read this: see how this case
Appears to you!

Zarco hands Felipe the papers on Gabriela Zahara

FELIPE
reading

Dona Gabriela Zahara del Valle
Married at San Sabastian to Guitierrez del Romeral.

ZARCO

Scene that it was! ceremonied among
The strummed background of song.
Cannot you see this blazed witch with Romeral,
Evil'd upon his arm *Zarco agitated*
Feeling but hollow for him? Mask!

FELIPE

By word of the people of Aldea-pequeno
Don Alfonso Guitierrez del Romeral -
It says - a very rich fellow - I see -

ZARCO

There, there, Felipe! He was rich, ah yes:
We know the finances of his estates.
Gabriela Zahara could fancy signing his riches
to herself,
Up to her ears in lovers, houses, lit up career.
Came the so impatient! Hurry?
Hurry was imprudent. She statued greater fortitude.
Cautioned herself while in her, deep,
Rude words furied to asp!
He could be contented, innocent, honest, straight-
forward,
But she, she was ever France, ever Italy!
To him, the jeweled mazy life
Couldn't be a candle to love of wife.

But how the cow moo'd country's lull
Drear'd on her city spirit!
Can't you see her in a gaudy dress,
Fanning herself in bored distress:
Ambling in lone of garden, far away
From the theatres and golden gallery?
Restless'd back to the house again
Found her husband sleeping contentedly?
Could this thing last long?

FELIPE

Don Alfonso Gutterrez de Romeral
Was buried on the fourth of May 1843
At Aldea-poqueno, having died of appoplexy!

ZARCO

Appoplexy! If so, the sudden shock
Of her ingratitude. That possibly. It's this:
She loathes the ohing of the dog and cow;
The long flat come back to the rock;
The nagging little well's drip drop;
The thoughtless wearying of a guitar;
The knowing looking but unworried stars;
Thinks the universe meaningless, accursed.
What was worse, the one she loved, her lover,
Was in the far swell of the city.
Seized by the thought, she on'd her mantle.
Sly through the night, Gabriela Zahara
Was gone in a one-horse cart, rushing
To where her lover kept her heart!

FELIPE

That may not be the case, Zarco. Think now,

ZARCO

How else, sir? So!
The after midnight eyes were reposed.
She's home again -- with him!
--- more angry to watch fade the rose mirage
Of the night's joy!
She anguishes; wraths tear of hate;
Sees wealth that would be hers too late.
She cannot wait. What shall she do?
It occurs to her in an ingenious flash!
He sleeps on his pillow of unawares.
The stone in hand, she thinks how that may fail.
He murmurs, stirs. Hers had to be a fulfilled dare!
There she saw in a sheen of avail
The little stake. Do not let him awake!
She thinks, and strikes him dead.

Zarco brings his hand down on the desk

FELIPE

Have you conclusive proof?

ZARCO

Dona Gabriela Zahara has the likeness of guilt.

FELIPE

Likeness, yes. Motive perhaps. Circumstances agree.
Zarco, you have been a pillar among lawyers,
I need not tell you what you have in these;
The frustrating memory of Mercedes!
Find in yourself a mood, my friend,

Deprecating and ready to conclude, then see.
You've rancour'd and crusted.
Gabriela Zahara's a mere suspect in a dearth
You'd sentence her to death?

ZARCO

Judicium in Absentia. It is up to her.

*Enter Secretary followed by a guard with the cloak
and hat of Zarco*

SECRETARY

Your Honor, the ceremonies begin.

ZARCO

Felipe, I must attend a celebration:
I am one of the officials of the occasion.
Come along. We will attend together.

Enter Guard with Black Box

SECRETARY

Your Honor, another matter ---

ZARCO

Set it and let it pall about.
Shrunk to a portable grave, Felipe!

FELIPE

What is it?

ZARCO

guard helps Zarco with cloak

The skull of Senor Romeral. I must examine the
Nail
In the skull. Come. We are late already.

*Exit Zarco and Felipe followed by Guard. Secretary
opens box. Takes out skull. Peruses skull thought-
fully. Stage lights dimming. Replaces skull in
box. Exit Secretary as light lingers on box.*

C u r t a i n

SCENE ONE

The chamber of Council. Judge Zarco is signing A document. Police Chief stands beside Zarco's desk. Enter Prosecuting Attorney with a large portfolio. He places it on the desk and in a theatrical proclamation speaks. Zarco gives him but little attention

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
somewhat effeminately

My case! It drums for her and of Just,
Your Honor.
The too-just for such a woman!

ZARCO

She's only on a paper gallows, sir.
Here is verification from Madrid.
gives Attorney paper
Throughout the whole of Spain, Judicium in
Absentia

Enter Police Chief

POLICE CHIEF

Your Honor, we have everywhere'd looking;
Made wealths of time more the pauper;
Weary'd clocks and threadbared the days;
She won't be found in the usual ways.

ZARCO

We'll unfuture that woman, sir;
Damp her out like dry twig fire;
Abrupt a thick blear hanging up
Of dooms across her path. Clank
Every lock She is in ex. The blank
Time's-up leaves her nowhere to turn.
She's already under her nail -

POLICE CHIEF

Perhaps we've weather'd her from us forever.
Your Honor, never to discover --

ZARCO

We will, sir. I swear. In my courtroom
We'll dungeon her in charges and drag her
Before every skeleton's fingering;
Make every legal phrase a catacomb of no hope.
I'll make my death warrant stick to her
(Of course, lamp her a polite doom's way)

And make the mooded under gloom
Of Bone's Field look in bloom!

POLICE CHIEF

Your Honor, I have been thinking --

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

-- oh ho!

POLICE CHIEF

She could have had an accomplice in this

ZARCO

Very likely!

POLICE CHIEF

Even suppose her a victim, scoundrel'd, sir!

ZARCO

Unlikely, sir. Explain?

POLICE CHIEF

They met by chance and he false-faced awhile.
Then changed. Blackmailed, perhaps, his eye
On her husband's money. Her husband's graces
Less than we know, met with the scoundrel's.
The husband's killed. Dona Gabriela may not
be all to blame!

ZARCO

We will not unburden her now. She defts about;
Dagger in sleeve, poison in flask, gluttred with lies!
That is the only way I can imagine her.

POLICE CHIEF

Supposing, sir, a scoundrel --

ZARCO

Suppose whomever you wish and find them!
You're at the helm of it, you know. But I.
I know what women will do and do however!

POLICE CHIEF

Well, we need another angle, I think
Others who might have been as of avial
as to whether Dona Gabriela hammered that nail.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

My dear chief, sir, leave, please some case for me!

You Honor, I make a surer **masic**, I see.
It is the crime of a woman; clever and self-possessed.

POLICE CHIEF

Seems to me sir --

ZARCO

I'll consider the matter, sir, but with some scarce.
To my mind a woman will be the one, and who?
Dona Gabriela Zahara, as surely as the
crime is done!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

I'm of His Honor's opinion. A contemptible
Woman!
To face-to-face her will be ordeal's nth!
I see myself abed a week. Oh dear!
His Honor sighed at by a physician;
Numerous pill bottles by you;
Really, we may die of her before we're through!

POLICE CHIEF

You exaggerate, Attorney. And why that
handkerchief?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

My dear sir, the just-appearing of her
Will make my breakfasting from thence
Horror. You know me, Your Honor,
And what the aghast of such people does to me!
Dona Gabriela Zahara! Ah, egering vice
Against the stare of justice!
How do you like that?

ZARCO

Perhaps, sir, you ought to desist awhile.
Hoard your enthusiasm until later.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

What a Medusa she must be, people of - of --
Should I say Spain or Cordoba? Say Spain!
O ye judges, we poor ministers of the Law!
We who, etc., I'm fond of that -

ZARCO

I'm not fond of t, But Chief, I say
Dona Gabriela has guilt'd it and I am not
Happy to open a wide world's gate
On a new, possibly wrong suspect this late.
Besides, sir, see how we have done:
Our search was the beginning;
We could not find Dona Gabriela Zahara;
The prosecuting attorney presented me the case;

The facts were those that I could not deny.
Unless she appeared in self defence,
We said we would have to condemn her from our case.
She did not appear. Our word is a word to keep.
The death sentence is in order
Under an old law of Spain.
We have done what we could.

POLICE CHIEF

I'll have the investigation look up
The mere history of del Romeral;
Send the investigation to Aldea-pequeno.
They are eager about the case.
All said and done, Gabriela Zahara.
Where she would go, whom she knew,
With whom conspire may come to light
Through him, the murdered man. Goodnight,
Your Honor.

Z ARCO

Goodnight.

exit Chief of Police

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Oh that woman! - I must go, Your Honor -
That woman is a Gorgon! How's that?
No, no: That unprincipled woman! O Spain!
Judges! Jury! That such women are!
Goodnight, Your Honor.
--Let's see: Oh misericordia, etc...

Exit Prosecuting Attorney

ZARCO

Yes, goodnight, sir.

*Enter Secretary as Prosecuting Attorney exits.
Secretary gathers papers, portfolios together as
Zarco stands brooding. Music.*

SECRETARY

I fear it is late, Your Honor.

ZARCO

Yes, yes I suppose I shall go too. Send the guard.

SECRETARY

Goodnight.

ZARCO

perusing skull of Romeral

Goodnight.

*Exit Secretary. Zarco replaces skull in box.
Readies himself to leave. Enter Guard.*

GUARD
holding note

A message, Your Honor. A woman

ZARCO

A woman? I cannot see her now.
Have them prepare my horse. *takes note*
Guard bows. Starts toward door as Zarco
reads note

Guard!

GUARD

Sir? *pause*

ZARCO
staring at note and sitting down
in shock

GUARD

Your Honor?

*For a moment there is only dark varying music.
Zarco suddenly crumbles note. He leans over on*
desk touching his forehead. After a moment
Zarco speaks.

ZARCO

The woman who brought this? Where is she now?

GUARD

Waiting upon Your Honor.

ZARCO

Tell her I will see her.

Guard exits. Music portentously swelling.
Reenter Guard with a woman. Emerging from
shadow it is the woman known so far as Blanca.
Music stops. Exit Guard. Blanca stands silently

Zarco without looking up, stands. At last
he speaks. But he speaks another name -

ZARCO

Mercedes?

BLANCA

I have come to see you Zarco because there are
things I

Must explain.

ZARCO

Drag out the dead Zarco? Yew him over?
Weave words, those specks of wildflowers --
At last for a heart's grave? Laments? Cryings?
Weary rehearsal! Must it be?

BLANCA

You have been tormented but not destroyed.
That barrenness "destroyed" has no Zarco.
But Mercedes, it has your Mercedes!

ZARCO

I see, You were the only sufferer? You call
That explaining? You'd tell me I loved you
Too little to have been too hurt?

BLANCA

Oh no. No, no my love!
Only that I'm thinking of a place,
a place of heart:
The black-rock'd, its in-vain sky,
An isle of wrecked lovers. Of stones!
How wailed by hollow gales!
How the past whys brokenly monument,
And love's shred wraiths wan to a sea!
Voices of unhoped-for ones
-- those who wept and drowned in a somewhere
utter and beyond --
Who in the wind!
That you should have had to suffer devils me!
I was hoping not so.

ZARCO

Your hoping did not make "not so" so.
You could have met me in that withering exile
And we'd have withstood all voids together.
No. I believe you were on your bare washed break
And pleased at it!

BLANCA

Zarco! Zarco! how can I make you understand?
I would have waited in Madrid - how I would have! -
Have been happy to have waited there forever.

ZARCO

You waited a week? I am supposing a week --
Possibly not a week. Even so, you could have
written.
For it was as if my fingers could not stir
Unless taking up a pen.
A year's neglect became as ten.

BLANCA

You are set against me, Hear me!
I could not let myself love you
As I wanted to love you ever,
Cruel'd as I was!

ZARCO

You could not love me. We understand
each other.
Yet you could have said so, I think.
You urged me even to the utter brink
Of preparing a wedding ceremony
You would have to be a woman
Mad to do this kind of thing!

BLANCA

Zarco, surely I don't doubt that weather
Of such dank and length'd melancholy
Woes about you. And yet, would I come now
If I had been unserious?

ZARCO

The truth is the real matter here.

BLANCA

Your forgiveness is what I have come for.
That forgiveness would wealth me.
I am poor in your love, I suppose.
You have cause.
But I could not let myself love you
For reasons -- reasons that I will make known.

ZARCO

You could not love me! Ah and kindly
You've come to tell me this?
To give torment's music a false cadence?

BLANCA

I could not love not because I wanted not to
Here in heart, for in our alack always
You were worlds to me! I lived in a Zarco
Of the renew'd. High excited with you.
You must never blur my memory of wonderful
Thinking the false, that is, that I
Could not love you not meaning to!
No. My situation was most sorry!

ZARCO

What was it? Well?

BLANCA

I was, unhappily, married!

*Pause. Music. Zarco in stunned consideration.
After pause Zarco speaks.*

ZARCO

Your - your husband, where a - ?

BLANCA

I must know that it's foolish, striking up
A lamp's mean light. The heap of lone-crashes
And broken-ups is squat for dumb,
Roost for night.

ZARCO

If I had our right word Mercedes, I'd say them.

BLANCA

You have thought them. They come to many noes.
'No' is the word I told someone a time ago.
There is echoed to the bleak banish,
Sad, joy'd tinklings of away and you,
You can return to them as joys someday.
I stay. I have to --

ZARCO

You had only to have told me that you --
You were married. Perhaps --

BLANCA

And you to be a judge? You so very trusting?
You so loving? It was impossible.
Fear plumed me. I was horror'd over with omen.
How, how would you have received it? Coul I,
Who had fated my way into a monster's lair,
And had been gnashed at, harsh'd and cruded over,
So soon give up the but awhile hoard of loving?
No, dear Zarco, I dared it, I miser'd,
Kept that midnight vigil on my heart's buried,
Pondered about it, alack'd at it,
Fretted over useless!
The sudden hatred of myself out-of'd
As from behind suffering Cypresses like
a conscienced moon!
I toiled to forget you.

*Zarco having a change of heart, comes up behind
her and taking her shoulder, turns her gently
to him.*

ZARCO

Perhaps, moiled in the yes or no occasion,
Living, we should pause to understand
That there are sometimes rare times.
The far-end gates upon doleful
But looking back, open our path was through a

love's field
Through which we hurried with nowhere to go.
It too beams now, and is fresh'd with anew,
Why I would want to linger, to turn back.
Forgive? Forgive? You know you are not fair.
What can I do but forgive my Mercedes?
Why should I take the solitary'd long?
Open the far-end gate and go on out,
Cold in the distance there without you?
But this! A husband! Have I choice but bare?
This man? Who was he? Where is he?

BLANCA

In a rust-stuck looked-up of forever!

ZARCO

This man, your husband, who -- or what -- ?

BLANCA

He's dead. My so-called husband's dead!

ZARCO

He is dead, Mercedes? I cannot understand.
Dead now? When? How?

BLANCA

Remember me, Zarco, as one who loved you!

ZARCO

Remember you, you say? Dear Mercedes, hear me!
I ask you, unhappy for him, now may we mean
something?

BLANCA

Listen - how it pains me! - to have to speak.
Remember me, Zarco, as one who lost you!

ZARCO

Lost me when we may mean the most?
For me, meaning, and not for you?

BLANCA

There is something you should know --

Enter Guard with Felipe following

FELIPE

Zarco, we were to dine at the Cafe de Plata

He sees Blanca. Blanca looks staringly at Felipe. Confounded, they do not speak.

ZARCO

I have been late for our supper, Felipe, but look!
Occasion rared it to do so. This is my
longed-for

Mercedes: Mercedes

The moon on Zarco who is dark-night'd!
Mercedes, this is my fondest of friends
Felipe from Granada.

pause

FELIPE

recovering quietly

I have been told many things about you and I
Feel as if I know you.

ZARCO

She's told me many things tonight, and, Felipe
I'm due to revise my thinking.

FELIPE

You are due to do that, Zarco, Remember I said so
About Zahara's fate.

ZARCO

If only I could do away
With Dona Gabriela Zahara quickly!
The Chief of Police wishes to take the case
To Aldea-pequeno. A man's involved, he thinks:
A man and not Dona Gabriela Zahara. Now!
Now when we can be together, Mercedes,
Now when worlds are to be lit for us!
If only I may do away with Zahara quickly!

BLANCA

Zarco! I beg of you, determine in you thrice
To give Dona Gabriela Zahara true justice.
When you have captured her, hear her.

FELIPE

I found in you a mood, Zarco my friend,
Deprecating and ready to conclude.
Gabriela Zahara's a mere suspect in a dearth.
What will her death be worth?

ZARCO

If she were innocent would she not have come forward?
If coming forward she confessed, would she not be
guilty?
I've done what could not have been avoided.

BLANCA

I must leave you. I'm at the Plaza de le
Siete Leon.
Goodnight. Goodnight, Senor Felipe.

ZARCO

Mercedes, I will visit you at the Plaza
de le Siete Leon.
A carriage for you! Come. Guard!

*Exit Zarco with Mercedes. Felipe stands brooding
facing audience. He sits disconsolately leaning upon
Zarco's desk. There is the sound of horses,
carriage etc. Reenter Zarco*

To me, the heart-ailed, she is breath of air

FELIPE

To me she's like a beautiful phantom in a coach
driven by specters!

ZARCO

I can't dare into a breast silver phrases
with exquisite mark;
Gesture my cloak; sly fascinating aside smiles by;
Turn wine to doses of love. I am not a magician.
No, no I am plain in many ways. Perhaps dull.
But this: Mercedes to me is love or none!

FELIPE

I remember one met at whom such silver phrases
Seemed as unheard as breath of air unseen;
To whom the gesture of a cloak, as you put it,
Would have appeared just plain idiocy,
To whom smiles were as through cracked looking-glass.

ZARCO

Come, we will go and later to the Plaza
de le Siete Leon.

FELIPE

You will and home to the so fresh'd
figure of each vase,
frame, crest of furniture,
Every aspect of a scene lit up by love's decor.
Meanwhile, Zarco, I will go too: away from Cordoba!

ZARCO

Away? Felipe why? There must be why?

FELIPE

A lost "why", friend. I leave tonight.

ZARCO

And will return when?

FELIPE

Words and a last drink at supper and
not again soon, friend.

ZARCO

I did not expect to lack my friend Felipe. So!
Return of Mercedes I pay for? A kind of law: I
Suppose that I should know.

FELIPE

Shall we go?

Exit Felipe and Zarco

SCENE TWO

Graveyard in abject condition. Enter a chorus of black-hooded Brothers significant of All Souls' Day. Commemoration of the Departed. Brotherhood carries symbols draped in black, white, red (crucifixa, staffs, etc.) and wear (in this instance) vestments of such colors. To a processional of fantastic harmonies some pass from left center stage to offstage. Enter four in black who pause before a burial plot, weedy, and of a fence of rusty tracery

COWL I

Whose grave is this?

COWL II

Cell of a man who died violently.
Subitanea et improvisa morte!

ALL COWLS

Miserabile dictu!

COWL III

Is he one who died in Fulfilment?

COWL II

In UnFulfilment. Libera nos, Domine!

COWL III

With palliative Dew of All Souls' Day.
Annointments bestow.

COWL I

A petitional Dew of All Souls' Day.

III COWL

Who has he to come as his Indulgent?
Or who to place tokens on him?

II COWL

Noone - no one but his wife, therefore nemo!

I COWL

His wife no one? What does it mean, we ask?

II COWL

He was murdered by her, and so, by her

Sudden'd to death without **U**nction.

ALL COWLS

By wife murdered. Misericordia!

I COWL

is she, then, dead?

II COWL

Dead, dead in this murder as in a tomb.

ALL COWLS

Lord have Mercy on her: Christ have Mercy on her:
God, Father in Heaven!

III COWL

Who was the woman and who her husband?

II COWL

Dona Gabriela Zahara. This, the grave of Senor
Romeral.

dark music. pause

ALL COWLS

music in gradual crescendo

I, II COWLS

III, IV COWLS

Alas, alas alas
 alas, alas, alas
Alas, alas, alas
 alas, alas, alas

Long let landscaped be sworn
Not far of soul's nor take
Despair through heartfelt noon
Wold'd over the shoals

Mirage: longset of a haven
Culls sun's thankless going
Stretched in a shadow
Of these dusts blown.

ALL COWLS

Humility's Dew of All Souls' Day upon her
Dead to him, to Church and to Law.

I COWL

Examination of Conscience for her:

III COWL

For her, confession
and for her -

ALL COWLS

For her, that she pray for forgiveness:

Misereatur
Nostril omnipotens Deus, et dimissis peccatis Nostris,
Perducat nos ad vitam aeternam. Amen.

*Behind them the gates of the cemetery are open.
The four hooded figures exit. Enter a few towns-
people with baskets of flowers, religious ac-
coutrements, etc. Some move offstage while
others take to graves on stage. Stage lights
bright. Then, a change of color. Faint thunder.
Wind. A woman kneeling looks up. Music becomes
martial. Enter armed Guardia Civil. Music stops.
From the midst of the Guardia Civil a woman comes
forward. It is Blanca, not as Mercedes but in her
true identity: Dona Gabriela Zahara del Valle.*

CAPTAIN OF GUARD

You can have a few minutes, Zahara. Hurry I say
And be done with this. We are impatient to go.
The police in Cordoba await you.

*He gestures to her. Guards stand alerted.
Slowly Dona Gabriela Zahara approaches the grave
of her husband. Music. Wind agitates her
garments and hair. One of the townspeople near
to a Guard (downstage) questions him as to who
this woman is.*

TOWNSMAN

Who is this woman? She seems gentle.

GUARD

Gabriela Zahara! She has committed herself
And faces the garrote. No matter of yours now!

The name is taken up. Murmur rises.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Zahara! Zahara! Zahara! *Fades*

DONA GABRIELA ZAHARA

Alfonso, I have committed myself to them
I move untomorrow -- dedicated to the Old Grim!

Murdering you, Alfonso, I did it for many sakes:
The bright, the unselfish, the kind, they baned you so
Many youthfult of happiness I strove to save,
Many an unfortunateness made go.

Murdering you, Alfonso, I did for your peace's sake.
All joy, heart and laughter, they pained you so.
I pitied you for good you found too hard to take:
Your death was the one sympathy I could bestow.

All Souls' Day, Alfonso.
I'd like to say a little for your "soul."

Poor man, you should've had one. Did you have?
Some wine bottle, perhaps? That did not do.

A few weeds on my "dear" Alfonso's bed.
How you hated all but things warped and drear.
No sacred Dew or drops of Host Water;
No, yours I have: a little vile liquor.

For last words upon you, hear these:
Love for pet or child, sister, brother,
 father, mother, wife, friend
You, Alfonso, never had. With but the truth
I commemorate you.
No curse or blasphemy would sound as bad.

CAPTAIN OF GUARD

Your time is up, Zahara. We are impatient to go!

*Gabriela Zahara, reposing herself, turns away.
Another distant moan of thunder. Music.
Guards surround her. They exit. A few towns-
people come together at center stage. They
murmur of what has happened. Meanwhile music
darkens. Another roll of thunder. Stagelights
changing, the townspeople look up as if to the
sky. Music is corroborated by a wind rising.
A sharp blow and townspeople gather baskets and
leave a restlessly ominous cemetery. Stagelights
darkening fast. Thunder. Lightning. Music
low as a blue, drear light falls over Romeral's
grave. For a moment, there is but music, faint
thunder and lightning.*

CURTAIN

SCENE ONE

Music hurried and preparatory sounding. Curtains open on brilliantly illuminated courtroom. Eight judges sit at a long table wearing black robes, caps. Raised on a small eminence is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Cordoba's Chair. Zarco sits there. There is a sort of desk or rostrum-like structure for his documents. Toward center stage is a defendant's box with a step or two.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Justices of the supreme court of Cordoba
 I will pronounce a name;
 A name unsu'd, unmoon'd, of all
 Miasma'd -- a name that palls us!
 Corpses, gasps, murder's cough
 Accessory this name enough.
 Decency, laughter, purity
 At this name cease to be.
 A name conversations lull at;
 A name synonymous with low:
 A name we must but pain to know.
 I will pronounce a name,
 One name: Dona Gabriela Zahara,
 Curse of Spain!

Justices,
 This grim woman cannot be found.
 She has complexed the law,
 Cast on it her shadow.
 She wickeds now, this day,
 Adder'd in some hidden by-way.
 I re-pronounce her name:
 Dona Gabriela Zahara!
 Here, I have her paper:
 Certificate of Death. Peruse!
 Rally then to this profound rite of Law.
 Sign it! She stands accused.

Death Certificate is handed over to long table by Secretary. Judges scan it and pass it along as Prosecuting Attorney proceeds.

This murder an uncommon murder, sirs.
 Not a man's action, as inferred.
 A woman would more avail
 Herself of this odd implement -- a nail,
 A malice so precise!
 Murder hid in the corpse -
 In his brain under his thick hair,
 Cloistered, ensconced there.
 That is wit enough to endorse
 Punishment by death
 In any province that is worth!

Now, Justices, you would suppose

So thick a conscience would find no repose:
That unsummoned terrors and
Open-screamed horrors
Would make confession of the crime
An irresistible temptation by this time.
But not this woman, a monstrosity!
She can endure. She has ferocity.
Commit herself? Give up? Grow weary?
She'd laugh to hear me!

Give up? Confess? Commit herself?
No she'll stealth till Doomsday.
Til we *bait* her someway;
Cat-trap her in her den;
Load her with the shackles of her sins!
Commit herself? Confess?
Never! Never! I laugh -

Sound of stir upstage. Guard enters. Gives another Guard message. Message is brought to secretary. Secretary hands it to Zarco. Zarco reads it. Jangles bell for attention of the court.

ZARCO

Judges of the Supreme Court of Cordoba:
I have here word concerning Gabriela Zahara.
She has committed herself at Aldea-poqueno
And has arrived in Cordoba under Guard.

There is murmur. Table of judges. They hastily confer. Prosecuting Attorney poses indignantly center stage,

ZARCO

Fortune avails us of Gabriela Zahara
it will please the court adjourn for some moments.

Zarco jangles desk bell. Guards sound snare Drums. Stop. General rising. Zarco exits Through door behind Chair. Secretary exits. Eight black-robed judges rise. Four leave the courtroom. Four join the Prosecuting Attorney center stage.

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

Give up? Confess? Commit herself?
Never! Never! -- and in she walks.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

She deserves apathy. She shall have apathy.

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

Shall she have a say?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Judge Zarco has her booked to die.

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

Words cannot save her. Murder is too err.
But justice would care to hear from her.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Sirs, months have passed us since
She availed her self defense.
That time her death decreed
Condemned her cold. This hearing
But the formality we hold.
Gabriela Zahara's doom was sanctioned in Madrid
We have here but to sign her "Dead"!

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

Books and the Law pronounce her dead.
Senses logic and logic that is read;
In reality are often divorced, Prosecutor.
How can we regard her as just a corpse?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

To me once and for all
She's had a funeral.

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

To us, The Law, The Books
Have a profound duty
More than signing a death
But by machinery!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

His Honor cannot prescribe Leniency
Nor to that a signature.

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

WE should rather prevail on the 'scales of Mercy'

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Prevail on His Honor to bend the Law?

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

Prevail upon His Honor to hear her -

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Hear murder defended?

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

With intended justice!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Justice undone!

FOUR BLACK-ROBED JUDGES

Justice confirmed!

Sudden roll on snare drums. Enter Secretary with ledgers. Enter four black-robed judges processionally. Four black-robed judges leave Prosecuting Attorney. Join others at table. Prosecuting Attorney takes seat. Roll on drums. Enter Zarco and resumes his position as chief justice. Music. Enter Guard carrying black box. Box is placed on table by Secretary. Zarco jangles bell.

ZARCO

Judges of the Supreme Court of the Province of Cordoba,
Gabriela Zahara is due to receive sentence upon arrival
Hence I trust the certificate of her Death
Passes immediate signature for dispatch and Execution.

I BLACK-ROBED JUDGE

rising

Your Honor, by your leave I speak.

ZARCO

Granted.

I BLACK-ROBED JUDGE

We request earnestly that we may hear
From Dona Gabriela Zahara her defense
And have the certificate of her death
Condoned on an act of confession and thereby
Waiving Judicium in Absentia.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

That does not accord, Your Honor,
with the Articles of Accord!

ZARCO

Understand. Judicium in Absentia, old law of Spain,
Invoked against Dona Gabriela Zahara del Valle,
Was designed in exchange with the suspect,
For voluntary commitment to Trial,
And full expensive defense by the Law
Of the individual's claims.
But that upon the dearth of else evidence
The shadow lies solemn on the said suspect,

Who, in resistance to posted proclamation,
Whether by ignorance or intention,
Commences concealment of his or her person
Yea nor nay in a set time specified,
Judicium in Absentia negates defense!
They are declared guilty.
The certificate of death is signed.
Whether they commit themselves thereafter
Or undergo capture, they are sentenced
And can make no defense. Having forfeited
her defense,
Dona Gabriela Zahara, under Judicium in Absentia,
Cannot be heard from to effect,
Or being heard from, cannot waive her fate.
She is as dead.

*Judges confer. Commotion in back of courtroom.
Message given to Secretary. Secretary hands the
message to Zarco. Zarco jangles bell.*

ZARCO

Judges of the Supreme Court of Cordoba,
Police of Cordoba have arrived with the prisoner.
Come to your decision.

I BLACK-ROBED JUDGE
rising

We will sign the Certificate.

*Each Judge signs as Certificate is passed along
table. Music. Zarco has driven to conclusion
his manipulation of an archaic law.*

ZARCO
Jingling bell

Bring in the prisoner to receive sentence!

SECRETARY
rising

Bring in Gabriela Zahara del Valle to receive
sentence.

*Sudden roll on snare drums. Stop. Court
spellbound. Music. Enter Gabriela Zahara
accompanied by four of the Guardia civil.
Unable to comprehend, Zarco stares at Dona
Gabriela Zahara, his Mercedes, in amazement,
His consternation grows. He rises. Gabriela
Zahara is placed in defendant's box. Her
manner is composed.*

POLICE CHIEF
receiving paper from Secretary

I, Chief of Police of Cordoba,
Attest to the validity of the prisoner as Dona
Gabriela Zahara del Valle,

Convicted of murder.

Zarco does not appear to have heard the Chief of Police of Cordoba. Slowly he sits. For a moment he cannot speak. He stares upon Gabriela Zahara.

I BLACK-ROBED JUDGE

Your Honor, the death certificate.

Delivered into the hands of the Secretary, the Secretary offers the paper to Zarco. Zarco takes the certificate to sign.

ZARCO
staring

Chief of Police of Cordoba, please ask the woman who she is?

POLICE CHIEF

Gabriela Zahara, Your Honor.

ZARCO

Ask her if she will say? Ask her!

POLICE CHIEF

Zahara, His Honor, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Cordoba,
Questions you as to identity. Speak up.

GABRIELA ZAHARA

I am Gabriela Zahara del Valle,
The wife of Senor Gutterrez del Romeral
Who is dead.

She Secretary offers Zarco the pen with which to sign the certificate of Death.

SECRETARY

His Honor wishes to sign the Death Certificate?

Zarco, hesitating, takes the pen. He looks to be in a stupor. He regards "Mercedes" once again. Then, in a kind of scattered haste, signs the Certificate, pushing it away. The Secretary, aware of a situation, hands him the seal. With a difficult effort Zarco stamps the Certificate.

GABRIELA ZAHARA
(Mercedes, Blanca)

I do not want more life. Mainly but
to fold the last;
Fond a smile on; say a word of things alas'd.

At sky take a last, wits-end look.
There see some outcast cloud eyed on
Or outcast star lone it across the waste,
Wonder how in the world the crystal
Of one's too thin life
Transparents unbroken even a day;
Then nervous dawn watch stop
Stark over the lying open of my coffin --
The blank dead bed of it.

Before I die I do so want but to explain,
Your Honor.

ZARCO

Explain! Explain! Do so!
You may make a statement!

GABRIELA ZAHARA

I was with my husband, alone with him
up on his death.
But I am not altogether the cause in this.

ZARCO

Who then, madam? Say who? Who?

GABRIELA ZAHARA

Not who, why, for I have been scroll'd across:
The null foreheads me. Listen now
But for a moment. My husband has been my death.
The Law will not be. You condemned a woman
Already dying wounds ago, an ough of nails
Of insult, abuse, indifference, unlove
Through her skull. I'm described as dead.
How can I make you see these spikes --
Nails of anguish, of offense and abuse?
Could Law be brought against my murderer?

My husband purposed a false-face, or, say I
Saw him in poses like a portrait
A statue of character and success.
Oh, I was young!
In awe I married this fake edifice of character.
To look to him, a monument of men, I set my life.

But suddenly, of course, the truth showed up.
And he turned from a likeness to poseur.
A sneer of the truth was, as if we fools
Never would learn! Was all too clear:
I had idealized a fraud.

Agony, vulgar swears, inanities, heaven knows!
A corridor of woes! Then burnt out my life's wax;
And fled beyond left frore for me!
An unleaf'd left my world's twigs wrack'd
The unfed desolation caw'd with lack!
My husband shut everything in a flask
With a small cork.

Then a warm abrupt blew
A love for one whose touch was wand!
Restless'd about me a season's shadowy fresh
And the mingle of nears and fars, of soon or late
Whispered sweetly, hysterically!
Never had I been so among --
Never had I been so within'd --
Never so swarmed with feeling!
I loved one with whom I could love the world!

This man trusted in vows, held faiths,
Kept his heart's neighborhood high,
He virtued up and up until I saw,
As in a lightning, the lit-up peril's face!
I saw my husbands spite show teeth and say,
"I know your secret. I'll ruin both of you!"
That night he drove into me a Nail of fear!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Your Honor, by your leave?

ZARCO

What! What!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Zahara,
You are not the one to blame?
Who is? I suppose Spain?
Anybody you can defame?
The dead man now.
Human nature is crass.
For his abuse, your word?
One thing looks over all
You declined the fall.
That he fell I have proof:
His tortured skull!

The Prosecuting Attorney has reached into the black box and taking the skull holds it up. Gabriela Zahara gasps at it. Her hand thrusts out against it. Court in consternation. Zarco rises and at his wits-end jingles bell.

ZARCO

No more! Take the prisoner away!

Music. Gabriela Zahara is led away. Zarco is seen bending over his rostrum as one who has suffered a severe attack. Snare drums roll as curtains hurry together.

S C E N E T W O

Zarco is at his desk. He is surrounded with open books, statistics, documents lying about in a state of furious disbevelment. Zarco's condition is that of a dangerous anxiety. He seeks legal extrication for Mercedes from Judicium in Absentia. He occasionally pauses, rises, paces the floor. He stops, presses his forehead or bends painfully over his desk.

ZARCO

murmuring

Mercedes, My poor Mercedes.

He hears, it seems, the voice of Mercedes.

VOICE OF MERCEDES

I do so want to explain, Your Honor.
Listen, Listen now but for a moment.
I do not want more life. You condemned a woman
Already dying wounds ago -

ZARCO

Her voice! Will I ever hear else? Never!
Its frail wane's droop'll be my mind's freak!
To die, murdered by me!

Commotion of someone's coming. Enter Guard with Felipe.

FELIPE

Zarco, I've come back about Mercedes. I know -

ZARCO

in distraction

Who? About whom have you come back?
Who was, is, will be Mercedes? Let me be told
about this Mercedes for whom you have
come back!

FELIPE

Here is a wild of you I little knew.

ZARCO

How would a drink do us? *proceeds to pour
the wine. It spills.*

FELIPE

Pleased duty; the packing up of papers of the case;
Dinner conversation and the fulfilled look;
The now due vacation with justice done;

Then the occasion's ornament, a drink?
Where, where in the vanish are they?

ZARCO

Here is that where they are Felipe, my friend
Where they belong!
*sweeps decanters, goblets
crashing around*

FELIPE

Then something is too terrible to tell?
Of Mercedes?

ZARCO
Of what she has become. I know!

FELIPE

She has told you?

ZARCO

She committed herself. A confession!

FELIPE

A confession! How hard you take us! Friend!
Then it is to be taken in the name of Law?
But Zarco who is always strong and wise?
Do not fear. My love would not come to bear.
Mercedes is in love with you - just you.

But out-of town, for me, nowhered
All lights seemed from a glory here;
All direction: was Cordobas to her;
Movement elsewhere made minutes years.

I have come back about Mercedes but once more!

ZARCO

Mercedes. My poor Mercedes.
I cannot, dare not think.

FELIPE

Friend, how little I knew you! Forgive me!
How could I know Blanca was your beautiful
Mercedes?

ZARCO

Blanca? Who is Blanca?

FELIPE

Mercedes, Blanca what does it matter,
my friend?

ZARCO

On the coach from Granada? The beautiful woman?
That was my Mercedes?
Dios nos assista!

FELIPE

She has said so. Do not be hard, Zarco, I
beg of you.

ZARCO

You were in love? If but she were or had been
your Blanca!

FELIPE

She said, "I've known one man who spoke the truth
Who spoke it and meant it senior," and I now know
That was of you, my friend.

ZARCO

No more! No, no more if you please!

FELIPE

Ah, now I am sorry to have told you!
You will be marrying her in the last days
of the year?
I may once see her, some farewell words make?

ZARCO

See her? See her? Marry her! My friend
Do you not know who she is? No, no Blanca!

FELIPE

We will let her be Mercedes. I am resigned to it.

ZARCO

Now Mercedes! Hurry, hurry. Fly there Felipe,
quick!

FELIPE

Zarco!

ZARCO

It is so plain in my mind's eye; the
hideous clasp
Grasps her with iron; her throat is blood!
The Father's book's white sleek, too last,
Affords him the too small to speak!

FELIPE

I do not understand you when I fear I do!

ZARCO

Mercedes, Felipe! Blanca! Zahara!

FELIPE

Zahara!

*Felipe stands back incredulously, a moment
thinking of what he has been told.*

ZARCO

Tomorrow dawn, Felipe, there'll be a matrimony
No fortunately star'd affair for us in any way!
Of that grimacing batch there is, perhaps,
Some geometrically deliberate Fate.
Have we not had in company, the bones of irony?
I'm suspicious, Felipe, suspicious of stars!

FELIPE

Blanca? And Mercedes? Zahara! How certain are you?

ZARCO

Have I not carried it beyond certainty, sir?!

FELIPE

But murder! Should she have been believed?

ZARCO

All questions have been asked and I
Have phrased freshly a hundred times
All questions and to one answer:
I am to blame; my Judicium in Absentia
and "old law of Spain"!
Of her own forge her confession -- her "why."

FELIPE

But, Zarco? Is not "why" the duty of a Judge?
Could you not have considered? Is there mercy?
Is not the "why" significant in a murder?

ZARCO

Hearing her tell, the "corroboration" sat still.
His clop jaw jutted the rotten rows of his
teeth;
His infinite eyes doomed over the courtroom.
"Why" was inextricably lost in the loom of
human fate.
No Why was sufficient - except to me!

FELIPE

The skull! What have you done, Zarco?

ZARCO

I vained to Just and Righteousness I should
not have!
Felipe, I sent a plea for a waiving of
Judicium in Absentia
I sent it but to what fate? Madrid is far.

FELIPE

The Books cannot save her now,
Can you? Do, Zarco, do!

ZARCO

I have passed another sentence: This: I
Renounce all degree, state and judgeship from today.
I'm the light out in a doomed house;
Empty shadow'd jug on a deserted table
Pitied on by a noon's eye!

FELIPE

Then write a certificate for Stay of Execution!

ZARCO

Felipe, go to her, go to her and explain that I
Will write a certificate for Stay of Execution!
To perdition with laws! To the devil with the
people of Spain!
It is all memoried sun on a ruined building;
Smile of resigned smile through an anger of
sticks.
Frail lasts of it drop cold to thick
Be my name the most hated, let me know! Guard!
I do not believe I'm forgiven. Guard!

FELIPE

I am sorry for you, I am, in a way, glad for you
I am terrified for Mercedes!

ZARCO

Hurry!

Exit Felipe

*Zarco pulls the cord of the hangings about the
room's portal. A gloomy blue is rising. Dawn
of a protentous day. Enter Guard*

Call my Personal Guard. Get Riano!
Be quick!

*Zarco hastens to desk. He prepares certificate
for a Stay of Execution. Outside, laughter and
singing in the street increases mixed with snare
drums and martial sounds. He takes seal and
stamps certificate. Music up. Enter Guard*

with a squad of the Guardia Civil.

ZARCO

Go and with haste to the Custodio of the
Prison!
Have cease (by order of the Chief Justice's power
Invested in me) Execution of Dona Gabriela Zahara.
Bring the lady here with dispatch. Go!

*Exit Guardia Civil. From this moment the
music should not wane, but convey a festive,
martial, religious and somber summation in
the nature of a scenery of music.*

Curtain.

SCENE Three

Entrance room to the corridor of cells of the prison. It is a shadowed, stone room like a vault. In a corner, readied, lie the coffins for the executed: crude vacant boxes. Right stage is ornamented gate. It presents and leads into the courtyard where the executions are held. In the courtyard, the commotion of the spectacle is heard: there is clanking; the passing to and fro of Guards; a family in grief passes; snare drums roll. There is heavy approach. The gate, opened suddenly, admits Guards and they bear a corpse. Left stage presents a disordered desk cluttered with objects of dismal character and some old books, wine bottle, etc. Enter the Custodio, the realm's official. His world is of keys, instruments of persuasion, and a sordid temperament. To the Guards he speaks.

THE CUSTODIO

Here, there! No, number 2!

The Custodio indicates a vacant coffin marked With a big numeral 2.

CHIEF GUARD

Haaaaaaa! He was a MAD one, stark mad!
“This where I will go
For my far, far rest.
Friends will visit me there?”
Friends will, I said,
Nor ever go, It is,
Most hard to leave I hear.

2

“This where I will go
For my long long rest,
Does it keep solitude?”
Without a doubt, I said.
None can talk if he would.

The coffin has been opened and prepared to receive no. 2's body.

3

“This place I must go
For my long, far rest,
Fresh air, flowers, what of?”

As for air, I said, cold:
As for flowers, plenty enough!

No. 2's body is laid in coffin which is closed and a loud hammering of nails begins.

4

“This where I may stay

For a happy rest,
Has responsible management?"

Beyond secure, I said
And Heaven sent!

*The Custodio laughs with the Chief Guard who
dispatches his subordinates and the coffin is
borne away.*

CHIEF GUARD

Next, is it she? The famous one?

THE CUSTODIO
he peruses roll call

No. 4. Ten O'clock. No. 3 next. Tiburcio
Severiano!
Zahara's No. 4.

*A festival-like sound rises above commotion and
passes*

CHIEF GUARD

Today, Montiano comes to town!

THE CUSTODIO

Montiano? Montiano! The youthful Torero!

CHIEF GUARD

He will kill Desastro.

Enter Priest with an aged couple, a man and woman.

THE CUSTODIO

Not Desastro Ho ho!
PRIEST

We were told to come for the body of Tuburcio
Severiano

THE CUSTODIO

He's dead, Father? *consults roll call*

PRIEST

He did not undergo execution as planned but
was sick and died.

THE CUSTODIO

Uncover the coffin marked 3 and see, you Guard!

*A Guard uncovers a coffin upon which the old
woman and man commence to sigh and wail for*

the body in the box.

CHIEF GUARD

PRIEST

Let Zahara come forward.
Ten o'clock, nine o'clock
are they so different?

Deus, cui propiam
est misereri semper
et parcere, te sup-
plices exoramus pro
anima famulitui
Tiburcio Severiano,
Quam hodie de hoc
Saeculo migrare jussisti:

Enter two Guards

THE CUSTODIO

Remove him to cart. Zahara will be No. 3

*Guard replaces lid on coffin as Priest continues
prayer.*

*Exit Priest, aged
man and woman and
Guards with body
of No. 3. Drums
roll. General
commotion continues.*

ut non tradas eam in manus
inimici, neque obliviscaris
in finem, sed jubeas eam a
sanctis. Angelis suscipi
et ad patriam paradisi
perduci; ut, quia in te
speravit et credidit, non
paens inferni sustineat
sed gaudia aeterna possideat.
Per Dominum.

*The Custodio unlocks the long corridor of cells.
The mood of length and gloom is imagined as con-
veyed by backdrop. Guards reenter comprising a
squad. Chief Guard and Custodio enter imaginable
corridor of cells, an echoing rattle of keys, locks,
etc., is heard.*

VOICE OF CUSTODIO

sounding hollow

NO. 3. DONA GABRIELA ZAHARA DEL VALLE°

*For a moment a dull drum (or subdued music).
Again sound of keys, locks at work. Death
tread etc. When she appears, an expressive
of music, or of a far chorus. Wind agitates
her. Dishevelment characterises her state of
fall. Doom prevails over her spirit. A Priest,
having been administering last rites, enters
with her. A guard, with a sharp knife, comes
forward. Taking her hair he holds it up and
with expert stroke, cuts it away. A black cloth
is bound around her head. The Priest begins his
prayer.*

PRIEST

Dominos noster Jesus Christus te absolvat

Et ego auctoritate ipsius te absolve, in
nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.

*Exit procession. Custodio returns to desk.
Pours a drink. Taking a marker, he makes a
large number "3" on a coffin. With another
drink, a moment admiring his art, he sits
down to desk. Enter Guard.*

GUARD

is it she? Zahara?

THE CUSTODIO

I swear it better be or I'm loony! So?

GUARD

One, Senor Felipe is in a hurry to see you.

THE CUSTODIO

Who may he be? Has he business?

GUARD

For Gabriela Zahara, word from a friend.

THE CUSTODIO

What friend?

GUARD

The Chief Justice of Cordoba.

THE CUSTODIO

Ho, ho, Zahara friend of the Chief Justice of
Cordoba?
And what say the people of Cordoba, of Spain
If they are friends? Have Senor Felipe explain!

GUARD

The Chief Justice of the Province of Cordoba
Has saved Zahara, he says. The execution's
to stop,

THE CUSTODIO

Cessation of the drums and an ominous pause

The drums are silent. Do not speak!
It is the listen of the death!

*Enter Guard excitedly. He indicates something's
approach*

GUARD II

Sir, it is the Guardia Civil. From the Chief Justice!

In a temper of immediate summons, enter the Guardia Civil.

CAPTAIN OF GUARDIA CIVIL

Dona Gabriela Zahara, is, under civil law
To be conveyed to the Chief Justice of Cordoba,
Whose order, hereby, stays execution this day,
Pending investigation of her case.

The Custodio receives the certificate in shock

THE CUSTODIO
to Guards

Quick! Quick! The Militante, sound it!

Exit Guards in a rush

CAPTAIN OF GUARDIA CIVIL

Is it so soon! Why so?

THE CUSTODIO

One, tubercio Severiano, died. A change of
schedule.
Who dreamed that Zahara would live!

*The snare drums roll. There is a sharp cry.
The Militante is sounded. The murmur of spectators
swells.*

THE CUSTODIO

I cannot tell. It is too late. I think.
It cannot be a blame to lay on us. Damn this!
All Cordoba knew Zahara would die today.

Enter Sentries with Felipe

SENTRY

Custodio, one Sonar Felipe is troubled deep
He demands to see you about Dona Zahara.

FELIPE

Chief Justice Zarco has made a reprieve!

Enter Chief Guard. He is angry

CHIEF GUARD

Confusion be damned! Who sounds the Militante?

Enter attendants, Guards, etc...

THE CUSTODIO

Silence! From the Chief Justice! Reprieve!

CAPTAIN OF GUARDIA CIVIL

Dona Gabriela Zahara *hands a paper to Chief Guard*
Bring her at once to be taken to Chief
Justice Zarco
Whose order, hereby, stays execution this day.

THE CUSTODIO

Look to them, not to me!

CHIEF GUARD

But Captain, all Cordoba knows Chief Justice Zarco
Would have no mercy on Zahara!
I would understand?

CAPTAIN OF GUARDIA CIVIL

Time presses us. Bring her at once to be
taken to a Council!

*Enter Guard. He speaks in a whisper to the Chief
Guard. Chief Guard consults with the Custodio.
They have spoken when Guards enter and they bear
between them the body of Dana Gabriela Zahara.
At no time in the present moments of the scene
should her body be entirely in view.*

THE CUSTODIO

I must pronounce Dona Zahara - dead.
Executed as prescribed by the law,
And by the order of the Chief
Justice of Cordoba.

CAPTAIN OF GUARDIA CIVIL

Is that to be her coffin?

THE CUSTODIO

For what we thought her death was, it is.

CAPTAIN OF GUARD

Leave her here to wait an official conveyance.
The Chief Justice will want to see your books.
Come, to the Chief Justice!

*Exit Guardia Civil. The Custodio's guards have
Dona Zahara at coffin. When they separate she
is closed up in it. Felipe covers his eyes a*

moment then looks again at the box containing the woman who had fascinated him so. The Chief Guard draws up.

CHIEF GUARD

to attendant

Sound the drums.

Drums roll. Exit Chief and Guard and corps. The Custodio opens a ledger and proceeds to write. Exit all except Felipe and Priest. Music. The Custodio closes ledgers. Pours drink. Drinks. Takes keys. Exits left stage with Ledger. Exit Priest in thought and slow.

FELIPE

Standing at coffin

SCENE Four

Zarco's Chamber of Council. Night. Wind agitates the chamber. Distant noises of revelry rise occasionally. Felipe locks despondantly through various open books on Zarco's desk. Enter Zarco. He is dressed in black, but is violently bloodless, profound darknesses under his eyes, the face lines heavy.

FELIPE

Zarco, I thought: you would come here. I waited.

ZARCO

Felipe, I - (as in a spell) I am made to wonder:
Is it her having been in this room, Felipe?
I seem not to be able to believe her dead.
Well, I hold her in my mind so deep
Any room would fill with but my thought of her:
Its projection of her image through thick clear
into star:
I could go through a midnight by the light of her.
Others could be lost on a disaster'd night sea.
Her image would not have it so with me!
Is it the gone of her in this room still?
Or her having been that is gone I feel?

FELIPE

No Blanca - or Mercedes - we knew can come, Zarco.
The excommunication, deaths driven her far.
True, is it not? To it, we are but what we are.

A distant revelry swells, passes

ZARCO

Sad joy'd tinklings of away. Can you hear?
The drear of them? "Go," she said.
"I stay here."

Sound of horses and a furiously arriving caleche

They are here! Excellent! *Going over to portal*

*Felipe, too, looks out of portal. Zarco hastens
To throw on his cloak. Binds it.*

It is I who leave Cordoba tonight!

FELIPE

I. do not see a "they", Zarco. One man only?

ZARCO

Well, one will do. One man, two. It will

not matter.

FELIPE

For what destination do you leave Cordoba tonight?

ZARCO

The vacation of which you spoke. A vacation!
I am in need of a vacation am I not?
'Justice' is done.
Let me shake my friend's hand. I would thank you.
I do not have much time. We should take drinks.

FELIPE

We will leave Cordoba - you and I. Leave Spain -

ZARCO

No! Back! Back! Nobody is to come!
No talk,
no memories, no friends! No!

FELIPE

For a moment I do not know you, Zarco!

Enter Guard

GUARD

The caleche, Your Honor, it waits below.

ZARCO

I am coming. Remembrance is on you like a
plume, Felipe!
I need only rest. I need ----- peace!

FELIPE

Zarco!

ZARCO

No more! Here -
opens cabinet, draws out black box

In three days take a stake.
Blast these hideously lasting bones to dust!
Guard, I will not need you.

*Exit Zarco. Felipe stands in amazement a moment.
He then rushes to door. He calls Zarco. Music.
Reenter Felipe after leaving stage vacant (music)
momentarily.*

FELIPE

Guard, His Honor did not go alone?

I saw the shape of someone in the caleche

GUARD

Senor, yes. A woman sat in the caleche,

FELIPE

Woman?

GUARD

I did see, senor, a woman: not speaking,
not moving -
sitting as a stone -- like dead!

FELIPE

*coming downstage in realization
and in an aghast whisper*

Then it was she! Zarco!

exit Felipe

*Slowly music rises in a description of death
caleche as curtains begin to close.*