

BLOOD WEDDING

**TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS
AND SEVEN SCENES**

(1933)

NOTICE

This edition of *Blood Wedding* has been printed with the proper authorization. It was scrupulously revised in accordance with the original manuscript of Federico García Lorca which I have in my possession, and it contains his very latest revisions.

MARGARITA XIRGU

Buenos Aires, July 1938

CHARACTERS

THE MOTHER

THE BRIDE

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

LEONARDO'S WIFE

THE SERVANT WOMAN

THE NEIGHBOR WOMAN

YOUNG GIRLS

LEONARDO

THE BRIDEGROOM

THE BRIDE'S FATHER

THE MOON

DEATH (*as a Beggar Woman*)

WOODCUTTERS

YOUNG MEN

ACT ONE
SCENE I

A room painted yellow.

BRIDEGROOM, *entering*. Mother.

MOTHER. What?

BRIDEGROOM. I'm going.

MOTHER. Where?

BRIDEGROOM. To the vineyard.

He starts to go.

MOTHER. Wait.

BRIDEGROOM. You want something?

MOTHER. Your breakfast, son.

BRIDEGROOM. Forget it. I'll eat grapes. Give me the knife.

MOTHER. What for?

BRIDEGROOM, *laughing*. To cut the grapes with.

MOTHER, *muttering as she looks for the knife*. Knives, knives. Cursed be all knives, and the scoundrel who invented them.

BRIDEGROOM. Let's talk about something else.

MOTHER. And guns and pistols and the smallest little knife—and even hoes and pitchforks.

BRIDEGROOM. All right.

MOTHER. Everything that can slice a man's body. A handsome man, full of young life, who goes out to the vineyards or to his own olive groves—his own because he's inherited them . . .

BRIDEGROOM, *lowering his head*. Be quiet.

MOTHER. . . . and then that man doesn't come back. Or if he does come back it's only for someone to cover him over with a palm leaf or a plate of rock salt so he won't

bloat. I don't know how you dare carry a knife on your body—or how I let this serpent

She takes a knife from a kitchen chest.

stay in the chest.

BRIDEGROOM. Have you had your say?

MOTHER. If I lived to be a hundred I'd talk of nothing else. First your father; to me he smelled like a carnation and I had him for barely three years. Then your brother. Oh, is it right—how can it be—that a small thing like a knife or a pistol can finish off a man—a bull of a man? No, I'll never be quiet. The months pass and the hopelessness of it stings in my eyes and even to the roots of my hair.

BRIDEGROOM, *forcefully*. Let's quit this talk!

MOTHER. No. No. Let's not quit this talk. Can anyone bring me your father back? Or your brother? Then there's the jail. What do they mean, jail? They eat there, smoke there, play music there! My dead men choking with weeds, silent, turning to dust. Two men like two beautiful flowers. The killers in jail, carefree, looking at the mountains.

BRIDEGROOM. Do you want me to go kill them?

MOTHER. No . . . If I talk about it it's because . . . Oh, how can I help talking about it, seeing you go out that door? It's . . . I don't like you to carry a knife. It's just that . . . that I wish you wouldn't go out to the fields.

BRIDEGROOM, *laughing*. Oh, come now!

MOTHER. I'd like it if you were a woman. Then you wouldn't be going out to the arroyo now and we'd both of us embroider flounces and little woolly dogs.

BRIDEGROOM, *he puts his arm around his mother and laughs*. Mother, what if I should take you with me to the vineyards?

MOTHER. What would an old lady do in the vineyards? Were you going to put me down under the young vines?

BRIDEGROOM, *lifting her in his arms*. Old lady, old lady—you little old, little old lady!

MOTHER. Your father, he used to take me. That's the

way with men of good stock; good blood. Your grandfather left a son on every corner. That's what I like. Men, men; wheat, wheat.

BRIDEGROOM. And I, Mother?

MOTHER. You, what?

BRIDEGROOM. Do I need to tell you again?

MOTHER, *seriously*. Oh!

BRIDEGROOM. Do you think it's bad?

MOTHER. No.

BRIDEGROOM. Well, then?

MOTHER. I don't really know. Like this, suddenly, it always surprises me. I know the girl is good. Isn't she? Well behaved. Hard working. Kneads her bread, sews her skirts, but even so when I say her name I feel as though someone had hit me on the forehead with a rock.

BRIDEGROOM. Foolishness.

MOTHER. More than foolishness. I'll be left alone. Now only you are left me—I hate to see you go.

BRIDEGROOM. But you'll come with us.

MOTHER. No. I can't leave your father and brother here alone. I have to go to them every morning and if I go away it's possible one of the Félix family, one of the killers, might die—and they'd bury him next to ours. And that'll never happen! Oh, no! That'll never happen! Because I'd dig them out with my nails and, all by myself, crush them against the wall.

BRIDEGROOM, *sternly*. There you go again.

MOTHER. Forgive me.

Pause.

How long have you known her?

BRIDEGROOM. Three years. I've been able to buy the vineyard.

MOTHER. Three years. She used to have another sweetheart, didn't she?

BRIDEGROOM. I don't know. I don't think so. Girls have to look at what they'll marry.

MOTHER. Yes. I looked at nobody. I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me. One woman with one man, and that's all.

BRIDEGROOM. You know my girl's good.

MOTHER. I don't doubt it. All the same, I'm sorry not to have known what her mother was like.

BRIDEGROOM. What difference does it make now?

MOTHER, *looking at him*. Son.

BRIDEGROOM. What is it?

MOTHER. That's true! You're right! When do you want me to ask for her?

BRIDEGROOM, *happily*. Does Sunday seem all right to you?

MOTHER, *seriously*. I'll take her the bronze earrings, they're very old—and you buy her . . .

BRIDEGROOM. You know more about that . . .

MOTHER. . . . you buy her some open-work stockings—and for you, two suits—three! I have no one but you now!

BRIDEGROOM. I'm going. Tomorrow I'll go see her.

MOTHER. Yes, yes—and see if you can make me happy with six grandchildren—or as many as you want, since your father didn't live to give them to me.

BRIDEGROOM. The first-born for you!

MOTHER. Yes, but have some girls. I want to embroider and make lace, and be at peace.

BRIDEGROOM. I'm sure you'll love my wife.

MOTHER. I'll love her.

She starts to kiss him but changes her mind.

Go on. You're too big now for kisses. Give them to your wife.

Pause. To herself.

When she is your wife.

BRIDEGROOM. I'm going.

MOTHER. And that land around the little mill—work it over. You've not taken good care of it.

BRIDEGROOM. You're right. I will.

MOTHER. God keep you.

The Son goes out. The Mother remains seated—her back to the door. A Neighbor Woman with a kerchief on her head appears in the door.

Come in.

NEIGHBOR. How are you?

MOTHER. Just as you see me.

NEIGHBOR. I came down to the store and stopped in to see you. We live so far away!

MOTHER. It's twenty years since I've been up to the top of the street.

NEIGHBOR. You're looking well.

MOTHER. You think so?

NEIGHBOR. Things happen. Two days ago they brought in my neighbor's son with both arms sliced off by the machine.

She sits down.

MOTHER. Rafael?

NEIGHBOR. Yes. And there you have him. Many times I've thought your son and mine are better off where they are—sleeping, resting—not running the risk of being left helpless.

MOTHER. Hush. That's all just something thought up—but no consolation.

NEIGHBOR, *sighing*. Ayl!

MOTHER, *sighing*. Ayl!

Pause.

NEIGHBOR, *sadly*. Where's your son?

MOTHER. He went out.

NEIGHBOR. He finally bought the vineyard!

MOTHER. He was lucky.

NEIGHBOR. Now he'll get married.

MOTHER, *as though reminded of something, she draws her chair near The Neighbor*. Listen.

NEIGHBOR, *in a confidential manner*. Yes. What is it?

MOTHER. You know my son's sweetheart?

NEIGHBOR. A good girl!

MOTHER. Yes, but . . .

NEIGHBOR. But who knows her really well? There's nobody. She lives out there alone with her father—so far away—fifteen miles from the nearest house. But she's a good girl. Used to being alone.

MOTHER. And her mother?

NEIGHBOR. Her mother I *did* know. Beautiful. Her face glowed like a saint's—but I never liked her. She didn't love her husband.

MOTHER, *sternly*. Well, what a lot of things certain people know!

NEIGHBOR. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend—but it's true. Now, whether she was decent or not nobody said. That wasn't discussed. She was haughty.

MOTHER. There you go again!

NEIGHBOR. You asked me.

MOTHER. I wish no one knew anything about them—either the live one or the dead one—that they were like two thistles no one even names but cuts off at the right moment.

NEIGHBOR. You're right. Your son is worth a lot.

MOTHER. Yes—a lot. That's why I look after him. They told me the girl had a sweetheart some time ago.

NEIGHBOR. She was about fifteen. He's been married two years now—to a cousin of hers, as a matter of fact. But nobody remembers about their engagement.

MOTHER. How do you remember it?

NEIGHBOR. Oh, what questions you ask!

MOTHER. We like to know all about the things that hurt us. Who was the boy?

NEIGHBOR. Leonardo.

MOTHER. What Leonardo?

NEIGHBOR. Leonardo Félix.

MOTHER. Félix!

NEIGHBOR. Yes, but—how is Leonardo to blame for anything? He was eight years old when those things happened.

MOTHER. That's true. But I hear that name—Félix—and it's all the same.

Muttering.

Félix, a slimy mouthful.

She spits.

It makes me spit—spit so I won't kill!

NEIGHBOR. Control yourself. What good will it do?

MOTHER. No good. But you see how it is.

NEIGHBOR. Don't get in the way of your son's happiness. Don't say anything to him. You're old. So am I. It's time for you and me to keep quiet.

MOTHER. I'll say nothing to him.

NEIGHBOR, *kissing her*. Nothing.

MOTHER, *calmly*. Such things . . . !

NEIGHBOR. I'm going. My men will soon be coming in from the fields.

MOTHER. Have you ever known such a hot sun?

NEIGHBOR. The children carrying water out to the reapers are black with it. Goodbye, woman.

MOTHER. Goodbye.

The Mother starts toward the door at the left. Halfway there she stops and slowly crosses herself.

C U R T A I N

ACT ONE
SCENE 2

A room painted rose with copperware and wreaths of common flowers. In the center of the room is a table with a tablecloth. It is morning.

Leonardo's Mother-in-law sits in one corner holding a child in her arms and rocking it. His Wife is in the other corner mending stockings.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Lullaby, my baby
once there was a big horse
who didn't like water.
The water was black there
under the branches.
When it reached the bridge
it stopped and it sang.
Who can say, my baby,
what the stream holds
with its long tail
in its green parlor?

WIFE, *softly*.

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse won't drink from the stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

My rose, asleep now lie,
the horse is starting to cry.
His poor hooves were bleeding,
his long mane was frozen,
and deep in his eyes
stuck a silvery dagger.
Down he went to the river,
Oh, down he went down!

And his blood was running,
Oh, more than the water.

WIFE.

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse won't drink from the stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

My rose, asleep now lie,
the horse is starting to cry.

WIFE.

He never did touch
the dank river shore
though his muzzle was warm
and with silvery flies.
So, to the hard mountains
he could only whinny
just when the dead stream
covered his throat.
Ay-y-y, for the big horse
who didn't like water!
Ay-y-y, for the snow-wound
big horse of the dawn!

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Don't come in! Stop him
and close up the window
with branches of dreams
and a dream of branches.

WIFE.

My baby is sleeping.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

My baby is quiet.

WIFE.

Look, horse, my baby
has him a pillow.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

His cradle is metal.

WIFE.

His quilt a fine fabric.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Lullaby, my baby.

WIFE.

Ay-y-y, for the big horse
who didn't like water!

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Don't come near, don't come in!
Go away to the mountains
and through the grey valleys,
that's where your mare is.

WIFE, *looking at the baby.*

My baby is sleeping.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

My baby is resting.

WIFE, *softly.*

Carnation, sleep and dream,
The horse won't drink from the stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *getting up, very softly.*

My rose, asleep now lie
for the horse is starting to cry.

She carries the child out. Leonardo enters.

LEONARDO. Where's the baby?

WIFE. He's sleeping.

LEONARDO. Yesterday he wasn't well. He cried during
the night.

WIFE. Today he's like a dahlia. And you? Were you at
the blacksmith's?

LEONARDO. I've just come from there. Would you believe
it? For more than two months he's been putting new shoes
on the horse and they're always coming off. As far as I can
see he pulls them off on the stones.

WIFE. Couldn't it just be that you use him so much?

LEONARDO. No. I almost never use him.

WIFE. Yesterday the neighbors told me they'd seen you
on the far side of the plains.

LEONARDO. Who said that?

WIFE. The women who gather capers. It certainly surprised me. Was it you?

LEONARDO. No. What would I be doing there, in that wasteland?

WIFE. That's what I said. But the horse was streaming sweat.

LEONARDO. Did you see him?

WIFE. No. Mother did.

LEONARDO. Is she with the baby?

WIFE. Yes. Do you want some lemonade?

LEONARDO. With good cold water.

WIFE. And then you didn't come to eat!

LEONARDO. I was with the wheat weighers. They always hold me up.

WIFE, *very tenderly, while she makes the lemonade*. Did they pay you a good price?

LEONARDO. Fair.

WIFE. I need a new dress and the baby a bonnet with ribbons.

LEONARDO, *getting up*. I'm going to take a look at him.

WIFE. Be careful. He's asleep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *coming in*. Well! Who's been racing the horse that way? He's down there, worn out, his eyes popping from their sockets as though he'd come from the ends of the earth.

LEONARDO, *acidly*. I have.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Oh, excuse me! He's your horse.

WIFE, *timidly*. He was at the wheat buyers.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. He can burst for all of me!

She sits down. Pause.

WIFE. Your drink. Is it cold?

LEONARDO. Yes.

WIFE. Did you hear they're going to ask for my cousin?

LEONARDO. When?

WIFE. Tomorrow. The wedding will be within a month. I hope they're going to invite us.

LEONARDO, *gravely*. I don't know.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. His mother, I think, wasn't very happy about the match.

LEONARDO. Well, she may be right. She's a girl to be careful with.

WIFE. I don't like to have you thinking bad things about a good girl.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *meaningfully*. If he does, it's because he knows her. Didn't you know he courted her for three years?

LEONARDO. But I left her.

To his Wife.

Are you going to cry now? Quit that!

He brusquely pulls her hands away from her face.

Let's go see the baby.

They go in with their arms around each other. A Girl appears. She is happy. She enters running.

GIRL. Señora.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. What is it?

GIRL. The groom came to the store and he's bought the best of everything they had.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Was he alone?

GIRL. No. With his mother. Stern, tall.

She imitates her.

And such extravagance!

MOTHER-IN-LAW. They have money.

GIRL. And they bought some open-work stockings! Oh, such stockings! A woman's dream of stockings! Look: a swallow here,

She points to her ankle.

a ship here,

She points to her calf.

and here,

She points to her thigh.

a rose!

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Child!

GIRL. A rose with the seeds and the stem! Oh! All in silk.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Two rich families are being brought together.

Leonardo and his Wife appear.

GIRL. I came to tell you what they're buying.

LEONARDO, *loudly*. We don't care.

WIFE. Leave her alone.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Leonardo, it's not that important.

GIRL. Please excuse me.

She leaves, weeping.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Why do you always have to make trouble with people?

LEONARDO. I didn't ask for your opinion.

He sits down.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Very well.

Pause.

WIFE, *to Leonardo*. What's the matter with you? What idea've you got boiling there inside your head? Don't leave me like this, not knowing anything.

LEONARDO. Stop that.

WIFE. No. I want you to look at me and tell me.

LEONARDO. Let me alone.

He rises.

WIFE. Where are you going, love?

LEONARDO, *sharply*. Can't you shut up?

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *energetically, to her daughter*. Be quiet!

Leonardo goes out.

The baby!

She goes into the bedroom and comes out again with the baby in her arms. The Wife has remained standing, unmoving.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

His poor hooves were bleeding,
his long mane was frozen,
and deep in his eyes
stuck a silvery dagger.

Down he went to the river,
Oh, down he went down!
And his blood was running,
Oh, more than the water.

WIFE, *turning slowly, as though dreaming*.

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse is drinking from the stream.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

My rose, asleep now lie
the horse is starting to cry.

WIFE.

Lullaby, my baby.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Ay-y-y, for the big horse
who didn't like water!

WIFE, *dramatically*.

Don't come near, don't come in!
Go away to the mountains!
Ay-y-y, for the snow-wound,
big horse of the dawn!

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *weeping*.

My baby is sleeping . . .

WIFE, *weeping, as she slowly moves closer*.

My baby is resting . . .

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Carnation, sleep and dream,
the horse won't drink from the stream.

WIFE, *weeping, and leaning on the table*.

My rose, asleep now lie,
the horse is starting to cry.

C U R T A I N

ACT ONE
SCENE 3

Interior of the cave where The Bride lives. At the back is a cross of large rose colored flowers. The round doors have lace curtains with rose colored ties. Around the walls, which are of a white and hard material, are round fans, blue jars, and little mirrors.

SERVANT. Come right in . . .

She is very affable, full of humble hypocrisy. The Bridegroom and his Mother enter. The Mother is dressed in black satin and wears a lace mantilla; The Bridegroom in black corduroy with a great golden chain.

Won't you sit down? They'll be right here.

She leaves. The Mother and Son are left sitting motionless as statues. Long pause.

MOTHER. Did you wear the watch?

BRIDEGROOM. Yes.

He takes it out and looks at it.

MOTHER. We have to be back on time. How far away these people live!

BRIDEGROOM. But this is good land.

MOTHER. Good; but much too lonesome. A four hour trip and not one house, not one tree.

BRIDEGROOM. This is the wasteland.

MOTHER. Your father would have covered it with trees.

BRIDEGROOM. Without water?

MOTHER. He would have found some. In the three years we were married he planted ten cherry trees,

Remembering.

those three walnut trees by the mill, a whole vineyard and

a plant called Jupiter which had scarlet flowers—but it dried up.

Pause.

BRIDEGROOM, *referring to The Bride.* She must be dressing.

The Bride's Father enters. He is very old, with shining white hair. His head is bowed. The Mother and the Bridegroom rise. They shake hands in silence.

FATHER. Was it a long trip?

MOTHER. Four hours.

They sit down.

FATHER. You must have come the longest way.

MOTHER. I'm too old to come along the cliffs by the river.

BRIDEGROOM. She gets dizzy.

Pause.

FATHER. A good hemp harvest.

BRIDEGROOM. A really good one.

FATHER. When I was young this land didn't even grow hemp. We've had to punish it, even weep over it, to make it give us anything useful.

MOTHER. But now it does. Don't complain. I'm not here to ask you for anything.

FATHER, *smiling.* You're richer than I. Your vineyards are worth a fortune. Each young vine a silver coin. But—do you know?—what bothers me is that our lands are separated. I like to have everything together. One thorn I have in my heart, and that's the little orchard there, stuck in between my fields—and they won't sell it to me for all the gold in the world.

BRIDEGROOM. That's the way it always is.

FATHER. If we could just take twenty teams of oxen and move your vineyards over here, and put them down on that hillside, how happy I'd be!

MOTHER. But why?

FATHER. What's mine is hers and what's yours is his. That's why. Just to see it all together. How beautiful it is to bring things together!

BRIDEGROOM. And it would be less work.

MOTHER. When I die, you could sell ours and buy here, right alongside.

FATHER. Sell, sell? Bah! Buy, my friend, buy everything. If I had had sons I would have bought all this mountain-side right up to the part with the stream. It's not good land, but strong arms can make it good, and since no people pass by, they don't steal your fruit and you can sleep in peace.

Pause.

MOTHER. You know what I'm here for.

FATHER. Yes.

MOTHER. And?

FATHER. It seems all right to me. They have talked it over.

MOTHER. My son has money and knows how to manage it.

FATHER. My daughter too.

MOTHER. My son is handsome. He's never known a woman. His good name cleaner than a sheet spread out in the sun.

FATHER. No need to tell you about my daughter. At three, when the morning star shines, she prepares the bread. She never talks: soft as wool, she embroiders all kinds of fancy work and she can cut a strong cord with her teeth.

MOTHER. God bless her house.

FATHER. May God bless it.

The Servant appears with two trays. One with drinks and the other with sweets.

MOTHER, to *The Son*. When would you like the wedding?

BRIDEGROOM. Next Thursday.

FATHER. The day on which she'll be exactly twenty-two years old.

MOTHER. Twenty-two! My oldest son would be that age if he were alive. Warm and manly as he was, he'd be living now if men hadn't invented knives.

FATHER. One mustn't think about that.

MOTHER. Every minute. Always a hand on your breast.

FATHER. Thursday, then? Is that right?

BRIDEGROOM. That's right.

FATHER. You and I and the bridal couple will go in a carriage to the church which is very far from here; the wedding party on the carts and horses they'll bring with them.

MOTHER. Agreed.

The Servant passes through.

FATHER. Tell her she may come in now.

To the Mother.

I shall be much pleased if you like her.

The Bride appears. Her hands fall in a modest pose and her head is bowed.

MOTHER. Come here. Are you happy?

BRIDE. Yes, señora.

FATHER. You shouldn't be so solemn. After all, she's going to be your mother.

BRIDE. I'm happy. I've said "yes" because I wanted to.

MOTHER. Naturally.

She takes her by the chin.

Look at me.

FATHER. She resembles my wife in every way.

MOTHER. Yes? What a beautiful glance! Do you know what it is to be married, child?

BRIDE, *seriously*. I do.

MOTHER. A man, some children and a wall two yards thick for everything else.

BRIDEGROOM. Is anything else needed?

MOTHER. No. Just that you all live—that's it! Live long!

BRIDE. I'll know how to keep my word.

MOTHER. Here are some gifts for you.

BRIDE. Thank you.

FATHER. Shall we have something?

MOTHER. Nothing for me.

To the Son.

But you?

BRIDEGROOM. Yes, thank you.

He takes one sweet, The Bride another.

FATHER, *to The Bridegroom.* Wine?

MOTHER. He doesn't touch it.

FATHER. All the better.

Pause. All are standing.

BRIDEGROOM, *to The Bride.* I'll come tomorrow.

BRIDE. What time?

BRIDEGROOM. Five.

BRIDE. I'll be waiting for you.

BRIDEGROOM. When I leave your side I feel a great emptiness, and something like a knot in my throat.

BRIDE. When you are my husband you won't have it any more.

BRIDEGROOM. That's what I tell myself.

MOTHER. Come. The sun doesn't wait.

To the Father.

Are we agreed on everything?

FATHER. Agreed.

MOTHER, *to The Servant.* Goodbye, woman.

SERVANT. God go with you!

The Mother kisses The Bride and they begin to leave in silence.

MOTHER, *at the door.* Goodbye, daughter.

The Bride answers with her hand.

FATHER. I'll go out with you.

They leave.

SERVANT. I'm bursting to see the presents.

BRIDE, *sharply.* Stop that!

SERVANT. Oh, child, show them to me.

BRIDE. I don't want to.

SERVANT. At least the stockings. They say they're all open work. Please!

BRIDE. I said no.

SERVANT. Well, my Lord. All right then. It looks as if you didn't want to get married.

BRIDE, *biting her hand in anger.* Ay-y-y!

SERVANT. Child, child! What's the matter with you? Are you sorry to give up your queen's life? Don't think of bitter things. Have you any reason to? None. Let's look at the presents.

She takes the box.

BRIDE, *holding her by the wrists.* Let go.

SERVANT. Ay-y-y, girl!

BRIDE. Let go, I said.

SERVANT. You're stronger than a man.

BRIDE. Haven't I done a man's work? I wish I were.

SERVANT. Don't talk like that.

BRIDE. Quiet, I said. Let's talk about something else.

The light is fading from the stage. Long pause.

SERVANT. Did you hear a horse last night?

BRIDE. What time?

SERVANT. Three.

BRIDE. It might have been a stray horse—from the herd.

SERVANT. No. It carried a rider.

BRIDE. How do you know?

SERVANT. Because I saw him. He was standing by your window. It shocked me greatly.

BRIDE. Maybe it was my fiancé. Sometimes he comes by at that time.

SERVANT. No.

BRIDE. You saw him?

SERVANT. Yes.

BRIDE. Who was it?

SERVANT. It was Leonardo.

BRIDE, *strongly*. Liar! You liar! Why should he come here?

SERVANT. He came.

BRIDE. Shut up! Shut your cursed mouth.

The sound of a horse is heard.

SERVANT, *at the window*. Look. Lean out. Was it Leonardo.

BRIDE. It was!

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT TWO
SCENE 1

The entrance hall of The Bride's house. A large door in the back. It is night. The Bride enters wearing ruffled white petticoats full of laces and embroidered bands, and a sleeveless white bodice. The Servant is dressed the same way.

SERVANT. I'll finish combing your hair out here.

BRIDE. It's too warm to stay in there.

SERVANT. In this country it doesn't even cool off at dawn.

The Bride sits on a low chair and looks into a little hand mirror. The Servant combs her hair.

BRIDE. My mother came from a place with lots of trees—from a fertile country.

SERVANT. And she was so happy!

BRIDE. But she wasted away here.

SERVANT. Fate.

BRIDE. As we're all wasting away here. The very walls give off heat. Ay-y-y! Don't pull so hard.

SERVANT. I'm only trying to fix this wave better. I want it to fall over your forehead.

The Bride looks at herself in the mirror.

How beautiful you are! Ay-y-y!

She kisses her passionately.

BRIDE, *seriously*. Keep right on combing.

SERVANT, *combing*. Oh, lucky you—going to put your arms around a man; and kiss him; and feel his weight.

BRIDE. Hush.

SERVANT. And the best part will be when you'll wake up and you'll feel him at your side and when he caresses your shoulders with his breath, like a little nightingale's feather.

BRIDE, *sternly*. Will you be quiet.

SERVANT. But, child! What *is* a wedding? A wedding is just that and nothing more. Is it the sweets—or the bouquets of flowers? No. It's a shining bed and a man and a woman.

BRIDE. But you shouldn't talk about it.

SERVANT. Oh, *that's* something else again. But fun enough too.

BRIDE. Or bitter enough.

SERVANT. I'm going to put the orange blossoms on from here to here, so the wreath will shine out on top of your hair.

She tries on the sprigs of orange blossom.

BRIDE, *looking at herself in the mirror*. Give it to me. *She takes the wreath, looks at it and lets her head fall in discouragement.*

SERVANT. Now what's the matter?

BRIDE. Leave me alone.

SERVANT. This is no time for you to start feeling sad.

Encouragingly.

Give me the wreath.

The Bride takes the wreath and hurls it away.

Child! You're just asking God to punish you, throwing the wreath on the floor like that. Raise your head! Don't you want to get married? Say it. You can still withdraw.

The Bride rises.

BRIDE. Storm clouds. A chill wind that cuts through my heart. Who hasn't felt it?

SERVANT. You love your sweetheart, don't you?

BRIDE. I love him.

SERVANT. Yes, yes. I'm sure you do.

BRIDE. But this is a very serious step.

SERVANT. You've got to take it.

BRIDE. I've already given my word.

SERVANT. I'll put on the wreath.

BRIDE, *she sits down*. Hurry. They should be arriving by now.

SERVANT. They've already been at least two hours on the way.

BRIDE. How far is it from here to the church?

SERVANT. Five leagues by the stream, but twice that by the road.

The Bride rises and The Servant grows excited as she looks at her.

SERVANT.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!
The world's rivers may all
Bear along your bridal Crown!

BRIDE, *smiling*. Come now.

SERVANT, *enthusiastically kissing her and dancing around her*.

Awake,
with the fresh bouquet
of flowering laurel.
Awake,
by the trunk and branch
of the laurels!

The banging of the front door latch is heard.

BRIDE. Open the door! That must be the first guests.

She leaves. The Servant opens the door.

SERVANT, *in astonishment*. You!

LEONARDO. Yes, me. Good morning.

SERVANT. The first one!

LEONARDO. Wasn't I invited?

SERVANT. Yes.

LEONARDO. That's why I'm here.

SERVANT. Where's your wife?

LEONARDO. I came on my horse. She's coming by the road.

SERVANT. Didn't you meet anyone?

LEONARDO. I *passed* them on my horse.

SERVANT. You're going to kill that horse with so much racing.

LEONARDO. When he dies, he's dead!

Pause.

SERVANT. Sit down. Nobody's up yet.

LEONARDO. Where's the bride?

SERVANT. I'm just on my way to dress her.

LEONARDO. The bride! She ought to be happy!

SERVANT, *changing the subject*. How's the baby?

LEONARDO. What baby?

SERVANT. Your son.

LEONARDO, *remembering, as though in a dream*. Ah!

SERVANT. Are they bringing him?

LEONARDO. No.

Pause. Voices sing distantly.

VOICES.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!

LEONARDO.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!

SERVANT. It's the guests. They're still quite a way off.

LEONARDO. The bride's going to wear a big wreath, isn't she? But it ought not to be so large. One a little smaller would look better on her. Has the groom already brought her the orange blossom that must be worn on the breast?

BRIDE, *appearing, still in petticoats and wearing the wreath*. He brought it.

SERVANT, *sternly*. Don't come out like that.

BRIDE. What does it matter?

Seriously.

Why do you ask if they brought the orange blossom? Do you have something in mind?

LEONARDO. Nothing. What would I have in mind?

Drawing near her.

You, you know me; you know I don't. Tell me so. What have I ever meant to you? Open your memory, refresh it. But two oxen and an ugly little hut are almost nothing. That's the thorn.

BRIDE. What have you come here to do?

LEONARDO. To see your wedding.

BRIDE. Just as I saw yours!

LEONARDO. Tied up by you, done with your two hands. Oh, they can kill me but they can't spit on me. But even money, which shines so much, spits sometimes.

BRIDE. Liar!

LEONARDO. I don't want to talk. I'm hot-blooded and I don't want to shout so all these hills will hear me.

BRIDE. My shouts would be louder.

SERVANT. You'll have to stop talking like this.

To The Bride.

You don't have to talk about what's past.

The Servant looks around uneasily at the doors.

BRIDE. She's right. I shouldn't even talk to you. But it offends me to the soul that you come here to watch me, and spy on my wedding, and ask about the orange blossom with something on your mind. Go and wait for your wife at the door.

LEONARDO. But, can't you and I even talk?

SERVANT, *with rage*. No! No, you can't talk.

LEONARDO. Ever since I got married I've been thinking night and day about whose fault it was, and every time I think about it, out comes a new fault to eat up the old one; but always there's a fault left!

BRIDE. A man with a horse knows a lot of things and can do a lot to ride roughshod over a girl stuck out in the desert. But I have my pride. And that's why I'm getting married. I'll lock myself in with my husband and then I'll have to love him above everyone else.

LEONARDO. Pride won't help you a bit.

He draws near to her.

BRIDE. Don't come near me!

LEONARDO. To burn with desire and keep quiet about it is the greatest punishment we can bring on ourselves. What good was pride to me—and not seeing you, and letting you lie awake night after night? No good! It only served to bring the fire down on me! You think that time heals and walls hide things, but it isn't true, it isn't true! When things get that deep inside you there isn't anybody can change them.

BRIDE, *trembling*. I can't listen to you. I can't listen to your voice. It's as though I'd drunk a bottle of anise and fallen asleep wrapped in a quilt of roses. It pulls me along, and I know I'm drowning—but I go on down.

SERVANT, *seizing Leonardo by the lapels*. You've got to go right now!

LEONARDO. This is the last time I'll ever talk to her. Don't you be afraid of anything.

BRIDE. And I know I'm crazy and I know my breast rots with longing; but here I am—calmed by hearing him, by just seeing him move his arms.

LEONARDO. I'd never be at peace if I didn't tell you these things. I got married. Now you get married.

SERVANT. But she *is* getting married!

Voices are heard singing, nearer.

VOICES.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
On your wedding morning waken!

BRIDE.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
She goes out, running toward her room.

SERVANT. The people are here now.

To Leonardo.

Don't you come near her again.

LEONARDO. Don't worry.

He goes out to the left. Day begins to break.

FIRST GIRL, *entering*.

Awake, O Bride, awaken,
the morning you're to marry;
sing round and dance round;
balconies a wreath must carry.

VOICES.

Bride, awaken!

SERVANT, *creating enthusiasm*.

Awake,
with the green bouquet
of love in flower.
Awake,
by the trunk and the branch
of the laurels!

SECOND GIRL, *entering*.

Awake,
with her long hair,
snowy sleeping gown,
patent leather boots with silver—
her forehead jasmines crown.

SERVANT.

Oh, shepherdess,
the moon begins to shine!

FIRST GIRL.

Oh, gallant,
leave your hat beneath the vine!

FIRST YOUNG MAN, *entering, holding his hat on high*.

Bride, awaken,
for over the fields
the wedding draws nigh
with trays heaped with dahlias
and cakes piled high.

VOICES.

Bride, awaken!

SECOND GIRL.

The bride
has set her white wreath in place
and the groom
ties it on with a golden lace.

SERVANT.

By the orange tree,
sleepless the bride will be.

THIRD GIRL, *entering*.

By the citron vine,
gifts from the groom will shine.

Three Guests come in.

FIRST YOUTH.

Dove, awaken!
In the dawn
shadowy bells are shaken.

GUEST.

The bride, the white bride
today a maiden,
tomorrow a wife.

FIRST GIRL.

Dark one, come down
trailing the train of your silken gown.

GUEST.

Little dark one, come down,
cold morning wears a dewy crown.

FIRST GUEST.

Awaken, wife, awake,
orange blossoms the breezes shake.

SERVANT.

A tree I would embroider her
with garnet sashes wound,
And on each sash a cupid,
with "Long Live" all around.

VOICES.

Bride, awaken.

FIRST YOUTH.

The morning you're to marry!

GUEST.

The morning you're to marry
how elegant you'll seem;
worthy, mountain flower,
of a captain's dream.

FATHER, *entering*.

A captain's wife
the groom will marry.
He comes with his oxen the treasure to carry!

THIRD GIRL.

The groom
is like a flower of gold.
When he walks,
blossoms at his feet unfold.

SERVANT.

Oh, my lucky girl!

SECOND YOUTH.

Bride, awaken.

SERVANT.

Oh, my elegant girl!

FIRST GIRL.

Through the windows
hear the wedding shout.

SECOND GIRL.

Let the bride come out.

FIRST GIRL.

Come out, come out!

SERVANT.

Let the bells
ring and ring out clear!

FIRST YOUTH.

For here she comes!
For now she's near!

SERVANT.

Like a bull, the wedding
is arising here!

The Bride appears. She wears a black dress in the style of 1900, with a bustle and large train covered with pleated gauzes and heavy laces. Upon her hair, brushed in a wave over her forehead, she wears an orange blossom wreath. Guitars sound. The Girls kiss The Bride.

THIRD GIRL. What scent did you put on your hair?

BRIDE, *laughing*. None at all.

SECOND GIRL, *looking at her dress*. This cloth is what you can't get.

FIRST YOUTH. Here's the groom!

BRIDEGROOM. Salud!

FIRST GIRL, *putting a flower behind his ear*.

The groom
is like a flower of gold.

SECOND GIRL.

Quiet breezes
from his eyes unfold.

The Groom goes to The Bride.

BRIDE. Why did you put on those shoes?

BRIDEGROOM. They're gayer than the black ones.

LEONARDO'S WIFE, *entering and kissing The Bride*. Salud!
They all speak excitedly.

LEONARDO, *entering as one who performs a duty*.

The morning you're to marry
We give you a wreath to wear.

LEONARDO'S WIFE.

So the fields may be made happy
with the dew dropped from your hair!

MOTHER, *to The Father*. Are those people here, too?

FATHER. They're part of the family. Today is a day of forgiveness!

MOTHER. I'll put up with it, but I don't forgive.

BRIDEGROOM. With your wreath, it's a joy to look at you!

BRIDE. Let's go to the church quickly.

BRIDEGROOM. Are you in a hurry?

BRIDE. Yes. I want to be your wife right now so that I can be with you alone, not hearing any voice but yours.

BRIDEGROOM. That's what I want!

BRIDE. And not seeing any eyes but yours. And for you to hug me so hard, that even though my dead mother should call me, I wouldn't be able to draw away from you.

BRIDEGROOM. My arms are strong. I'll hug you for forty years without stopping.

BRIDE, *taking his arm, dramatically*. Forever!

FATHER. Quick now! Round up the teams and carts! The sun's already out.

MOTHER. And go along carefully! Let's hope nothing goes wrong.

The great door in the background opens.

SERVANT, *weeping*.

As you set out from your house,
oh, maiden white,
remember you leave shining
with a star's light.

FIRST GIRL.

Clean of body, clean of clothes
from her home to church she goes.

They start leaving.

SECOND GIRL.

Now you leave your home
for the church!

SERVANT.

The wind sets flowers
on the sands.

THIRD GIRL.

Ah, the white maid!

SERVANT.

Dark winds are the lace
of her mantilla.

They leave. Guitars, castanets and tambourines are heard.

Leonardo and his Wife are left alone.

WIFE. Let's go.

LEONARDO. Where?

WIFE. To the church. But not on your horse. You're coming with me.

LEONARDO. In the cart?

WIFE. Is there anything else?

LEONARDO. I'm not the kind of man to ride in a cart.

WIFE. Nor I the wife to go to a wedding without her husband. I can't stand any more of this!

LEONARDO. Neither can I!

WIFE. And why do you look at me that way? With a thorn in each eye.

LEONARDO. Let's go!

WIFE. I don't know what's happening. But I think, and I don't want to think. One thing I do know. I'm already cast off by you. But I have a son. And another coming. And so it goes. My mother's fate was the same. Well, I'm not moving from here.

Voices outside.

VOICES.

As you set out from your home
and to the church go
remember you leave shining
with a star's glow.

WIFE, *weeping.*

Remember you leave shining
with a star's glow!

I left my house like that too. They could have stuffed the whole countryside in my mouth. I was that trusting.

LEONARDO, *rising.* Let's go!

WIFE. But you with me!

LEONARDO. Yes.

Pause.

Start moving!

They leave.

VOICES.

As you set out from your home
and to the church go,
remember you leave shining
with a star's glow.

S L O W C U R T A I N

ACT TWO
S C E N E 2

The exterior of The Bride's Cave Home, in white gray and cold blue tones. Large cactus trees. Shadowy and silver tones. Panoramas of light tan tablelands, everything hard like a landscape in popular ceramics.

SERVANT, *arranging glasses and trays on a table.*

A-turning,
the wheel was a-turning
and the water was flowing,
for the wedding night comes.
May the branches part
and the moon be arrayed
at her white balcony rail.

In a loud voice.

Set out the tablecloths!

In a pathetic voice.

A-singing,
bride and groom were singing

and the water was flowing
for their wedding night comes.
Oh, rime-frost, flash!—
and almonds bitter
fill with honey!

In a loud voice.

Get the wine ready!

In a poetic tone.

Elegant girl,
most elegant in the world,
see the way the water is flowing,
for your wedding night comes.
Hold your skirts close in
under the bridegroom's wing
and never leave your house,
for the Bridegroom is a dove
with his breast a firebrand
and the fields wait for the whisper
of spurting blood.
A-turning
the wheel was a-turning
and the water was flowing
and your wedding night comes.
Oh, water, sparkle!

MOTHER, *entering*. At last!

FATHER. Are we the first ones?

SERVANT. No. Leonardo and his wife arrived a while ago. They drove like demons. His wife got here dead with fright. They made the trip as though they'd come on horseback.

FATHER. That one's looking for trouble. He's not of good blood.

MOTHER. What blood would you expect him to have? His whole family's blood. It comes down from his great grandfather, who started in killing, and it goes on down through the whole evil breed of knife wielding and false smiling men.

FATHER. Let's leave it at that!

SERVANT. But how can she leave it at that?

MOTHER. It hurts me to the tips of my veins. On the forehead of all of them I see only the hand with which they killed what was mine. Can you really see me? Don't I seem mad to you? Well, it's the madness of not having shrieked out all my breast needs to. Always in my breast there's a shriek standing tiptoe that I have to beat down and hold in under my shawls. But the dead are carried off and one has to keep still. And then, people find fault.

She removes her shawl.

FATHER. Today's not the day for you to be remembering these things.

MOTHER. When the talk turns on it, I have to speak. And more so today. Because today I'm left alone in my house.

FATHER. But with the expectation of having someone with you.

MOTHER. That's my hope: grandchildren.

They sit down.

FATHER. I want them to have a lot of them. This land needs hands that aren't hired. There's a battle to be waged against weeds, the thistles, the big rocks that come from one doesn't know where. And those hands have to be the owner's, who chastises and dominates, who makes the seeds grow. Lots of sons are needed.

MOTHER. And some daughters! Men are like the wind! They're forced to handle weapons. Girls never go out into the street.

FATHER, *happily*. I think they'll have both.

MOTHER. My son will cover her well. He's of good seed. His father could have had many sons with me.

FATHER. What I'd like is to have all this happen in a day. So that right away they'd have two or three boys.

MOTHER. But it's not like that. It takes a long time. That's why it's so terrible to see one's own blood spilled out on

the ground. A fountain that spurts for a minute, but costs us years. When I got to my son, he lay fallen in the middle of the street. I wet my hands with his blood and licked them with my tongue—because it was my blood. You don't know what that's like. In a glass and topaze shrine I'd put the earth moistened by his blood.

FATHER. Now you must hope. My daughter is wide-hipped and your son is strong.

MOTHER. That's why I'm hoping.

They rise.

FATHER. Get the wheat trays ready!

SERVANT. They're all ready.

LEONARDO'S WIFE, *entering*. May it be for the best!

MOTHER. Thank you.

LEONARDO. Is there going to be a celebration?

FATHER. A small one. People can't stay long.

SERVANT. Here they are!

Guests begin entering in gay groups. The Bride and Groom come in arm-in-arm. Leonardo leaves.

BRIDEGROOM. There's never been a wedding with so many people!

BRIDE, *sullen*. Never.

FATHER. It was brilliant.

MOTHER. Whole branches of families came.

BRIDEGROOM. People who never went out of the house.

MOTHER. Your father sowed well, and now you're reaping it.

BRIDEGROOM. There were cousins of mine whom I no longer knew.

MOTHER. All the people from the seacoast.

BRIDEGROOM, *happily*. They were frightened of the horses.

They talk.

MOTHER, *to The Bride*. What are you thinking about?

BRIDE. I'm not thinking about anything.

MOTHER. Your blessings weigh heavily.

Guitars are heard.

BRIDE. Like lead.

MOTHER, *stern*. But they shouldn't weigh so. Happy as a dove you ought to be.

BRIDE. Are you staying here tonight?

MOTHER. No. My house is empty.

BRIDE. You ought to stay!

FATHER, *to The Mother*. Look at the dance they're forming. Dances of the far away seashore.

Leonardo enters and sits down. His Wife stands rigidly behind him.

MOTHER. They're my husband's cousins. Stiff as stones at dancing.

FATHER. It makes me happy to watch them. What a change for this house!

He leaves.

BRIDEGROOM, *to The Bride*. Did you like the orange blossom?

BRIDE, *looking at him fixedly*. Yes.

BRIDEGROOM. It's all of wax. It will last forever. I'd like you to have had them all over your dress.

BRIDE. No need of that.

Leonardo goes off to the right.

FIRST GIRL. Let's go and take out your pins.

BRIDE, *to The Groom*. I'll be right back.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. I hope you'll be happy with my cousin!

BRIDEGROOM. I'm sure I will.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. The two of you here; never going out; building a home. I wish I could live far away like this, too!

BRIDEGROOM. Why don't you buy land? The mountain-side is cheap and children grow up better.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. We don't have any money. And at the rate we're going . . . !

BRIDEGROOM. Your husband is a good worker.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. Yes, but he likes to fly around too much; from one thing to another. He's not a patient man.

SERVANT. Aren't you having anything? I'm going to wrap up some wine cakes for your mother. She likes them so much.

BRIDEGROOM. Put up three dozen for her.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. No, no. A half-dozen's enough for her!

BRIDEGROOM. But today's a day!

LEONARDO'S WIFE, *to The Servant*. Where's Leonardo?

BRIDEGROOM. He must be with the guests.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. I'm going to go see.

She leaves.

SERVANT, *looking off at the dance*. That's beautiful there.

BRIDEGROOM. Aren't you dancing?

SERVANT. No one will ask me.

Two Girls pass across the back of the stage; during this whole scene the background should be an animated crossing of figures.

BRIDEGROOM, *happily*. They just don't know anything. Lively old girls like you dance better than the young ones.

SERVANT. Well! Are you tossing me a compliment, boy? What a family yours is! Men among men! As a little girl I saw your grandfather's wedding. What a figure! It seemed as if a mountain were getting married.

BRIDEGROOM. I'm not as tall.

SERVANT. But there's the same twinkle in your eye. Where's the girl?

BRIDEGROOM. Taking off her wreath.

SERVANT. Ah! Look. For midnight, since you won't be sleeping, I have prepared ham for you, and some large glasses of old wine. On the lower shelf of the cupboard. In case you need it.

BRIDEGROOM, *smiling*. I won't be eating at midnight.

SERVANT, *slyly*. If not you, maybe the bride.
She leaves.

FIRST YOUTH, *entering*. You've got to come have a drink with us!

BRIDEGROOM. I'm waiting for the bride.

SECOND YOUTH. You'll have her at dawn!

FIRST YOUTH. That's when it's best!

SECOND YOUTH. Just for a minute.

BRIDEGROOM. Let's go.

They leave. Great excitement is heard. The Bride enters. From the opposite side Two Girls come running to meet her.

FIRST GIRL. To whom did you give the first pin; me or this one?

BRIDE. I don't remember.

FIRST GIRL. To me, you gave it to me here.

SECOND GIRL. To me, in front of the altar.

BRIDE, *uneasily, with a great inner struggle*. I don't know anything about it.

FIRST GIRL. It's just that I wish you'd . . .

BRIDE, *interrupting*. Nor do I care. I have a lot to think about.

SECOND GIRL. Your pardon.

Leonardo crosses at the rear of the stage.

BRIDE, *she sees Leonardo*. And this is an upsetting time.

FIRST GIRL. We wouldn't know anything about that!

BRIDE. You'll know about it when your time comes. This step is a very hard one to take.

FIRST GIRL. Has she offended you?

BRIDE. No. You must pardon me.

SECOND GIRL. What for? But *both* the pins are good for getting married, aren't they?

BRIDE. Both of them.

FIRST GIRL. Maybe now one will get married before the other.

BRIDE. Are you so eager?

SECOND GIRL, *shyly*. Yes.

BRIDE. Why?

FIRST GIRL. Well . . .

She embraces The Second Girl. Both go running off. The Groom comes in very slowly and embraces The Bride from behind.

BRIDE, *in sudden fright*. Let go of me!

BRIDEGROOM. Are you frightened of me?

BRIDE. Ay-y-y! It's you?

BRIDEGROOM. Who else would it be?

Pause.

Your father or me.

BRIDE. That's true!

BRIDEGROOM. Of course, your father would have hugged you more gently.

BRIDE, *darkly*. Of course!

BRIDEGROOM, *embracing her strongly and a little bit brusquely*. Because he's old.

BRIDE, *curtly*. Let me go!

BRIDEGROOM. Why?

He lets her go.

BRIDE. Well . . . the people. They can see us .

The Servant crosses at the back of the stage again without looking at The Bride and Bridegroom.

BRIDEGROOM. What of it? It's consecrated now.

BRIDE. Yes, but let me be . . . Later.

BRIDEGROOM. What's the matter with you? You look frightened!

BRIDE. I'm all right. Don't go.

Leonardo's Wife enters.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. I don't mean to intrude . . .

BRIDEGROOM. What is it?

LEONARDO'S WIFE. Did my husband come through here?

BRIDEGROOM. No.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. Because I can't find him, and his horse isn't in the stable either.

BRIDEGROOM, *happily*. He must be out racing it.

The Wife leaves, troubled. The Servant enters.

SERVANT. Aren't you two proud and happy with so many good wishes?

BRIDEGROOM. I wish it were over with. The bride is a little tired.

SERVANT. That's no way to act, child.

BRIDE. It's as though I'd been struck on the head.

SERVANT. A bride from these mountains must be strong. *To The Groom.*

You're the only one who can cure her, because she's yours.

She goes running off.

BRIDEGROOM, *embracing The Bride*. Let's go dance a little.

He kisses her.

BRIDE, *worried*. No. I'd like to stretch out on my bed a little.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll keep you company.

BRIDE. Never! With all these people here? What would they say? Let me be quiet for a moment.

BRIDEGROOM. Whatever you say! But don't be like that tonight!

BRIDE, *at the door*. I'll be better tonight.

BRIDEGROOM. That's what I want.

The Mother appears.

MOTHER. Son.

BRIDEGROOM. Where've you been?

MOTHER. Out there—in all that noise. Are you happy?

BRIDEGROOM. Yes.

MOTHER. Where's your wife?

BRIDEGROOM. Resting a little. It's a bad day for brides!

MOTHER. A bad day? The only good one. To me it was like coming into my own.

The Servant enters and goes toward The Bride's room. Like the breaking of new ground; the planting of new trees.

BRIDEGROOM. Are you going to leave?

MOTHER. Yes. I ought to be at home.

BRIDEGROOM. Alone.

MOTHER. Not alone. For my head is full of things: of men, and fights.

BRIDEGROOM. But now the fights are no longer fights.

The Servant enters quickly; she disappears at the rear of the stage, running.

MOTHER. While you live, you have to fight.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll always obey you!

MOTHER. Try to be loving with your wife, and if you see she's acting foolish or touchy, caress her in a way that will hurt her a little: a strong hug, a bite and then a soft kiss. Not so she'll be angry, but just so she'll feel you're the man, the boss, the one who gives orders. I learned that from your father. And since you don't have him, I have to be the one to tell you about these strong defenses.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll always do as you say.

FATHER, *entering*. Where's my daughter?

BRIDEGROOM. She's inside.

The Father goes to look for her.

FIRST GIRL. Get the bride and groom! We're going to dance a round!

FIRST YOUTH, *to The Bridegroom*. You're going to lead it.

FATHER, *entering*. She's not there.

BRIDEGROOM. No?

FATHER. She must have gone up to the railing.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll go see!

He leaves. A hubbub of excitement and guitars is heard.

FIRST GIRL. They've started it already!

She leaves.

BRIDEGROOM, *entering*. She isn't there.

MOTHER, *uneasily*. Isn't she?

FATHER. But where could she have gone?

SERVANT, *entering*. But where's the girl, where is she?

MOTHER, *seriously*. That we don't know.

The Bridegroom leaves. Three guests enter.

FATHER, *dramatically*. But, isn't she in the dance?

SERVANT. She's not in the dance.

FATHER, *with a start*. There are a lot of people. Go look!

SERVANT. I've already looked.

FATHER, *tragically*. Then where is she?

BRIDEGROOM, *entering*. Nowhere. Not anywhere.

MOTHER, *to The Father*. What does this mean? Where is your daughter?

Leonardo's Wife enters.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. They've run away! They've run away! She and Leonardo. On the horse. With their arms around each other, they rode off like a shooting star!

FATHER. That's not true! Not my daughter!

MOTHER. Yes, your daughter! Spawn of a wicked mother, and he, he too. But now she's my son's wife!

BRIDEGROOM, *entering*. Let's go after them! Who has a horse?

MOTHER. Who has a horse? Right away! Who has a horse? I'll give him all I have—my eyes, my tongue even. . . .

VOICE. Here's one.

MOTHER, *to The Son*. Go! After them!

He leaves with two young men.

No. Don't go. Those people kill quickly and well . . . but yes, run, and I'll follow!

FATHER. It couldn't be my daughter. Perhaps she's thrown herself in the well.

MOTHER. Decent women throw themselves in water; not that one! But now she's my son's wife. Two groups. There are two groups here.

They all enter.

My family and yours. Everyone set out from here. Shake the dust from your heels! We'll go help my son.

The people separate into two groups.

For he has his family: his cousins from the sea, and all who came from inland. Out of here! On all roads. The hour of blood has come again. Two groups! You with yours and I with mine. After them! After them!

C U R T A I N

ACT THREE
S C E N E 1

A forest. It is nighttime. Great moist tree trunks. A dark atmosphere. Two violins are heard. Three Woodcutters enter.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. And have they found them?

SECOND WOODCUTTER. No. But they're looking for them everywhere.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. They'll find them.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Sh-h-h!

THIRD WOODCUTTER. What?

SECOND WOODCUTTER. They seem to be coming closer on all the roads at once.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. When the moon comes out they'll see them.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. They ought to let them go.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. The world is wide. Everybody can live in it.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. But they'll kill them.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. You have to follow your passion. They did right to run away.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. They were deceiving themselves but at the last blood was stronger.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Blood!

FIRST WOODCUTTER. You have to follow the path of your blood.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. But blood that sees the light of day is drunk up by the earth.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. What of it? Better dead with the blood drained away than alive with it rotting.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Hush!

FIRST WOODCUTTER. What? Do you hear something?

THIRD WOODCUTTER. I hear the crickets, the frogs, the night's ambush.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. But not the horse.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. No.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. By now he must be loving her.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Her body for him; his body for her.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. They'll find them and they'll kill them.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. But by then they'll have mingled their bloods. They'll be like two empty jars, like two dry atoyos.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. There are many clouds and it would be easy for the moon not to come out.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. The bridegroom will find them with or without the moon. I saw him set out. Like a raging star. His face the color of ashes. He looked the fate of all his clan.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. His clan of dead men lying in the middle of the street.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. There you have it!

THIRD WOODCUTTER. You think they'll be able to break through the circle?

SECOND WOODCUTTER. It's hard to. There are knives and guns for ten leagues 'round.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. He's riding a good horse.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. But he's carrying a woman.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. We're close by now.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. A tree with forty branches. We'll soon cut it down.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. The moon's coming out now. Let's hurry.

From the left shines a brightness.

FIRST WOODCUTTER.

O rising moon!

Moon among the great leaves.

SECOND WOODCUTTER.

Cover the blood with jasmynes!

FIRST WOODCUTTER.

O lonely moon!

Moon among the great leaves.

SECOND WOODCUTTER.

Silver on the bride's face.

THIRD WOODCUTTER.

O evil moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow.

FIRST WOODCUTTER.

O sorrowing moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow.

They go out. The Moon appears through the shining brightness at the left. The Moon is a young woodcutter with a white face. The stage takes on an intense blue radiance.

MOON.

Round swan in the river
and a cathedral's eye,
false dawn on the leaves,
they'll not escape; these things am I!
Who is hiding? And who sobs
in the thornbrakes of the valley?
The moon sets a knife
abandoned in the air
which being a leaden threat
yearns to be blood's pain.
Let me in! I come freezing
down to walls and windows!
Open roofs, open breasts
where I may warm myself!
I'm cold! My ashes
of somnolent metals
seek the fire's crest
on mountains and streets.
But the snow carries me
upon its mottled back

and pools soak me
 in their water, hard and cold.
 But this night there will be
 red blood for my cheeks,
 and for the reeds that cluster
 at the wide feet of the wind.
 Let there be neither shadow nor bower,
 and then they can't get away!
 O let me enter a breast
 where I may get warm!
 A heart for me!
 Warm! That will spurt
 over the mountains of my chest;
 let me come in, oh let me!

To the branches.

I want no shadows. My rays
 must get in everywhere,
 even among the dark trunks I want
 the whisper of gleaming lights,
 so that this night there will be
 sweet blood for my cheeks,
 and for the reeds that cluster
 at the wide feet of the wind.
 Who is hiding? Out, I say!
 No! They will not get away!
 I will light up the horse
 with a fever bright as diamonds.

He disappears among the trunks, and the stage goes back to its dark lighting. An Old Woman comes out completely covered by thin green cloth. She is barefooted. Her face can barely be seen among the folds. This character does not appear in the cast.

BEGGAR WOMAN.

That moon's going away, just when they's near.
 They won't get past here. The river's whisper
 and the whispering tree trunks will muffle
 the torn flight of their shrieks.
 It has to be here, and soon. I'm worn out.

The coffins are ready, and white sheets
 wait on the floor of the bedroom
 for heavy bodies with torn throats.
 Let not one bird awake, let the breeze,
 gathering their moans in her skirt,
 fly with them over black tree tops
 or bury them in soft mud.

Impatiently.

Oh, that moon! That moon!

The Moon appears. The intense blue light returns.

MOON. They're coming. One band through the ravine
 and the other along the river. I'm going to light up the
 boulders. What do you need?

BEGGAR WOMAN. Nothing.

MOON. The wind blows hard now, with a double edge.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Light up the waistcoat and open the
 buttons; the knives will know the path after that.

MOON.

But let them be a long time a-dying. So the blood
 will slide its delicate hissing between my fingers.
 Look how my ashen valleys already are waking
 in longing for this fountain of shuddering gushes!

BEGGAR WOMAN. Let's not let them get past the arroyo.
 Silence!

MOON. There they come!

He goes. The stage is left dark.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Quick! Lots of light! Do you hear me?
 They can't get away!

The Bridegroom and The First Youth enter. The Beggar Woman sits down and covers herself with her cloak.

BRIDEGROOM. This way.

FIRST YOUTH. You won't find them.

BRIDEGROOM, *angrily*. Yes, I'll find them.

FIRST YOUTH. I think they've taken another path.

BRIDEGROOM. No. Just a moment ago I felt the galloping.

FIRST YOUTH. It could have been another horse.

BRIDEGROOM, *intensely*. Listen to me. There's only one horse in the whole world, and this one's it. Can't you understand that? If you're going to follow me, follow me without talking.

FIRST YOUTH. It's only that I want to . . .

BRIDEGROOM. Be quiet. I'm sure of meeting them there. Do you see this arm? Well, it's not my arm. It's my brother's arm, and my father's, and that of all the dead ones in my family. And it has so much strength that it can pull this tree up by the roots, if it wants to. And let's move on, because here I feel the clenched teeth of all my people in me so that I can't breathe easily.

BEGGAR WOMAN, *whining*. Ay-y-y!

FIRST YOUTH. Did you hear that?

BRIDEGROOM. You go that way and then circle back.

FIRST YOUTH. This is a hunt.

BRIDEGROOM. A hunt. The greatest hunt there is.

The Youth goes off. The Bridegroom goes rapidly to the left and stumbles over The Beggar Woman, Death.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Ay-y-y!

BRIDEGROOM. What do you want?

BEGGAR WOMAN. I'm cold.

BRIDEGROOM. Which way are you going?

BEGGAR WOMAN, *always whining like a beggar*. Over there, far away . . .

BRIDEGROOM. Where are you from?

BEGGAR WOMAN. Over there . . . very far away.

BRIDEGROOM. Have you seen a man and a woman running away on a horse?

BEGGAR WOMAN, *awakening*. Wait a minute . . .

She looks at him.

Handsome young man.

She rises.

But you'd be much handsomer sleeping.

BRIDEGROOM. Tell me; answer me. Did you see them?

BEGGAR WOMAN. Wait a minute . . . What broad shoulders! How would you like to be laid out on them and not have to walk on the soles of your feet which are so small?

BRIDEGROOM, *shaking her*. I asked you if you saw them! Have they passed through here?

BEGGAR WOMAN, *energetically*. No. They haven't passed; but they're coming from the hill. Don't you hear them?

BRIDEGROOM. No.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Do you know the road?

BRIDEGROOM. I'll go, whatever it's like!

BEGGAR WOMAN. I'll go along with you. I know this country.

BRIDEGROOM, *impatiently*. Well, let's go! Which way?

BEGGAR WOMAN, *dramatically*. This way!

They go rapidly out. Two violins, which represent the forest, are heard distantly. The Woodcutters return. They have their axes on their shoulders. They move slowly among the tree trunks.

FIRST WOODCUTTER.

O rising death!

Death among the great leaves.

SECOND WOODCUTTER.

Don't open the gush of blood!

FIRST WOODCUTTER.

O lonely death!

Death among the dried leaves.

THIRD WOODCUTTER.

Don't lay flowers over the wedding!

SECOND WOODCUTTER.

O sad death!

Leave for their love a green branch.

FIRST WOODCUTTER.

O evil death!

Leave for their love a branch of green!

They go out while they are talking. Leonardo and The Bride appear.

LEONARDO.

Hush!

BRIDE.

From here I'll go on alone.
You go now! I want you to turn back.

LEONARDO.

Hush, I said!

BRIDE.

With your teeth, with your hands, anyway
you can,
take from my clean throat
the metal of this chain,
and let me live forgotten
back there in my house in the ground.
And if you don't want to kill me
as you would kill a tiny snake,
set in my hands, a bride's hands,
the barrel of your shotgun.
Oh, what lamenting, what fire,
sweeps upward through my head!
What glass splinters are stuck in my tongue!

LEONARDO.

We've taken the step now; hush!
because they're close behind us,
and I must take you with me.

BRIDE.

Then it must be by force!

LEONARDO.

By force? Who was it first
went down the stairway?

BRIDE.

I went down it.

LEONARDO.

And who was it put
a new bridle on the horse?

BRIDE.

I myself did it. It's true.

LEONARDO.

And whose were the hands
strapped spurs to my boots?

BRIDE.

The same hands, these that are yours,
but which when they see you would like
to break the blue branches
and sunder the purl of your veins.
I love you! I love you! But leave me!
For if I were able to kill you
I'd wrap you 'round in a shroud
with the edges bordered in violets.
Oh, what lamenting, what fire,
sweeps upward through my head!

LEONARDO.

What glass splinters are stuck in my tongue!
Because I tried to forget you
and put a wall of stone
between your house and mine.
It's true. You remember?
And when I saw you in the distance
I threw sand in my eyes.
But I was riding a horse
and the horse went straight to your door.
And the silver pins of your wedding
turned my red blood black.
And in me our dream was choking
my flesh with its poisoned weeds.
Oh, it isn't my fault—
the fault is the earth's—
and this fragrance that you exhale
from your breasts and your braids.

BRIDE.

Oh, how untrue! I want
from you neither bed nor food,
yet there's not a minute each day
that I don't want to be with you,
because you drag me, and I come,

then you tell me to go back
and I follow you,
like chaff blown on the breeze.
I have left a good, honest man,
and all his people,
with the wedding feast half over
and wearing my bridal wreath.
But you are the one will be punished
and that I don't want to happen.
Leave me alone now! You run away!
There is no one who will defend you.

LEONARDO.

The birds of early morning
are calling among the trees.
The night is dying
on the stone's ridge.
Let's go to a hidden corner
where I may love you forever,
for to me the people don't matter,
nor the venom they throw on us.

He embraces her strongly.

BRIDE.

And I'll sleep at your feet,
to watch over your dreams.
Naked, looking over the fields,
as though I were a bitch.
Because that's what I am! Oh, I look at you
and your beauty sears me.

LEONARDO.

Fire is stirred by fire.
The same tiny flame
will kill two wheat heads together.
Let's go!

BRIDE.

Where are you taking me?

LEONARDO.

Where they cannot come,
these men who surround us.
Where I can look at you!

BRIDE, *sarcastically.*

Carry me with you from fair to fair,
a shame to clean women,
so that people will see me
with my wedding sheets
on the breeze like banners.

LEONARDO.

I, too, would want to leave you
if I thought as men should.
But wherever you go, I go.
You're the same. Take a step. Try.
Nails of moonlight have fused
my waist and your chains.

This whole scene is violent, full of great sensuality.

BRIDE.

Listen!

LEONARDO.

They're coming.

BRIDE.

Run!

It's fitting that I should die here,
with water over my feet,
with thorns upon my head.
And fitting the leaves should mourn me,
a woman lost and virgin.

LEONARDO.

Be quiet. Now they're appearing.

BRIDE.

Go now!

LEONARDO.

Quiet. Don't let them hear us.

The Bride hesitates.

BRIDE.

Both of us!

LEONARDO, *embracing her.*

Any way you want!

If they separate us, it will be
because I am dead.

BRIDE.

And I dead too.

*They go out in each other's arms.**The Moon appears very slowly. The stage takes on a strong blue light. The two violins are heard. Suddenly two long, ear-splitting shrieks are heard, and the music of the two violins is cut short. At the second shriek The Beggar Woman appears and stands with her back to the audience. She opens her cape and stands in the center of the stage like a great bird with immense wings. The Moon halts. The curtain comes down in absolute silence.*

C U R T A I N

ACT THREE

S C E N E 2

*The Final Scene**A white dwelling with arches and thick walls. To the right and left, are white stairs. At the back, a great arch and a wall of the same color. The floor also should be shining white. This simple dwelling should have the monumental feeling of a church. There should not be a single gray nor any shadow, not even what is necessary for perspective.**Two Girls dressed in dark blue are winding a red skein.*

FIRST GIRL.

Wool, red wool,
what would you make?

SECOND GIRL.

Oh, jasmine for dresses,
fine wool like glass.
At four o'clock born,
at ten o'clock dead.
A thread from this wool yarn,
a chain 'round your feet
a knot that will tighten
the bitter white wreath.LITTLE GIRL, *singing.*

Were you at the wedding?

FIRST GIRL.

No.

LITTLE GIRL.

Well, neither was I!
What could have happened
'midst the shoots of the vineyards?
What could have happened
'neath the branch of the olive?
What really happened
that no one came back?
Were you at the wedding?

SECOND GIRL.

We told you once, no.

LITTLE GIRL, *leaving.*

Well, neither was I!

SECOND GIRL.

Wool, red wool,
what would you sing?

FIRST GIRL.

Their wounds turning waxen
balm-myrtle for pain.
Asleep in the morning,
and watching at night.LITTLE GIRL, *in the doorway.*And then, the thread stumbled
on the flinty stones,

but mountains, blue mountains,
are letting it pass.
Running, running, running,
and finally to come
to stick in a knife blade,
to take back the bread.

She goes out.

SECOND GIRL.

Wool, red wool,
what would you tell?

FIRST GIRL.

The lover is silent,
crimson the groom,
at the still shoreline
I saw them laid out.

She stops and looks at the skein.

LITTLE GIRL, *appearing in the doorway.*

Running, running, running,
the thread runs to here.
All covered with clay
I feel them draw near.
Bodies stretched stiffly
in ivory sheets!

The Wife and Mother-in-law of Leonardo appear. They are anguished.

FIRST GIRL. Are they coming yet?

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *harshly.* We don't know.

SECOND GIRL. What can you tell us about the wedding?

FIRST GIRL. Yes, tell me.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *curtly.* Nothing.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. I want to go back and find out all about it.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, *sternly.*

You, back to your house.
Brave and alone in your house.
To grow old and to weep.
But behind closed doors.

Never again. Neither dead nor alive.
We'll nail up our windows
and let rains and nights
fall on the bitter weeds.

LEONARDO'S WIFE. What could have happened?

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

It doesn't matter what.
Put a veil over your face.
Your children are yours,
that's all. On the bed
put a cross of ashes
where his pillow was.

They go out.

BEGGAR WOMAN, *at the door.* A crust of bread, little girls.

LITTLE GIRL. Go away!

The Girls huddle close together.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Why?

LITTLE GIRL. Because you whine; go away!

FIRST GIRL. Child!

BEGGAR WOMAN.

I might have asked for your eyes! A cloud
of birds is following me. Will you have one?

LITTLE GIRL. I want to get away from here!

SECOND GIRL, *to the Beggar Woman.* Don't mind her!

FIRST GIRL. Did you come by the road through the
arroyo?

BEGGAR WOMAN. I came that way!

FIRST GIRL, *timidly.* Can I ask you something?

BEGGAR WOMAN.

I saw them: they'll be here soon; two torrents
still at last, among the great boulders,
two men at the horse's feet.
Two dead men in the night's splendor.

With pleasure.

Dead, yes, dead.

FIRST GIRL. Hush, old woman, hush!

BEGGAR WOMAN.

Crushed flowers for eyes, and their teeth
two fistfuls of hard-frozen snow.

Both of them fell, and the Bride returns
with bloodstains on her skirt and hair.

And they come covered with two sheets
carried on the shoulders of two tall boys.
That's how it was; nothing more. What was
fitting.

Over the golden flower, dirty sand.

She goes. The Girls bow their heads and start going out rhythmically.

FIRST GIRL.

Dirty sand.

SECOND GIRL.

Over the golden flower.

LITTLE GIRL.

Over the golden flower
they're bringing the dead from the arroyo.
Dark the one,
dark the other.
What shadowy nightingale flies and weeps
over the golden flower!

She goes. The stage is left empty. The Mother and a Neighbor Woman appear. The Neighbor is weeping.

MOTHER. Hush.

NEIGHBOR. I can't.

MOTHER. Hush, I said.

At the door.

Is there nobody here?

She puts her hands to her forehead.

My son ought to answer me. But now my son is an armful
of shrivelled flowers. My son is a fading voice beyond the
mountains now.

With rage, to The Neighbor.

Will you shut up? I want no wailing in this house. Your

tears are only tears from your eyes, but when I'm alone
mine will come—from the soles of my feet, from my roots—
burning more than blood.

NEIGHBOR. You come to my house; don't you stay here.

MOTHER. I want to be here. Here. In peace. They're all
dead now: and at midnight I'll sleep, sleep without terror
of guns or knives. Other mothers will go to their windows,
lashed by rain, to watch for their sons' faces. But not I.
And of my dreams I'll make a cold ivory dove that will
carry camellias of white frost to the graveyard. But no;
not graveyard, not graveyard: the couch of earth, the bed
that shelters them and rocks them in the sky.

*A woman dressed in black enters, goes toward the right,
and there kneels. To The Neighbor.*

Take your hands from your face. We have terrible days
ahead. I want to see no one. The earth and I. My grief
and I. And these four walls. Ay-y-y! Ay-y-y!

She sits down, overcome.

NEIGHBOR. Take pity on yourself!

MOTHER, *pushing back her hair*. I must be calm.

She sits down.

Because the neighbor women will come and I don't want
them to see me so poor. So poor! A woman without even
one son to hold to her lips.

*The Bride appears. She is without her wreath and wears
a black shawl.*

NEIGHBOR, *with rage, seeing The Bride*. Where are you
going?

BRIDE. I'm coming here.

MOTHER, *to The Neighbor*. Who is it?

NEIGHBOR. Don't you recognize her?

MOTHER. That's why I asked who it was. Because I
don't want to recognize her, so I won't sink my teeth in
her throat. You snake!

*She moves wrathfully on The Bride, then stops. To The
Neighbor.*

Look at her! There she is, and she's crying, while I stand here calmly and don't tear her eyes out. I don't understand myself. Can it be I didn't love my son? But, where's his good name? Where is it now? Where is it?

She beats The Bride who drops to the floor.

NEIGHBOR. For God's sake!

She tries to separate them.

BRIDE, *to The Neighbor*. Let her; I came here so she'd kill me and they'd take me away with them.

To The Mother.

But not with her hands; with grappling hooks, with a sickle—and with force—until they break on my bones. Let her! I want her to know I'm clean, that I may be crazy, but that they can bury me without a single man ever having seen himself in the whiteness of my breasts.

MOTHER. Shut up, shut up; what do I care about that?

BRIDE. Because I ran away with the other one; I ran away!

With anguish.

You would have gone, too. I was a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside and out, and your son was a little bit of water from which I hoped for children, land, health; but the other one was a dark river, choked with brush, that brought near me the undertone of its rushes and its whispered song. And I went along with your son who was like a little boy of cold water—and the other sent against me hundreds of birds who got in my way and left white frost on my wounds, my wounds of a poor withered woman, of a girl caressed by fire. I didn't want to; remember that! I didn't want to. Your son was my destiny and I have not betrayed him, but the other one's arm dragged me along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always—even if I were an old woman and all your son's sons held me by the hair!

A Neighbor enters.

MOTHER. She is not to blame; nor am I!

Sarcastically.

Who is, then? It's a delicate, lazy, sleepless woman who throws away an orange blossom wreath and goes looking for a piece of bed warmed by another woman!

BRIDE. Be still! Be still! Take your revenge on me; here I am! See how soft my throat is; it would be less work for you than cutting a dahlia in your garden. But never that! Clean, clean as a new-born little girl. And strong enough to prove it to you. Light the fire. Let's stick our hands in; you, for your son, I, for my body. *You'll* draw yours out first.

Another Neighbor enters.

MOTHER. But what does your good name matter to me? What does your death matter to me? What does anything about anything matter to me? Blesséd be the wheat stalks, because my sons are under them; blesséd be the rain, because it wets the face of the dead. Blesséd be God, who stretches us out together to rest.

Another Neighbor enters.

BRIDE. Let me weep with you.

MOTHER. Weep. But at the door.

The Girl enters. The Bride stays at the door. The Mother is at the center of the stage.

LEONARDO'S WIFE, *entering and going to the left.*

He was a beautiful horseman,
now he's a heap of snow.

He rode to fairs and mountains
and women's arms.

Now, the night's dark moss
crowns his forehead.

MOTHER.

A sunflower to your mother,
a mirror of the earth.

Let them put on your breast
the cross of bitter rosebay;

and over you a sheet
of shining silk;
between your quiet hands
let water form its lament.

WIFE.

Ay-y-y, four gallant boys
come with tired shoulders!

BRIDE.

Ay-y-y, four gallant boys
carry death on high!

MOTHER.

Neighbors.

LITTLE GIRL, *at the door.*

They're bringing them now.

MOTHER.

It's the same thing.
Always the cross, the cross.

WOMEN.

Sweet nails,
cross adored,
sweet name
of Christ our Lord.

BRIDE. May the cross protect both the quick and the
dead.

MOTHER.

Neighbors: with a knife,
with a little knife,
on their appointed day, between two and three,
these two men killed each other for love.
With a knife,
with a tiny knife
that barely fits the hand,
but that slides in clean
through the astonished flesh
and stops at the place
where trembles, enmeshed,
the dark root of a scream.

BRIDE.

And this is a knife,
a tiny knife
that barely fits the hand;
fish without scales, without river,
so that on their appointed day, between two
and three,
with this knife,
two men are left stiff,
with their lips turning yellow.

MOTHER.

And it barely fits the hand
but it slides in clean
through the astonished flesh
and stops there, at the place
where trembles enmeshed
the dark root of a scream.

The Neighbors, kneeling on the floor, sob.

CURTAIN