

SESSION 4

Readings: Colette, “The Other Wife”
Armando Palacio Valdés, “The Love of Clotilde”
Italo Calvino, “The Man Who Shouted Teresa” and “The Black Sheep”
Clarice Lispector, “The Hen”
Miguel de Cervantes *The Force of Blood* (*La fuerza de la sangre*)



Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette (1873-1954), known as Colette, was a French writer and actress. Her 1944 novella *Gigi* became a film and a theater production.

Colette, “The Other Wife”

“TABLE FOR TWO? This way, Monsieur, Madame, there is still a table next to the window, if Madame and Monsieur would like a view of the bay.”

Alice followed the maitre d’.

“Oh, yes. Come on, Marc, it’ll be like having lunch on a boat on the water...

Her husband caught her by passing his arm under hers. “We’ll be more comfortable over there.”

“There? In the middle of all those people? I’d much rather...

“Alice, please.”

He tightened his grip in such a meaningful way that she turned around.

“What’s the matter?”

“Shh... he said softly, looking at her intently, and led her toward the table in the middle.

“What is it, Marc?”

“I’ll tell you, darling. Let me order lunch first. Would you like the shrimp? Or the eggs in aspic?”

“Whatever you like, you know that.”

They smiled at one another, wasting the precious time of an over-worked maitre d’, stricken with a kind of nervous dance, who was standing next to them, perspiring.

“The shrimp,” said Marc. “Then the eggs and bacon. And the cold chicken with a romaine salad. *Fromage blanc*? The house specialty? We’ll go with the specialty. Two strong coffees. My chauffeur will be having lunch also, we’ll be leaving again at two o’clock. Some cider? No, I don’t trust it... Dry champagne.”

He sighed as if he had just moved an armoire, gazed at the colorless midday sea, at the pearly white sky, then at his wife, whom he found lovely in her little Mercury hat with its large, hanging veil.

“You’re looking well, darling. And all this blue water makes your eyes look green, imagine that! And you’ve put on weight since you’ve been traveling... It’s nice up to a point, but only up to a point!”

Her firm, round breasts rose proudly as she leaned over the table.

“Why did you keep me from taking that place next to the window?”

Marc Seguy never considered lying. “Because you were about to sit next to someone I know.”

“Someone I don’t know?”

“My ex-wife.”

She couldn’t think of anything to say and opened her blue eyes wider.

“So what, darling? It’ll happen again. It’s not important.”

The words came back to Alice and she asked, in order, the inevitable questions. “Did she see you? Could she see that you saw her? Will you point her out to me?”

“Don’t look now, please, she must be watching us... The lady with brown hair, no hat, she must be staying in this hotel. By herself, behind those children in red...”

“Yes I see.”

Hidden behind some broad-brimmed beach hats, Alice was able to look at the woman who, fifteen months ago, had still been her husband’s wife.

“Incompatibility,” Marc said. “Oh, I mean... total incompatibility! We divorced like well-bred people, almost like friends, quietly, quickly. And then I fell in love with you, and you really wanted to be happy with me. How lucky we are that our happiness doesn’t involve any guilty parties or victims!”

The woman in white, whose smooth, lustrous hair reflected the light from the sea in azure patches, was smoking a cigarette with her eyes half closed. Alice turned back toward her husband, took some shrimp and butter, and ate calmly.

After a moment's silence she asked: "Why didn't you ever tell me that she had blue eyes, too?"

"Well, I never thought about it!"

He kissed the hand she was extending toward the bread basket and she blushed with pleasure. Dusky and ample, she might have seemed somewhat coarse, but the changeable blue of her eyes and her wavy, golden hair made her look like a frail and sentimental blonde. She vowed overwhelming gratitude to her husband. Immodest without knowing it, everything about her bore the overly conspicuous marks of extreme happiness.

They ate and drank heartily, and each thought the other had forgotten the woman in white. Now and then, however, Alice laughed too loudly, and Marc was careful about his posture, holding his shoulders back, his head up. They waited quite a long time for their coffee, in silence. An incandescent river, the straggled reflection of the invisible sun overhead, shifted slowly across the sea and shone with a blinding brilliance.

"She's still there, you know," Alice whispered.

"Is she making you uncomfortable? Would you like to have coffee somewhere else?"

"No, not at all! She's the one who must be uncomfortable! Besides, she doesn't exactly seem to be having a wild time, if you could see her..."

"I don't have to. I know that look of hers."

"Oh, was she like that?"

He exhaled his cigarette smoke through his nostrils and knitted his eyebrows. "Like that? No. To tell you honestly, she wasn't happy with me."

"Oh, really now!"

"The way you indulge me is so charming, darling... It's crazy... You're an angel... You love me... I'm so proud when I see those eyes of yours. Yes, those eyes... She... I just didn't know how to make her happy, that's all. I didn't know how."

"She's just difficult!"

Alice fanned herself irritably, and cast brief glances at the woman in white, who was smoking, her head resting against the back of the cane chair, her eyes closed with an air of satisfied lassitude.

Marc shrugged his shoulders modestly.

"That's the right word," he admitted. "What can you do? You have to feel sorry for people who are never satisfied. But we're satisfied... Aren't we, darling?"

She did not answer. She was looking furtively, and closely, at her husband's face, ruddy and regular; at his thick hair, threaded here and there with white silk; at his short, well-cared-for hands; and doubtful for the first time, she asked herself, "What more did she want from him?"

And as they were leaving, while Marc was paying the bill and asking for the chauffeur and about the route, she kept looking, with envy and curiosity, at the woman in white, this dissatisfied, this difficult, this superior...

To consider:

1. What is the setting of the story?
2. What happens in the story?
3. How does Colette deal with human psychology in the story?
4. How can one interpret/analyze the ending?

Armando Palacio Valdés (1853-1938) was a well-respected Spanish writer of fiction and a noted critic.

Armando Palacio Valdés, “The Love of Clotilde”

In the dressing-room of Clotilde, leading actress of one of the most important theaters in the capital, there gathered every night about half a dozen of her male friends. The reception lasted almost always about as long as the performances; but it included a number of parentheses. Whenever the actress, was obliged to change her costume she would turn towards her visitors with a bewitching smile and beseeching eyes:

"Gentlemen, will you withdraw for one little moment?—not more than one little moment."

Thereupon they would all transfer themselves to the ante-room and remain there patiently waiting. No, I am mistaken, not quite all, because the youngest of them, a third-year student in the School of Medicine, would avail himself of the chance to take a turn in the wings to stretch his legs and snatch a fugitive kiss or so. At all events, the majority remained, either seated or pacing up and down, until the moment when Clotilde would re-open her door and, putting out her head, decked as queen or peasant girl, according to the part she was playing, would call out:

"Now you may come back, gentlemen. Have I been very long?"

Don Jerónimo always lingered. He was the last to withdraw grumbling and the first to return to the dressing-room. He was never able to reconcile himself to that modest custom. And although he never allowed himself to say so openly, yet in the depths of his secret thoughts he regarded it as a lack of courtesy that he should be ejected from his seat, merely because the silly child must change her dress,—he, who for thirty years had passed his life behind the scenes and had been on intimate terms with every actor and actress, ancient and modern!

He was fifty-four years of age and had been attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ever since he was four-and-twenty. Each successive government had regarded him as one of the indispensable wheels in the machinery of colonial administration. Furthermore, he was a bachelor and living at the mercy of his landlady. It was said that in his youth he once wrote a play which won him nothing but hisses and free entry for life behind the scenes of the theaters. Whether resigned or not to the verdict of the public, he ceased to write plays and assumed instead the nobler role of patron to unrecognized authors and artists and to ruined managers.

Any youth from the provinces who arrived in Madrid with a drama in his pocket could take no surer road to seeing it produced than that which led to the home of Don Jerónimo. One and all, he received them with open arms, the good and the bad alike. There is no denying that, since he was rather brusque in his ways, he never spared the young authors who asked his advice and read him their productions, but criticized vigorously, even to the verge of insult: "This whole episode is sheer nonsense; spill your ink-well on it!" "Why, look here, for the love of heaven! How do you suppose that a man who is on the point of committing murder is going to stand there for sixteen seconds, without drawing his breath?" "Lord, what tommyrot! Platonic love for a woman of that class! You must have tumbled out of the nest unfledged, my lad!"

But anyone possessed of a little tact refused to take offense, but went calmly on and ended by entrusting his manuscript to the hands of Don Jerónimo. And he could rest assured that his drama would be produced. The veteran of the greenrooms exercised a strong influence, akin to intimidation, over managers and actors alike; when he was displeased, he gave his tongue free rein; if a play had been hissed, he would protest, boiling with rage, against the public verdict, and would continue to support the author more staunchly than ever. If on the contrary it scored a hit, he merely kept silent and smiled ecstatically, but never sought out the

successful author in order to congratulate him. And if the latter should complain of his indifference, his answer was:

"Now that you have shown that you can use your wings, will you please, my friend, will you please leave me free to succor some other poor fellow?"

His private life offered little of special interest. Every night, upon leaving the theater, he betook himself to the *Café Habanero*, where he habitually consumed a beefsteak, together with a small measure of beer. And, according to a certain friend, who had watched him repeatedly, he always managed his repast so artfully as to finish, at one and the same time, the last mouthful of meat, the last fragment of bread, and the last draught of beer.

On this particular night the little gathering was unwontedly animated. The actress's friends indulged more freely than usual in gossip and laughter. Don Jerónimo, muffled closely in his cape (one of his privileges), lounging at ease in the big corner chair, and with his inevitable cigar between his teeth (another special privilege), was giving utterance to rare and racy stories, which from time to time caused his hearers to cast a glance in the direction of Clotilde and brought a slightly heightened color to the latter's cheeks.

Don Jerónimo himself took no notice of this; he had first known her as such a mere child that he considered he had the right to dispense with certain courtesies that are due to ladies,—assuming that in the whole course of his life he had ever shown them to any woman, which is very doubtful. He had met her first as a mere child and had opened the way for her to the stage. At the time that he ran across her, she was living wretchedly and trying to learn the art of making artificial flowers. Today, thanks to her talent, she earned enough to keep her mother and sisters in comfort.

Clotilde's attraction lay in her charm of manner rather than her beauty. Her complexion was olive, her eyes large and black, the best of all her features; her mouth somewhat big, but with bright red lips and admirably even teeth. Tonight she was costumed as a lady of the time of Louis XV, with powdered hair, which was marvelously becoming to her. She took almost no part in the conversation, but seemed satisfied to be merely a listener, constantly turning her serene gaze from one speaker to another, and often answering only with a smile when they addressed her.

All at once there came the voice of the call-boy:

"Señorita Clotilde, if you please—"

"Coming," she answered, rising.

She crossed over to the mirror, gave a few final touches to her brows and lashes with a pencil, adjusted with somewhat nervous fingers the coils of her hair, the cross of brilliants which she wore at her throat, and the folds of her dress. Her friends became for the moment silent and abstractedly watched these last preparations.

"Good-by for the present, gentlemen." And she left the dressing-room, followed by her maid, carefully bearing her train, a magnificent train of cream-colored satin.

"She grows lovelier every day, Clotilde does," said the medical student, allowing an imperceptible sigh to escape him.

Don Jerónimo took an enormous pull at his cigar, and instantly became enveloped in a cloud of smoke. For this reason no one observed the smile of triumph with which he received the medical student's remark.

"I agree with you that she grows prettier every day," said another of the visitors. "But it seems to me that her disposition has been undergoing a big change for some time back. You, my boy, have not known her as long as we have. She used to be a fascinating talker, so merry, so full of spirits! No one could ever remain out of temper in her company. But now I find her grave and sad almost all the time."

"It's a fact that I have wondered at the melancholy look in her eyes."

Don Jerónimo took another enormous pull at his cigar. No one saw the swift flare of anger that passed over his face.

"Changes like that, my boy, have only one cause, and that is love."

"Was she engaged?"

"Precisely,—Don Jerónimo knows the story well."

"Yes, and I am going to tell it to you," said the one referred to, from the depths of his cloak. "Though you may believe me that it is no pleasant task to relate such follies. But it concerns a girl whom we all of us love, and whatever affects her ought to interest us."

"Some three years ago a young man, faultlessly dressed and with the manuscript of a play under his arm, called upon the director of this theater. Now there is nothing in the world more impressive and awe-inspiring than a well-dressed young man who carries the manuscript of a play under his arm. The director did his best to dodge him, and held him off with a number of adroit moves; but he was finally cornered, all the same. In other words, the young man invited him to breakfast one day, enticing him with the seductive prospect of several dozen oysters, washed down with abundant Sauterne, and for dessert he shot off his play at close range.

"As it turned out, the play was no good. Pepe did what you know one does in such cases: he expressed deep admiration for the versification, he said 'bravo!' over certain obscurely phrased thoughts, and finally he recommended a few changes in the second act, after which the work would be unexceptionable.

"The unwary poet returned home greatly pleased, and set to work zealously upon the revision. At the end of a fortnight he returned for another interview with Pepe; this time the latter found the first act somewhat slow, and advised him at any cost to put more action into it and make it somewhat shorter. It took the poet a month to rewrite the first act. When he once more presented himself, the director, while expressing great admiration for the excellence of the verse and for some of the ideas, manifested some doubt as to whether the play was *actable*. That it was *literary*, he had none whatever; on the contrary, it seemed to him that from this point of view it compared favorably with the best of Ayala's plays,—but *actable*, really *actable*, ah! that was another matter!"

"What is the difference, Don Jerónimo? I don't understand."

"Then I will explain, my boy. We, who are behind the scenes, mean by *actable* a good play, and by *literary* a bad one."

"I see!"

"After expressing these doubts, the manager concluded by recommending certain additional alterations in the third act.

"At last the poet understood,—a really marvelous occurrence, because poets, who understand everything else and can tell you why the condor flies so high, who soar to the skies and descend into the abyss and penetrate the secret thoughts of all created things, are not capable of realizing that there are times when their works do not please those who hear them. Our young man, whom we will call Inocencio, received back his manuscript somewhat peevishly, and for a while nothing further

was heard of him. But at last, doubtless after a good deal of profound meditation, he presented himself on a certain morning at the home of Clotilde. I hardly need tell you that he carried his manuscript under his arm.

"He waited patiently in the parlor while our young friend completed her toilet, and when at last she made her appearance, she saw before her a blushing and confused young man, who nevertheless was pleasant-mannered and fashionably dressed, and who besought with stammering lips that she would do him the favor of listening while he read his play. Women, you must know, find a singular pleasure in playing the role of patroness, especially in regard to young men of pleasant manners and fashionable dress. So that it is not at all surprising that Clotilde listened patiently to the play and even pronounced it acceptable.

"The young man entrusted himself wholly to her guidance, deposited his manuscript in her pretty hands, as though it were a new-born child, and she received it like a doting mother, took it under her protection, and promised to watch over its precious existence and introduce it to the world. The young man declared that such an intention was worthy of the noble heart whose fame had already reached his ears. Clotilde replied that it was no kindness on her part to work to have the play produced, but only an act of justice. The young man said that this idea was exceedingly flattering, because Clotilde's great talent and the accuracy of her judgments were well known to everyone, but that he dared not build upon such an illusion. Clotilde declared that there were many unmerited reputations in the world, and one of them was hers, but that on this occasion she felt that she was on firm ground.

"The young man replied that when the river roars the water toils, and that when the whole world unites in admiring not only the exceptional beauty and artistic inspiration of a certain person, but also her splendid genius and brilliant intellect, it was necessary to bow one's head. Clotilde said that on this occasion she refused to bow hers, because she was quite convinced that the world was greatly mistaken regarding what it called her talent, which was nothing more nor less than pure instinct. The young man cried out to heaven against such mystification, for which there was absolutely no excuse. Then, promptly calming down, he declared himself profoundly moved by the modesty of his patroness, and swore by all the saints in heaven that he never had met her equal,—with the result that the manuscript was momentarily gaining ground in the heart of our sympathetic friend, and that the young man, overwhelmed with emotion, took his leave of her until the following day.

"On the following day, Clotilde called upon the manager, and by threatening to break her contract, forced from him a promise to produce Inocencio's play as soon as possible. That same afternoon, the poet expressed his thanks to his patroness and promptly took her into his confidence. He belonged to a distinguished provincial family, although without great financial resources. It was in the hope of bettering them that he had come to Madrid, relying solely upon his genius. In his native town they said that he had talent, and that if the verses which he had contributed to the *Tagus Echo* had been published in Madrid, he would be talked of as a second Nuñez de Arce y Grilo [Spanish writers of the time]. He did not know whether that was so; but he felt that his heart was full of noble sentiments, and he loved the theater better than the apple of his eye. Would he succeed in being an Ayala or a Tamayo [other writers]? Would he be rejected by the public? It was an insoluble mystery to him.

"During this interview, Clotilde became convinced of two very important things: namely, that Inocencio possessed a talent so great that his head could scarcely hold it, and secondly, that there was no one else in all Madrid who could wear so conspicuous a necktie with such charming effect. I need not tell you that their confidential interviews increased in frequency, and that consequently Clotilde came day by day more completely under the fascinating influence of that supernatural necktie. In the end, she yielded herself vanquished, and surrendered herself to it, bound hand and foot. The necktie deigned to raise her from the ground and grant her the favor of its affection."

"What about a necktie?" asked one of the company, who had been nodding.

Don Jerónimo took an immense, an infernal pull at his cigar, in testimony of his annoyance, then proceeded with no further notice:

"Meanwhile the rehearsals of Inocencio's play had begun. It was called, if I am not mistaken, *Stooping to Conquer*,—excuse me, no, I believe it was just the reverse, *Conquering to Stoop*. Well, at all events, it contained a participle and an infinitive. Before long I became aware that lover-like relations had been established between our fair friend and the author, and since, as a matter of fact, even if Inocencio was a bad poet, as Pepe insisted, he seemed like a good lad, I was very glad it had happened and I helped it along as much as I could. Clotilde confided in me, and declared that she was desperately in love; that her ambitions no longer had anything to do with the art of the stage, which seemed to her an unbearable slavery; that her ideal was to live tranquilly, even if it were in a garret, united to the man whom she adored; that woman was born to be the guardian angel of the

fireside, and not to divert the public, and that she herself would rather be queen of a humble little apartment illuminated with love, than to receive all the applause in the world. In short, gentlemen, our young friend was living in the midst of an idyllic dream.

"Inocencio was, to all appearance, no less in love than she. I frequently encountered them walking through the unfrequented by-paths of the Retiro [famous park in Madrid], at a respectable distance from her mother, who lingered opportunely to examine the first opening buds of flowers or some curious insect. Mothers, at this critical period of courtship, are under an obligation to be admirers of the works of nature. The young pair of turtle-doves would pause when they caught sight of me and greet me blushing. I cannot conceal from you that, however much I felt the loss to art, I was delighted that Clotilde was going to be married. A woman always needs the protection of a man. And there is no question that so far as outward appearance went, they were worthy of one another. Inocencio certainly was a most attractive young fellow.

"At the theater they talked of nothing else than of this wedding, which was still in the bud. Everybody was delighted, because Clotilde is the only actress, since the beginning of the world, who took it into her head to attempt what until now was regarded as impossible, to make herself beloved by her companions.

"I observed, nevertheless,—for you know that I am an observant person: it is the only quality that I possess, that of observation, a thing to which the authors of today attach no importance. Today, in the drama, everything is so much dried leaves, a lot of moonshine, which, they let filter down through the foliage of the trees, a lot of description of dawn and twilight, and a lot of other similar pastry-shop stuff. That's all there is to it! When any fledgling author comes to me with nonsense of that sort, I say to him: 'Get down to the facts! Get down to the facts!' The facts are the drama, which doesn't exist in the great part of the above-mentioned."

"Aren't you exciting yourself, Don Jerónimo?"

"Well, as I was telling you, I observed that as the rehearsals progressed the ascendancy of Inocencio over our young friend increased. The tone in which he addressed her was no longer the humble and courteous tone of earlier days; he corrected her frequently in her manner of delivery, he dictated the attitudes and gestures which she should adopt, and sometimes, when the actress did not quite understand his wishes, he allowed himself to address her publicly in rather severe

terms, and the way he looked at her was severer still. Our poet was already thundering and lightning like a true lord and master.

"Clotilde accepted it with good grace. She, who had always been so haughty, even towards the most distinguished authors, stretched out and shrank back like soft wax in the hands of that insignificant jackanapes. You ought to have seen the humility with which she accepted his suggestions, and the distress which his censures caused her. All the time that the rehearsal lasted she kept her eyes steadily fixed upon him, watching like a submissive slave to catch the wishes of her master. The poet, lolling at ease in an arm-chair, with a brazier of hot coals before him, directed the action in as dictatorial a manner as either Gracia Gutierrez or Ayala could have done. A mere glance from him sufficed to make Clotilde flush crimson or turn pale. The other actors made no protest, out of consideration for her. When she had finished her scene she came eagerly to take her seat beside her betrothed, who sometimes deigned to welcome her with a haughty smile, and at other times with an Olympian indifference. I, meanwhile, looked on, scandalized.

"On one occasion I came upon them from behind and overheard what they were saying. Clotilde was speaking, and hotly maintaining that Inocencio's *Stooping to Conquer* or *Conquering to Stoop* was better than *A New Drama* [an 1867 play by Manuel Tamayo y Baus]. The young man protested feebly. On another occasion they were speaking of their future union. Clotilde was picturing in impassioned phrases the nook to which they would go to hide their happiness; some lofty spot on the hills of Salamanca, a dear little nest, bathed in sunlight, where Inocencio could work in his private study, writing plays, while she sat by his side and embroidered in absolute silence. When he was tired they could talk for a while, to let him rest, and then she would give him a kiss and go back again to her work. In the evening they would go out, arm in arm, to take a short walk, and then home again. But no more of the theater; she abhorred it with all her soul. In the spring they would go every morning to take a walk in the Retiro and take chocolate under the trees; in the summer they would spend a month or two in Inocencio's birthplace, so as to bring back from the country a supply of good color and health for the coming winter.

"The description of this tender idyl, which, even if I am a confirmed bachelor, set my heart beating within my breast, produced no other effect upon the new author than an insolent somnolence which would not disappear until he suddenly raised his imperious voice to admonish some one of the actors.

"At last the opening night arrived. We were all anxious to see the result. The

prevailing opinion was that the play offered little novelty; but since Clotilde had staked her whole soul upon the outcome, a big success was predicted. At the dress rehearsal our young friend had achieved genuine prodigies. There was a moment when the few of us whom curiosity had brought to witness it, rose to our feet electrified, convulsed, making a most unseemly outcry. You have no conception how marvelously she rendered her part. Then and there, all of a sudden, an idea entered my head. Recalling all my observations of Clotilde's love affair, I felt convinced, in view of the evidence, that Inocencio had had no other purpose in winning her love than to assure an exceptional interpretation of the leading *role* of his play, and a flattering outcome of his venture. I decided not to communicate my suspicions to anyone. I kept silent and hoped, but there is no doubt that from that time on the young man was decidedly out of favor with me.

"The noise which Inocencio's friends had been making in regard to the theme of his play, the fact that Clotilde had chosen it for her benefit performance, and the widespread rumor that the celebrated actress was going to win a signal triumph in it, all worked together to help the speculators to dispose of every seat in the house at fabulous prices. I know a marquis who paid eleven *duros* [a *duro* was equal to 5 *pesetas* in Spanish currency] for two orchestra stalls. This room where we are now sitting was filled, just as it is annually, with flowers and presents; it was impossible to move about in the midst of such a conglomeration of porcelain, books with costly bindings, ebony work-boxes, picture-frames, and no end of other fancy trifles.

"The audience room was unusually brilliant. The most resplendent ladies, the men most distinguished in politics, literature, and finance; in short, the *high life*, as the phrase goes, was all there. But even more brilliant and more radiant was Inocencio himself; radiant with glory and happiness, and graciously receiving the crowds of visitors who came to see the presents, dictating orders to the call-boys and scene-shifters regarding the proper setting of the scene, and multiplying his smiles and hand-shakings to the point of infinity. Clotilde also seemed more beautiful than ever, and her expressive face revealed the tender emotion which possessed her, as well as her deep anxiety to win laurels for her future husband.

"The curtain arose and everyone hurried to occupy his seat. In the wings there was no one save the author and three or four of his friends. The opening scenes were received as usual with indifference; the following ones with a little more cordiality; the versification was fluent and polished, and, as you know, the public appreciates sugar-coated phrases. At last the moment arrived for Clotilde's entrance, and a faint murmur of curiosity and expectation ran through the audience. She spoke her lines

discreetly, but without much warmth; it was easy to see that she was afraid. The curtain fell in a dead silence.

"Immediately the waiting-room and passage-way were filled by Inocencio's friends, who came eagerly to tell him that this first performance of his play was a great success,—but what was the matter with Clotilde? She hardly put any movement into her part,—and she was usually so much alive, so tremendously forceful! Our young friend acknowledged that, as a matter of fact, she had felt badly scared, and that this had hampered her seriously. The author, greatly alarmed for the fate of his work, endeavored to persuade her that there was nothing to be afraid of, that all she had to do was to be herself, and that she was not to think of him at all while she spoke her lines.

"'I can't help it,' insisted Clotilde, 'all the time that I am speaking I keep thinking that you are the author, and imagining that the play is not going to succeed, and it makes me so frightened.'

"Inocencio was in despair; he tried entreaties, advice, arguments, he embraced her without caring who saw him; he tried to infuse courage into her by appealing to her vanity as an artist; in short, he did everything imaginable to save his play.

"The second act began. Clotilde had a few pathetic scenes. In the beginning there was a certain slight disturbance in the audience, and this sufficed to disconcert her completely, and to make her acting irremediably bad, worse than she had ever acted in her whole life. A good deal of coughing was heard, and some loud murmurs of impatience. At the end of that second act a few indiscreet friends tried to applaud, but the audience drowned them out with an immense and terrifying series of hisses. The author, who was standing by my side, pale as death, relieved his feelings with a flood of coarse words, and made his way to Pepe's room, which faces that of Clotilde, and where his friends consoled him, casting the whole blame for the failure upon her, and inflaming more and more the anger surging in his heart. Meanwhile, our friend was utterly crushed and overcome, and continually calling for her Inocencio. In order to spare her further trouble, I told her that the author had accepted the situation resignedly, and had left the theater to get a breath of air. The unhappy girl bitterly blamed herself, taking the entire failure on her own shoulders.

"The curtain rose for the third act; and we all gathered anxiously at the wings. Clotilde, by a powerful effort of will, showed herself at first more self-possessed than in the previous acts, but the audience was in a mood to have some sport, and

nothing could have made them take the play seriously. When the public once scents a trail, it is like a wild beast that smells blood; there is no way of heading it off, and you have got to let it have its flesh at any cost. And there is no doubt that on this occasion it gorged itself full. Coughs, laughter, sneezes, stampings, hisses,—there was a little of everything. Tears sprang to our poor friend's eyes, and she seemed upon the point of fainting. When the curtain finally fell her eyes sought on all sides for her lover, but he had disappeared. In her dressing-room, where I followed her, she sobbed, groaned, gave way to despair, called herself a fool, said that she was going to hire herself out on some farm to tend the geese and more to the same effect. It cost me some hard work to calm her down, but at last I succeeded so that she sank into a sort of silent lethargy. In the sorrow which her eyes revealed I saw that what tormented her horribly was the absence of Inocencio.

"The door of the room was suddenly flung open. The defeated poet made his appearance; he was quite pale but apparently calm. Nevertheless, I perceived at the first glance that his calmness was assumed, and that the smile which contracted his lips closely resembled that of a condemned man who wishes to die bravely.

"A gleam of joy illuminated Clotilde's face. She rose swiftly and flung her arms around his neck, saying in a broken voice:

"I have ruined you, my poor Inocencio, I have ruined you! How generous you are! But listen, I swear to you, by the memory of my father, that I will atone for the humiliation you have just suffered.'

"'There is no need for you to atone, my dear girl,' replied the poet, in a soft tone under which a disdainful anger could be felt, 'my family has not achieved its illustrious name through the intercession of any actor. From this day henceforth I gladly renounce the theater and all that is connected with it. Accordingly,—I wish you good-day.' And, unclasping the arms that imprisoned his neck, and smiling sarcastically, he retreated a few steps and took his leave. Clotilde gazed at him in a stupor, then fell unconscious on the divan.

"At the sight of her in such a state I felt my blood take fire, and I followed the young man out. I overtook him near the stairs, and, grasping him by the wrist, I said to him:

"A word with you. The first thing that a man has to be, before he can be a poet, is a gentleman,—and that is something you are not. Your play was hissed because it lacks the same thing that you lack,—and that is a heart. Here, sir, is my card."

"And did you not send him your seconds, Don Jerónimo?" inquired the medical student.

"Silence, silence!" exclaimed another of the group, "here is Clotilde."

And, in fact, the charming actress at that moment appeared in the doorway, and her large and sad black eyes, all the more beautiful beneath her white Louis XV coiffure, smiled tenderly upon her faithful friends.

To consider:

1. How is the story narrated? How does this affect the story itself?
2. What do we know about the main characters? How can one describe the characterization per se?
3. What moves the plot forward?
4. What is the basis of conflict in the story?
5. Is the conflict resolved? If so, how? If not, why not?
6. Does the story have a message, explicit or implicit?
7. How would you rate the story?

Italo Calvino (1923-1985) was a noted Italian writer, most famous for his novels, including *If on a winter's night a traveler* (1979). His works can be allegorical, filled with fantasy, and laced with wit.

Italo Calvino, "The Man Who Shouted Teresa"

I stepped off the pavement, walked backwards a few paces looking up, and, from the middle of the street, brought my hands to my mouth to make a megaphone, and shouted toward the top stories of the block: "Teresa!"

My shadow took fright at the moon and huddled at my feet.

Someone walked by. Again I shouted: "Teresa!" The man came up to me and said: "If you do not shout louder she will not hear you. Let's both try. So: count to three, on three we shout together." And he said: "One, two, three." And we both yelled, "Tereeesaaa!"

A small group of friends passing by on their way back from the theater or the café saw us calling out. They said: “Come on, we will give you a shout too.” And they joined us in the middle of the street and the first man said one to three and then everybody together shouted, “Te-reee-saaa!”

Somebody else came by and joined us; a quarter of an hour later there were a whole bunch of us, twenty almost. And every now and then somebody new came along.

Organizing ourselves to give a good shout, all at the same time, was not easy.

There was always someone who began before three or who went on too long, but in the end we were managing something fairly efficient. We agreed that the “Te” should be shouted low and long, the “re” high and long, the “sa” low and short. It sounded fine. Just a squabble every now and then when someone was off.

We were beginning to get it right when somebody, who, if his voice was anything to go by, must have had a very freckled face, asked: “But are you sure she is home?”

“No,” I said.

“That is bad,” another said. “Forgotten your key, have you?”

“Actually,” I said, “I have my key.”

“So,” they asked, “why don’t you go on up?”

“I don’t live here,” I answered. “I live on the other side of town.”

“Well, then, excuse my curiosity,” the one with the freckled voice asked, “but who lives here?”

“I really wouldn’t know,” I said.

People were a bit upset about this.

“So, could you please explain,” somebody with a very toothy voice asked, “why you are down here calling out Teresa.”

“As far as I am concerned,” I said, “we can call out another name, or try somewhere else if you like.”

The others were a bit annoyed.

“I hope you were not playing a trick on us,” the freckled one asked suspiciously.

“What,” I said, resentfully, and I turned to the others for confirmation of my good faith. The others said nothing.

There was a moment of embarrassment.

“Look,” someone said good-naturedly, “why don’t we call Teresa one more time, then we go home.”

So we did it one more time. “One two three Teresa!” but it did not come out very well. Then people headed off for home, some one way, some another.

I had already turned into the square when I thought I heard a voice still calling:

“Tee-reee-sa!”

Someone must have stayed on to shout. Someone stubborn.

To consider:

1. What is the style of the story?
2. What is the tone?
3. Does the story have a moral or message?

Italo Calvino, “The Black Sheep”

There was once a country where everyone was a thief.

At night, each inhabitant went out armed with a crowbar and a lantern, and broke into a neighbor's house. On returning at dawn, loaded down with booty, he would find that his own house had been burgled as well.

And so everyone lived in harmony, and no one was badly off—one person robbed another, and that one robbed the next, and so it went on until you reached the last person, who was robbing the first. In this country, business was synonymous with fraud, whether you were buying or selling. The government was a criminal organization set up to steal from the people, while the people spent all their time cheating the government. So life went on its untroubled course, and the inhabitants were neither rich nor poor.

And then one day—nobody knows how—an honest man appeared. At night, instead of going out with his bag and lantern to steal, he stayed at home, smoking and reading novels. And when thieves turned up, they saw the light on in his house and so they went away again.

This state of affairs didn't last. The honest man was told that it was all very well for him to live a life of ease, but he had no right to prevent others from working. For every night he spent at home, there was a family who went without food.

The honest man could offer no defense. And so he too started staying out every night until dawn, but he couldn't bring himself to steal. He was honest, and that was that. He would go as far as the bridge and watch the water flow under it. Then he would go home to find that his house had been burgled.

In less than a week, the honest man found himself with no money and no food in a house which had been stripped of everything. But he had only himself to blame. The problem was his honesty: it had thrown the whole system out of kilter. He let

himself be robbed without robbing anyone in his turn, so there was always someone who got home at dawn to find his house intact—the house the honest man should have cleaned out the night before. Soon, of course, the ones whose houses had not been burgled found that they were richer than the others, and so they didn't want to steal any more, whereas those who came to burgle the honest man's house went away empty-handed, and so became poor.

Meanwhile, those who had become rich got into the habit of joining the honest man on the bridge and watching the water flow under it. This only added to the confusion, since it led to more people becoming rich and a lot of others becoming poor.

Now the rich people saw that if they spent their nights standing on the bridge they'd soon become poor. And they thought, “Why not pay some of the poor people to go and steal for us?” Contracts were drawn up, salaries and percentages were agreed upon (with a lot of double-dealing on both sides: the people were still thieves). But the end result was that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer.

Some of the rich people were so rich that they no longer needed to steal or to pay others to steal for them. But if they stopped stealing they would soon become poor: the poor people would see to that. So they paid the poorest of the poor to protect their property from the other poor people. Thus a police force was set up, and prisons were established.

So it was that, only a few years after the arrival of the honest man, nobody talked about stealing or being robbed any more, but only about how rich or poor they were. They were still a bunch of thieves, though.

There was only ever that one honest man, and he soon died of starvation.

To consider:

1. Is this a politically oriented story? If so, how so?
2. Are you convinced by its argument?

Clarice Lispector (1920-1977) was a Brazilian writer, born in the Ukraine, who was internationally acclaimed for her the uniqueness and artistry of novels and short stories. Her best-known novel is *The Hour of the Star*.

Clarice Lispector, “The Hen”

She was a Sunday hen. She was still alive only because it was not yet 9:00 o'clock.

She seemed calm. Since Saturday she had cowered in a corner of the kitchen. She didn't look at anyone, no one looked at her. Even when they had selected her, fingering her intimately and indifferently, they couldn't have said whether she was fat or thin. No one would ever have guessed that she had a desire.

So it was a surprise when she opened her little wings, puffed out her breast, and, after two or three tries, reached the wall of the terrace. For an instant she vacillated – long enough for the cook to scream – and then she was on the neighbor's terrace, and from there, by means of another awkward flight, she reached a tile roof. There she remained like a misplaced weather vane, hesitating, first on one foot, then on the other. The family was urgently called and, in consternation, saw their lunch standing beside a chimney. The father of the family, reminding himself of the double obligation of eating and of occasionally taking exercise, happily got into his bathing trunks and resolved to follow the itinerary of the hen. By cautious jumps he reached the roof, and the hen, trembling and hesitating, quickly picked another direction. The pursuit became more intense. From roof to roof, more than a block of the street was traversed. Unprepared for a more savage struggle for life, the hen had to decide for herself which routes to take, without any help from her race. In the young man, however, the sleeping hunter woke up. Lowly as was the prey, he gave a hunting cry.

Alone in the world, without father or mother, she ran, out of breath, concentrated, mute. Sometimes in her flight she would stand at bay on the edge of a roof, gasping; while the young man leaped over others with difficulty, she had a moment in which to collect herself. The she looked so free.

Stupid, timid, and free. Not victorious, the way a rooster in flight would have looked. What was there in her entrails that made a being of her? The hen is a

being. It's true, she couldn't be counted on for anything. She herself couldn't count on herself – the way a rooster believes in his comb. Her only advantage was that there are so many hens that if one died another would appear at the same moment, exactly like her, as if it were the same hen.

Finally, at one of the moments when she stopped to enjoy her escape, the young man caught her. Amid feathers and cries, she was taken prisoner. Then she was carried in triumph, by one wing, across the roofs and deposited on the kitchen floor with a certain violence. Still dazed, she shook herself a little, cackling hoarsely and uncertainly.

It was then that it happened. Completely overwhelmed, the hen laid an egg. Surprised, exhausted. Perhaps it was premature. But immediately afterward, as if she had been born for maternity, she looked like an old, habitual mother. She sat down on the egg and remained that way, breathing, buttoning and unbuttoning her eyes. Her heart, so small on a plate, made the feathers rise and fall, and filled that which would never be more than an egg with warmth. Only the little girl was near-by and witnessed everything, terrified. As soon as she could tear herself away, she got up off the floor and shrieked: “Mama! Mama! Don't kill the hen anymore! She laid an egg! She likes us!”

Everyone ran to the kitchen again and, silent, stood in a circle around the new mother. Warming her child, she was neither gentle nor harsh, neither happy nor sad; she was nothing; she was a hen. Which suggests no special sentiment. The father, the mother, and the daughter looked at her for some time, without any thought whatever to speak of. No one had ever patted the head of a hen. Finally, with a certain brusqueness, the father decided: “If you have this hen killed, I'll never eat chicken again in my life!”

“Me too!” the little girl vowed ardently.

The mother shrugged, tired.

Unconscious of the life that had been granted her, the hen began to live with the family. The little girl, coming home from school, threw down her school-bag and ran to the kitchen without stopping. Once in a while the father would still remember: “And to think I made her run in that state!” The hen became the queen of the house. Everyone knew it except the hen. She lived between the kitchen and the kitchen terrace, making use of her two capacities: apathy and fear.

But when everyone in the house was quiet and seemed to have forgotten her, she

plucked up a little of the courage left over from her great escape and perambulated the tile floor, her body moving behind her head, deliberate as in a field, while the little head betrayed her: moving, rapid and vibrant, with the ancient and by now mechanical terror of her species.

Occasionally, and always more rarely, the hen resembled the one that had once stood plain against the air on the edge of the roof, ready to make an announcement. At such moments she filled her lungs with the impure air of the kitchen and, if females had been able to sing, she would not have sung, but she would have been much more contented. Though not even at these moments did the expression of her empty head change. In flight, at rest, giving birth, or pecking corn – it was the head of a hen, the same that was designed at the beginning of the centuries.

Until one day they killed her and ate her and the years went by.

Translated by Elizabeth Bishop

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To consider:

1. What is the tone of “The Hen”?
2. What is the message—or what are the messages—if any, of the story?
3. What does the story seem to be saying about human nature?

Miguel de Cervantes (Spain, 1547-1616), a contemporary of William Shakespeare, is best known as the author of *Don Quixote*, published in two parts (1605, 1615). Cervantes wrote other novels, a collection of novellas, plays, and poetry. *The Force of Blood* is one of the twelve “exemplary novellas” published in 1613, between the two parts of *Don Quixote*. The topics and styles of the novellas vary greatly. *The Force of Blood* accentuates the strong role of the code of honor in Spanish society. Families tried to avoid dishonor at all costs.

Miguel de Cervantes, *The Force of Blood*

One night, after a sultry summer's day, an old hidalgo [lesser nobleman] of Toledo walked out to take the air by the river's side, along with his wife, his little boy, his daughter aged sixteen, and a female servant. Eleven o'clock had struck: it was a fine clear night: they were the only persons on the road; and they sauntered leisurely along, to avoid paying the price of fatigue for the recreation provided for the Toledans in their valley or on the banks of their river. Secure as he thought in the careful administration of justice in that city, and the character of its well-disposed inhabitants, the good hidalgo was far from thinking that any disaster could befall his family. But as misfortunes commonly happen when they are least looked for, so it chanced with this family, who were that night visited, in the midst of their innocent enjoyment, by a calamity which gave them cause to weep for many a year.

There was in that city a young cavalier, about two-and-twenty years of age, whom wealth, high birth, a wayward disposition, inordinate indulgence, and profligate companions impelled to do things which disgraced his rank. This young cavalier—whose real name we shall, for good reasons, conceal under that of Rodolfo—was abroad that night with four of his companions, insolent young roisterers like himself, and happened to be coming down a hill as the old hidalgo and his family were ascending it. The two parties, the sheep and the wolves, met each other. Rodolfo and his companions, with their faces muffled in their cloaks, stared rudely and insolently at the mother, the daughter, and the servant-maid. The old hidalgo indignantly remonstrated; they answered him with mocks and jeers, and passed on. But Rodolfo had been struck by the great beauty of Leocadia, the hidalgo's daughter, and presently he began to entertain the idea of enjoying it at all hazards. In a moment he communicated his thoughts to his companions, and in the next moment they resolved to turn back and carry her off to please Rodolfo; for the rich who are open-handed always find parasites ready to encourage their bad propensities; and thus to conceive this wicked design, to communicate it, approve it, resolve on ravishing Leocadia, and to carry that design into effect was the work of a moment.

They drew their swords, hid their faces in the flaps of their cloaks, turned back, and soon came in front of the little party, who had not yet done giving thanks to

God for their escape from those audacious men. Rodolfo laid hold on Leocadia, caught her up in his arms, and ran off with her, whilst she was so overcome with surprise and terror, that far from being able to defend herself or cry out, she had not even sense or sight left to see her ravisher, or know whither he was carrying her. Her father shouted, her mother shrieked, her little brother cried, the servant-maid tore her own face and hair; but the shouts and shrieks were disregarded, the wailings moved no pity, the clawing and scratching was of no avail; for all was lost upon the loneliness of the spot, the silence of the night, and the cruel hearts of the ravishers. Finally, the one party went off exulting, and the other was left in desolation and woe.

Rodolfo arrived at his own house without any impediment, and Leocadia's parents reached theirs heart-broken and despairing. They were afraid to appeal for justice to the laws, lest thereby they should only publish their daughter's disgrace; besides, though well born they were poor, and had not the means of commanding influence and favour; and above all, they knew not the name of their injurer, or of whom or what to complain but their luckless stars. Meanwhile Rodolfo had Leocadia safe in his custody, and in his own apartment. It was in a wing of his father's house, of which he had the keys, a great imprudence on the part of any parent. When Leocadia fainted in his arms, he had bandaged her eyes, in order that she might not notice the streets through which she passed, or the house into which he took her; and before she recovered her senses, he effected his guilty purpose.

Apathy and disgust commonly follow satiated lust. Rodolfo was now impatient to get rid of Leocadia, and made up his mind to lay her in the street, insensible as she was. He had set to work with that intention, when she came to herself, saying, "Where am I? Woe is me! What darkness is this? Am I in the limbo of my innocence, or the hell of my sins? Who touches me? Am I in bed? Mother! dear father! do you hear me? Alas, too well I perceive that you cannot hear me, and that I am in the hands of enemies. Well would it be for me if this darkness were to last forever, and my eyes were never more to see the light! Whoever thou art," She exclaimed, suddenly seizing Rodolfo's hand, "if thy soul is capable of pity, grant me one prayer: having deprived me of honour, now deprive me of life. Let me not survive my disgrace! In mercy kill me this moment! It is the only amends I ask of you for the wrong you have done me."

Confused by the vehemence of her reproaches, Rodolfo knew not what to say or do, and answered not a word. This silence so astonished Leocadia, that she began to fancy she was dreaming, or haunted by a phantom; but the hands she grasped were of flesh and blood. She remembered the violence with which she had been

torn from her parents, and she became but too well aware of the real nature of her calamity. After a passionate burst of tears and groans, "Inhuman youth!" she continued, "for your deeds assure me that your years are few, I will forgive the outrage you have done me, on the sole condition that you promise and vow to conceal your crime in perpetual silence, as profound as this darkness in which you have perpetrated it. This is but a small recompense for so grievous a wrong; but it is the greatest which I can ask, or you can grant me. I have never seen your face, nor ever desire to see it. It is enough for me to remember the injury I have sustained, without having before my mind's eye the image of my ravisher. My complaints shall be addressed only to Heaven: I would not have them heard by the world, which judges not according to the circumstances of each case, but according to its own preconceived notions. You may wonder to hear me speak thus, being so young. I am surprised at it myself; and I perceive that if great sorrows are sometimes dumb, they are sometimes eloquent. Be this as it may, grant me the favour I implore: it will cost you little. Put me at once into the street, or at least near the great church; for I shall know my way thence to the house of my parents. But you must also swear not to follow me, or make any attempts to ascertain my name or that of my family, who if they were as wealthy as they are noble, would not have to bear patiently such insult in my person. Answer me, and if you are afraid of being known by your voice, know, that except my father and my confessor, I have never spoken with any man in my life, and that I should never be able to tell who you were, though you were to speak ever so long."

The only reply Rodolfo made to the unhappy Leocadia was to embrace her, and attempt a repetition of his offence; but she defended herself with hands, feet, and teeth, and with a strength he could not have supposed her capable of exerting. "Base villain," she cried, "you took an infamous advantage of me when I had no more power to resist than a stock or a stone; but now that I have recovered my senses, you shall kill me before you shall succeed. You shall not have reason to imagine, from my weak resistance, that I pretended only to faint when you effected my ruin." In fine, she defended herself with such spirit and vigour as completely damped Rodolfo's ardour. Without saying a word he left the room, locked the door behind him, and went in quest of his companions, to consult them as to what he should do.

Finding herself left alone, Leocadia got out of bed, and groped about the room, and along the walls, feeling for a door or window through which she might make her escape. She found the door, but it was locked outside. She succeeded in opening the window; and the moonlight shone in so brightly, that she could distinguish the colour of some damask hangings in the room. She saw that the bed was gilded, and

so rich, that it seemed that of a prince rather than of a private gentleman. She counted the chairs and the cabinets, observed the position of the door, and also perceived some pictures hanging on the walls, but was not able to distinguish the subjects. The window was large, and protected by a stout iron grating: it looked out on a garden, surrounded by high walls, so that escape in that direction was as impossible as by the door.

Everything she observed in this sumptuous apartment showed her that its master was a person of quality, and of extraordinary wealth. Among other things on which she cast her eyes was a small crucifix of solid silver, standing on a cabinet near the window. She took it, and hid it in the sleeve of her gown, not out of devotion, nor yet with a felonious intention, but with a very proper and judicious design. Having done this, she shut the window as before, and returned to the bed, to see what would be the end of an affair which had begun so badly. In about half an hour, as it seemed to her, the door was opened; someone came in, blindfolded her, and taking her by the arm, without a word spoken, led her out of the room, which she heard him lock behind him.

This person was Rodolfo, who though he had gone to look for his friends, had changed his mind in that respect, not thinking it advisable to acquaint them with what had passed between him and the girl. On the contrary, he resolved to tell them, that repenting of his violence, and moved by her tears, he had only carried her half-way towards his house, and then let her go. Having come to this resolution, he hastened back to remove Leocadia before daylight appeared, which would compel him to keep her in his room all the following day. He led her then to the Plaza del Ayuntamiento [town hall], and there, in a feigned voice, speaking half Portuguese and half Spanish, he told her she might go home without fear, for she should not be followed; and he was already out of sight before she had taken the bandage from her eyes.

Leocadia looked all round her: she was quite alone: no one was in sight; but suspecting that she might be followed at a distance, she stopped every now and then on her way home, which was not far, and looked behind her. To baffle any spies that might perchance be watching her, she entered a house which she found open; and by and by she went from it to her own, where she found her parents stupefied with grief. They had not undressed, or thought of taking any rest. When they saw her, they ran to her with open arms, and welcomed her with tears. Choking with emotion, Leocadia made a sign to her parents that she wished to be alone with them. They retired with her, and she gave them a succinct account of all that had befallen her. She described the room in which she had been robbed of her

honour, the window, the grating, the garden, the cabinets, the bed, the damask hangings, and, last of all, she showed them the crucifix which she had carried off, and before which the three innocent victims renewed their tears, imprecated Heaven's vengeance on the insolent ravisher, and prayed that he might be miraculously punished. She told her parents, that although she had no wish to know the name of him at whose hands she had received such cruel wrong, yet if they thought fit to make such a discovery, they might do so by means of the crucifix, by directing the sacristans of the several parishes in the city to announce from the pulpits that whoever had lost such an image would find it in the hands of a certain monk whom he should name. By this means, they would discover their enemy in the person of the owner of the crucifix.

“That would be very well, my child,” replied her father, “if your plan were not liable to be frustrated by ordinary cunning; but no doubt this image has been already missed by its owner, and he will have set it down for certain that it was taken out of the room by the person he locked up there. To give him notice that the crucifix was in the hands of a certain monk would only serve to make known the person who deposited it in such keeping, but not to make the owner declare himself; for the latter might send another person for it, and furnish him with all the particulars by which he should identify it. Thus you see we should only damage ourselves without obtaining the information we sought; though to be sure we might employ the same artifice on our side, and deposit the image with the monk through a third hand. What you had best do, my child, is to keep it, and pray to it, that since it was a witness to your undoing, it will deign to vindicate your cause by its righteous judgment. Bear in mind, my child, that an ounce of public dishonour outweighs a quintal of secret infamy; and since, by the blessing of God, you can live in honour before the public eye, let it not distress you so much to be dishonoured in your ownself in secret. Real dishonour consists in sin, and real honour in virtue. There are three ways of offending God; by thought, word, and deed; but since neither in thought, nor in word, nor in deed have you offended, look upon yourself as a person of unsullied honour, as I shall always do, who will never cease to regard you with the affection of a father.”

Thus did this humane and right-minded father comfort his unhappy daughter; and her mother embracing her again did all she could to soothe her feelings. In spite of all their tenderness her anguish was too poignant to be soon allayed; and from that fatal night, she continued to live the life of a recluse under the protection of her parents.

Rodolfo meanwhile having returned home, and having missed the crucifix, guessed

who had taken it, but gave himself no concern about it. To a person of his wealth such a loss was of no importance; nor did his parents make any inquiry about it, when three days afterwards, on his departure for Italy, one of his mother's women took an inventory of all the effects he left in his apartment. Rodolfo had long contemplated a visit to Italy; and his father, who himself had been there, encouraged him in that design, telling him that no one could be a finished gentleman without seeing foreign countries. For this and other reasons, Rodolfo readily complied with the wishes of his father, who gave him ample letters of credit on Barcelona, Genoa, Rome, and Naples. Taking with him two of his companions, he set out on his travels, with expectations raised to a high pitch, by what he had been told by some soldiers of his acquaintance, concerning the good cheer in the hostleries of Italy and France, and the free and easy life enjoyed by the Spaniards in their quarters. His ears were tickled with the sound of such phrases as these: *ecco li buoni polastri, picioni, presuto, salcicie* [food names in Italian], and all the other fine things of the sort, which soldiers are fond of calling to mind when they return from those parts to Spain. In fine, he went away with as little thought or concern about what had passed between him and the beautiful Leocadia as though it had never happened. She meanwhile passed her life with her parents in the strictest retirement, never letting herself be seen, but shunning every eye lest it should read her misfortune in her face. What she had thus done voluntarily at first, she found herself, in a few months, constrained to do by necessity; for she discovered that she was pregnant, to the grievous renewal of her affliction.

Time rolled on: the hour of her delivery arrived: it took place in the utmost secrecy, her mother taking upon her the office of midwife: and she gave birth to a son, one of the most beautiful ever seen. The babe was conveyed, with the same secrecy, to a village, where he remained till he was four years old, when his grandfather brought him, under the name of nephew, to his own house, where he was reared, if not in affluence, at least most virtuously. The boy, who was named Luis after his grandfather, was remarkably handsome, of a sweet docile disposition; and his manners and deportment, even at that tender age, were such as showed him to be the son of some noble father. His grandfather and grandmother were so delighted with his grace, beauty, and good behaviour, that they came at last to regard their daughter's mischance as a happy event, since it had given them such a grandson. When the boy walked through the streets, blessings were showered upon him by all who saw him—blessings upon his beauty, upon the mother that bore him, upon the father that begot him, upon those who brought him up so well. Thus admired by strangers, as well as by all who knew him, he grew up to the age of seven, by which time he could already read Latin and his mother tongue, and write a good round hand; for it was the intention of his grandparents to

make him learned and virtuous, since they could not make him rich, learning and virtue being such wealth as thieves cannot steal, or fortune destroy.

One day, when the boy was sent by his grandfather with a message to a relation, he passed along a street in which there was a great concourse of horsemen. He stopped to look at them; and to see them the better, he moved from his position, and crossed the street. In doing so, he was not rapid enough to avoid a fiery horse, which its rider could not pull up in time, and which knocked Luis down, and trampled upon him. The poor child lay senseless on the ground, bleeding profusely from his head. A moment after the accident had happened, an elderly gentleman threw himself from his horse with surprising agility, took the boy out of the arms of a person who had raised him from the ground, and carried him to his own house, bidding his servants go fetch a surgeon.

Many gentlemen followed him, greatly distressed at the sad accident which had befallen the general favourite; for it was soon on everybody's lips that the sufferer was little Luis. The news speedily reached the ears of his grandparents and his supposed cousin, who all hurried in wild dismay to look for their darling. The gentleman who had humanely taken charge of him being of eminent rank, and well known, they easily found their way to his house, and arrived there just as Luis was under the surgeon's hands. The master and mistress begged them not to cry, or raise their voices in lamentation; for it would do the little patient no good. The surgeon, who was an able man, having dressed the wound with great care and skill, saw that it was not so deadly as he had at first supposed. In the midst of the dressing, Luis came to his senses, and was glad to see his relations, who asked him how he felt. "Pretty well," he said, only his head and his body pained him a good deal. The surgeon desired them not to talk to him, but leave him to repose. They did so, and the grandfather then addressed himself to the master of the house, thanking him for the kindness he had shown to his nephew. The gentleman replied that there was nothing to thank him for; the fact being, that when he saw the boy knocked down, his first thought was that he saw under the horses' heels the face of a son of his own, whom he tenderly loved. It was this that impelled him to take the boy up, and carry him to his own house, where he should remain all the time he was in the surgeon's hands, and be treated with all possible care. The lady of the house spoke to the same effect, and with no less kindness and cordiality.

The grandfather and grandmother were surprised at meeting with so much sympathy on the part of strangers; but far greater was the surprise of their daughter, who, on looking round her, after the surgeon's report had somewhat allayed her agitation, plainly perceived that she was in the very room to which she had been

carried by her ravisher. The damask hangings were no longer there; but she recognised it by other tokens. She saw the grated window that opened on the garden: it was then closed on account of the little patient; but she asked if there was a garden on the outside, and was answered in the affirmative. The bed she too well remembered was there; and, above all, the cabinet, on which had stood the image she had taken away, was still on the same spot. Finally, to corroborate all the other indications, and confirm the truth of her discovery beyond all question, she counted the steps of the staircase leading from the room to the street, and found the number exactly what she had expected; for she had had the presence of mind to count them on the former occasion, when she descended them blindfold. On her return home, she imparted her discovery to her mother, who immediately made inquiries as to whether the gentleman in whose house her grandson lay ever had a son. She found he had one son, Rodolfo—as we call him—who was then in Italy; and on comparing the time he was said to have been abroad with that which had elapsed since her daughter's ravishment, she found them to agree very closely. She made all this known to her husband; and it was finally settled between the three that they should not move in the matter for the present, but wait till the will of Heaven had declared itself respecting the little patient.

Luis was out of danger in a fortnight; in a month he rose from his bed; and during all that time he was visited daily by his mother and grandmother, and treated by the master and mistress of the house as if he was their own child. Doña Estefania, the kind gentleman's wife, often observed, in conversation with Leocadia, that the boy so strongly resembled a son of hers who was in Italy, she never could look at him without thinking her son was actually before her. One day, when Doña Estefania repeated this remark, no one being present but herself and Leocadia, the latter thought it a good opportunity to open her mind to the lady, in the manner previously concerted between herself and her parents.

“Señora,” she said, “when my parents heard of the terrible accident that had befallen their nephew, they felt as if the sky had fallen upon their heads. For them it was losing the light of their eyes, and the staff of their age, to lose their nephew, their love for whom far surpasses that which parents commonly bear towards their sons. But, as the proverb says, with the disease God sends the remedy. The boy found his recovery in this house; and I found in it reminiscences of events I shall never forget as long as I live. I, señora, am noble, for so are my parents, and so were all my ancestors, who, though but moderately endowed with the gifts of fortune, always happily maintained their honour where-ever they lived.”

Doña Estefania listened attentively to Leocadia, and was astonished to hear her

speak with an intelligence beyond her years, for she did not think her more than twenty; and without interrupting her by a single word, she heard her relate her whole story, how she had been forcibly carried into that chamber, what had been done to her there, and by what tokens she had been able to recognise it again. In confirmation of all this, she drew forth from her bosom the crucifix she had taken away with her, and thus addressed it: "Lord, who wast witness of the violence done to me, be thou the judge of the amends which are my due. I took thee from off this cabinet, that I might continually remind thee of my wrong, not in order to pray to thee for vengeance, which I do not invoke, but to beseech thee to inspire me with some counsel which may enable me to bear it with patience." Then turning to Doña Estefania, "This boy, señora," she said, "towards whom you have manifested the extreme of your great kindness and compassion, is your own grandson. It was by the merciful providence of Heaven that he was run over, in order that being taken to your house, I should find him in it, as I hope to find there, if not the remedy most appropriate to my misfortune, at least the means of alleviating it." Thus saying, and pressing the crucifix to her breast, she fell fainting into the arms of Doña Estefania, who as a gentlewoman, to whose sex pity is as natural as cruelty is to man, instantly pressed her lips to those of the fainting girl, shedding over her so many tears that there needed no other sprinkling of water to recover Leocadia from her swoon.

Whilst the two were in this situation, Doña Estefania's husband entered the room, leading little Luis by the hand. On seeing his wife all in tears, and Leocadia fainting, he eagerly inquired the cause of so startling a spectacle. The boy having embraced his mother, calling her his cousin, and his grandmother, calling her his benefactress, repeated his grandfather's question. "I have great things to tell you, señor," said Doña Estefania to her husband, "the cream and substance of which is this: the fainting girl before you is your daughter, and that boy is your grandson. This truth which I have learned from her lips is confirmed by his face, in which we have both beheld that of our son."

"Unless you speak more fully, señora, I cannot understand you," replied her husband.

Just then Leocadia came to herself, and embracing the cross seemed changed into a sea of tears, and the gentleman remained in utter bewilderment, until his wife had repeated to him, from beginning to end, Leocadia's whole story; and he believed it, through the blessed dispensation of Heaven, which had confirmed it by so many convincing testimonies. He embraced and comforted Leocadia, kissed his grandson, and that same day he despatched a courier to Naples, with a letter to his

son, requiring him to come home instantly, for his mother and he had concluded a suitable match for him with a very beautiful lady. They would not allow Leocadia and her son to return any more to the house of her parents, who, overjoyed at her good fortune, gave thanks for it to Heaven with all their hearts.

The courier arrived at Naples; and Rodolfo, eager to become possessed of so beautiful a wife as his father had described, took advantage of the opportunity offered by four galleys which were ready to sail for Spain; and two days after the receipt of the letter he embarked with his two comrades, who were still with him. After a prosperous run of twelve days, he reached Barcelona, whence he posted in seven to Toledo, and entered his father's house, dressed in the very extreme of fashionable bravery. His parents were beyond measure rejoiced at his safe arrival, after so long an absence; and Leocadia was filled with indescribable emotions, as she beheld him, herself unseen, from a secret place in which she had been stationed by Doña Estefania's contrivance. Rodolfo's two comrades proposed to take leave of him at once, and retire to their own homes; but Estefania would not suffer them to depart, for their presence was needful for the execution of a scheme she had in her head.

It was nearly night when Rodolfo arrived; and whilst preparations were making for supper, Estefania took her son's companions aside, believing that they were two of the three whom Leocadia mentioned as having been with Rodolfo on the night of her abduction. She earnestly entreated them to tell her, if they remembered that her son had carried off a young woman, on such a night, so many years ago; for the honour and the peace of mind of all his relations depended on their knowing the truth of that matter. So persuasive were her entreaties, and so strong her assurances that no harm whatever could result to them from the information she sought, they were induced to confess that one summer's night, the same she had mentioned, themselves and another friend being out on a stroll with Rodolfo, they had been concerned in the abduction of a girl whom Rodolfo carried off, whilst the rest of them detained her family, who made a great outcry, and would have defended her if they could. They added that Rodolfo told them, on the following day, that he had carried the girl to his own apartment; and this was all they knew of the matter.

All doubts which could possibly have remained on the case having been removed by this confession, Estefania determined to pursue her scheme. Shortly before supper she took her son in private into a room, where she put the portrait of a lady into his hands, saying, "Here is something to give you an appetite for your supper, Rodolfo; this is the portrait of your bride; but I must tell you that what she wants in beauty is more than made up for in virtue. She is of good family, and tolerably

wealthy; and since your father and I have made choice of her, you may be assured she will suit you very well.”

“Well,” said Rodolfo, staring at the portrait, “if the painter of this portrait has flattered the original as much as painters usually do, then beyond all doubt the lady must be the very incarnation of ugliness. Truly, my lady mother, if it is just and right that sons should obey their parents in all things, it is no less proper that parents should have regard to the inclinations of their sons; and since matrimony is a bond not to be loosed till death, they ought to take care that it shall press as smoothly and equably as possible. Virtue, good birth, prudence, and the gifts of fortune, are all very good things, and may well gladden the heart of whoever may have the lot to obtain this lady for a wife; but that her ugliness can ever gladden the eyes of her spouse, appears to me an impossibility. I am a bachelor to be sure, but I perfectly comprehend the coincidence there should be between the sacrament of marriage and the just and due delight mutually enjoyed by the married pair, and that if that be wanting, the object of marriage is frustrated; for to imagine that an ugly face which one must have before his eyes at all hours, in the hall, at table, and in bed, I say once more that is impossible. For God’s sake, my lady mother, give me a wife who would be an agreeable companion, not one who will disgust me, so that we may both bear evenly, and with mutual good-will, the yoke imposed on us by Heaven, instead of pulling this way and that way, and fretting each other to death. If this lady is well-born, discreet, and rich as you say, she will easily find a husband of a different humour from mine. Some look for noble blood in a wife, some for understanding, others for money, and others again for beauty, and of the latter class I am one. As for high birth, thank Heaven and my ancestors I am well enough off in that respect; as for understanding, provided a woman is neither a dolt nor a simpleton, there is no need of her having a very subtle wit; in point of wealth, I am amply provided by my parents; but beauty is what I covet, with no other addition than virtue and good breeding. If my wife brings me this, I will thank Heaven for the gift, and make my parents happy in their old age.”

Estefania was delighted to hear Rodolfo speak thus, for the sentiments he expressed were just such as best accorded with the success of the scheme she had in hand. She told him that she would endeavour to marry him in conformity with his inclination, and that he need not make himself uneasy, for there would be no difficulty in breaking off the match which seemed so distasteful to him. Rodolfo thanked her, and supper being ready they went to join the rest of the party at table. The father and mother, Rodolfo and his two companions had already seated themselves, when Doña Estefania said, in an off-hand way, “Sinner that I am, how well I behave to my guest! Go,” she said to a servant, “and ask the señora Doña

Leocadia to honour our table with her presence, and tell her she need not stand on any punctilio, for all here are my sons and her servants." All this was part of her scheme, with the whole of which Leocadia had been previously made acquainted.

The lady soon appeared, presenting a most charming spectacle of perfect beauty, set off by the most appropriate adornments. The season being winter, she was dressed in a robe and train of black velvet, with gold and pearl buttons; her girdle and necklace were of diamonds; her head was uncovered, and the shining braids and ringlets of her thick chestnut hair, spangled with diamonds, dazzled the eyes of the beholders. Her bearing was graceful and animated; she led her son by the hand, and before her walked two maids with wax-lights and silver candlesticks. All rose to do her reverence, as if something from heaven had miraculously appeared before them; but gazing on her, entranced with admiration, not one of them was able to address a single word to her. Leocadia bowed to them all with courteous dignity, and Estefania taking her by the hand led her to a seat next to herself and opposite to Rodolfo, whilst the boy was seated beside his grandfather. "Ah," said Rodolfo to himself, as he gazed on the lovely being before him, "could I find but half that beauty in the wife my mother has chosen for me, I should think myself the happiest man in the world. Good God! what is it I behold? Is it some angel in human shape that sits before me?" Whilst his eyes were thus making his soul captive to the lovely image of Leocadia, she, on the other hand, finding herself so near to him who was dearer to her than the light of those eyes with which she furtively glanced at him from time to time, began to revolve in her mind what had passed between her and Rodolfo. The hopes her mother had given her of being his wife began to droop, and the fear came strong upon her that such bliss was not for one so luckless as herself. She reflected how near she stood to the crisis which was to determine whether she was to be blessed or unhappy for ever, and racked by the intensity of her emotions, she suddenly changed colour, her head dropped, and she fell forward in a swoon into the arms of the dismayed Estefania.

The whole party sprang up in alarm and hastened to her assistance, but no one showed more earnest sympathy than Rodolfo, who fell twice in his haste to reach her. They unlaced her, and sprinkled her face with cold water; but far from coming to her senses, the fulness of her congested bosom, her total insensibility, and the absence of all pulse gave such mortal indications, that the servants began imprudently to cry out that she was dead. This shocking news reached the ears of her parents, whom Doña Estefania had concealed in another room that they might make their appearance at the right moment. They now rushed into the supper room, and the parish priest, who was also with them, went up to the prostrate lady to see if she could by any signs make known that she repented of her sins in order that he

might give her absolution; but instead of one fainting person he found two, for Rodolfo lay with his face on Leocadia's bosom. His mother had left her to him as being her destined protector; but when she saw that he too was insensible, she was near making a third, and would have done so had he not come to himself. He was greatly confused at finding that he had betrayed such emotion; but his mother, who guessed his thoughts, said to him, "Do not be ashamed, my son, at having been so overcome by your feelings; you would have been so still more had you known what I will no longer conceal from you, though I had intended to reserve it for a more joyful occasion. Know then, son of my heart, that this fainting lady is your real bride: I say real, because she is the one whom your father and I have chosen for you, and the portrait was a pretence."

When Rodolfo heard this, carried away by the vehemence of his passion, and on the strength of his title as a bridegroom disdaining all conventional proprieties, he clasped Leocadia in his arms, and with his lips pressed to hers, seemed as if he was waiting for her soul to issue forth that he might absorb and mingle it with his own. Just at the moment when the tears of the pitying beholders flowed fastest, and their ejaculations were most expressive of despair, Leocadia gave signs of recovery, and brought back gladness to the hearts of all. When she came to her senses, and, blushing to find herself in Rodolfo's arms, would have disengaged herself, "No, señora," he said, "that must not be; strive not to withdraw from the arms of him who holds you in his soul." There needed no more than these words to complete her revival; and Doña Estefania having no further need of stratagem, requested the priest to marry her son to Leocadia on the spot. This was done; for the event took place at a time when the consent of the parties was sufficient for the celebration of a marriage, without any of the preliminary formalities which are now so properly required. I leave it to a more ingenious pen than mine to describe the gladness of all present; the embraces bestowed on Rodolfo by Leocadia's parents; the thanks they offered to Heaven, and to his father and mother; the congratulations on both sides; the astonishment of Rodolfo's companions who saw him so unexpectedly married to so charming a bride on the very night of his arrival; and above all, when they learned from the statement openly made by Doña Estefania, that Leocadia was the very person whose abduction her son had effected with their aid. Nor was Rodolfo less surprised than they; and the better to assure himself of so wonderful a fact, he begged Leocadia to give him some token which should make perfectly clear to him that which indeed he did not doubt, since it was authenticated by his parents.

"Once when I recovered from a swoon," replied Leocadia, "I found myself, señor, in your arms without honour; but for that I have had full compensation, since on

my recovery from my this day's swoon I found myself in the same arms, but honoured. If this is not enough for you, let it suffice to mention a crucifix which no one could have purloined from you but myself, if it be true that you missed it in the morning, and that it is the same that is now in the hands of your mother, my lady."

"You are mine, the lady of my soul, and shall be so as long as God grants me life," cried Rodolfo; embracing her again, amidst a fresh shower of benedictions and congratulations from the rest of the party.

At last they sat down to a merry supper to the sound of music, for the performers, who had been previously engaged, were now arrived. Rodolfo saw his own likeness in his son's face as in a mirror. The four grandparents wept for joy: there was not a corner of the house but was full of gladness; and though night was hurrying on with her swift black wings, it seemed to Rodolfo that she did not fly, but hobble on crutches, so great was his impatience to be alone with his beloved bride. The longed-for hour came at last: every one retired to rest: the whole house was buried in silence; but not so shall be the truth of this story, which will be kept alive in the memory of men by the many children and descendants of that illustrious house in Toledo, where that happy pair still live, and have, for many prosperous years, enjoyed the society of each other, their children, and their grandchildren, by the blessing of Heaven, and through the force of that blood which was seen shed on the ground by the valorous, illustrious, and Christian grandfather of the little Luis.

[Translated by Walter K. Kelly]

To consider:

1. How does the code of honor factor into the narrative?
2. What key decision does Leocadia's father make after her misfortune?
3. How is Rodolfo represented in the story? Does his character change at the end?
4. What is the role of Doña Estefania (Estefanía in Spanish)?
5. What is the significance of the title?
6. How do you interpret the ending of "The Force of Blood"?