Life Is Dream by Calderón
Translated by Jo Clifford

Those who audition can expect to read any or several of the following:

Side 1

ROSAURA. I’ve come both to oblige you and assist you:
Coming as a woman to persuade you
To help me regain my honor
And coming as a man to assist you
To help you regain your throne.
And so it seems to me that today
If I fall in love with you as a woman
As a man I will die for you,
Fiercely defending my honor.
As a woman, I come to persuade you
To take up arms in defense of my honor:
It matters to us both, brave leader,
That this arranged wedding does not take place.
It matters to me so that the man
Who calls himself my husband does not marry;
It matters to you because you need to prevent
The union of their powers which may put in doubt
Our own inevitable victory.
As a man I come to encourage you
To recover your lost scepter.
As a woman, I come to beg for your pity
When I fall helpless at your feet.
As a man I come to aid you
With my sword and my fierce courage.
If you love me as a woman
As a man I’ll fight to the death.
To regain honor and self-respect,
I’ll be a woman and fill your heart with tenderness
And I’ll be a man to gain respect.
SEGISMUNDO. When a bird is born, it is so beautiful,  
Its feathers like the petals of a flower,  
It can barely fly before it leaves  
The kind safety of its parents’ nest  
And then it’s gliding, freely gliding  
Through the vast halls of the empty sky.  
I have more soul than a bird.  
Why should I have less liberty?  
When a beast is born, its skin becomes  
A mirror of the patterns of the stars.  
It can barely walk before human need  
Stalks it, captures it, teaches it cruelty:  
And then it’s hunting with vicious greed  
Through the endless tunnels of nature’s maze.  
I have more feeling than a brute.  
Why should I have less liberty?  
When a fish is born, it does not breathe,  
It’s spewed from mud and slime.  
It can barely swim before it glides  
Like a ship of fins and scales  
And then it’s sailing in immensity  
Through the vast cold heart of the endless sea.  
I have more free will than a fish.  
Why should I have less liberty?  
How can it be justified?  
And how can it be right  
For God to give freedom  
— Sweet and beautiful freedom —  
To give it to a fish, a brute and a bird  
And deny it to a human being!
BASILIO. My wife gave birth to a son.
The omens of his birth were so many, and so dreadful
They exhausted the skies. While the baby still lay
In the womb’s living grave, far from the beautiful light
Of day, she dreamt again and again of her belly torn open
By a monster in the shape of a man.
And on the day that he was born, the sun itself
Engaged in blood-soaked battle with the moon
With the earth as the battlefield.
The sun was smothered in living fire,
The heavens darkened, palaces trembled,
The clouds rained stones and the rivers ran with torrents of blood.
And it was under this sign
My son Segismundo was born.
He foretold his future in the manner of his birth,
For in being born he killed his mother
And so boasted with male ferocity:
“Look: I am human and this is how
We humans repay those who do us good.”
I ran to my books, and in them I read
Segismundo would be the most brutal man,
The cruelest prince, the most vicious monarch.
That under him his kingdom would become
Divided, split, torn by civil wars:
I saw him inspired by fury.
I saw him driven on by rage.
I saw him defeat and overcome me.
I saw me lying vanquished at his feet.
I saw me humiliated, helpless,
And forced to be his wretched slave.
CLOITALDO. So what do you intend to do?

ROSURA. Kill Astolfo.

CLOITALDO. Remember you have to see Astolfo –

ROSURA. As the man who’s insulted and betrayed me.

CLOITALDO. — As your king and husband to Estrella.

ROSURA. That will never be. I swear to God.

CLOITALDO. This is madness.

ROSURA. I know.

CLOITALDO. Then overcome it.

ROSURA. I cannot.

CLOITALDO. Then you will lose . . .

ROSURA. Yes.

CLOITALDO. Life and honor.

ROSURA. I know.

CLOITALDO. What are you hoping to achieve?

ROSURA. My death.

CLOITALDO. This is worse than desperate.

ROSURA. It is honor.

CLOITALDO. It’s madness.

ROSURA. Bravery.

CLOITALDO. It’s sheer lunacy.

ROSURA. It’s anger, it’s rage.

CLOITALDO. You’re possessed by a hatred

You won’t even try to control?

ROSURA. No.

CLOITALDO. Who will help you?

ROSURA. I’ll help myself.

CLOITALDO. Is there no alternative?

ROSURA. No.

CLOITALDO. There has to be. Rosaura please.

There has to be another way.

ROSURA. Another way to destroy myself!

CLOITALDO. Daughter!

Well, if you insist on being destroyed,

Let’s destroy ourselves together!