





SELECTED PROSE OF  
HEINRICH VON KLEIST

SELECTED, TRANSLATED,  
AND WITH AN AFTERWORD  
BY PETER WORTSMAN

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*Pour Claudie, toujours entre mes mots*

P.W.



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*For it is not we who know,  
but rather a certain state of mind in us that knows.*

HEINRICH VON KLEIST



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# FRAGMENTS

...

## 1.

There are certain errors that demand a greater outlay of intellect than the truth itself. Tycho's<sup>\*</sup> renown is based entirely, and rightfully so, on an error, and if Kepler<sup>†</sup> had not explained the cosmic system he would have become famous solely on account of his delusion and on account of the keenly reasoned arguments on which he based that delusion, namely that the moon does not turn on its axis.

## 2.

One could divide humanity into two classes: 1) those who master a metaphor, and 2) those who hold by a formula. Those with a bent for both are far too few, they do not comprise a class.

<sup>\*</sup>Tycho Brahe, alchemist and astronomer (1546–1601)

<sup>†</sup>Johannes Kepler, astronomer (1571–1630)

# THE EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

...

In Santiago, the capital of the Kingdom of Chile, at the very moment when the great earth tremors of the year 1647 struck, in the wake of which many thousands found their doom, a young Spaniard by the name of Jeronimo Rugera, accused of a crime, stood beside a pillar in the prison where he'd been incarcerated and intended to hang himself. Don Henrico Asteron, one of the wealthiest noblemen in town, had about a year before chased him out of his house, where he was at the time employed as a tutor, because he had been found to have a tender entanglement with Donna Josephe, Don Henrico's only daughter. The old Don, who had expressly warned his daughter, was enraged to such an extent by the secret denunciation conveyed

to him by his crafty, proud, eavesdropping son, that he himself had his daughter sent off to the Carmelite Cloister of Our Beloved Lady of the Mountain.

By a fortuitous coincidence, Jeronimo had managed to reestablish contact with her there and on a silent night made the cloister garden the scene of his consummated bliss. It was on Corpus Christi Day, and the festive procession of nuns, followed by the novices, had just got started, when, at the tolling of the bells, the unfortunate Josephe collapsed in labor on the steps of the cathedral.

This occurrence caused quite a scene; the young sinner was immediately hauled off to prison, without consideration for her condition, and hardly had she given birth when, on the express orders of the archbishop, she was made to undergo the most grueling trial. The entire city spoke with such indignation of the scandal, and lashed out so vehemently against the entire cloister in which the scandal took place, that neither the pleas of the Asteron family nor even the wishes of the abbess herself, who, on account of the girl's otherwise impeccable behavior, had taken a liking to her, could attenuate the severity of punishment ordained by the law of the sacred order. All that could be done was that, by an edict of the viceroy, the death by fire to which she was condemned was commuted to death by beheading, this to the great disgruntlement of the matrons and young girls of Santiago.

Viewing windows were rented out along the street on which the condemned was to pass in a cart, the rooftops were cleared, and the pious daughters of the city invited their girlfriends to stand at their sisterly side to enjoy together the spectacle of God's wrath.

Jeronimo, who had in the meantime likewise been incarcerated,

almost lost consciousness upon learning of the dreadful turn of events. To no avail did he try to come up with an escape plan; wherever the wings of his most audacious ideas drew him they struck against lock and wall, and an attempt to file through the window grill, as soon as it was discovered, led to his transfer to a still more narrow cell. He flung himself down before the picture of the holy mother of God and prayed to her with boundless fervor as the only one who could still save him.

But the dreaded day came, and with it the absolute certainty of the complete hopelessness of his situation. The bells that were to accompany Josephe to the place of execution began to toll, and desperation overwhelmed his soul. Life seemed hateful and he decided to seek death by means of a cord that chance had left him. As already mentioned, he was at that time stationed beside a pillar, and was in the process of fastening the cord that was to wrest him free of this wretched world to an iron hook at the level of the cornice, when, suddenly, the greater part of the city collapsed with a crash, as if the firmament caved in, and all that breathed life was buried under its ruins. Jeronimo Rugera was numb with horror; and now, as if his entire consciousness had been shattered, he held on for dear life to the pillar from which he was to have dangled, so as to keep from falling. The floor shook beneath his feet, all the walls of the prison cracked, the entire structure leaned toward the street, about to come crashing down, and only the slow collapse of the building across the way, bracing the prison's collapse in an accidental buttress, prevented it from completely caving in. Trembling, with hair on end and knees about to buckle under, Jeronimo slid across the slanting

floor toward the opening that the collision of the two buildings had rent in the front wall of the prison.

He had hardly managed to escape outdoors, when, in the wake of a second tremor, the entire, already shattered street completely caved in. With no thought as to how he would save himself from this general destruction, he scampered over rubble and fallen beams as death lunged for him from all sides, fleeing toward the nearest gates of the city. But another house collapsed in his path, its tumbling ruins flying in all directions, forcing him down a side street; here the flames already soared, flashing through billowing clouds of smoke from the gabled rooftops, driving him in terror down yet another street, where the Mapocho River, flooding its bed, caught him in its current and swept him, screaming, down a third street. Here lay a heap of the slaughtered, here a lone voice groaned, buried under the rubble, here people shrieked from burning rooftops, here man and beast battled with the flood, here a brave soul tried to help; here stood another, pale as death, stretching his trembling hands in silence to the heavens. When Jeronimo reached the gate and managed to crawl to the top of a hill just outside the city, he collapsed unconscious.

He may have lain there for a good quarter hour or so, in the deepest sleep, when he finally reawakened, and with his back to the city, raised himself half-upright on the ground. Touching his brow and breast, not knowing what to make of his present state, he was seized by a boundless sense of rapture as a west wind wafting from the sea fanned the feeling of returning life, and his eye flitted every which way, taking in nature's blossoming splendor around Santiago. But

the wretched heaps of fallen humanity everywhere he looked tore at his heart; he could not fathom what had driven them all to this state, and it was only when he turned around and saw the city lying in ruins behind him that he remembered the terrible moments he had lived through. He bowed so low his brow touched the ground to thank God for his miraculous delivery; and forthwith, as if that one terrible impression that engraved itself in his mind's eye had driven out all previous impressions, he cried for joy that dear life in all its brilliant emanations was still his to savor.

Whereupon, perceiving a ring on his finger, he suddenly remembered Josephe; and with her, his incarceration, the bell he had heard and the moments that preceded the prison's collapse. A bottomless sadness once again filled his breast; he began to repent of his prayer, and the force that held sway above seemed abominable to him. He mingled with the crowds pouring out of the city gates, people primarily engaged in saving their possessions, and timidly dared inquire after the daughter of Asteron and if her execution had been carried out; but no one was able to give him a conclusive account. A woman, almost weighted all the way down to the ground with a colossal load of household implements and two children hanging from the scruff of her neck, said in passing, as though she'd witnessed it herself, that the girl had been beheaded. Jeronimo turned around; and since, considering the time elapsed, he could not himself doubt that the execution had taken place, he sat himself down in a lonely wood and yielded to the full extent of his pain. He wished that the destructive force of nature would once again erupt upon him. He could not fathom why he had escaped the fate that his miserable soul had sought in those awful moments, since death seemed to advance

unbidden to his rescue from every direction. He firmly resolved not to budge from the spot, even if here and now the mighty oaks were to be uprooted and the treetops were to tumble down upon him. Whereupon, having cried his heart out, and hope having been rekindled amidst the hottest tears, he stood up and set out to traverse the surrounding terrain in every direction. He scoured every mountaintop on which people had assembled; on every path on which the flood of humanity still flowed he sought them out; his trembling foot carried him to wherever he saw a woman's garment fluttering in the wind – yet beneath none of these garments did he find the beloved daughter of Asteron. The sun sank low in the sky, and with it his hope once again began to sink, as he clambered up to the edge of a cliff, and his gaze fell upon a wide valley in which but a handful of people could be seen. He passed in haste through the individual groups of people he found there, uncertain of what to do next, and was about to turn around again, when he suddenly spotted a young woman seated by a wellspring whose water ran down into the gorge, busily washing a child in its stream. And his heart leapt at this sight: he hastened in a fury down into the ravine and cried out: “Oh holy mother of God!” as he recognized Josephe, who, roused by the sound, meekly looked up. Saved by a heavenly miracle, with what boundless joy did these poor unfortunates fall into each other's arms!

Josephe had been on her way to death, already very close to the place of execution, when the entire apparatus was suddenly smashed to pieces in the crashing collapse of buildings. Her first panic-stricken steps thereupon carried her toward the nearest gate; but she soon returned to her senses and turned around to head back to the cloister where her helpless little boy had been left behind. She

found the entire cloister already in flames, and the abbess, who, in those moments that were to have been her last, had offered succor to the newborn, crying outside the gate for someone to help save the boy. Josephe staggered undaunted through the burst of smoke that blew toward her, into the building already collapsing all around her, and just as if all the angels in heaven stood guard over her she safely reemerged with him from the portal. She wanted to fall into the arms of the abbess, who had clasped her hands over her head in joy, when the saintly lady, together with almost all the other sisters, was killed in a most ignominious way by a falling gable. Josephe fell back in horror at the terrible sight; she hastened to press the abbess' eyes shut and fled, altogether consumed with fright, to save from the teeth of death the precious boy that heaven had given back to her.

She had only taken a few steps when she encountered the crushed corpse of the archbishop that had just been dragged out of the rubble of the cathedral. The palace of the viceroy had been leveled, the court of law in which she had been condemned to death stood in flames, and at the site where her father's house had been a lake now bubbled over, spewing a red hot steam. Josephe pulled herself together to keep going. She bravely strode with her precious booty from street to street, chasing the misery from her breast, and was already almost at the city gate when she spotted the ruins of the prison where Jeronimo had been held. At the sight of this she tottered, about to fall unconscious in a corner; but at that selfsame moment the collapse of another building behind her that had been damaged by the tremors drove her upright again; fortified by her fright, she kissed the child, wiped the tears from her eyes and staggered to the gate, blind to the horror that surrounded her on every side. Once she'd made it out

into the open, she soon concluded that not every resident of a fallen building was necessarily killed in its collapse.

At the next crossroads she stopped dead in her tracks and waited to see if a certain someone, after little Philip the dearest to her in the world, might yet appear. But since that person did not turn up and the fleeing mass of humanity grew from moment to moment, she continued on her way, then turned again and waited; and shedding bitter tears, she slunk into a dark valley shaded by stone-pines to pray for his soul which she believed to be departed; and it was here in the valley that she found this beloved person, and so found bliss, as if it were the Valley of Eden.

All this she now told Jeronimo with great emotion, and once she'd finished speaking, handed him the boy to kiss. Jeronimo took him in his arms and hugged him with immeasurable fatherly love, and weeping over the unfamiliar little face, sealed his lips with unending kisses. Meanwhile, the loveliest night had fallen, a wondrously mild, scented night, so silvery and still as only a poet could have dreamed up. Everywhere along the riverbed, in the shimmer of the moonlight, people had set up camp and were in the process of preparing soft beds of moss and leaves to rest their weary bones after the torturous day. And since the poor wretches were still weeping – one over the loss of his house, another over wife and child, and a third over the loss of everything – Jeronimo and Josephe slipped off into a dense thicket so as to sadden no one with the sound of the secret jubilation of their rejoicing souls. They found a splendid pomegranate tree, its branches spreading wide, covered with fragrant fruit; and on its topmost branch a nightingale piped its voluptuous song. Here beside its trunk Jeronimo sat down to rest, with Josephe on

his lap and Philip on hers, all under the cover of his coat. Scattered lights filtered through the tree; its shadow brushed past them and the moon faded in the dawn before they fell asleep. For they had countless things to tell each other of cloister garden and cold prison cell, and how they had each suffered for the other; and they were deeply stirred when they fathomed how much misery the world had had to suffer to permit their happiness!

They decided, as soon as the tremors stopped, to make their way to La Concepción, where Josephe had a trusted girlfriend from whom they hoped to procure a small loan, and thence to ship off to Spain, where Jeronimo had relatives on his mother's side and where they planned to live out their days. Hereupon, after showering each other with kisses, they finally fell asleep.

When they awakened, the sun had already risen high in the sky and they noticed several families nearby engaged in preparing themselves a modest breakfast over an open fire. Jeronimo himself was just then pondering how he would go about finding sustenance for his own when a well-dressed man with a child in his arms walked up to Josephe and asked her discreetly: would she be willing to briefly give her breast to suckle this poor little creature whose mother lay injured beneath yonder trees? Josephe was a bit bewildered when she recognized him as an acquaintance; but when, misconstruing her bewilderment, he continued: "It would only be for a few minutes, Donna Josephe, and this child has not been nourished since that terrible hour that made us all miserable," she replied: "I was silent for another reason, Don Fernando; in these terrible times, no one would hesitate to share what's his"; and handing her own child to the father, she took the little stranger to her breast. Don Fernando

was very grateful for this kindness and asked if she would join the little group that was just then gathered round the fire preparing a small breakfast. Josephe replied that she would be delighted to accept, and since Jeronimo had no objections, followed the man to his family where she was most warmly and graciously received by Don Fernando's two sisters-in-law, whom she recognized as two very distinguished young ladies.

Donna Elvira, Don Fernando's wife who lay on the ground, her feet badly wounded, seeing her own son being suckled at Josephe's breast, bid her most cordially to sit down beside her. And even Don Pedro, Don Fernando's father-in-law, who was wounded in the shoulder, gave her a kindly nod.

Curious thoughts stirred in Jeronimo's and Josephe's breasts. If they now saw themselves treated with such great intimacy and kindness, they did not know what to make of the recent past, of the place of execution, of the prison and the bell; and wondered if it had only been a bad dream. It was as if the dispositions of their fellow citizens had all been rendered conciliatory following the terrible shock. They could not revert any further back in their memories than to that moment. Only Donna Elisabeth, who had been invited by a girlfriend the day before to witness the spectacle of the execution from her rooftop, but declined the invitation, cast an occasional dreamy look at Josephe; but word of some new terrible misfortune soon tore her attention, hardly rooted in the present, back to that time.

There were accounts of how, immediately following the first quake, the city was teeming with women collapsing in full view of all the men; how the monks ran around, crucifix in hand, crying: "The

End of the World is at hand!” how the people replied to a guard sent by the viceroy with orders to empty a church, that Chile no longer had a viceroy; how at the most terrible moments the viceroy had to have gallows erected to rein in the looting; and how an innocent man, who managed to save himself by fleeing through a burning house situated to the rear of his own, was caught by the owner, who promptly accused him of undue haste, and the man was hanged on the spot.

At one point, amidst the liveliest recounting of simultaneous experiences of the quake, Donna Elvira, whose wounds Josephe assiduously tended, took the liberty of asking her how she had weathered that terrible day. And when, with a heavy heart, Josephe revealed a few of the most salient details of her ordeal, Donna Elvira was overcome by a flood of tears; she grasped Josephe’s hand and pressed it, and with a wink, implied that she need say no more. Josephe bethought herself among the blessed souls in heaven. In a burst of emotion which she was not able to hold back, for all the misery that the preceding day had wrought, she called it an act of deliverance the like of which heaven had never released upon the world. And amidst these awful moments that had brought about the destruction of all of humanity’s worldly possessions, and during which all of nature threatened to be engulfed, it did indeed seem that the human spirit itself blossomed like a lovely flower. In the fields all around, as far as the eye could see, there were people of all social classes lying together, nobles and beggars, matrons of once stately households and peasant women, civil servants and day laborers, monks and nuns: all commiserating with each other, helping each other, cheerfully sharing the little of life’s necessities they’d been able to salvage, as

though the common calamity had joined all those who'd managed to survive it into a single harmonious family of man.

Instead of the meaningless chatter for which the world ordinarily furnished material aplenty at teatime, people now recounted cases of inconceivable heroism; they spoke of individuals who in the past had been but little respected in society who rose to the grandeur of ancient Romans; countless examples were given of fearlessness, of cheerful recklessness in the face of danger, of self-denial and godly self-sacrifice, of the unflinching abandonment of life as though it were the most worthless possession, which one was likely to find again round the next bend. Indeed, seeing as there was not a soul to whom something stirring had not happened on that day or who had not himself performed some magnanimous deed, the bitter pain in every human heart was mixed with the sweetest sense of gratification, so much so that it was impossible to assess whether the sum total of general well-being had not increased just as much as it had diminished.

After listening in silence to the last of these accounts, Jeronimo took Josephe by the arm and led her with indescribable joy up and down beneath the shady canopy of the pomegranate grove. He told her that, given the current cast of mind of the people and the subversion of all social norms, he had abandoned his initial decision to ship off to Europe; that should the viceroy, who had always proven himself favorably inclined to his cause, still be alive, he would hazard an appearance and fall to his knees before him; and that he had every hope of being able to remain in Chile with her – whereupon he pressed a kiss on her forehead. Josephe replied that she had harbored similar thoughts; that, if only her father were still alive, she

herself had no doubt he would forgive her; but that instead of begging mercy on their knees, she would rather that they make their way to La Concepción – that city being close to the harbor, just in case – and from there, pursue in writing the business of a pardon with the viceroy, and that if things turned out as they wished they could easily make their way back to Santiago. After thinking it over a bit, Jeronimo agreed to the wisdom of this cautious measure, and reflecting on happy times that lay ahead, led her back and forth a few more times beneath the shady bower before rejoining their companions.

In the meantime the day had advanced to afternoon, and as the aftershocks of the quake had abated, the swarm of refugees had barely had a chance to calm their spirits when word spread that the prelate of the Dominican cloister planned to say a solemn mass in the Dominican church, the only structure that had survived the quake intact, to pray to heaven for the aversion of any further misfortune.

The people soon broke camp in all corners and streamed into the city. The question was raised in Don Fernando's group as to whether they ought not also take part in this festivity and join the flood of humanity. Donna Elisabeth reminded them, with a catch in her throat, what an unholy thing had occurred the day before in the cathedral; that such thanksgiving services would, after all, be repeated; and that they would then feel themselves freer to give full vent to their feelings with greater serenity and peace, since the danger would by then be long gone. Leaping to her feet, Josephe promptly remarked that she had never felt a more burning need to lay her face in the dust before her Maker, now that He had manifested his incomprehensible and sublime might in this way. Donna

Elvira enthusiastically agreed with Josephe. She insisted that they go hear the mass and called upon Don Fernando to lead the way, whereupon the whole group, including Donna Elisabeth, rose to its feet. But since the latter was perceived to hesitate with a heaving breast in all the little preparations for leaving, and in answer to the question what ailed her, replied that she did not rightly know, but that she harbored an ill-fated premonition, Donna Elvira allayed her fear and invited her to stay behind with her and her sick father. Josephe said: "Then you will surely, Donna Elisabeth, take back this little darling, who as you can see, has once again crawled into my arms." "Very gladly," replied Donna Elisabeth, and reached out to grab him; but the child protested bitterly against this injustice and would under no circumstances let go, so Josephe said with a smile that she would keep him after all and coaxed him with kisses into silence. Hereupon, Don Fernando, who was very touched by her great dignity and grace, offered her his arm; Jeronimo, who was carrying little Philip, led Donna Constanza; all the other members of the group followed; and in this order they headed back into the city.

They had walked no more than fifty paces when they heard Donna Elisabeth, who had in the meantime engaged in a heated, furtive exchange with Donna Elvira, cry out: "Don Fernando!" and followed the agitation of her tongue with restless steps. Don Fernando stopped and turned around, awaiting her, without letting go of Josephe's arm; and since Donna Elisabeth herself stopped a fair distance away, as though she expected him to advance toward her, he asked what she wished of him. Hereupon, the latter approached him, albeit, so it seemed, with a certain hesitation, and whispered a few words in his hear, so softly that Josephe could not hear them.

“What of it?” asked Don Fernando, “What’s the worst that can happen?” With a troubled look Donna Elisabeth went on whispering in his ear. His face red with consternation, Don Fernando replied: “Enough! Donna Elvira had best calm herself down”; and led Josephe onwards.

As soon as they entered the Church of the Dominicans, the organ’s sweet strains wafted forth with melodious splendor; an immeasurably large crowd was pressed within. The crush of people continued past the portals and all the way out to the esplanade, and along the walls in the spaces between paintings stood boys with their caps in their hands, casting longing looks aloft. The chandeliers glimmered, and in the twilight threw eerie shadows among the columns; the big, stained-glass rose window in the far background glowed like the setting sun that lent it its light, and as soon as the organ stopped playing all was silent in the gathered throng as if not a single soul had a sound left in his breast. Never before in a Christian cathedral had such a fervent flame climbed up to heaven as that day in the Dominican Cathedral of Santiago; and no human breasts gave more heat to the flame than those of Jeronimo and Josephe!

The service began with a sermon delivered from the pulpit by the oldest canon decked out in festive finery. He started right in, stretching his trembling hands out from under his flowing vestments up to the heavens, praying with praise, thanks, and glory that there were still people left in this devastated corner of creation able to mutter thanks to God. He described what had occurred as a wink of the Almighty; human law could not surpass God’s in severity; and when, after indicating the telltale crack which the cathedral had sustained, he nevertheless referred to yesterday’s earthquake as a mere foretaste

of what was to come, a collective shudder ran through the hearts of all those gathered together. Hereupon, in the flow of priestly oratory, he lashed out against the moral corruption of the city; horrors as not even Sodom and Gomorrah had endured would be their just deserts; and it was only thanks to the infinite forbearance of God that they were not totally wiped off the face of the earth.

But the canon's words cut like a dagger into the hearts of our two poor unfortunates, already torn to shreds by his sermon, when he proceeded to refer in detail to the sacrilege committed in the cloister garden of the Carmelite nuns; he called the worldly mercy that spared the sinners' lives a godless abomination, and in a vitriolic harangue, mentioning the perpetrators by name, he consigned their souls to all the devilish demons of Hell! Jerking her hand from Jeronimo's arm, Donna Constanza cried out: "Don Fernando!" But the latter replied so firmly and yet so furtively, binding both in his command: "Be silent, woman, don't even blink an eye, and pretend to fall into a faint, whereupon we will quietly slip out of the church." But even before Donna Constanza was able to carry out this sensibly devised rescue measure, a loud voice interrupted the canon's sermon: "Take heed, ye burghers of Santiago, for here they stand, the godless sinners!" And when, after a wide ring of outrage spread around them, another voice exclaimed in horror: "Where?" a third voice replied: "Here!" and the speaker, engulfed with righteous malice, tore Josephe down by her hair so that she would have tumbled to the ground with Don Fernando's son in her arms had Don Fernando not held her up. "Are you mad?" cried the young man, and wrapped his arm around Josephe, "I am Don Fernando Ormez, son of the commander of the city, whom you all know." "Don Fernando Ormez?" replied a

shoemaker standing in front of him who had worked for Josephe and knew her at least as well as he knew her little feet. And turning with insolent defiance to Asteron's daughter, asked: "Who is the father of this child?" Don Fernando went white in the face at this question. He cast a cautious look at Jeronimo, while desperately scanning the gathered throng: Was there not a soul who recognized him? Gripped by horror at the awful situation they found themselves in, Josephe cried out: "This is not my child, as you suppose, Master Pedrillo!" and casting a look of abject terror at Don Fernando, she exclaimed: "This young gentleman is Don Fernando Ormez, son of the commander of the city whom you all know!" The shoemaker replied: "Which of you, which burghers know this young man?" And several of those standing around repeated: "Whoever knows Jeronimo Rugera, let him step forward!" And it came to pass at that very same moment, that little Juan, terrified by the tumult, turned away from Josephe's breast and stretched his arms out to Don Fernando. Hereupon, a voice cried out: "He *is* the father!" and "He *is* Jeronimo Rugera!" and yet another: "They *are* the blasphemous couple!" and a third voice cried: "Stone them! By God, let all good Christians gathered in this temple of Jesus stone them!" Whereupon Jeronimo countered: "Hold it, you inhuman beasts! If it's Jeronimo Rugera you're after, here he is! Let go of that man who is wholly innocent!"

Flustered by Jeronimo's remark, the seething mob stopped short; several hands let go of Don Fernando; and since at that very moment a marine officer of high rank came rushing forward, and after shoving his way through the throng, asked: "Don Fernando Ormez! What happened to you?" the latter, now set free, replied with truly

heroic composure: “You see there, Don Alonzo, those murderous blackguards! I’d have been done for if that worthy gentleman had not given himself off as Jeronimo Rugera to still the raging rabble. Please be so kind as to take him into custody, as well as this young woman, for their own protection,” and grabbing hold of Master Pedrillo, added, “and arrest that no good scoundrel who stirred up this whole uproar!” To which the shoemaker cried: “Don Alonzo Onoreja, I ask you on your honor, is this girl not Josephe Asteron?” And since, though very well acquainted with Josephe, Don Alonzo hesitated to reply, and numerous other voices, fired up anew in their fury, cried out: “It’s her! It’s her!” and “Kill her!” Josephe took little Philip, whom Jeronimo had until now held in his arms, and handed him to Don Fernando, along with little Juan, saying: “Don Fernando, save your two sons and leave us to our fate!” Don Fernando took charge of the two children and said that he would sooner die than permit any harm to be done to his companions. After soliciting the sword of the marine officer, he offered Josephe his arm and bid the other couple follow him. When, in response to such a show of gallantry, people stepped aside and let them pass with a modicum of respect, they did indeed manage to make their way out of the church and thought themselves saved. But hardly had they reached the esplanade, which was likewise crowded with people, when a voice from the raging mob that followed hot on their heels, cried out: “Citizens of Santiago, that is Jeronimo Rugera, I swear, for I am his father!” and with a mighty blow of a cudgel struck him down at Donna Constanza’s side. “Jesus, Maria!” cried Donna Constanza, and ran to her brother-in-law; but already the cry rang out: “Cloister harlot!” accompanied by a second cudgel blow that laid

her out dead beside Jeronimo. “Fiend!” cried an unknown person, “That was Donna Constanza Xares!” “Why did they deceive us!” the shoemaker cried in reply, “Seek out the real culprit and kill her!” Don Fernando burned with fury upon seeing Constanza’s lifeless corpse; he drew and swung his sword, and came down so hard he would surely have hacked in two the murderous scoundrel who had brought about this atrocity had the latter not with a fortuitous turn escaped the fatal blow. But seeing as he was not able to fight off the mob that flung itself upon him, Josephe cried: “Take care of yourself and the children, Don Fernando!” and: “Here, take me, you bloodthirsty beasts!” and willingly flung herself into their midst to put an end to the fight. Master Pedrillo struck her down with a cudgel. Whereupon, doused with her blood, he cried: “Send the bastard with her to Hell!” and surged forward again with still unsated bloodlust.

Don Fernando, that godly hero, now stood with his back up against the church, clutching the children with his left hand and the sword with his right. With every lightning stroke he brought a man down; a lion fights no more fiercely. Seven bloodhounds lay dead at his feet, the leader of the satanic rabble himself was wounded. Yet Master Pedrillo did not rest until he managed to grab one of the children by the feet, tear him from Don Fernando’s breast, and swinging him aloft, smash him head-first against the edge of a church pillar. Whereupon he fell still, and the rabble dispersed. When Don Fernando saw his little Juan lying there, head split open, with the brains spilling out, he raised his gaze to heaven, consumed with unspeakable grief.

The marine officer once again appeared on the scene, tried to

comfort him, and assured him that, though circumstances justified his restraint, he deeply regretted not having come to Don Fernando's assistance in this tragic debacle; but Don Fernando said he bore him no ill will, and bid him only help now to remove the corpses. They were carried in the dark of dusk to Don Alonzo's lodgings; Don Fernando followed, shedding many a bitter tear upon little Philip's face. He spent the night at Don Alonzo's, and inventing various excuses, first because his wife was sick, and then, because he did not know how she would judge his actions, he delayed for the longest time informing her of the whole unhappy business; but shortly thereafter, apprised of all that had transpired by a chance visit from a friend, this admirable lady wept her motherly heart out in silence, and fell into his arms and kissed him one morning with a last radiant tear. Hereupon Don Fernando and Donna Elvira took in the little stranger as their adoptive son; and when Don Fernando thought of both Philip and Juan, and reflected on how he had come to be blessed with each, it almost seemed to him as though he ought to be happy.