

# The Mask

A Rustic Interlude

by

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(1506 - 1565)

Dramatis Personae

Alameda, Simpleton

Salcedo, his Master

(Salcedo also plays the ghost of Diego Sánchez)

The text used herein of *La Carátula*, the second of seven *Pasos*, is based upon that contained in the edition of *El Deleitoso*, printed in Logroño by Matias Mares in 1588.

*(Enter Alameda and his master Salcedo.)*

Alameda      Are you there, sir?

Salcedo      I'm here, haven't you two eyes in your head?

Alameda      Faith, sir, if I hadn't run into you, I'd never have found you, not even if I traipsed round and round oftener than a dog that wants to lie down.

Salcedo      Sure, that's not hard to believe, Alameda, where you're concerned.

Alameda      If you didn't believe me I'd say you'd lost your wits; for I'm here to see you about something that has me mighty troubled in my conscience. But I must be rum!

Salcedo      You mean mum.

Alameda      I suppose I mean mum; I think that . . .

Salcedo      Well, say what you mean. This is an out of the way place, if mum's the word, and there's some secret you want to get off your chest.

Alameda      Can anybody hear us, do you think? Look well; what I have to tell is dead secret; for as I was traipsing around I didn't run into you, and then I see it was yourself right enough, just as if they whispered your name in my ear.

Salcedo      I believe you all right.

Alameda      And why would you not believe me, me being the grandson of a pastry cook?

Salcedo      What's up? Out with it!

Alameda Shhh! Speak softly!

Salcedo Say what you have to say.

Alameda Is anyone listening?

Salcedo Haven't I told you there's no one about?

Alameda Do you know that I've found something that will make me very wealthy.

Salcedo Have you found something, Alameda? I'd like a share.

Alameda No, no; I alone found it, and I want to enjoy it alone, if my luck is in.

Salcedo Let us see what you've found -- come on, show it.

Alameda Tell me, sir, have you ever seen a windfall?

Salcedo Yes, I have.

Alameda Well, my find is worth more than that; more than twenty-five *maravedis*.

Salcedo Is that possible? Let us see.

Alameda And I don't know if I'll sell it, nor if I'll pawn it either.

Salcedo Show it.

Alameda Slowly then, slowly. Just have a squint at it.

Salcedo What a letdown! Is that all it is?

Alameda What? No good, is it? Well, I'm telling yo, sir, that when I was out looking for wood, bless me if I didn't find near the wall of the yard yonder this bloody face.

Salcedo My dear Alameda, I don't know what to say, except that you'd have been better off if the lashes had dropped off your eyes than make such an unlucky find as you have this day.

Alameda Is it unlucky for a fellow to have found such a thing as this?

Salcedo Unlucky is it? I wouldn't be in your shoes for all the cash in Venice. Do you know who the sinner was who owned that face?

Alameda A sinner is he?

- Salcedo I fancy I must know him.
- Alameda I do too.
- Salcedo Tell me, Alameda; have you not heard tell of Diego Sánchez, the caretaker whom the robbers skinned after taking all his money?
- Alameda Diego Sánchez?
- Salcedo Yes, Diego Sánchez. You can't deny that this is the man.
- Alameda So this is Diego Sánchez? Bad 'cess to the mother who bore me! Couldn't the Lord above have made me find a fine friar's wallet bulging with bread than the face of one who's been flayed. God save us! Diego Sánchez! Diego Sánchez, is it? I don't suppose he'll let a word out of him, no matter how I yell. Now tell me, sir, what happened to the robbers? Were they ever found?
- Salcedo No, they've not been found, but, my dear Alameda, the police are dying to know who are the criminals.
- Alameda And tell me, sir, am I then the criminal?
- Salcedo Yes, my friend.
- Alameda What will they do if they catch me?
- Salcedo The least they can do to you when they find you is to put a rope round your neck and hang you.
- Alameda Hang me, is it? And afterwards they'll land me in the galleys -- and I'm one who's a bit weak in the gullet and choke easily. I suppose, sir, then if they hang me, I'll lose my appetite.
- Salcedo The one piece of advice I'll give you, my friend, is to go to the shrine of Saint Anthony and take on the caretaker's job the other fellow held; in this way the police can do nothing to you.
- Alameda Now tell me, sir, how much will I have to pay to get a poor box and a bell like that unlucky fellow?
- Salcedo No need to buy new ones. The town crier will be selling the ones belonging to the last caretaker, and you'll be able to buy them. But there is one thing that I'm afraid of.
- Alameda I'm scared of more than two hundred things. But why are you scared?
- Salcedo Some night when you're all alone in the shrine you'll be scared out of your wits by the ghost of that poor devil. But I'd prefer that than to have you putting the wind up all of us when we find you strung up by the neck like a dog on a churchyard wall.
- Alameda And I'd be winded too, wouldn't I sir? If they pressed my Adam's apple, I wouldn't be able to breathe.

- Salcedo Well, my dear fellow, you'd better get a move on. If you don't hurry, the police may catch you.
- Alameda And what in heaven's name am I to do with this face or whatever it is?
- Salcedo Better get rid of it. Don't let them find it on you.
- Alameda Well, I'll leave it and be off then. Please God I'll make a good caretaker. So rest in peace and good luck to you, Diego Sánchez.
- (Exit Alameda.)*
- Salcedo Now that I've made that poor half-wit think this mask is the phiz of Diego Sánchez, I'll play a trick on him with it; I'll go and wrap myself up in a sheet as best I can, and I'll bob up in front of him, pretending I'm the ghost of Diego Sánchez. What a lark it will be! I'll get going quick.
- (Exit Salcedo, and enter Alameda, dressed as a caretaker, carrying a lighted lantern and a bell.)*
- Alameda Charity, gentlemen! Just what'll buy a penny worth of oil for my lamp! A Saint's caretaker has a dog's life, and no mistake. Not a square meal to be had, only a crust of bread now and then. I might as well be a warrener's pup that's kept dying of hunger so as he'll be quicker to pick up the scent when he's hunting. And mind you, those dogs who used to be pals of mine don't recognize me now that I'm dressed up in this caretaker outfit, and when they see me begging from door to door the crusts that were their standby, bless me if they don't set upon me with their jaws open, ready to gobble me up as a cuckoo does butterflies. And the worst of it all is that the shrine yonder is as silent as the grave, not even the buzzing of a fly! And when I start thinking of the soul of that skinned caretaker it puts the fear of God in me. And no sooner do I hear a rustle, or a wee bit of a sound then I hide my head under the blankets. Why, I declare I'm like a pot of stew on the fire with the lid on it to keep the gravy from escaping. God in His infinite mercy give us a hand! But surely He knows best, amen.
- Salcedo *(Disguised with a mask.)* Alameda!
- Alameda Heavens above! They're after calling me! Will anyone give us a copper or two for the oil?
- Salcedo Alameda!
- Alameda There are two Alamedas! There's Alameda, and there's me. God be with me!
- Salcedo Alameda!
- Alameda Holy Ghost preserve us! It must be someone wanting to give me alms.
- Salcedo Alameda!

Alameda        Go on with your Alameda, Alameda! They'll give me a puck in the eye with a copper, I suppose.

Salcedo        Alonso de Alameda!

Alameda        Yes, Alonso and all! Faith and they know too well the name I was given at the font. I don't like the looks of this. Who in heaven's name are you?

Salcedo        Don't you recognize me by my voice?

Alameda        By your voice, is it? I wouldn't like to. I'd know you if I saw your face.

Salcedo        Did you know Diego Sánchez?

Alameda        It's he, it's he! But perhaps it isn't, and it's someone else. Sir, I knew seven or eight in this life.

Salcedo        How is it you don't recognize me?

Alameda        Are you one of them?

Salcedo        Yes, I am. For before they skinned my face. . . .

Alameda        It's the skinned fellow, it's the skinned fellow all right!

Salcedo        I want you to recognize me, so here I am.

Alameda        Why me? Well, I forgive you. But Sir Diego Sánchez, better wait for someone else to come along who'll know you better than I do.

Salcedo        I was sent to you.

Alameda        To me? Look here, Sir Diego Sánchez. For the love of God, let me be! I give in, and I'm struck all of a heap.

Salcedo        What's that you say?

Alameda        I'm at the end of my tether.

Salcedo        Do you now recognize me?

Alameda        Ta ta ta ta, I do, ta, ta, ta, ta, I recognize you right enough.

Salcedo        Who am I then?

Alameda        If I'm not mistaken, you're the caretaker whose face they skinned to rob him.

Salcedo        So I am.

Alameda        I wish to God you'd never been. And have you no face?

Salcedo        I used to have a face before, but now you have it, bad cess to you!

Alameda        Well, what do you want now, Sir Diego Sánchez?

Salcedo        Where are the skeletons of the dead?

Alameda        (*Aside.*) To the graveyard, he's sending me! (*Aloud.*) Do they get their meals there, Diego Sánchez?

Salcedo        Yes. Why do you ask?

Alameda        What do they eat?

Salcedo        Cooked lettuce and mallow roots.

Alameda        That's a foul diet, no mistake. What a number of fellows with the squitters must be there. But why do you want to take me with you?

Salcedo        Because you're wearing my clothes without my leave.

Alameda        Here, take them, take them away, I don't want them!

Salcedo        Now you'll have to come with me, and if the other ghosts discharge you, they'll let you come back.

Alameda        And if they don't?

Salcedo        Then you'll have to stay with the skeletons in the old cisterns. But there's something else you must do.

Alameda        What's that?

Salcedo        You know those robbers who skinned me threw my body into a stream.

Alameda        Your lordship must have stayed very cool there, at any rate.

Salcedo        What you must do is go at midnight sharp to the stream and take my body and carry it to the San Gil's graveyard at the end of the town and shout in a loud voice "Diego Sánchez!"

Alameda        Well, my lord, wouldn't it be better for me to go home to fetch an ass to carry your corpse?

Salcedo Yes, go quickly.

Alameda I'll be back in a moment.

Salcedo Hurry, I'll wait here.

Alameda Tell me, Sir Diego Sánchez, how long is it from now to the Day of Judgment?

Salcedo God only knows.

Alameda Well, you may wait until you know it! (*Exit.*)

~ *finis* ~