

THE VILLAGE THAT KILLED A MAN by MICHAEL HATFIELD
based on the original play 'FUENTE OVEJUNA' by LOPE DE VEGA

CAST LIST:

MALE:

MENGO
FRONDOSO
BARRILDO
ESTEBAN mayor and father of Laurencia
DON ROJO town councillor
COMMANDER FERNANDO GOMEZ DE GUZMAN
CAPTAIN FLORES
SERGEANT ORTUNO
GRAND MASTER OF THE KNIGHTS OF CALATRAVA*
DON MANRIQUE
KING FERDINAND*
MALE VILLAGER 1 The male villagers abbreviated to M1, M2, etc.
MALE VILLAGER 2
MALE VILLAGER 3
MALE VILLAGER 4
YOUNG BOY

FEMALE:

LAURENCIA
PASCUALA
JACINTA
ARBELLA
QUEEN ISABELLA*
FEMALE VILLAGER 1 The female villagers abbreviated to F1, F2, etc.
FEMALE VILLAGER 2
FEMALE VILLAGER 3
FEMALE VILLAGER 4
FEMALE VILLAGER 5
FEMALE VILLAGER 6

+ SOLDIERS. There can be more villagers, or less - though I feel the above is about as few as one should go.

Thus, the cast could be as many as 27: 16M, 11F [with as many extra villagers and soldiers as desired on top of this.] Or 24: 14M, 10 F with the doubling built in as suggested. A further possible character to double would be Don Manrique, only in at the very beginning and the end, perhaps with another of the Male Villagers, reducing the male cast to 13 - the bare minimum.

*These parts, which are small, can be taken by villagers, soldiers or separate extras, as desired. Since they are - except at the very end - 'represented' by effigies, behind whose mask faces, the 'characters' speak, the playing of them is up to a director's choice. I have used Male Villager 1 & 2 [M1 & M2] and Female Villager 1 [F1] to play them in the following text.

The play is a good full-length - approx two hours. It has really great scenes for fewer characters, however, which would reduce it to the main storyline and make this fine play suitable for examination purposes.

EXTRACT ONE

The Villagers appear, accompanied by Mengo, Frondoso, Barrildo, Esteban, Don Rojo, Laurencia, Jacinta, Arbella and Pascuala.

F1

Welcome to our village.

ALL

Fuente Ovejuna!

M1

Translation: The Sheep Well. A small country village.

F2

Population: four hundred. [*Sound of baby crying.*]

BOY

And one!

F3

Much the same as any other village.

M2

Some thin people, some fat people.

MENGO

Oi!

F4

Some fiery señoritas.

F5 & 6

Some friendly señoritas.

M3

And some ... [*Tries to hug one and gets a slap in the face.*] ... not so friendly!

F1, M1 and M2 go off to bring back effigies of King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella and the Grand Master of the Knights of Calatrava. They do not enter yet. Alternatively, these parts - which are small - can be taken by extras, non-villagers - perhaps those who are soldiers later on.

M4

In short, like any other village we have our passions. [*The rest cheer.*]

F2

Our intrigues. [*Oohs.*]

F3

Our feuds. [*Arguing.*]

M3

And our friendships. [*Hugs.*]

F4

We live in the shadow of a mountain.

F5

Simple ordinary lives.

M4

Completely untouched by greatness.

ALL whispering

But touched by the shadow of greatness.

At this point the three effigies appear.

M3

On one side of us, the Grand Master of the Knights of Calatrava.

F6

On the other, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

MENGO

Allow me to explain...

VILLAGERS

Not you, Mengo.!

MENGO

Why not?

VILLAGERS

Because you're an idiot!

MENGO

Fair enough.

FRONDOSO

Let us explain. Over here is Andalucia.

LAURENCIA

And here is Castille.

ESTEBAN

And between the two, the strategic pass of Ciudad Real.

FRONDOSO

Whoever controls this pass controls the whole area.

LAURENCIA

And which village lies nearest to Ciudad Real?

ALL VILLAGERS

Fuente Ovejuna!

MENGO

I knew that!

VILLAGERS

Let battle commence!

On this instruction, the villagers fall back into groupings that allow the effigies central stage. Fernando Gomez de Guzman enters to beside the Grand Master. Don Manrique enters to beside Ferdinand and Isabella...

...The effigies are set in positions, the King and Queen on one side and the Grand Master on the other, where they will brood over the whole play. The Villagers start to leave.

MENGO

They call me a clown and they call me a duffer but there's one thing I know to be true: When great powers collide, it's the victims who suffer - the poor folk like me and like ...

JACINTA

Mengo!

MENGO

There's no justice. But then, you already know that ... don't you?

He exits. The town square is now empty but for Pascuala, Arbella and Laurencia, busying themselves at the well.

PASCUALA

There goes our beloved Commander then.

ARBELLA

Didn't he look handsome, riding strong and proud at the head of his soldiers?

LAURENCIA

Let's hope he's riding to his death.

PASCUALA

Laurencia!

ARBELLA

What a terrible thing to say!

LAURENCIA

Alright, alright. I'll let him live. Just as long as he rides out of here and never comes

back.

ARBELLA

What's he done to upset you?

LAURENCIA

He won't leave me alone. He's been chasing me for a month.

PASCUALA

Then perhaps it's time you let him catch you.

LAURENCIA

Never!

ARBELLA

I wish he'd chase me.

LAURENCIA

Oh, grow up, girl. He's like all men; he only wants what he can't have.

PASCUALA

So why not give him what he wants?

LAURENCIA

Because I despise him. We mean nothing to him, nothing at all. We're just a diversion, a little entertainment to alleviate his boredom. He thinks he owns us.

ARBELLA

I think he's a romantic. He loves women.

LAURENCIA

He detests women. He thinks we can be bought and sold.

PASCUALA

Well, in this village ...

LAURENCIA

Not me. My heart is not for sale. It's mine to give away, not his to buy. You know his errand boys, Flores and Ortuno? They offered me a silver necklace, a silk embroidered dress and a golden bracelet to meet the Commander alone.

PASCUALA

It's cruel and wicked of them!

ARBELLA

I'd take them.

LAURENCIA

Child, understand this: once you sell yourself, you have nothing else to bargain with.

ARBELLA

Well, I still think he's handsome.

LAURENCIA

Handsome is as handsome does. I find him loathsome.

Enter Jacinta wearing a new shawl.

PASCUALA

Jacinta! Where did you get that?

JACINTA

Captain Flores gave it to me. What do you think? Isn't it beautiful? [*Laurencia drags it from her shoulders and throws it down.*] What did you do that for?

LAURENCIA

What's wrong with you? All of you? What's wrong with the women in this town? Have you lost your self-respect? Do you want to be cattle, is that it? To fetch a good price at the market? Jacinta, how much did you pay for that shawl?

JACINTA

Nothing. It was free - a gift.

LAURENCIA

But I can see the price tag. Nothing's free, can't you see that? Flores knows that; Christ, they all know that. Think about it, Jacinta; aren't you worth more than a silver necklace? A golden bracelet? A shawl?

Jacinta considers for a moment then throws it away. Unnoticed, Arbella retrieves it and

departs.

JACINTA

It didn't suit me, anyway. Credit me with better taste than that. Besides, I'm not the one they really want.

PASCUALA

You'd better be careful.

LAURENCIA

Aren't I always? Besides, I can handle the Commander.

JACINTA

He's dangerous.

LAURENCIA

Aren't all men when they don't get their own way?

JACINTA

No, I mean really dangerous. There's something in his eyes. A sharp tongue will be no protection, Laurencia. He's like a wild animal...

EXTRACT TWO

FRONDOSO

That's the way of things in the big city. So, don't take it personally when I call you 'ladies.' We country boys can't compete with city folk when it comes to hypocrisy and lies. We can't offer you expensive gifts to earn your favours.

LAURENCIA

Perhaps we don't want expensive gifts.

FRONDOSO

You don't?

LAURENCIA

You see, we are simple country girls, not as well-versed in the ways of the wicked outside world as you, well-travelled men.

MENGO

Is she getting at us?

BARRILDO

It's hard to tell with Laurencia.

LAURENCIA

All we know is the country way; which is to say the exact opposite.

FRONDOSO

The opposite?

LAURENCIA

If you're serious you're called 'boring.' If you're intelligent, you're called 'pretentious.'

PASCUALA

If you're generous, you're extravagant.

JACINTA

If you work hard, you're called a 'crawler.'

FRONDOSO

We know all that.

WOMEN

Do you? Do you really?

PASCUALA

Ever been a woman?

JACINTA

Ever been chased by a man?

PASCUALA

If you're friendly to them you're a 'tease.'

JACINTA

If you're not, you're 'cold.'

LAURENCIA

If you're angry, you're a 'harridan.'

JACINTA

If you're quiet you're a 'wallflower.'

PASCUALA

Welcome their attention you're a 'slut.'

JACINTA

Refuse them, you're 'frigid.'

LAURENCIA

We can't win.

FRONDOSO

It's not a game, you know.

LAURENCIA

No, not to us it isn't. But what would you know? ... You're men. You've been nowhere; you know nothing! Go be a woman for a day. Then come back and tell us you understand. [*Forcing him back step by step.*] City! Village! It makes no odds to us! Play your little-boy games, but don't you dare to mock us with your 'flattery.'

Fronadoso, backing off, slips and falls to the floor.

MENGO

What's got into her?

BARRILDO

Search me.

FRONDOSO

Isn't she magnificent? Pick me up. [*They do so.*] Laurencia? Laurencia!

MENGO

That boy's a fool!

BARRILDO

He's a glutton for punishment.

FRONDOSO

Laurencia - will you hear me out?

LAURENCIA

That depends on what you have to say.

FRONDOSO

The truth.

LAURENCIA

Just the truth?

FRONDOSO

And nothing but!

LAURENCIA

Go on.

FRONDOSO

Mengo and I have a little wager and we need an impartial judge.

LAURENCIA

And why are you asking me?

FRONDOSO

Because you never lie to me - even if I want you to.

LAURENCIA *to the women*

Should I?

JACINTA

The boy's a fool.

PASCUALA

And he's a glutton for punishment.

LAURENCIA

Aren't they all?

PASCUALA

Go on, do it. But don't make it easy for him.

LAURENCIA

Do I ever? [*To Frondoso.*] Very well. State your case.

BARRILDO

It's very simple, your Honour. Mengo here states that love does not exist; Frondoso claims that it does.

PASCUALA

Do you really believe that, Mengo?

MENGO

I do.

PASCUALA

Have you never been in love?

JACINTA

He must have been. Everyone's been in love!

LAURENCIA

Some people manage perfectly well without it.

FRONDOSO

Some people say they can.

BARRILDO

I think you've lost the argument before you've begun, Mengo.

MENGO

Let me make my case.

BARRILDO

Very well. My lords and ladies, the distinguished ...

PASCUALA

Shouldn't that be 'extinguished?'

BARRILDO

Silence in court! The distinguished Council for the Prosecution ...

MENGO

It's very simple, ladies and gentlemen - I don't deny the existence of what you call 'love.' What I say is this: what we call 'love' is nothing more than 'self-interest.' We all look after Number One and we like to pretend it's something noble, something special - but it isn't. It's just selfishness - not 'love' at all.

PASCUALA

You're wrong, Mengo.

MENGO

Prove it...

EXTRACT THREE

COMMANDER

Don't you like me just a little, Laurencia? The other women seem to. Even the respectable married ladies like me - Sebastiana, Maria, they like me. And Martin del Pollo's wife - now, what was her name? She liked me just two days after her wedding day.

He kisses her and Frondoso moves, which the Commander hears, snatching up his crossbow. He does not see Frondoso. Laurencia attempts to divert him.

LAURENCIA

Commander! Do you need a crossbow to win a lady's affections? [*She disarms him and lays it down.*]

COMMANDER

Do you feel safer now? [*He kisses her.*] There's a fire in your eyes today, Laurencia. You're like a wild animal. [*She struggles and hits him.*] How dare you!

He knocks her to the ground and climbs astride her. She screams and Ortuno appears, pushing the Commander away and helping Laurencia to her feet.

ORTUNO

Are you all right, Miss?

FLORES *to Ortuno*

What in God's name do you think you're doing?

ORTUNO *to Flores*

Sir, she's the mayor's daughter. You can't stand by and ... [*Becomes aware of the Commander and loses his courage.*] I don't know, sir.

COMMANDER

Sergeant Ortuno!

ORTUNO

Yes, sir!

COMMANDER

I think you will find our quarry has moved further up the mountain. Track it down.

ORTUNO

But, sir ... yes, sir.

FLORES

No matter how long it takes?

COMMANDER

It will take you some time.

FLORES

Yes, sir; it will, sir.

COMMANDER

Then what are you waiting for?

ORTUNO *reluctantly - looking at Laurencia*

Nothing, sir.

As he and Flores depart, the Commander grabs Laurencia and throws her to the ground.

LAURENCIA

You call yourself a knight?

COMMANDER

Not today, Laurencia. Today, as you well know, I am a hunter... and you have made yourself my prey. [*She struggles.*] Enough of this pretence, Laurencia. Very well, you leave me no choice. [*He starts to drag her to the pool.*]

LAURENCIA

On your honour ...!

COMMANDER

Oh, we're far beyond all that, don't you think? Beyond honour ; beyond mercy.

LAURENCIA

Take your hands off me!

COMMANDER

All in good time! Calm yourself. Now, listen to me, Laurencia: there are two types of people in this world - wolves and sheep - if you'll forgive the analogy. You and your ignorant friends down there are the sheep, whilst I, of course, am the wolf. And you know what wolves do to sheep? [*He kisses her violently and she spits at him.*] Why must you be so un-cooperative? Comport yourself with a little dignity for God's sake, and we shall both get on a good deal better ...

FRONDOSO *stepping out of hiding and picking up the crossbow*

Get away from her!

COMMANDER

What?

FRONDOSO

Get away from her now or I won't be responsible for my actions!...

EXTRACT FOUR

M4

It's that damn Commander, strutting around like he owns us all. I'd like to see that bastard run out of ...

The Commander enters, along with Flores and Ortuno. The Villagers retreat into a huddle.

COMMANDER

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Please don't let me interrupt you. You were saying?

M4

I'm not afraid of you.

COMMANDER

Of course you're not. But you are causing an affray, my friend, so I'm afraid I must ask you to leave. The town, I mean. For ever.

M4

I'm not going anywhere! This is my town! I was born here ...

COMMANDER

No! This is my town! It remains under my sole jurisdiction and you are no longer welcome in it. Are you still here? [*To Flores and Ortuno.*] Gentlemen, show him which way to go.

Flores and Ortuno force M4 out.

ESTEBAN

Commander!

COMMANDER

Ah - the honourable mayor. I wanted a word with you.

ESTEBAN

Say what you have to say and then go.

COMMANDER

In private, if you please. Flores! Ortuno! Clear the square.

The Villagers are dispersed, though Don Rojo remains nearby.

ESTEBAN

How may I help you?

COMMANDER

Please sit down.

ESTEBAN

I'd rather stand.

COMMANDER

I won't ask you again, Esteban.

ESTEBAN *sitting reluctantly*

As you wish.

COMMANDER

As Mayor of this village, would you consider yourself responsible for the behaviour of its people?

ESTEBAN

I'm a public servant, no more.

COMMANDER

As am I.

ESTEBAN

It's my role to hear their grievances. To allow them to be heard.

COMMANDER

And do you believe you should set a good example to the people?

ESTEBAN

Of course.

COMMANDER

It seems to me of late that the people are failing to show me the proper respect.

ESTEBAN

Sir, understand - we live in difficult times. The people are afraid.

COMMANDER

Of course - that is to be expected. They follow the example set by their mayor.

ESTEBAN

Sir, I have never showed you anything but the utmost respect ...

COMMANDER

And your daughter?

ESTEBAN

My daughter?

COMMANDER

What is your definition of respect, Senor Esteban? Abuse ... indifference ... disdain ... assault?

ESTEBAN

My lord, respect is something that must be earned.

COMMANDER

What did you say?

ESTEBAN

I said, respect is something that must be earned - it is a most elusive thing. The most exalted knight may never receive it; the poorest peasant may be worthy of it.

Flores and Ortuno react but Don Rojo steps forward, trying to placate the soldiers.

DON ROJO

Sir, we are good citizens.

COMMANDER *to Flores and Ortuno*

No, let them speak. They seem to have found their courage at last. And it is my duty to hear their grievances. [*To Don Rojo.*] Good citizens? You think so?

DON ROJO

We pay our taxes; we welcome you into our homes. Sir, you wear the cross of Calatrava on your breast; your enemies fear the sight of it, and with good cause. It symbolises the sword of justice, sweeping away all evil on a tide of crimson. But it is also the sign of our Lord Jesus Christ - of compassion, of mercy .. a hand that heals, a heart that forgives. Can you not see that we are not your enemies? On our honour, sir...

COMMANDER

You see how swiftly the disease of disrespect spreads? Daughters infect fathers; councillors infect councillors, until contagion fills the air! You begin to choke on it - there is no cure. [*Drawing out his dagger.*] Unless you cut it out at the heart. Do you not agree, gentlemen?

ESTEBAN

Yours is the only diseased heart here. We are simple people. We have not forgotten how to feel, how to love our wives - our children - our families. In the city, everything is for sale: honour, glory, love and hate - but not here. Cut out the cancer from your own heart.

COMMANDER *offering Esteban the dagger*

No. You do it.

ORTUNO

Sir!

COMMANDER

Well, Senor Esteban? Cut out the cancer; be cruel to be kind. Isn't it your civic duty? [*Esteban takes the dagger, confused.*] Think of your daughter, Esteban, think of her future. Think of the future of this village. [*Esteban lets the dagger fall, defeated.*] Talk to your daughter, Esteban. Make the situation clear to her - to them all. A little kindness, a little respect. Is that too much to ask?

Esteban and Don Rojo depart, shaken.

FLORES

You took a risk there.

COMMANDER

Did I so?

ORTUNO

Doesn't it bother you, how much they hate you?

COMMANDER

I don't give a damn...

[Believing the Commander has died in battle, Frondoso who, since he threatened the Commander has been under threat of death, proposes to Laurencia and is accepted. The following happens at their wedding:]

EXTRACT FIVE

The Villagers join in with the song until, as the Commander and his battered soldiers enter, silence falls.

COMMANDER

Please don't let me interrupt your celebrations. There was a time when you used to celebrate my return. Still, times change. *[Frondoso runs.]* Stop him! Hold him!

FRONDOSO

Help me!

DON ROJO

There's nothing we can do.

FRONDOSO

I'm a dead man.

The soldiers drag him out.

COMMANDER

I swear you shall have a fair trial. Your own Chief Magistrate will see to that, won't you, Senor Esteban?

ESTEBAN

Commander, I can't ...

COMMANDER

The charge is attempted murder and it carries a mandatory death sentence.

ESTEBAN

But I'm about to become his father-in-law.

COMMANDER

The wedding party is over.

ESTEBAN

This boy was protecting my daughter, as well you know, and his crime is therefore vindicated. Justice, Commander - you should recognise it; you met it at Ciudad Real. Your days are numbered.

COMMANDER

And so are yours. *[To Ortuno.]* Remove his chain of office.

ESTEBAN

I give it willingly.

COMMANDER

And have him beaten with it. *[Esteban is dragged out.]* Anyone else have anything to say? Then get out of here. This wedding's become a funeral.

The Villagers start to leave, but Laurencia pushes forward, trying to stop them.

LAURENCIA

You only beat him because he is my father - and it doesn't change the fact that he is right. [*To the Villagers.*] Where are you going? Stand with me!

COMMANDER

Laurencia, how delightful! We have some unfinished business, you and I.

A stylised dance, under which the voices of the Villagers, who remain in the background, can be heard. The Commander rapes Laurencia symbolically, through the dance.

F1

He wants what does not belong to him.

F6

My heart is mine to give away, not his to buy.

M4

Nothing's free.

M1

We know what we feel.

F2

Feelings don't count.

F5

Everything we have is yours.

F3 & 4

We came here to hunt, did we not?

M2 & 3

Then let's hunt!

Laurencia screams. Blackout.

EXTRACT SIX

Night. The women enter, silent and sad. Behind them, the men prepare for a meeting. All the village characters -except Frondoso and Laurencia -gather for the meeting, subdued, in silence.

ALL

Welcome to Fuente Ovejuna -

F2

The silent village.

F6

The village that disappeared

F3

The village that died.

F4

We pray to God for guidance.

F5

And all we can hear is our own heart's frantic beating.

ALL FEMALE VILLAGERS

So we turn and pray to the giants.

ALL MALE VILLAGERS

We pray to the Grand Master to deliver us from the evil of his servants.

The effigy of the Grand Master turns away.

ALL MALE VILLAGERS

We pray to King Ferdinand, To bring his cleansing sovereign sword to us.

M3

To shine his light on our darkness.

The effigy of the King turns away.

ALL FEMALE VILLAGERS

We pray as women to Queen Isabella, to share our suffering and bring us merciful relief.

The effigy of the Queen turns away. Those who are manipulating the effigies rejoin the rest of the villagers.

F2

But the answer is always the same.

ALL

Shh. The voices of the giants are silent now.

ALL MALE VILLAGERS

No news from the outside world at all.

M3

No news of Ciudad Real.

F6

No news of Ferdinand and Isabella.

F3

Our world is now reduced to this square mile.

M4

Our God is now a Commander, battle scarred, world weary.

F5

A hater of life, a despoiler of the innocent.

M3

Our women no longer venture out in daylight.

F4

Our children have forgotten how to laugh.

M4

Our crops are left untended.

ALL MALE VILLAGERS

And one by one, the men move at night, to meet under cover of darkness.

ALL FEMALE VILLAGERS

The hunted make their plans below.

F2

While above, Frondoso sits, waiting for death.

F3

And Laurencia has learned that there are worse things ...

EXTRACT SEVEN

The door bursts open and a dishevelled Laurencia enters.

LAURENCIA

Let me in! Let me in! For Christ's sake, let me in!

M1

Who is it?

LAURENCIA

Don't you recognise me? Has it been so long? Have I changed so much?

DON ROJO

Laurencia!

LAURENCIA

You don't know me? How can that be? Can't you see me? Are your eyes still closed? Are you ashamed to look at me? To see what you have done to me?

ESTEBAN

Mother of God, it is Laurencia.

LAURENCIA

Is it?

ESTEBAN

My daughter!

LAURENCIA

No, not your daughter! Not your daughter, no!

ESTEBAN

My child!

LAURENCIA

No more. No. Nobody's child.

BARRILDO

Laurencia!

LAURENCIA

Nobody's child! Nobody's wife! Nothing!

DON ROJO

He's your father.

LAURENCIA

He's not my father! A father loves his child; a father protects his child! A father fights for his child!

M2

That's not fair!

LAURENCIA

Where were you? When I needed you, where were you?

ESTEBAN

I tried ...

BARRILDO

It's not Esteban's fault - they beat him ...

LAURENCIA

And you? Did they beat you? Or you? Or you? You abandoned me. You stood and watched while they took Frondoso, you bowed your heads and turned away when they took me. They ripped the heart right out of my body and scattered it to the four winds. He took my secret soul last night and trampled it into the dirt - and you stood and watched him do it and never said a word. And still you stand silent ... still! Is it my shame you cannot bear or is it your own? [*Picking out various villagers.*] You - you had a daughter; she was stolen from you. What did you say? - Nothing. You - you had a wife; you gave her away. What did you do? Nothing. Enjoy your silence. Say nothing. Just listen - listen carefully and on the wind you'll hear the sound of distant laughter. The Commander is laughing and he's laughing at you - the world is laughing at you. You call yourselves men? Listen ... they're laughing at the very thought of it.

M3

How dare you?

LAURENCIA

How dare you speak out now. How dare you watch your women degraded, your pride destroyed, your honour despoiled, then burn with anger at a few little words! You don't fight with iron; you don't fight with steel - you fight with your heart's inner fire, with your living soul, your spirit. But you - you were dead long ago. You're empty shells. You call yourselves men but you're nothing of the sort - you're sheep! No, you're worse than sheep - even the ram will protect his flock. You're stones - cold, marble stones, lying in a wasteland of your own making. And still you say nothing! Sweet Jesus, what does it take to move you? What water trickles through your veins? What is it that freezes your tongues? Is it the same shame that stops your hearts from beating? Well, don't worry any longer. I'll take away the cause of your embarrassment. [*She turns to go.*]

BARRILDO

Where are you going?

LAURENCIA

To find the women of this village. We're living in a world turned upside down; maybe I'll find warriors amongst the women of Fuente Ovejuna. Our hearts are still alive; the fire still burns in our breast. Give us your weapons; we'll do your job for you. We'll kill the Commander and his men. Better to live one day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep. [*She takes Barrildo's knife.*]

DON ROJO

What about us? What are we supposed to do?

LAURENCIA

You can hide behind our skirts; you can cook and clean for us while we go out to fight. And wherever you go the world will point at you and say, 'There go the halfmen of Fuente Ovejuna. There go the cowards. There go the bearded women. There go the pretty nursemaids.' And you will bow your heads in silence and turn away.

M3

Enough!

LAURENCIA

No! Not enough! Never enough! Frondoso is a dead man - you know it; you all know it. You watched him go. Do you think he'll be the last? I'll get my husband back, alone if necessary.

ESTEBAN

No!

LAURENCIA

You can't stop me.

ESTEBAN

I meant - you're not going alone. This is my job. [*Taking the knife from her.*] Who's with me?

BARRILDO

I'm with you. Anyone else?

Long pause.

MENGO

Yes. Me.

M1

Mengo?

MENGO

Yes. Listen to me. Laurencia's right: we have been cowards, every one of us. We've tried to save our necks, because we're scared. And because we're scared, my friend is up there in the hands of those killers instead of in the arms of his beautiful bride. Well, my back is bleeding and my heart is in my mouth but I'm ready to fight. On my own, if necessary. I'm not hiding any longer. [*Pause. The men rise one by one.*] Death to all tyrants!

BARRILDO

Death to all monsters!

ALL VILLAGERS

Death to all tyrants! Death to all monsters!

LAURENCIA

Thankyou, father.

ESTEBAN

You were right, Laurencia - you were right all along.

LAURENCIA

No, I was wrong after all. This village always had a heart - a soul - we just misplaced it for a while....

PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES etc.

INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTION.

The play is serious and passionate in its tone. It is the story of an oppressed village which, under the heel of a tyrannical Commander, who rapes the women and abuses the village's good nature at every opportunity, finally rises up against him and kills him. Its added power comes from the way the disparate characters in the village - cowards, jokers, hotheads, sober older men, women and children - all finally pull together to take collective responsibility for the murder. They throw themselves on the mercy of the rulers of Spain who, faced with the combined guilt of the whole town, are forced to recognise the injustices the Commander had committed and the justice of the village's revenge.

Added political spice is added through the cynical comments of the narrator/ town buffoon, Mengo. He it is that points out that nothing changes for the poor, whoever rules them. It is power itself that corrupts.

Though the intention of the play is serious and powerful - an effect achieved by a combination of strong characters, fiery speeches and sections of heightened language accompanied by physical theatre - there is light relief too. Mengo is a comic character and the repartee between the young men and women of the town is humorous.

The love theme within the play acts as alleviation to the horror. The love between Frondoso and Laurencia is a strong thread, though it is tested harshly. Most of the 'love' within the play is sullied by the Commander and his soldiers' multiple rapes. This stands in stark contrast to the warmth, courage and honour of the main characters.

In fact, honour and lack of it is another major theme of the play. It is not the upper class characters who are honourable. Most of them are brutal and cruel and even the mercy shown by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in the end has little effect - the rulers are simply too aloof to have any real understanding of the plight of their subjects. This is emphasised by the device of having effigies of these rulers who brood from on high over the whole play, causing pain and bloodshed on a whim, though they prove to be mere empty shells when it comes to any real help...