

TANGO DE LA MENEGILDA (from *La Gran Vía*)

Spanish lyrics by D. F. Perez, music by Federico Chueca & Joaquin Valverde
English version by Tom Lehrer

Life is brutal,
If you must work as a maid.
Hopeless, futile,
Overworked and underpaid.
And if you just surrender,
And if you don't learn to use your head,
Though you may live to a hundred,
You'll still end up in a poorhouse bed.

As for me, I must say,
There were skills that I learned right away.
Clothes to wash, beds to make,
Floors to sweep, meals to cook, cakes to bake.
But it didn't take me long to see
That life was passing me by.
I consulted with my conscience.
It said, "Listen, honey,
You've learned how to bake,
Now just learn how to take
Your piece of the cake."

I caught on so well, before anyone knew it,
I had some nice clothes and a trinket or two.
Perhaps you are wond'ring "How does she do it?"
With jewelry and dresses,
My road to success is ---
I'd give you three guesses,
But I think one will do.

I was sent out
Shopping alone every day.
When I went out,
They'd give me money to pay,
And out of each ten duros
I'd end up spending, say, eight or nine,
And what was left I deposited
With a soldier friend of mine.

Then one day I came back
And I found I'd been given the sack
Don't know why, don't know how,
And I laugh when I think of it now.
When my mistress had finished screaming,
Her son whispered in my ear.
As he paid me my back wages,
He said, "Listen, honey, you know what I think."
And he said with a wink,
"Let me buy you a drink."

I've worked for so many and gotten so clever,
That's how I arrived where you find me today.
I work for an old man who can't live forever.
At the end of my journey
With money to burn, e-
Ven power of attorney,
What more can I say?

original lyrics

Pobre chica
la que tiene que servir.
Más valiera
que se llegase a morir.
Porque si es que no sabe
por las mañanas brujulear
aunque mil años viva
su paradero es el hospital.

Cuando yo vine aquí
lo primero que al pelo aprendí
fue a fregar a barrer
a guisar, a planchar y a coser.
Pero viendo que estas cosas
no me hacían prosperar
consulté con mi conciencia
y al punto me dijo: "Aprende a sisar
Aprende a sisar
Aprende a sisar."

Salí tan mañosa, que al cabo de un año
tenía seis trajes de seda y satén.
A nada que ustedes discurran un poco
ya han adivinado
ya se han figurado
de dónde saldría
para ello el parné.

Yo iba sola
por la mañana a comprar,
y me daban
tres duros para pagar
y de sesenta reales
gastaba treinta, o un poco más
y lo que me sobraba
me lo guardaba un melitar.

Yo no sé como fue
que un domingo después de comer
yo no sé que pasó
que mi ama a la calle me echó
pero al darme el señorito
la cartilly y el parné
me decía por lo bajo
"Te espero en tal parte tomando café
Tomando café, tomando café."

Después de este lance serví a un boticario,
serví a una señora que andaba muy mal
me vine a esa casa y allí estoy al pelo,
pues sirvo a un abuelo
que el pobre está lelo
y yo soy el ama
y punto final.

*Many performances of this song are on
YouTube, including a good one by Pasión Vega at
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0T92BvNVTs*