



I WEAR THE MASK OF THE CAPITANO

And I'd bear the insignia of a Captain too, if they were
to be conquered at sword-point. This mine unrestrained
frankness brings some to accuse me of boasting or swaggering, but
they only find the courage to say so when my shoulders are turned.
As for me, I respect nobility: I hit them in the chest, and not in the back;
I let them taste my steel, and not my boot!

They are noble in name and not in substance, of course, unlike my friend who
proudly wears the mask of the **Innamorato** and matches their blue blood to an
immaculate soul. This is their initiation to the art of duelling, albeit in my heart I
would have wished them a better occasion. A trivial squabble, spirits searing and then
cooling to come out tempered, laughing and hiding from the gendarmes, as accomplices,
not enemies. God knows I would fight in their stead, if only I could!

Not out of ill will towards the **Magnifico**, who I concede hides a generous soul behind
their mask, but because I know that the good grace of the powerful always entails a price.
My friend languishes and thinks themselves ungrateful as they offer up steel for the gold
of their benefactor, without seeing that they fight for freedom, not outrage. They choose the
wrong viscera: In place of heart-ache, they should be feeling stomach-ache in trepidation.

Were truly the Magnificent respectful of them, they would not have chosen a lowly **Servitore**
as their second. A peasant, a scoundrel, yet one with a certain boldness. They speak freely, be-
yond their station, and were they my servant they would become familiar with my boot, but bring
me laughter in retaliation. I admire cleverness and keep my eye on them, lest it become vile cunning.

I certainly do not expect the **Giudice** to do it. They are but a scribbler, and have spent long
protesting this duel, trying to uphold reason to conceal their fear of the Doge's wrath.

The duellists insisted on their presence and I shall not spoil their fun, but I esteem
myself their enemy. I march better 'neath the cross-fire of glances inimical!

In truth, the pistols will be judges, and wounds their witnesses.

The blood that spills will be the blood of honour.