

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA

Oscar Wilde

DUCHESS: Better for me I had not seen your face.

GUIDO recoils: she seizes his hands as she kneels.

Nay, Guido, listen for a while:
Until you came to Padua I lived
Wretched indeed, but with no murderous thought,
Very submissive to a cruel Lord,
Very obedient to unjust commands,
As pure I think as any gentle girl
Who now would turn in horror from my hands -

(Stands up.)

YOU CAME: ah! Guido, the first kindly words
I ever heard since I had come from France
Were from your lips: well, well, that is no matter.
You came, and in the passion of your eyes
I read love's meaning; everything you said
Touched my dumb soul to music, so I loved you.
And yet I did not tell you of my love.
'Twas you who sought me out, knelt at my feet
As I kneel now at yours, and with sweet vows,

(Kneels.)

Whose music seems to linger in my ears,
Swore that you loved me, and I trusted you.
I think there are many women in the world
Who would have tempted you to kill the man.
I did not.
Yet I know that had I done so,
I had not been thus humbled in the dust,

(Stands up.)

But you had loved me very faithfully.

(After a pause approaches him timidly.)

I do not think you understand me, Guido:
It was for your sake that I wrought this deed
Whose horror now chills my young blood to ice,
For your sake only. *(Stretching out her arm.)*
Will you not speak to me?
Love me a little: in my girlish life
I have been starved for love, and kindness
Has passed me by.