

MARRIAGE A LA MODE

John Dryden

Enter LEONIDAS musing; AMALTHEA following him

AMALTHEA: Yonder he is, and I must speak, or die;
And yet 'tis death to speak; yet he must know
I have a passion for him, and may know it
With a less blush, because to offer it
To his low fortunes shows i loved before
His person, not his greatness.

LEONIDAS: First scorned, and now commanded from the court!
The king is good, but he is wrought to this
By proud Argaleon's malice.
What more disgrace can love and fortune join
To inflict upon one man? I cannot now
Behold my dear Palmyra; she, perhaps, too
Is grown ashamed of a mean ill-placed love.

AMALTHEA: *(aside)*
Assist me, Venus, for I tremble when
I am to speak, but I must force myself.
(to him) Sir, I would crave but one short minute with you,
And some few words.

LEONIDAS: *(aside)* The proud Argaleon's sister!

AMALTHEA: *(aside)* Alas, it will not out; shame stops my mouth.
(to him) Pardon my error, Sir, I was mistaken,
And took you for another.

LEONIDAS: *(aside)* In spite of all his guards, I'll see Palmyra;
Though meanly born, I have a kingly soul yet.

AMALTHEA: *(aside)* I stand upon a precipice, where fain
I would retire, but love still thrusts me on:
Now I grow bolder, and will speak to him.
(to him) Sir, 'tis indeed to you that I would speak,
And if –

LEONIDAS: O, you are sent to scorn my fortunes.
Your sex and beauty are your privilege;
But should your brother –

AMALTHEA: *(aside)*
Now he looks angry, and I dare not speak.
(to him)
I had some business with you, Sir,

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But 'tis not worth your knowledge.

LEONIDAS: Then 'twill be charity to let me mourn
My griefs alone, for I am much disordered.

AMALTHEA: 'Twill be more charity to mourn them with you:
Heaven knows I pity you.

LEONIDAS: Your pity, Madam,
Is generous, but 'tis unavailable.

AMALTHEA: You know not till 'tis tried.
Your sorrows are no secret; you have lost
A crown, and mistress.

LEONIDAS: Are not these enough?
Hang two such weights on any other soul,
And see if it can bear them.

AMALTHEA: More; you are banished by my brother's means,
And ne'er must hope again to see your princess,
Except as prisoners view fair walks and streets,
And careless passengers, going by their grates,
To make them feel the want of liberty.
But, worse than all,
The king this morning has enjoined his daughter
To accept my brother's love.

LEONIDAS: Is this your pity?
You aggravate my griefs and print them deeper
In new and heavier stamps.

AMALTHEA: 'Tis as physicians show the desperate ill
To endear their art, by mitigating pains
They cannot wholly cure. When you despair
Of all you wish, some part of it, because
Unhoped for, may be grateful; and some other –

LEONIDAS: What other?

AMALTHEA: Some other may –
(*aside*)
My shame again has seized me, and I can go
No farther –

LEONIDAS: These often failings, sighs, and interruptions,
Make me imagine you have grief like mine.
Have you ne'er loved?

AMALTHEA : I? Never.
(*aside*)
'Tis in vain;
I must despair in silence.

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- LEONIDAS: You come as I suspected then, to mock.
At least observe my griefs; take it not ill
That I must leave you.
Is going
- AMALTHEA: You must not go with these unjust opinions.
Command my life and fortunes; you are wise,
Think, and think well, what I can do to serve you.
- LEONIDAS: I have but one thing in my thoughts and wishes.
If by your means I can obtain the sight
Of my adored Palmyra; or, what's harder,
One minute's time, to tell her I die hers.
She starts back
I see I am not to expect it from you;
Nor could, indeed, with reason.
- AMALTHEA: Name any other thing. Is Amalthea
So despicable, she can serve your wishes
In this alone?
- LEONIDAS: If I should ask of heaven,
I have no other suit.
- AMALTHEA: To show you, then, I can deny you nothing,
Though 'tis more hard to me than any other,
Yet I will do it for you.
- LEONIDAS: Name quickly, name the means, speak, my good angel.
- AMALTHEA: Be not so much o'erjoyed; for if you are,
I'll rather die than do it. This night the court
Will be in masquerade.
You shall attend on me; in that disguise
You may both see and speak to her,
If you dare venture it.
- LEONIDAS: Yes, were a god her guardian,
And bore in each hand thunder, I would venture.
- AMALTHEA: Farewell then; two hours hence I will expect you.
My heart's so full that I can stay no longer.
(Exit)
- LEONIDAS: Already it grows dusky. I'll prepare
With haste for my disguise.