

THE BEAUX STRATAGEM (EXTRACT 2)

George Farquhar

MRS SULLEN: Well, sister!

DORINDA: And well, sister!

MRS SULLEN: What's become of my lord?

DORINDA: What's become of his servant?

MRS SULLEN: Servant! He's a prettier fellow, and a finer gentleman by fifty degrees, than his master.

DORINDA: O'my conscience, I fancy you could beg that fellow at the gallows-foot!

MRS SULLEN: O'my conscience, I could, provided I could put a friend of yours in his room.

DORINDA: You desired me sister to leave you, when you transgressed the bounds of honour.

MRS SULLEN: Thou dear conscious countrygirl! What does that mean? You can't think of the man without the bedfellow, I find.

DORINDA: I don't find anything unnatural in that thought; while the mind is conversant with the flesh and blood, it must confirm to the honours of the company.

MRS SULLEN: How a little love and good company improves a woman! Why, child, you begin to live - you never spoke before.

DORINDA: Because I was never spoke to. My lord has told me that I have more wit and beauty than any of my sex; and truly I begin to think the man is sincere.

MRS SULLEN: You're in the right, Dorinda; pride is the life of a woman, and flattery is our daily bread; and she's a fool that won't believe a man there, as much as she that believes him in anything else. But I'll lay you a guinea that I had finer things said to me than you had.

DORINDA: Done! What did your fellow say to ye?

MRS SULLEN: My fellow took the picture of Venus for mine.

DORINDA: But my lover took me for Venus herself.

MRS SULLEN: Common cant! Had my spark called me a Venus directly, I should have believed him a footman in good earnest.

DORINDA: But my lover was upon his knees to me.

MRS SULLEN: And mine was upon his tiptoes to me.

DORINDA: Mine vowed to die for me.

MRS SULLEN: Mine swore to die with me.

DORINDA: Mine spoke the softest moving things.

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MRS SULLEN: Mine had his moving things too.

DORINDA: Mine kissed my hand ten thousand times.

MRS SULLEN: Mine has all that pleasure to come.

DORINDA: Mine offered marriage.

MRS SULLEN: O Lord! D'ye call that a moving thing?

DORINDA: The sharpest arrow is his quiver my dear sister! Why, my ten thousand pounds may lie brooding here this seven years, and hatch nothing at last but some ill-natured clown like yours. Whereas, if I marry my Lord Aimwell, there will be title, place and precedence, the park, the play, and the drawing-room, splendour, equipage, noise, and flambeaux. - Hey, my lady Aimwell's servants there! - lights, lights to the stairs! - My Lady Aimwell's coach put forward! Stand by, make room for her ladyship! - Are not these things moving? What! Melancholy of a sudden?

MRS SULLEN: Happy, happy sister! Your angel has been watchful for your happiness, whilst mine has slept regardless of his charge. Long smiling years of circling joys for you, but not one hour for me!

DORINDA: Come, my dear, we'll talk of something else

MRS SULLEN: O Dorinda! I own myself a woman, full of my sex, a gentle, generous soul, easy and yielding to soft desires; a spacious heart, where love and all his train might lodge. And must the fair apartment of my breast be made a stable for a brute to lie in?

DORINDA: Meaning your husband, I suppose?

MRS SULLEN: Husband! No, even husband is too soft a name for him - but come, I expect my brother here tonight or tomorrow; he was abroad when my father married me; perhaps he'll find a way to make me easy.

DORINDA: Will you promise not to make yourself easy in the meantime with my lord's friend?

MRS SULLEN: You mistake me, sister. It happens with us as among the men; the greatest talkers are the greatest cowards; and there's a reason for it. Those spirits evaporate in prattle, which might do more mischief if they took another course - though, to confess the truth, I do love that fellow; - and if I met him dressed as he should be, and I undressed as I should be - look ye, sister, I have no supernatural gifts- I can't swear I could resist the temptation; though I can safely promise to avoid it; and that's as much as the best of us can do.