John Gay, â??Panthea. An Elegyâ?•

Description

JOHN GAY

â??Panthea. An Elegyâ?•

Long had *Panthea* felt Loveâ??s secret smart,
And hope and fear alternate rulâ??d her heart;
Consenting glances had her flame confest.
(In womanâ??s eyes her very soulâ??s exprest)
Perjurâ??d *Alexis* saw the blushing maid,
He saw, he swore, he conquerâ??d and betrayâ??d:
Another love now calls him from her arms,
His fickle heart another beauty warms;
Those oaths oftâ??whisperâ??d in *Panthea*â??s ears,
He now again to *Galatea* swears.
Beneath a beech thâ?? abandonâ??d virgin laid,
In grateful solitude enjoys the shade;
There with faint voice she breathâ??d these moving strains,
While sighing Zephyrs sharâ??d her amâ??rous pains.

Pale settled sorrow hangs on upon my brow,
Dead are my charms; *Alexis,* breaks his vow!
Think, think, dear shepherd, on the days you knew,
When I was happy, when my swain was true;
Think how thy looks and tongue are formâ??d to move,
And think yet moreâ??that all my fault was love.
Ah, could you view me in this wretched state!
You might not love me, but you could not hate.
Could you behold me in this conscious shade,
Where first thy vows, where first my love was paid,
Worn out with watching, sullen with despair,
And see each eye swell with a gushing tear?
Could you behold me on this mossy bed,
From my pale cheek the lively crimson fled,
Which in my softer hours you oftâ?? have sworn,
With rosie beauty far out-blushâ??d the morn;
Could you untouchâ??d this wretched object bear,
And would not lost *Panthea* claim a tear?
You could not sureâ??tears from your eyes would steal,
And unawares thy tender soul reveal.
Ah, no!â??thy soul with cruelty is fraught,

No tenderness disturbs thy savage thought;
Sooner shall tigers spare the trembling lambs,
And wolves with pity hear with their bleating dams;
Sooner shall vultures from their quarry fly,
Than false *Alexis* for *Panthea* sigh.
Thy bosom neâ??er a tender thought confest,
Sure stubborn flint had armâ??d thy cruel breast;
But hardest flints are worn by frequent rains,
And the soft drops dissolve their solid veins;
While thy relentless heart more hard appears,
And is not softenâ??d by a flood of tears.

Ah, what is love! *Panthe*aâ??s joys are gone,
Her liberty, her peace, her reason flown!
And when I view me in the watry glass,
I find *Panthea* now, not what she was.
As northern winds the new-blown roses blast,
And on the ground their fading ruins cast;
As sudden blights corrupts the ripenâ??d grain,
And of its verdure spoil the mournful plain;
So hapless love on blooming features preys,
So hapless love destroys our peaceful days.

Come, gentle sleep, relieve these wearyâ??d eyes,
All sorrow in thy soft embraces dies:
There, spite of all thy perjurâ??d vows, I find
Faithless *Alexis* languishingly kind;
Sometimes he leads me by the mazy stream,
And pleasingly deludes me in my dream;
Sometimes he guides me to the secret grove,
Where all our looks, and all our talk is love.
Oh, could I thus consume each tedious day,
And in sweet slumbers dream my life away;
But sleep, which now no more relieves these eyes,
To my sad soul the dear deceit denies.

Why does the sun dart forth his cheerful rays?
Why do the woods resound with warbling lays?
Why does the rose her grateful fragrance yield,
And the yellow cowslips paint the smiling field?
Why do the streams with murmâ??ring musick flow,
And why do groves their friendly shade bestow?
Let sable clouds the cheerful sun deface,
Let mournful silence seize the featherâ??d race;
No more, ye roses, grateful fragrance yield,
Droop, droop, ye cowslips, in the blasted field;
No more, ye streams, with murmâ??ring musick flow,
And let not groves a friendly shade bestow:

With sympathizing grief let nature mourn,
And never know the youthful springâ??s return;
And shall I never more *Alexis* see?
Then what is spring, or grove or stream to me?

Why sport the skipping lambs on yonder plain?
Why do the birds their tuneful voice strain?
Why frisk those heifers in cooling grove?
Their happier life is ignorant of love.

Oh! lead me to some melancholy cave,
To lull my sorrow in a living grave;
From the dark rock where dashing waters fall,
And creeping ivy hangs the craggy wall,
Where I may waste in tears my hours away,
And never know the seasons or the day.
Die, die, *Panthea*â??fly in this hateful grove,
For what is life without the Swain I love?

NOTES:

Title *Panthea* This name means â??of all godsâ?• in Greek.

1 *smart* â??Mental suffering, sorrowâ?• (*OED*).

10 *Galatea â??*In Greek mythology, a Nereid who was loved by the Cyclops Polyphemus. Galatea, however, loved the youth Acisâ?• (*Britannica*).

14 *Zephyrs* Greek god of gentle winds.

18 *swain* â??Loverâ?• (*OED*).

39 *quarry* Here a reference to the vultureâ??s â??preyâ?• or carrion (*OED*).

42 *flint* â??Hard stoneâ?• (*OED*).

45 *hard* â??Unyieldingâ?• (*OED*).

49 *watry glass* Water serving as a mirror.

51 *northern winds* Refers to Boreas, Greek god of the cold northern winds.

61 *mazy* â??Twistingâ?• (*OED*).

70 *warbling* â??Singing with sweet quavering notesâ?• (*OED*).

72 *cowslips* â??Well-known plant in pastures and grassy banks, blossoming in springâ?• (*OED*).

87 *heifers* â??Young cowsâ?• (*OED*).

92 *craggy* â??Hard and roughâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: ***Poems on Several Occasions: Volume 2*** **(London, 1737), pp. 109-113. [Google Books]**

Edited by Joanna Tran