Matthew Prior, â??An English Padlockâ?•

Description

MATHEW PRIOR

â??An English Padlockâ?•

Miss *Danae*, when Fair and Young,
(As *Horace* has divinely sung)
Could not be kept from *Joveâ??s* Embrace
By Doors of Steel, and Walls of Brass.
The Reason of the Thing is clear,
(Would *Jove* the naked Truth aver,)
Cupid was with him of the Party,
And showâ??d himself sincere and hearty:
For, give that Whipster but his Errand,
He takes my Lord Chief Justiceâ?? Warrant;
Dauntless as Death away he walks,
Breaks the Doors open, snaps the Locks,
Searches the Parlour, Chamber, Study,
Nor stops â??till he has his *Culpritâ??s* Body.

Since this has been Authentick Truth,
By Age deliverâ??d down to Youth;
Tell us, mistaken Husband, tell us,
Why so Mysterious, why so Jealous?
Does the Restraint, the Bolt, the Bar,
Make us less Curious, her less Fair?
The Spy, who does this Treasure keep,
Does she neâ??er say her Prayâ??rs, nor Sleep?
Does she to no Excess incline?
Does she fly Musick, Mirth and Wine?
Or have not Gold and Flattâ??ry Powâ??r,
To purchase One unguarded Hour?

Your Care does further yet extend,
That Spy is guarded by your Friend.â??â??
But has that Friend nor Eye, nor Heart?
May He not feel the cruel Dart
Which, soon or late, all Mortals feel?
May He not, with too tender Zeal,
Give the Fair Prisâ??ner Cause to see,
How much He wishes, she were free?

May He not craftily infer
The Rules of Friendship too severe,
Which chain him to a hated Trust,
Which make him Wretched, to be Just?
And may not She, this Darling She,

Youthful and healthy, Flesh and Blood,
Easie with Him, ill usâ??d by Thee,
Allow this Logic to be good?

Sir, Will your Questions never end?
I trust to neither Spy nor Friend.
In short, I keep her from the Sight
Of evâ??ry Human Face. â??â?? Sheâ??ll write.â??â??
From Pen and Paper Sheâ??s debarrâ??d.â??â??
Has she a Bodkin and a Card?
Sheâ??ll prick her Mind: â??â?? She will, you say;
But how shall She that Mind convey?
I keep her in one Room, I lock it;
The Key, look here, is in this Pocket:
The Key-hole , is that left? Most certain,
Sheâ??ll thrust her Letter throâ??,â??â??Sir *Martin.*

Dear angry Friend, what must be done?
Is there no Way?â??â?? There is but one.
Send her abroad, and let her see,
That all this mingled Mass, which she
Being forbidden longs to know,
Is a dull Farce, an empty Show,
Powder, and Pocket-Glass, and Beau;
A Staple of Romance and Lies,
False Tears, and real Perjuries;
Where Sighs and Looks are bought and sold,
And Love is made but to be told;
Where the fat Bawd and lavish Heir
The Spoils of ruinâ??d Beauty share,
And Youth seducâ??d from Friends and Fame
Must give up Age to Want and Shame.
Let her behold the Frantick Scene,
The Women wretched, false the Men:
And when, these certain Ills to shun,
She would to thy Embraces run;
Receive her with extended Arms,
Seem more delighted with her Charms;
Wait on her to the Park and Play,
Put on good Humour, make her gay;
Be to her Virtues very kind,
Be to her Faults a little blind;

Let all her Ways be unconfinâ??d, 80
And clap your *Padlock* â??â?? on her Mind.

NOTES:

Title Padlock â??A detachable lockâ?• (*OED*).

1 *Danae* Greek mythological daughter of King Acrius of Argos and Queen Eurydice. Acrius had no sons to give his throne to and as Danae was childless he kept her locked in a tower to keep the prophecy that his grandson would kill him from coming true (â??Danae,â?• *greekmythology.com,* accessed 7 August 2017).

2 *Horace* A Roman poet, Quintus Horatius Flaccus who wrote about this myth in reference to Danae being locked away (â??Horatii Flacci Opera,â?• *books.google.com,* accessed 7 August 2017).

3 *Jove* â??A poetical equivalent of Jupiterâ?• Danae was impregnated by Zeus in the tower (*OED*) (â??Danae,â?• *greekmythology.com,* accessed 7 August 2017).

9 *Whipster* â??A vague, mischievous, or contemptuous personâ?• (*OED*).

20 *Curious* â??Careful, attentive, concernedâ?• (*OED*).

32 *Zeal* â??Ardent love or affectionâ?• (*OED*).

48 *Bodkin* â??A long pin or pin-shaped ornament used by women to fasten up the hairâ?• (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (1709), pp. 105-108. [HathiTrust]

Edited by Mimi Willmer