

Sonnets 1 to 10,
a free sample from

Defiant Love:

Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia, to Amphilanthus*

Modern Language Edition

by

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[P1]

Sonnet 1.

The poet describes a dream in which Venus encourages Cupid (Amphilanthus) to shoot an arrow through her (Pamphilia's) heart, thereby converting her into a (his) lover.

WHen night's mantle could not on black improve,
and sleep, like death, my senses did inspire
with knowledge of myself, then thoughts did move
swifter than any swiftness might require.

In sleep, a char'iot drawn by winged desire
I saw, where sat bright Venus, queen of love,
and at her feet, her son, adding more fire
to burning hearts, which she held up above.

But one heart that burned more than all the rest,
the goddess took and held over my breast:
“Now shoot, dear son,” she said. “That's how we'll win.”

He obeyed her and sacrificed my heart.
On waking, I hoped the dream would depart,
although, since then, a lover I have been.

[P2]

Sonnet 2.

The poet describes the eyes of Amphilanthus gazing at her the way the sun shines down on the earth.

DEar eyes, how well indeed you do adorn
that blessèd sphere, which gazing souls hold dear,
the well belovèd place of triumphs near
the court of glory, where love's might was born.

How can they call you April's sweetest morn?
When pleasant looks, from those bright lights appear,
a sunshine day, from clouds and mists still clear,
like little fires for wishes not yet born.

Two stars shine down from heav'n to grace the earth,
placed on the throne which gives all joys their birth,
shining and burning, pleasing in their charms.

Ev'n when wounding, their hurts are still delights:
so pleasant is their force, so great their mights,
as they happily triumph in their harms.

[P3]

Sonnet 3.

*The poet tells Cupid to shine on her through the eyes of
Amphilanthus and to remain in his heart.*

STill, there's some hope; you, Love, must play your part.

Remember who you are, and think of me;
shine in those eyes which have conquered my heart,
and see if mine answer you too slowly.

Stay in that breast and, if it's moving, see
what flames now burn in mine with truest smart,
exiling thoughts about inconstancy,
or those not depleted by constant art.

Just watch my sleep, and if I take some rest
thinking of you, my spirit then distressed,
as, pale and famished, I for mercy cry.

Will you leave your servant? Think about this:
who wears Love's crown, must not do so amiss,
but seek their good, who on your strength rely.

[P4]

Sonnet 4.

The poet addresses the night, describing how the return of Amphilanthus brings back painful memories of his departure and abandonment in the past.

DEsist, dark night; my joys now bud again,
which were dormant; still, some cold looks did chill
me to the root and my great hope did kill,
while thunder struck me as my joys did wain.

Then I, alas, with bitter sobs and pain,
inwardly groaned at my luck's present ill:
the light of comfort dimmed, woe's pride did fill;
with this odd growth in grief, I keened in vain.

Worst was, when memories I thought were good
molested me, and yet as witness stood
of the best days in former times I knew.

Gone are the marvels past, like the Great Snow,
melted and wasted by changes we know:
now life's returning to where it once grew.

[P5]

Sonnet 5.

The poet glories in her beloved now that Amphilanthus is back, but she begins to suffer the anxiety of losing him again to other women.

Can pleasant sights misfortune ever bring?

Can firm desire a painful torment try?

Can winsome eyes to the heart cause a sting?

Or can sweet lips in deceit hidden lie?

The pleasant sun can blind the strongest eye
if watched too long, our vision destroying;
indulged, desire will toward mischief fly
and, like despair, a reckless throw will fling.

Eyes having won, rejection's now the sting,
killing the bud before the tree does spring;
sweet lips, unloving, then like poison prove.

Desire, sight, eyes, lips; seek, see, taste and find.
You may win love, and curses if unkind;
show your dislike for pain: glory in love.

[P6]

Sonnet 6.

The poet complains to Amphilanthus about the pain, sorrow and humiliation that she bears as the result of his fickle nature on her, and swears that she would rather die than endure the likelihood of his absence any longer.

DO'n't keep trying to heap disdain on me,
or take pleasure your cruelty to show
on luckless me, on whom all sorrows flow,
to endure what you left so carelessly.

Alas, ev'n grief has grown to pity me;
scorn bemoans that it would such malice show,
and would allow all joy's delights to flow;
yet I your torture bear most wretchedly.

I've suffered a long time and thought it dear
to do your will, though my pain grew more near.
Wish you my death? Say so, and you'll it have.

For all the depth of my heart-felt despair,
it is not about my death that you care,
but I now want it, since you won't me save.

[P7]

Song. 1.

The poet compares her fate to that of a shepherdess deceived by her lover, ready to wear willow bark as a sign of her grief and her impending death.

*The spring now comes at last
to trees, fields and flowers,
and meadows learn to taste
his pride, while sad showers
which from my eyes do flow
reminds me with cruel pains
that winter still remains;
no sign of spring does show.*

*The sun which to the earth
gives heat, light and pleasure,
exults in spring, hates dearth:
plenty is his treasure.
To me, his heat is cold,
his light all darkness is;
since I am barred from bliss,
no heat or light behold.*

*A shepherdess once said,
who was by grief oppressed,
for her true love betrayed,
barred her from quiet rest:
and so weeping, said she,
“My end is coming near;
now willow must I wear,
my fortune so will be.*

*“With branches from this tree,
I’ll dress my luckless head,
Which will my wittness be,
my hopes in love are dead;
my clothes embroidered shall
be graced with garlands round,
some scattered, others bound;
some tied, some meant to fall.*

*“The bark my book will be,
where I will daily write
this tale of luckless me,
true slaue to Fortune’s spite.
The root will be my bed
where I will nightly lie
bewailing treachery,
since all true love is dead.*

*“And these lines I will leave
should such a lover come,
who may their truth perceive
and place them on my tomb:
‘She who faithfully loved,
now dead from lack of care,
killed by unkind depair
and change, her end here proved.’”*

[P8]

Sonnet 7.

The poet struggles under Amphilanthus's dominance, wondering whether she should tell him that she is actually his willing slave, but does not do so because his immaturity and thoughtlessness repel her.

STop, Love; you know you have the upper hand:

it's cruel to force when I do not resist.

Please stop, and I'll surrender to your band,

so do not with your attitude persist.

Now look, I yield; let armies be dismissed,

I am your conquered subject, bound to stand,

never your foe, who did your claim assist,

seeking fealty from those who did withstand.

But now it seems you think I should you love;

I should confess your will made me so choose,

and your fair looks made me a lover prove

when I my freedom did for pain refuse.

Still, Sir, it's your boyhood that I despise:

I love your charms, but not your lack of eyes.

[P9]

Sonnet 8.

The poet expresses the depth of her grief but finds that writing is no relief. The further she retreats within herself, the more she realizes that her love is true.

NOw by the power of grief to wailing brought,
through false impressions of change on my part,
I try to find relief in verse, which bought,
sharpen the pain; grief's not just cured by art.

Oh, how unkindness moves within my heart,
which remains true and free from changing thought:
what unknown grief it breeds, what endless smart,
with endless tears which, without cause, are wrought.

It now makes me avoid all glaring light,
and seek the darkest clouds me light to give.
These to all others only darkness drive;
they shine on me, for sun disdains my sight.

Yet though I live darkly, I triumph may:
no unkindness or wrong will love allay.

[P10]

Sonnet 9.

The poet refuses to acknowledge Amphilanthus's power over her; she prefers to be ruled by sorrow and despair.

IF you are pleased, your pleasures don't grieve me.

If you delight, I don't envy your joy.

If you're content, may you contented be;

Do you want bliss? Hope on, and yet enjoy.

Let bad luck and misfortune me destroy;

let me my crosses bear, and yet stay free,

while all delights their opposites deploy

to hold good back so I just torments see.

Bereft of joys, only my pains tarry;

with despair, disdain has the upper hand:

yet love grips my senses in such a band

that (since despised), I with sorrow marry.

Then if I now with grief must coupled be,

I'll wed sorrow, so despair governs me.

[P11]

Sonnet 10.

The poet describes how Amphilanthus returns to her from one of his absences, he trying to find rest, she trying to find consolation for her faith and hope.

The tired traveller wearily sought
in places far away, yet found no end
to pain or work, nor could his status mend,
but joyously then himself back home brought.

He found no ease, though he with joy was fraught
and beyond fear, as willing souls ascend,
like me, on whom new pleasures still descend
and for whom noble blessings have been wrought.

He tired of his pains, I of my mind;
he was content merely to ease his limbs.
The greatest happiness that I did find:
belief feeds faith, while hope in pleasure swims.

Truth says that bad thoughts will always breed spite
which, once acknowledged, brings all hearts delight.

