

LAMENTATIONS

With tears I remember
Yes, I remember
How you wooed me
You cooed to me
I was your apple
So young and supple
I was beautiful
Intelligent and resourceful – you said
Remember – you said
You love me
You needed me
You were in flames
When you called my name
Your need
Was my need
Yes – you got me thinking
You were the right picking
That there couldn't be
Any better for me
That you were responsible
Dutiful and peaceful
Your father
Like my father
Had left you much
So together we'll have too much
Yes, you pursued me ...
Oh! How you fooled me!

Mine was a choice
A precarious choice
The left, the right
The west, the east
Your rival
Was anything but trivial
But, you left none to chance
And promised everything as my spouse
Unity, equality, clarity
And declared the other ruthless, pitiless
Who for a trivium would leave me headless ...
With you I once shared a common language
Yes, a common heritage

Then our fathers changed it all – we became transformed
Transfigured and transmogrified
We became too different
And though near, we were very distant

Yet you wooed on
Knowing I was green horned
Harping on my diffidence
And my father's indifference
You carried on,
How can I marry him?
We had nothing in common but one tongue
But with your glib tongue, you wagged on
You'd give me fun
in our sanctified union
Ours would be a perpetual honeymoon
Lots of gifts, of gold and roses festooned
Our union will never mould
Never grow old
You said, as you sought
Besotted
My espousal
To walk me to the altar ...

I had my fears, reservations
And apprehensions
But you'd not hear, behind my back
In the dark
You cowered and bought callow relations
To brothers and sisters, you recounted fabrications
Their vote, with your vote
Had mine vetoed

Quivering I stood
Unlike everyone in mellow moods
How could it be?
Marriage ... me?
Father signed – he'd been eager
To extricate me from his fingers
Father-in-law signed I shivered -
Was I marrying him as well?
Quarter-head endorsed and wished us well
Relations hurriedly thumb-printed
All will be right, assuredly, they uttered
My husband signed, I wondered
Would he be gentle, kind or upright?

Would he be forthright?
Suddenly it was over
I'd signed, shakily, now it didn't matter
I was caught in wedlock
God, good God! Grant me luck!

The years have overtaken us in marriage
Still, papers are crisp at the vicarage
But you now say I'm shit worthless
Nothing but third class
Like the frog drooping its eyes condescendingly
Inverting its mouth in continual disapproval
You hold me in disdain and dismiss me contemptuously

Yoked in wedlock
A veritable deadlock
I suffer, but father went for indifference
Looked away at my sufferance
A perennial paranoiac policy of non-interference
Marooning me to father-in-law
Whose xenophobic son overworked, sapped and looted -
Look my arms as thin as straws
You father - absently watched
You idly watched, how they laughed
And shared their booty
See how I'm enslaved by my own husband
You father who gave away my hand
You sold me into bondage
Into marriage
Ill-informed and ill-prepared
You who wouldn't tell me
There could be a third option for me
The alternative to stay alone
A queen of my own home
Yes, you father, you too are to blame for my plight
You share guilt for my sorrow and pitiable sight

I call to you the quarter-head, the committees of peace
My relatives and for once
You my father, pool heads and pore tomes of law
Then rectify the contract's flaws
The contract defaced and defaulted
The signed scroll now rendered defunct
I pray realign this marriage my husband negated
I now wish the marriage proposal had been rejected

With no dignity, my husband gives me name
With no honour, he enforces a name
Neighbours, well wishers tell my hubby
He has had enough out of me
Or if he has had enough of me,
He should set me free, to go home where I belong
Sweet home where I'm always welcome

True I'm patient peace loving
And enduring
Yes, my husband knows
For the way has always been his own
Thrived he has, on my malleability
My pliability and affability
In naivety I believed he would guilt-ridden
Into love and conscientiousness
But that was a desperate dream in unconsciousness
For I just reached the road's end
My wit's end
Remember dear, the slow to anger
Are the worst in anger
Fury that would make my Balkan friend
Light-hearted and kind

Dear husband, listen to my call for reform
Review that miserable contract -
unabashedly distorted and brashly deformed
Make me feel at ease and healthy
Dispel the darkness, doom and despondency
Lurking in my thought
Awaken in me that forlorn sentiment
Of marriage and unity
Before we hit the craggy bottom in disruptive disunity

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