



***The Enchanting Duke, a classical myth period drama,***

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Charon meandered through the high flier party, the event of the year, everyone was here. Count Rockshlin of Hapsberg, Lady Deverik and even the famous scoundrel Baron Pimpemel. But there was only one man who all the ladies of the evening were watching, the Duke James. Yet Sharon had always considered contemptuous and arrogant, a cold man of strength as an officer in the army. A bad man who never cared of any other, least of all the many ladies who seemed to frequent his bedroom, or so she had heard.

“Oh I’m sorry, terribly,” said a lady almost dropping her drink onto Charon.

“You’ve ruined my dress, oh,” cried Charon in a truly irritated way. Her beautiful dress had cost thousands especially the pearl inlaid embroidery, the work of tens of people sourced from Italy. She had waited several months for it to be complete, and meant so much to her, for she had been looking forward to this society ball for such time as would any lady of 30 years, alone without a partner. No one to hold her at night. As the daughter of a fallen Baron, who himself died in a war when she was but a little girl, growing in poverty and simplicity yet still of class and distinction.

“I’ll pay for the damage my dear, oh, it’s you, Charon, do you remember me darling, Sychlla,” said Sychlla, “you must meet my friend here,”

“Oh my dear what have you done to yourself, I must say that this all reminds of our old days with your father, he always had such hope for you as one of his beautiful girls who would marry straight away, by the way let me introduce myself, Charibus,”

“We’re terribly happy to meet you again, I remember you as a little girl, moving to and fro, before the time your family fell from grace, not that I’m demeaning you am I,” said Sychlla.

“You know you really should meet the Duke, except he’s not going to be impressed with your clothing, perhaps you should go home and change. Does your family still have horse?” said Charibus.

Oh the nightmare, between these two awful friends of my father, caught between them in the society party, still a sea away from finding my journey’s end of a husband. As if the gods could not curse me more. A little giddy, between champagne and Scylla and Charibus, she excused herself and went to the balcony. Looking at the wonderous estate of Duke James in the stately home, the trees, horsemen riding around, the maze and the beautiful lake. A hand touched her shoulder. The blood drained from her face.

“Are you enjoying my party?”

Lost for words, gaping into his eyes, kind eyes. The kind one wants. Wanton eyes. The eyes of march. Music felt as if it played, the march of the light brigade, turning to rout, somewhat girlish and afraid, Duke James moved to grab her waist, his sword pressing against her lower back. She looked round whilst still caught in this embrace. A moment and his lips touched hers, strong, somehow too strong, too searching and awfully invasive. Yet something touched then and there. Something that mused between regret and hope. At the moment Schylla and Charibus returned.

Scared at the possibility of scandalous effects on her only thing, her reputation, Charon twisted out and slapped the Duke across his face. She felt a certain smoothness and strength on his chiselled face, square on his jaw.

“You are certainly not behaving as a gentlemen,” shouted Charon blushing, somewhat elevated in holding down this beast of a man. She runs out into the party and out the door to her carriage.

Chapter 2

Charon ran out of the party to the carriage, a simple one that the family still had, its gilded surfaces and heraldic symbols worn and tired, yet still the family crest was there. A gold chain of large links across a figure of mercury, the god of messages.

"Driver move now!" Shouted Charon, embarrassment mixed with the awful cackles of Sychlla and Charibus. Oh they were going to talk about this and then her reputation would be ripped like a dress from pirates who had captured a beautiful maiden. That night Charon cried herself to sleep in a her four poster bed within the small hovel of her old deteriorating family home in Chaveshire.

Her dream that night, of two women, a brutish woman talking to a woman in a toga with a crown of leaves upon her, the empress. Each chased the other, yet when they met, they had a cat fight, as one moved over the other, rolling around in grass. Grasping the empress by the throat the brutish woman screamed as she felt pain in herself. "Et tu" said the empress as she turned the tables, and was over the other woman. Charon wakes hearing the maid, their only one, purring "faster pussycat, kill, kill, kill".

"Oh what are you talking about," asked Charon.

"Oh the cat has managed to find more of those mice, m'lady," said Tatania the maid.

"I was having the most awful dream Tati," said Charon.

"So what is my dear lady going to do today," asked Tatania.

"I'll be going out to the market today, it may even have something we could afford," said Charon.

Charon roused, performed her ablutions and looked at her dress, stained by poisoned witches the previous night. She went out, somewhat perplexed and in a certain sense amused by the last night's encounter, with the Duke.

In the market she met Big Al, her gay friend, her best friend. He stood in his stylish suit, with fruffles and a high collar that kept his head from looking down, somehow straightened yet clothed in fabulous velvet, so fashionable this season among the higher classes. He was a musician and writer of distinction yet like her was not seen as of the right sort for his lack of heritage for his money.

"These silks would make wonderful stockings," said Big Al.

"Oh I'm not sure they would last the hard seasons of Chaveshire," said Charon.

"Oh look darling, a fortune teller," said Big Al.

There across the street was an old lady gypsy with a coined headscarf and a small table with an asian cover of cloth, worn and old, mysterious and wonderous. She looked and returned gazes at them.

"Oh let's see if my fortune is about to change," said Charon.

"What have you my dear to ask for?" asked the old gypsy woman.

"I want to know if I should marry before my life as a maiden is up, where do I find him?" Said Charon.

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"Your name is Charon, and your heart is already pledged, though you know not," said the old lady as she was turning the tarot cards she was reading. Then a gasp from Charon. The card.

"Death, is that my future, to be alone till then," asked Charon.

"No this is you," said the gypsy.

"What do you mean, I am Charon, Death?"

"Death is twofold, for it is a new beginning, yet to your lover, the one your heart is truly pledged, it is marriage that is the journey to Hades and you are both journeyman and companion in the inevitable," said the old lady.

"Oh do let's stop this nonsense, here's a few coins for your trouble," said Big Al.

They left as the old lady scrambled for the coins.

"Oh these commoners, think they can tell us some stupid ideas and get away with all our money," said Big Al.

"I think she might be right somehow." Said Charon.

"You mean you have found someone, finally!" Said Big Al.

"Yes, I ... had a little encounter with the Duke at the party," said Charon.

"Oh I see, how wonderful for you," said Big Al.

"But you see, I know of his scoundrel of a reputation and tentative encounters with him are as illusory as reality itself," said Charon.

"Ah my dear darling Charon, I should hope you will find him to truly be in love with him one day, perhaps I should arrange a meeting of sorts, for you and him," said Big Al with a visible risible smile.

Later at night.

Big Al enters, as mischievous and holding a potion. He comes to the bedside of the Duke and places a drop upon his eyelids, then exits stage right.

Much later at night.

Big Al enters Charon's bedroom and places a drop upon Charon's eyelids, knowing that he has already arranged for the Duke to meet her next day by surprise at her home. A drop upon her eyelids and she shall wake to see the Duke and fall deliriously in love with him, as if she was not already. Big Al leaves the room, then eek, a mouse, he cries out. Charon wakes and sees Big Al.

"Oh it's you Al," said Charon, then the magic comes to work and she jolts her head a little, "Oh, Big, big Al," she says sleepily.

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## The Duke

The Duke awakes sleepily and looks around for his vestements. He wakes and remembers the discussion he had with that Oik Al. He is called on urgent business to see Charon. Something of incredible importance that even breakfast had to be postponed. He goes to the stables and rides one of his best stallions to her home. Reaching there, he comes to the door, open as usual and enters to see her running after Al who is rather bemused. As the Duke sees her he is suddenly brought into a state of delirium and delicious damnation. He was in love, a glitter all around him, as though he were a great lion looking for flesh and beauty. Her eyes were as fairies meandering as a will-o-the-wisp in an enchanted forest of elves and lords.

"Oh Charon, you are so lovely," said The Duke.

"Oh, hello. Please excuse my nightly vestements. It is terribly nice of you to call round, but I'm a trifle engaged in a little matter of extreme importance. I do hope you don't mind leaving," said Charon as she bustles the Duke out of the house to turn her ambitions to Big Al. But he had gone. After some time of searching, Charon decided to sit in a pouting grump on the stairs and wonder what to do now she had found her big Al, her true love.

Big Al had gone, the duke also. Charon, having spent much time looking in every nook and cranny of the house, the cupboards, the wardrobes, the privy. Everywhere she looked he had gone. Her one true love. All was wonderful, glitter and love. Real love at last. With Big gay Al. There was a rap at the door. Hard knocking. Could her love had returned, perhaps with flowers and a gift?

She opened the door and saw a hand with flowers, she looked up and saw, with disappointment, it was the Duke, not Big Gay Al. Her stepped in and handed her the flowers with a bow.

"My dear, I must beseech you to pardon my need for a.. a.. moment of your precious time," stammered a usually articulate Duke James. Charon, seemed totally uninterested in the Duke, somehow the previous feelings of love were left aside as wilted flowers, somehow his flowers were such. How strange, as if some magic upon me. Really she wanted to get rid of the Duke, yet he may know where Big Al is.

"Oh please come in, there is a matter of great importance I wish to speak with you about," said Charon.

"Ah, yes, I had hoped to talk of such a matter," said the Duke James, somewhat perking up from his previous slip to melancholy.

"It is on a highly personal matter, of deep importance to my heart, your Grace," said Charon.

Could this be it, have I finally found my love, thought the Duke. As once I was a whoring drunkard youth I now could be settled with a wife and marriage, in a horse drawn carriage.

"It would seem to me that I have found my endymion, my shepherd guide," mused Charon as she looked dreamily, thinking of Big Al. Such small thin arms.

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“And you my moon, the licks of light atop my skin,” said James.

“Oh you understand, a thing of beauty,” said Charon.

“A joy forever,” said James.

“Endymion, my endymion,” moaned Charon as she swooned in love. James comes to her, putting an arm around her, somehow the scent of her, the touch of her soft pretty warm skin tingled and moved his soul to hers. He brought her face to his, she was still in stupor from the magic potion, and met his lips with hers. Aghast, she pulled away, cold and angry.

“What are you doing?” Shouted Charon.

“Are you some dreadful, siren tease to me, my dear,” retorted Duke James.

“What manner is this madness you have?” Said Charon, confused.

“You were talking of another instead of me?” Said James.

“Yes, not you, I’m in love with Big Al,” said Charon.

“But he is gay Charon. What strange and wonderful dreams are the stuff women are made of,” said James in disbelief.

“No we will be wed, I simply have to find him,” said Charon.

“So you do not love me, me?” Said James, dewey eyed, yet proud and angry now at the slight of not just not being the shepherd to her moonlight. “Carrion is mine life. Is fate a damned demon of devilish pretentions? My oblivion destroys my very form yet within this my love for you is a chime that would break and burn any not made of stronger stuff. So nothing remains. Just love,”

Charon totally oblivious to James oblivion of the heart simply said,

“Now please may you kindly leave your grace.”

“You pugnacious Chavisherian, tempting man’s weakness then throwing them away,” said James as Charon de Brute began to pluck the petals from the flowers he had given her. With that James left.

Julia De Caesar

James wandered through the streets, much put out by the ludicrousness of Charon. As beautiful as she was so was her feminine madness. He wondered hysterically. Aroused in anger he punched a nearby carriage. A voice came from the carriage that James had thought was empty.

“Is someone there? “ asked the voice. Coming out of the carriage came a blonde lady, her hair up in a small hat with a little rose placed in it. She looked down at the Duke, himself rather red and a little embarrassed as his omnipotence was somehow shaken.

“Oh my lady, I am sorry to have disturbed you, it is simply a bad day,” said James.

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The lady looked a charismatic leader, eyes of marching soldiers come to capture the essence of Jame's. He seemed somehow to feel that this was someone who seemed most comely and attractive.

"It is not a trouble my good sir, I was on my way to a meeting of suffragettes. Would you be pleased to accompany me on this trip, I may be able to give you a lift to your destination," said the lady.

"It would be an honour my lady to be your chaperone and protector, by the way what is your name" said James .

"I need no protector, and my name is Julia, Julia de Caesar, though your company would dearly feel comforting," said Julia.

"As you wish my lady," said James with a bow and entered the carriage.

Inside the carriage, decorated with lush materials of velvet and silk, it appeared as a small palace of eastern origin, yet it had a greater warmth for James to be so near such a lady. His mind pondered as he looked into Julia's eyes of Charon, his love.

"So what has made your day bad?" Asked Julia.

"Irrationality of the female species," replied James.

"I would wonder if you see in the other only yourself?" Said Julia.

"Women will never understand that their nature is a weaker sex, a playful gaggle of girls and giggling madness," said James.

"You talk as some of my friends do who say we should do away with men altogether if they are not to consider the logic of equality?" Said Julia in a cold rational tone.

"Oh my poor little girl, your heart and passion are so easily pricked," said James.

"I do disagree on part of that point. A pricked heart blossoms most powerfully," said Julia.

Somehow the naughty look in her eye made James feelings for Charon transfer onto hers. They had the same looks of cheekiness and virility. A lack of innocence. With that Julia pressed her lips against James, pushing him down onto the lush velvet of the carriage, her tongue driving powerfully into his, grasping him as one would an animal one was fighting. She tamed this lion and brought her maine to his face. Passion and the scent of her sex filled his nostrils and he felt somehow powerful holding her need on him. As they engaged in this act Julia grinded herself against him vigorously until she came to express her passion in an almighty gasp and shout.

"Is everything alright my lady in there?" Asked the driver from outside.

"Oh yes, yes, yes," screamed Julia.



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