

ERASMUS DESIDERIUS

A MERRY DIALOGUE
DECLARINGE THE
PROPERTIES OF
SHROWDE SHREWS
AND HONEST WIVES

Desiderius Erasmus

**A Merry Dialogue Declaringe
the Properties of Shrowde
Shrews and Honest Wives**

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Eulalia. God spede, & a thousand mine old acquaintāce. xantippa.

xan. As many agayn, my dere hert. Eulalia. me semets ye ar warē much faire now of late.

Eula. Saye you so? gyue you me a mocke at the first dash.

xan. Nay veryly but I take you so.

Eula. Happely mi new gown maketh me to loke fayrer then I sholde doe.

xan. Sothe you saye, I haue not sene a mynioner this many dayes, I reken it Englishe cloth.

Eu. It is english stuff and dyed in Venis.

xan. It is softer then sylke what an oriente purpel colore here is who gaue you so rich a gift.

Eu. How shoulde honeste women come by their gere? but by their husbandes.

xā. Happy arte thou that hathe suche an husband, but I wolde to god for his passyon, that I had maryed an husband of clowts, when I had married col my good mā.

Eula. Why say ye so. I pray you, are you at oddes now.

xā. I shal neuer be at one w^t him ye se how beggerly I go. I haue not an hole smock to put on my backe, and he is wel contente with all: I praye god I neuer come in heuen & I be not ashamed oftymes to shewe my head, when I se other wiues how net and trim they go that ar matched with farre porer mē then he is.

Eula. The apparell of honest wiues is not in the aray of the body, nor in the tirements of their head as saynte Peter the apostle teacheth vs (and that I learned a late at a sermon) but in good lyuyng and honest conuersacion and in the ornamentes of the soule, the cōmon buenes ar painted up, to please manye mennes eies we ar trime ynough yf we please our husbands only.

xan. But yet my good man so euyll wylling to bestow ought vpon his wyfe, maketh good chere, and lassheth out the dowrye that hee hadde with mee no small pot of wine.

Eulaly, where vpon?

xantipha, wheron hym lykethe beste, at the tauerne, at the stewes and at the dyce.

Eulalia Peace saye not so.

xan. wel yet thus it is, then when he cōmeth home to me at midnight, longe watched for, he lyeth rowtyng lyke a sloyne all the leue longe nyght, yea and now and thē he all bespeweth his bed, and worse then I will say at this tyme.

Eulali. Peace thou dyshonesteth thy self, when thou doest dishonesteth thy husbād.

xantip. The deuyll take me bodye and bones but I had leuer lye by a sow with pigges, then with suche a bedfelowe.

Eulali. Doest thou not then take him vp, wel favoredly for stūbling.

Xantip. As he deserueth I spare no tonge.

Eulalia. what doth he thē.

xantip. At the first breake he toke me vp vengeably, trusting that he shoulde haue shakē me of and put me to scilence with his crabid wordes.

Eula Came neuer your hote wordes vnto hād-strokes.

xantip. On a tyme we fel so farre at wordes y^t we wer almost by y^e eares together.

Eula what say you womā?

xan. He toke vp a staffe wandryng at me, as the deuill had bene on hym ready to laye me on the bones.

Eula. were thou not redye to ron in at the bēch hole.

xanti. Nay mary I warrant the. I gat me a thre foted stole in hand, & he had but ones layd his littell finger on me, he shulde not haue founde me lame. I woulde haue holden his nose to the grindstōe

Eulalia. A newe found shelde, ye wanted but youre dystaffe to haue made you a speare.

xantip. And he shoulde not greatlye a laughed at his parte.

Eulali. Ah my frynde. xantypa. that way is neither good nor godly,

xantippa what is neither good nor godly. yf he wyll not vse me, as hys wyfe: I wil not take him for my husbāde.

Eulalya. But Paule sayeth that wyues shoulde bee boner and buxome vnto their husbādes with all humylytye, and Peter also bryngethe vs an example of Sara, that called her husbāde Abrahame, Lorde.

xantippa. I know that as well as you thē y^e same paule say that men shoulde loue theyr wyues, as Christ loues his spouse the churche let him do his duete I wil do myne.

Eula. But for all that, when the matter is so farre that the one muste forber the other it is reason that the woman giue place vnto the man,

xan. Is he meete to be called my husbāde that maketh me his vnderlyng and his dryuel?

Eula. But tel me dame xātip. Would he neuer offre the stripes after that

xātip. Not a stripe, and therin he was the wyser man for & he had he should haue repented euery vayne in hys harte.

Eulali. But thou offered him foule wordes plentie,

xantip. And will do.

Eula. What doth he y^e meane seasō.

xantip. What doth he sometye cowcheth an hogeshed, sometime he doth nothing but stande and laughe at me, other whyle takethe hys Lute wheron is scarslie three strynges layenge on that as fast as he may dryue because he would not here me.

Eula. Doeth that greue thee?

xantippa. To beyonde home, manie a tyme I haue much a do to hold my handes.

Eula. Neighbour. xantip. wylt thou gyue me leaue to be playn with the.

xantippa Good leaue haue you.

Eula. Be as bolde on me agayne our olde acquayntaunce and amite, euen frō our chyldehode, would it should be so.

xantippa. Trueth you saie, there was neuer woman kinde that I fauoured more

Elaly Whatsoeuer thy husbād be, marke well this, chaunge thou canst not, In the olde lawe, where the deuill hadde cast aboone betwene the man and the wife, at the worste waye they myght be deuorsed, but now that remedie is past, euē till death depart you he must nedes be thy husbāde, and thou hys wyfe,

xan. Il mote they thryue & thei that taken away that liberty from vs

Eulalia. Beware what thou sayest, it was christes act.

Xā. I can euil beleue that

Eula. It is none otherwyse, now it is beste that eyther of you one beyng with an other, ye laboure to liue at reste and peace.

xantypa. Why? can I forgeue him a new,

Eu. It lieth great parte in the womē, for the orderinge of theyr husbādes.

xan. Leadest thou a mery life with thine.

Eula Now all is well.

xan. Ergo ther was somewhat to do at your fyrste metying

Eula. Neuer no greate busynes, but yet as it, happeneth now and than betwene man & womā, there was foule cloudes a loft, that might haue made a storme but that they were ouer blowen with good humanitie and wyse handlynge. Euery man hath hys maner and euery mā hath his seuerall aptite or mynde, and thinkes hys owne way best, & yf we list not to lie there liueth no mā without faulte, which yf anie were elles, ywis in wedlocke they ought to know and not vtterly hated

xan, you say well,

Eulalya. It happeneth many times that loue dayes breketh betwene man and wife, before y^e one be perfittly knowē vnto the other beware of that in any wife, for when malice is ones begon, loue is but barely redressed agayne, namely, yf the mater grow furthe unto bytter checkes, & shamfull raylinges such things as are fastened with glew, yf a manne wyll all to shake them strayght waye whyle the glew is warme, they soone fal in peces, but after y^e glew is ones dried vp they cleue together so fast as anie thing, wherefore at the beginning a meanes must be made, that loue mai encrease and be made sure betwene y^e man & the wife, & that is best brought aboute by gentillesse and fayre condycions, for the loue that beautie onelie causeth, is in a maner but a cheri faire

Xan. But I praye you hartelye tell me, by what pollycy ye brought your good man to folow your daunce.

Eula. I wyll tell you on this condicyon, that ye will folowe me.

xan. I can.

Eula, It is as easy as water if ye cā find in your hart to do it, nor yet no good time past for he is a yong mā, and you ar but agirle of age, and I trowe it is not a yere ful sins ye wer married.

Xā All thys is true

Eulalia. I wyll shew you then. But you must kepe it secret

xantip. with a ryght good wyl.

Eula. This was my chyefe care, to kepe me alwayes in my housbandes fauoure, that there shulde nothyng angre him I obserued his appetite and pleasure I marked the tymes bothe whan he woulde be pleased and when he wold be all byshrwd, as they tameth the Elephantes and Lyons or suche beastes that can not be wonne by strēgth

xantypa. Suche a beaste haue I at home.

Eula. Thei that goth vnto the Elephantes weare no white garmentes, nor they that tame wylde bulles, weare no blasyng reedes, for experience teacheth, that suche beastes bee madde with those colours, like as the Tygers by the sound of tumbrels be made so wode, that thei plucke theymself in peces. Also thei y^t

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