"Honour is a Mere Scutcheon: and so Ends my Catechism”

Translated by: Tanisha Chakma

Agathias

Τί στενάχεις; - Φιλέω. - Τίνα; - Παρθένον. - Ἡ ῥά γε καλήν; -
Καλήν ἡμετέροις ὀμματί σανομένην. -
Ποῦ δὲ μὴ εἰσενόησας; - Ἐκεῖ ποτὲ δεῖπνον ἐπελθὼν
ζωνή κεκλιμένην ἐδρακον ἐν στιβάδι. -
Ἐλπίζεις δὲ τυχεῖν; - Ναὶ ναί, φίλος· ἄμφραδίην δὲ
οὐ ζητῶ φιλήν, ἀλλ' ὑποκλεπτομένην. -
Τὸν νόμιμον μᾶλλον φεύγεις γάμον; - Ἀτρεκὲς ἔγνων,
ὅτι γε τῶν κτεάνων ποὺλῦ τὸ λειπόμενον. -
Ἔγνως; οὐ φιλέεις, ἐψεύσαο· πῶς δύναται γὰρ
ψυχῆ ἐρωμανέειν ὅρθα λογιζομένη; (5.267)

Why do you sigh?
-- I am in love.
…With whom?
-- A lady.
Is she lovely?
-- To my eyes she appears lovely.
Where did you see her?
-- At the public feast where I had gone, I laid my eyes on her lying on a bed of straw.
Do you hope to have a chance with her?
-- Yes indeed, my friend. But it is not a public affair that I seek, but rather a clandestine one.
Then you do not intend to marry her?
-- I have learnt that she has not a penny to her name.
Is that so? Then it is not love that you feel; you’re mistaken. For how can a soul be madly in love and yet so very calculating?