

Konstantinos Theotokis, *Honor and Money*

Translation of chapters IV and XII translated by Prof. Nektaria Klapaki.

This translation has been made for the purposes of the class only—please do not circulate outside of the class.

IV.

“Andreas”, she said inaudibly but with a steady voice, “was your intention to shame my poor home?”

“Oh, mother”, said Rini breaking into tears, “oh, mother”.

“No”, Andreas said and, turning even more red.

“Didn’t it occur to you”, she continued bitterly, “that we are poor people, weak, that we don’t have anything else except our honor and hope for God’s mercy, and that I am the only supporter of my family; me, a poor woman, almost alone because it’s as if I don’t have the man I have?” And she started crying.

“Oh, mother”, said Rini again with a sigh, “he will tell you; his heart is made out of gold; he cannot put up with dishonor”.

“Why did you let him in? Why did you come in, Andreas? The neighbor in the square is gossiping about this; and she’s right; who’s going to marry my poor daughter now that you harmed her thus?”

“Listen”, Andreas said pissed off, “the entire suburb knows me as an honorable man, and you yourself know that very well. What do you want me to do? Love does not operate the way parents want. Love emerges by itself. I will marry your daughter Rini”.

“There’s nothing else you can do”, said the mother with a sigh, “that’s the only way our honor will be restored”.

“If you want”, Andreas said again in a nonchalant way, “bring the priest and the godfather now to consummate the business. However, Mrs. Epistimi, you know the state in which my home is. My poor father left me debts I keep trying to pay off. What can I do only with my two hands? You can open my heart and you will find Rini inside. I love her since that night; her eyes have burned me. But how can I propose to her now? How can I raise our children?”

“Is this what you worry about? Doesn’t God help? You are both hard-working people. You don’t need anyone’s help”.

“That’s not true, Mrs. Epistimi; my home will come down even more; it will be taken away; I will be publicly ashamed!”

“We are both hard-working people. Do we need anyone’s help?”, said Rini crying, “[I could stay] even in a shed with our love; would we exchange our life for all the wealth in the world?”

“I want you to have a lady-like life once we get married; I cannot marry you under these low circumstances. What do you give, Mrs. Epistimi?”

“My daughter”, Epistimi responded with pride wiping off her eyes, “along with my blessing! Why don’t you act in an honorable way since you are a man of honor? Do you love her? Take her and may God help you. We’re poor people; you knew that from the start!”

“Without anything?” he asked saddened.

“You did harm on her! And she’s a weak human being, the poor thing. Her share is three hundred, nothing else”.

“That’s nothing”, he said, crossing his hands; “what can I do with three hundred?”

“You did harm on her”, the mother said again outraged; “if you are a man of honor, show it; otherwise, you are responsible for her”.

“Give me six hundred to free my home from the debt at least. Damn the money!”

“Oh, please give him the money, mother!” Rini said crying and supplicating her mother; “with these you will buy off my happiness. No matter how many men are in the world, even princes, nobody will ever love me like Andreas; and nor will I ever love anyone like him”.

“What are you saying?”, responded her mother, casting a stern glance at her.

“You made a mistake and then I should do injustice to your other siblings? There are two young females after you who are growing very quickly, and your brother will end up in the streets. What else should I do for all of you? Didn’t I do all I could do? I don’t have any more money!”

“This way, it’s impossible”, said Andreas and he got emotional.

Then Mrs. Epistimi became angry. She raised her hand, and said to him with sparks in her eyes:

“That’s how your household was from the very start; that’s how it was! And it took a downward turn, which it deserved. And you are following this example. Oh, damn you, why did you have to disturb the peace of my household, to harm the best girl of the suburb, oh, I wish gold turns into soil in your hands!”

“Don’t curse”, said the maiden fearfully and she started hitting her bosom; “he did not mean to do this, mother; he loves me; give him the money, give it to him!”

“And you, silly girl”, responded angrily the mother, “since you ended up like this and you lost your youth, go shave off your head and lock yourself up in a monastery, poor thing. Oh, what can I do with you!”. And then the mother threw herself in a chair, having hidden her honest face with her hands, and she started crying, bitterly and silently.

All three of them were crying.

“Oh”, said Rini timidly, looking at Andreas with wet eyes while grabbing her fingers; “we are both hard-working people. Do we need anyone’s help?”

“I cant”, said the young lad distressed; “tomorrow we’re going to be kicked out in the street; I cannot marry you in poverty”.

They all stayed silent for a while. The room was getting dark for the sun had set; nothing could be heard except the shallow breathing of Mrs. Epistimi who was sitting motionless. That evening, none of them thought of turning the light on.

And now it was Rini’s turn to get angry and to rebel in despair:

“It is you, mother”, she said in a coarse voice, “not Andreas, it is you who is responsible for this because you cannot spare a little money! You have money but you don’t want to give it. I know very well that you have ten and twelve hundred; you do business every day growing your money. And now...now you want to lock me up in a monastery, your own daughter, me, when I have worked and earned my dowry with my own labor, so you can leave more money to your other children. Oh, mother, mother!”

“Your own share is three hundred”, she responded in a coarse voice without raising her head.

“I will take you”, Andreas whispered to her ear; “be patient!”, he said and he hurriedly left the house.

Shortly afterward, Epistimi was calm. Her daughter was still standing, as if she was nailed on her spot, without saying a word.

“Turn on the lamp”, the mother ordered, lifting her head as if nothing had happened. And after the light was on she continued in a nonchalant way: “Now, let’s assess the situation. What happened? You did a mistake. You’ll pay for it, of course. But it’s not that grave. No? Only your reputation was compromised. But you still have your three hundred. It was not your destiny to marry Andreas; now, you will marry someone who’s beneath [you or beneath Andreas]. That’s all. As long as you stop here.”

“No, mother”, she said, “I will marry Anreas, nobody else”, and she went to the kitchen.

At that moment, the old man came in the house, looking thin, drunk, and bent. He had heard the last words and asked, with a silly smile, closing his eyes:

“What’s going on?”

“Take a look at your daughter!”, his wife responded, “all this comes from you. Had you been at home, instead of at the tavern, nothing would have happened”.

“My Rini?”, he asked, ready to cry.

“Yes, your Rini!”, she replied, “she let in here...”

“Anreas is asking my hand”, interrupted the maiden crying, “but he wants six hundred and she doesn’t give it to him; she doesn’t want me to enter a fortunate marriage”.

“Give it to him”, said the drunkard in compassion, “give it to him, woman”.

“And what about the other girls? And what about us? And what about the boy?”

“Give it to him, woman, God will provide for us!”, he said and went to the bedroom to sleep.

“No, no!”, yelled Mrs. Epistimi.

XII.

Andreas’s wound was nothing. After they washed his wound and bandaged him in a pharmacy, he set out for the suburb. He was going to find Rini again, to take the money, pay off his debts, and he was planning to prepare his wedding for next Sunday. Freed from poverty, he found himself again, he became a good human being again, and his heart woke up again to love’s calling.

Everyone in the streets congratulated him on having saved his life, while in the suburb where everything was known immediately, people started to gather around him in order to find out directly from him what had happened. Everyone was content with the way things turned out and everyone wished him the best.

He went to his home; but he did not find Rini there, so without wasting any time, he went to the house of his mother-in-law.

Everyone cried there, Rini, her two sisters and the boy.

He approached her and tried to kiss her.

She looked at him in grievance, as if she scolded him for his behavior, but she did not resist his embrace. Would she find at the end some sort of gallantry in his heart?

As if he had immediately forgotten what he had done all these days, he said to her happily: “We’re getting married on Sunday!”

She smiled.

"The poverty is gone", he continued; "we're leaving poverty behind! Your mother got angry, she hit me, but it's all right. She will give me all the money she has, but I am going to take only the ten hundred I need".

She looked at her siblings in pain, turned her gaze down and did not respond.

"Why aren't you happy?" he asked her.

At that moment the old man, Trinkoulos, entered the house. He was shaking, thin, scared, his eyes were hazy from drinking wine all these years. But now he was sober and he was crying. He had overheard Andreas's last words and he hugged his daughter with love. And then he could no longer control himself. He started sobbing heavily and then started bellowing in order not to cry out loud.

Saddened, Andreas kept looking at these two human beings, who loved each other, who suffered because of him and who were now silent.

At the end, her father told her while holding her close to his chest: "You have been made unhappy".

He did not say who did that. Maybe, he was thinking of his wife but Andreas thought that his words implied him, and he said: "It was my fault; but now everything has been rectified. On Sunday I am getting married. Here are the keys to the dresser. She said that you should give me ten hundred".

"And you think you can buy off love too? Oh, what have you done!", Rini said bitterly, and she started crying.

"Love?", he asked her in anger; "don't I have [your] love?"

"No!", she responded, "no! You were ready to sell me for some money without which you would not marry me; gone is love now. The bird [of love] has flown far away!"

"It will return to its sweet nest", he responded saddened, "our life will be a paradise!"

"No!", she said; "not after what you've done, no! And even if I had loved you, I would not have come with you. I am a hard-working woman. Whose help do I need?" And in a moment she continued: "Why should I do injustice to my siblings?"

"She's responsible for your unhappy state", the father said again bitterly, being completely sober. "Why didn't she want to give [him] the money right from the start, as I told her? Damn the money!"

"Let's go", Andreas said.

"No!", she said determined; "our paths separate from now on. I will go to a foreign place, a foreign world, a different land; I will work to support myself and to raise the child I will give birth to. My mother will give me recommendation letters so I can find employment elsewhere. She can obtain these letters from the ladies she's working for. No, I am not coming with you. I am a hard-working woman. Whose help do I need?" And after a moment, as if she responded to an inner thought of hers, she cried again: "I am not coming, I am not coming!"

Andreas looked at her closely and realized that from now on all his words would be pointless.

"Damn the money!", he cried in despair. "Gone is my happiness!"

And immediately he left the house.