

## THE MAYOR'S TALE

### THE MAYOR'S PROLOGUE

"Madame Mayor, it's now your turn to tell  
A tale," the bartender said. "You must know well  
The wily ways of politics and power.  
There's plenty there to while away an hour,  
Though I would rather that you take less time  
Since soon enough the gambling's end will  
chime."

"I'll speak of love and marriage," the mayor said,  
"But from a woman's point of view. You've led  
Us to believe that women are to blame  
For putting out too soon love's lambent flame.  
But men are far more faithless, there's no doubt,  
As in this next sad tale you'll find out!"

### THE MAYOR'S TALE

Candace was still virgin at eighteen,  
Innocent by choice, and not too keen  
On being just a notch on some boy's pride,  
Not loved sufficiently to be a bride.

Although she burned with natural desire,  
She knew how to mitigate that fire  
By letting it burn awhile, for time would tell  
How much a suitor loved her, and how well.

She had learned this lesson from a bird,

And lest you think this statement sounds absurd,  
Recall with what good sense a parrot speaks,  
While crows make tools of wires with their beaks.

Aesop's crow put stones into a cup  
To bring the level of the water up  
To where he could put down his beak and drink.  
Now who says that an animal can't think?  
As recently was proven, when a crow  
Did this in a lab, as all well know.

Birds marry, cheat, divorce, and mourn their dead  
Just as we do, as is often said,  
And feel the pangs of passion and desire,  
The joys of parenthood, the inner fire  
That welds two into one, so that we see  
Never one, but two, where e'er they be.

And they can speak, albeit in songs and cries,  
Which translate into truths and also lies --  
Yes, birds lie as we do, for the same  
Reasons, both utility and shame.  
But enough of this -- all know it all too well!  
Back to Candace -- I have a tale to tell!

One day as she was walking through a park,  
A place one wouldn't frequent after dark,  
With thickets that could hide all sorts of crimes,  
She heard deep moans, so pitiful at times  
That she was moved to search for who might be  
Crying out in pain so piteously.

She searched in places dangerous to go,  
Driven by anxiety to know  
Whether she might alleviate the pain  
That would such grievous wailing sustain.

In a little while she found a hawk  
In such distress that she could barely talk,  
A female falcon bleeding from her breast,  
Perched on a branch far from any nest.  
As she cried she plucked hard at her heart  
As though she meant to tear her breast apart.

"Dear falcon," Candace said. "Please, what might  
be  
The sorrow that you suffer in that tree?  
Pray come down and perch upon my shoulder,

And tell me of your pain. Though you are older,  
Perhaps you will find comfort just in sharing  
Your story with a listener who is caring."

"Oh, what's the good of counting down this  
sorrow?"

The bird replied. "I won't be here tomorrow  
With any luck. My heart cannot long bear  
This burden! But my tale I would share  
In hope that you might well avoid my fate,  
If for saving you it's not too late.

"You look so kind and innocent, I must  
Warn you of what men you shouldn't trust.  
Ah! If only someone had warned me!  
But to the tale, as you shall shortly see.

"I was young once, and innocent as you,  
All hot with desire, but very mindful, too,  
Of all the snares that men put in our way  
To have their fun, then leave before we lay  
Our eggs. But we can't hatch them on our own,  
For we must eat, and they will die alone.

"It takes two to raise our little chicks,  
And long, hard work, so schemers use their tricks  
To make us think they love us, all the while  
Lying through their beaks! Oh, how they smile  
And flatter us! To make us think we were  
The very pitch of grace! Such words would stir  
A stone to longing! And they seem so true,  
Coming from a male point of view,  
A mirror in which we ourselves can see  
Precisely as we always dreamed we'd be!

"I must admit, I lusted after those  
Who courted me with poetry, not prose,  
Who trembled with desire for my love  
And played so well the music that would move  
My heart, while I danced tipsy to their tune,  
Drowning in the liquor of their swoon!

"Of course in time I fell in love with one  
Who seemed so handsome, strong, and full of  
fun,  
So much in love with me, so quick and sure,  
He seemed he could be nothing less than pure.

"I gave myself to him, and thought no boy  
Again could bring me to such perfect joy.  
And so we were a pair, I thought for life,  
And went to build our nest as man and wife.

"But just as he was so in love with me,  
My lover was enamored serially,  
Truly, truly passionate about  
Each present love in turn, wholly without  
The need for artifice, though well he knew  
He would move on as soon as he was through.

"We had not hatched our first ill-fated brood  
When he turned nasty, in an ugly mood,  
Irritable with having to supply  
Our chicks with food, asking himself why  
He'd gotten so entangled in my snare,  
As though I were the one who put him there!  
Oh, God! It was so painful just to hear him  
That soon I couldn't suffer being near him!

"But we took turns at guarding well our nest  
While the other hunted without rest.  
It's hard, hard work to raise a hungry brood,  
To supply ourselves and them with food,  
While those romantic males, good for love,  
Poor husbands and providers often prove,  
For all they would pursue is their own pleasure,  
And their own happiness is all they treasure,  
Loving till the ecstasy is done,  
Then looking, looking for another one.

"As my far-roving husband did, and when  
He found another willing, virgin hen,  
He disappeared, leaving me alone  
With eight young chicks to manage on my own!

"Ah, my dear one! Listen to my tale,  
And learn to recognize those who will fail  
To do what's right once love becomes for life,  
And what was once a wench becomes a wife.

"For those who will excite the hottest lust  
Are those who vanish quickly when they must  
Do their share of drudgery, while they  
Who might not women's hearts so quickly sway,  
Are likely to make husbands good and true,  
Their bonds of glory ever to renew!

"But you cannot imagine my despair  
Since you are not a bird. Just see me there  
Waiting by my nest for his return,  
Waiting, waiting, waiting, just to learn  
From a passing friend what he had done,  
Nesting somewhere with another one!

"What was I to do? My chicks cried out  
With hunger! And as for now I was without  
A mate to watch the nest as I found food,  
I had to leave my chicks for their own good,  
Circling back and forth so I could see  
Whether they were safe. But presently  
I spied a tasty squirrel on the ground  
And dove for him. I could not look around,  
But took him in my talons in the air  
And turned to see my chicks no longer there!

"Ah!" I screamed. "Oh, no! Please no!" and  
dropped  
The squirrel to the ground. Time just stopped,  
As though the clock were shattered at that hour,  
And so would read forever. I flew to scour  
The area around my nest and found  
Some tell-tale feathers scattered on the ground,  
Evidence of massacre, but none  
Of my poor babes survived -- not even one!

"Then how the hatred filled me like a fire,  
And I flew out to find that wretched liar  
Who talked of love undying for his pleasure,  
While all he cared about was joy and leisure!

"Days I flew until I found him near  
Another female hawk, his latest dear,  
The two about to breed another brood  
For him to abandon! I could not help intrude!

"Stop!" I cried, 'or it will be too late  
To save your chicks from my poor chicks' sad  
fate!  
This cad abandoned me, as I am sure  
He's done to many an innocent and pure  
Virgin, who believes his loving lies,  
And gives herself to still his plaintive cries.

"He loves himself alone, and females are

But mirrors to his solitary star,  
Proof of prowess, proof that he exists,  
Something he's not sure of without lists  
Of conquests, since his soul is so alone.  
Save yourself! His heart is made of stone!

"Off the female flew, and so he turned,  
Oblivious to the hatred he had earned.  
'Sorry!' he said. 'I see your jealousy  
Has turned your vicious temper against me.  
What have I done? Would you have me stay  
With you when love is gone? Why, I pray?  
You want me to pretend my love for you,  
To murmur lovely words that aren't true?"

"I pledge myself to an authentic life,  
A value even higher than a wife,  
And would for both our sakes be honest, so  
What we see will be what we will know.  
You should be grateful for my honesty,  
So you might also live authentically."

"Our chicks are dead!" I cried. "So much for your  
Excuses! Now between us there is war!"  
And so we fought until I broke his neck,  
And he fell bleeding from the skies, a wreck  
That did not touch my sorrow, not at all,  
For I felt nothing as I saw him fall.  
My grief so swallowed up my victory  
That vengeance held no bit of joy for me."

The bird flew back upon her branch and cried  
As though all torn to pieces deep inside.  
"Please go!" she said to Candace. "Leave me now!  
But if you care for me, remember how  
I suffered, and avoid my tragic fate!

"And to your fellow females please relate  
This tale of perfidy and fatal woe,  
That they might in time this harsh truth  
know:  
That men whom women lust for love them not.  
So do not listen to romantic rot  
But look for men who mean the things they say,  
And who, though they seem dull, at least will  
stay.  
Now go, and do not seek me out tomorrow!  
Only death will mitigate my sorrow."

Candace blew the bird a kiss and turned  
To leave, taking to heart what she had learned,  
Remaining virgin till she was mature  
Enough to judge the lure within allure,  
And when she married virgin, married well.  
That is all – I have no more to tell.