

**Medusa: A Portrait**

TO THE HON. IDA COCHRAN HAUGHTON, VISCOUNTESS  
 WOODYBY———

MY LADY:—

I shou'd be but a Cheater, and unworthy of the poetick Art, were I not to acknowledge to you by this Dedication the Indebtedness I bear you. For 'tis plain that I may my self claim but partial Credit for a Picture which, without so illustrious a Model, wou'd never have been drawn with any Sort of Fidelity. Truly, the Satirist desiring to shew certain Traits of Mind, wou'd be hard put to it, had he not before him some Sort of living Example; and I am in Candour forc'd to concede, that of the Qualities I here seek to pourtray, no human Being cou'd display so great and flourishing an Abundance as your self. I shall ever count it a Piece of the greatest good Fortune, if my Satire proceed, that your Hatred of me mov'd you to slander and vilify me behind my Back; for lacking that Provocation I shou'd have neither had the Temerity to expose your Failings, nor possess so compleat a Fund of Lies and Calumnies from which to draw a Picture of such Venom as I never thought before to exist upon Earth.

Conscious, therefore, of my Debt, I will commend this unpretentious Effort to your well-known Graciousness, and beg leave to subscribe my self,

MY LADY,

Your Ladyship's most obedient,  
 most devoted, humble servant,

THEOBALDUS SENECTISSIMUS, ARMIGER.

Soak'd in her noxious venom, puff'd with gall,  
 Like some fat toad see dull MEDUSA sprawl;  
 Foul with her spleen, repugnant to the sight,  
 She crudely whines amidst eternal night.  
 From wit and sense by slothful brain debarr'd,  
 And with the chains of age and sourness scarr'd,  
 Her half-liv'd life one hateful wish reveals:  
 To give to others all the pain she feels!  
 Unschool'd in youth, unchasten'd by the years,  
 Grotesque with ignorance, absurd with fears;

5

10

Shunn'd for her ugly face and fretful mind,  
 She crawls alone, at war with all mankind.  
 In her black heart no love or kindness dwells,  
 But hate that shocks, and malice that repels;  
 Her narrow thoughts an equal vileness shew, 15  
 For there but envy and suspicion grow.  
 Blind to the truth, by jealous passion fann'd,  
 She slanders all she cannot understand,  
 And with loose tongue the sinner and the saint 20  
 Alike befouls in one inclusive taint.  
 Slow to see goodness, quick to smell a fault,  
 She scours the earth for victims to assault;  
 With what strain'd words she doles her lagging praise!  
 With what glad force her instant hatreds blaze!  
 Sluggish of wit, her loathsome bulk attests 25  
 One spark alone—a rage that never rests!  
 But not content to be an open fool,  
 Or candid knave, she seeks to cheat by rule;  
 Her want of sense in quoted saws she cloaks,  
 And with trite pelf a double laugh provokes, 30  
 Whilst all her cruelty must candour seem,  
 Tho' doubly evil for the stratagem.  
 So lurks MEDUSA, scourge of all around,  
 With hate, spleen, vanity, and dulness bound.  
 Anxious the wretch that courts her tardy smile, 35  
 And hapless he that knows her sneers and guile;  
 For since her envy flays all greater minds,  
 In ev'ry one alive a foe she finds—  
 Save for a little band of kindred sort,  
 In torpor mighty, but in wisdom short. 40  
 Void of all humour but the sly grimace,  
 She sees a challenge in each smiling face,  
 And spreads with twofold zeal her net malign,  
 Since she as injur'd innocence may shine.  
 From such a pest what rescue may we gain? 45  
 What spell may crush her hypocritic strain?  
 Her human form (perchance 'twas human once)  
 Forbids us smother the offending dunce;  
 Besides, we hesitate to smother such  
 A reptile thing, repellent to the touch. 50  
 A musket-ball but little harm could do  
 Where there's no brain or heart to hurtle thro',

So still the monster heaves and puffs and rolls,  
The toothless tearer of a thousand souls!  
So must she fume, insatiate, sour, and wild;  
Deaf, stupid, blear'd; by ev'ry tongue revil'd:  
So must we wait, till Heav'n the curse revokes,  
And the swoln snake in her own poison chokes!

55