

Alciphron, Letters, Letters of the Courtesans: Leontion to Lamia (Fictional Epistle)

Post by “Charles” of June 9, 2020 at 8:01 PM

Nothing is harder to please, it seems, than an old man who is just starting to behave like a boy again. How this Epicurus is controlling me, criticizing everything, suspecting everything, writing me incomprehensible letters and chasing me out of his garden. By Aphrodite, even if he had been an Adonis, though nearly eighty years old, I wouldn't put up with him, this lice-ridden and sickly man who is all wrapped up in fleece instead of felt. How long must one endure this philosopher? Let him have his [Principal Doctrines](#) on Nature and his distorted Canons, and permit me to live according to nature, my own mistress, without anger and violence. I really have such a besieger, not at all like you, Lamia, have in Demetrius. It's not possible to lead a virtuous life on account of this man. He wants to be a Socrates with his chatter and irony, and he believes Pythocles is an Alcibiades and thinks he can make me his Xanthippe. I will end up leaving for whatever place and flee from land to land rather than to endure his incessant letters.

But now he has ventured into the most terrible and intolerable act of all, which is why I'm writing to you, hoping you'll tell me what to do. You know that handsome

fellow Timarchus from Cephisia. I don't deny that I'm quite familiar with the young man (I have for a long time been truthful to you, Lamia) and I almost got my first lesson in love from him; he took my virginity when I was living next door. Since that time he has never ceased sending me all sorts of nice things like clothes, gold, Indian maids and Indian servants. I won't mention the rest.

But he anticipates the seasons in the smallest delicacies, so that nobody may taste them before I do. So that's the kind of lover about whom Epicurus says, 'Shut him out and don't let him come near you.' What kind of names do you think he's calling him?

Not as an Athenian or a philosopher *** or of Cappadocia coming to Greece for the first time. Even if the whole city of Athens were full of Epicures, by Artemis, I wouldn't weigh them all against Timarchus's arm, or even against his finger!

What do you say, Lamia? Isn't this true? Am I not right?

And don't, I beg of you by Aphrodite, don't let this answer

enter your mind: 'But he's a philosopher, he's distinguished, he has many friends.' He may even take what I

have, and teach others. It is not doctrine that warms me,

but the object of my desire, and I desire Timarchus, by

Demeter! What's more, on account of me the young man

has been forced to abandon everything, the Lyceum, his

youth, his comrades and friends, in order to live with Epicurus and flatter him and chant his windy doctrines. This

Atreus says, 'Get out of my realm and don't approach

Leontium!' Like it wouldn't be more fair if Timarchus said
'No, don't you approach mine!' And the man who is young puts up with his elderly rival,
the latecomer, but the other can't stand him who has a more rightful claim.
By the gods, I implore you, Lamia, what should I do?
By the mysteries, by the release from these misfortunes,
when I think about my separation from Timarchus I immediately turn cold, my hands and feet
begin to sweat and my
heart turns upside down. I beg you, take me into your
house for a few days, and I'll make him aware of what good
things he was enjoying with me in the house. He's not
going to stand the boredom any more; that I know for sure.
He will immediately send out Metrodorus, Hermarchus
and Polyaeus as ambassadors. How often, Lamia, do you
think I've told him in private: 'What are you doing,
Epicurus? Don't you know how Timocrates, the brother of
Metrodorus, is making fun of you because of this, in the
assembly, in the theatre, in front of the other sophists?' But
what can I do with this man? He's shameless in his desire,
and I'm going to be just like him, shameless, and not let go
of my Timarchus. Farewell.