

THE SATYRICON

PUTEOLI

1. [*Encolpius*]... 'Our professors of rhetoric are hag-ridden in the same way, surely, when they shout "I got these wounds fighting for your freedom! This eye I lost for you. Give me a hand to lead me to my children. I am hamstrung, my legs can't support me." We could put up with even this stuff if it were a royal road to eloquence. But the only result of these pompous subjects and this empty thunder of platitudes, is that when young speakers first enter public life they think they have been landed on another planet. I'm sure the reason such young nitwits are produced in our schools is because they have no contact with anything of any use in everyday life. All they get is pirates standing on the beach, dangling manacles, tyrants writing orders for sons to cut off their fathers' heads, oracles advising the sacrifice of three or more virgins during a plague – a mass of cloying verbiage: every word, every move just so much poppycock.¹

2. 'People fed on this kind of thing have as much chance of learning sense as dishwashers have of smelling clean. If you'll pardon my saying so, you are mainly responsible for ruining good speaking. Your smooth and empty sound effects provided a few laughs, and as a result you took the guts out of real oratory, and that was the end of it. Young men were not tied down to rhetorical exercises when it was Sophocles or Euripides who developed the proper language for them.² Academic pedants had not addled their wits when Pindar and the nine lyric poets shrank away from the Homeric style.³ And apart from the poets I can cite, I certainly cannot see Plato or Demosthenes going in for this sort of training.⁴ The elevated, what one might call the *pure* style, is not full of purple patches and bombast: it is lifted up by its intrinsic beauty. It is not so long since that long-winded spouting of yours travelled from Asia to Athens and its foul pestilential breath infected every youthful ambition.⁵ Once the rules go, eloquence loses vigour and voice. In short, who since then has

equalled Thucydides or Hyperides in their reputation?⁶ Why, not even poetry has shown a spark of life. All forms of literature have been faced with the same diet and lost their chance of a ripe old age. Even the great art of painting has met the same fate since the unscrupulous Egyptians invented short cuts for painters.⁷

3. Agamemnon, after his own sweat in the classroom, did not allow me to hold forth in the colonnade for longer than himself.

'Young man,' he said, 'your opinions show extraordinary good taste and you have that extremely rare quality – a love for intellectual merit. So I shall not baffle you with any expertise. *Of course* teachers are making immoral concessions with these exercises – they *have* to humour the madmen. If the speeches they make do not win the approval of their young pupils, as Cicero says, "they will be the only ones in their schools".⁸ When spongers in drama⁹ are trying to get a dinner out of their rich friends, their main object is to find out what they would most like to hear. The only way they will get what they are after is by captivating their audience. It is the same with a tutor of rhetoric. Like a fisherman he has to bait his hook with what he knows the little fishes will rise for; otherwise he's left on the rocks without a hope of their biting.

4. 'What's the answer? It's the parents you should blame. They won't allow their children to be properly controlled. In the first place they sacrifice everything, even their hopes, to their ambition. Then in their over-eagerness they direct these immature intellects into public life. They will tell you that there is no mightier power than oratory and they dress up their boys as orators while they are still drawing their first breath. If only parents would not rush them through their studies! Then young men who are prepared to work would cultivate their minds with solid reading, mould their characters with sensible advice, and prune their words with a stylish pen. They would wait and listen before they tried themselves and they would realize that an adolescent taste is quite worthless. Then the noble art of oratory would have its true weight and dignity. Boys today are frivolous in school; young men are laughing-stocks in public life; and, the greatest shame of all, even when they are old they refuse to give up the mistakes they learnt earlier.

'But just to show you how I am not above a bit of low-level improvisation in the manner of Lucilius,¹⁰ I'll throw you off a few lines expressing my feelings:

5. 'Ambition to fulfil the austere demands of Art,
The mind moving to mighty themes,
Demands discipline, simplicity –
The heart like a mirror.
Disdain the haughty seats of the mighty,
Humiliating invitations to drunken dinners,
The addictions, the low pleasures,
The mental spark guttering out with the wine.
Refuse theatre seats,
Refuse to sell applause
To the actor's empty mouthings.

'Under smiling battlements of martial Athens,
In Lacedaemonian colony,
By the home of the Sirens even,
No matter:
Verse for your early education,
Deep joyful draughts from Homeric springs
Then full of the Socratic circle,
Let your reins ride loose,
Rattle the great sword of Demosthenes.
Now our Roman squadrons swirl round you like a flood,
Roman voices mixed with Greek music,
Changing their savour.
Then leave the forum behind
And let your reading advance
Till the power of Fortune
Makes itself heard in History,
Clearly and distinctly

in running cadences.

War's epic sounds should feast your ears;
Shudder at the mighty orotundities
Of Cicero,
who never lost a cause.
This is the right armour of genius –
"Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring."
Only then pour out your heart.¹¹

6. As I was listening carefully to him, I did not notice Ascytlus slipping away ... and while I paced about silenced by this flood of ideas, a huge crowd of students entered the colonnade. Apparently they had

been listening to an extempore declamation by whoever it was who had followed Agamemnon on the speaker's platform. While the young men were laughing at the points he made and picking to pieces the arrangement of the whole speech, I took the opportunity to slip away and started off hastily after Ascyltus. But I was not paying much attention to the way I went, and I had no idea where our lodging was.¹² Whichever direction I took, I came back to the same spot. Finally, worn out with running and dripping with sweat, I went up to an old woman selling fresh vegetables.

7. 'Excuse me, mother,' I began, 'I don't suppose you know where I'm staying, do you?'

She was amused by my naïve politeness.

'Why shouldn't I know?' she said. She got to her feet and set off in front of me. I thought she was uncanny, and followed her. And then, as we reached an out of the way place, the kind old lady threw back a patchwork curtain and said to me:

'This is where you must be staying.'

I was just telling her I did not recognize the place, when I caught sight of some naked old prostitutes and some customers furtively prowling up and down in the middle of them. Slowly, in fact too late, I realized I had been taken to a brothel. Cursing the old woman's tricks I covered my face and began hurrying right through the whore-house to the other side. At the very door who should bump into me but Ascyltus. Like me he was worn out and practically dead. It looked as though he had been brought there by the same little old woman. Greeting him with a smile, I asked what he was doing in this dreadful place.

8. He wiped away the sweat with his hands and said:

'If only you knew what has been happening to me!'

'What happened?' I said.

'I wandered through the whole town,' he began faintly, 'and I couldn't find where I'd left our lodgings. Then a respectable-looking gentleman came up and very kindly offered to show me the way. He went down various pitch-dark turnings and brought me to this place. Then he offered me money and began making improper suggestions. The woman had already got her money for the cubicle and he had his hand on me. If I'd not been stronger than he was, I should have been in a bad way.'

In fact, everyone all around seemed to have been drinking aphrodisiac...¹³

Our combined forces made short work of the nuisance.

9. As though through a fog I caught sight of Giton standing at the side of the street. I rushed to the spot...

I asked my little friend if he'd prepared anything for supper. At this the boy sat down on the bed and wiped away a stream of tears with his thumb. I was deeply shocked at the dear boy's state and urged him to tell me what had happened. Slowly and reluctantly – in fact I had to plead and threaten alternately – he told me:

'It was your dear friend, the fellow you go round with, anyway. Just a few minutes ago he ran into my room and began wanting to rape me. When I shouted for help, he took out his big knife and said: "If you're playing Lucretia, I'm your Tarquin."¹⁴

When I heard this, I shook my fist in front of Ascyltus's face: 'What have you to say, you round-heeled tart! Your very breath stinks from your dirty ways!'

Ascyltus pretended to be horrified. Then he made an even braver show with his own fists and shouted far more loudly than I had: 'Shut up, you dirty gladiator! You could even perform for the noontday crowd. Shut up, you stab-in-the-dark! Even when you were at your best, you never managed to lay a decent woman. I was very close to you in the park, wasn't I? Just the way the boy is now in the hotel.'

'Didn't you slip away,' I said, 'when we were talking to the professor?'

10. 'Well, you fool, what did you expect me to do, when I was dying of hunger? I should have been listening to his rubbishy platitudes, I suppose! They're not worth a row of broken bottles – he'd be interpreting his dreams next! *You* are a hell of a sight worse – I didn't praise his poetry to cadge a dinner.' ... So our mortifying quarrel collapsed in roars of laughter, and we turned peaceably to other things...

But his treachery stuck in my mind, so I said: 'Look, Ascyltus, I see it is impossible for us to get along together. I suggest we divide our belongings and try to make a living by ourselves. You've got an education and so have I. I don't want to interfere with your earnings, so I'll offer some other line. Otherwise every day hundreds of different

things will set us at each other's throat, and get us talked about all over town.'

Ascyrtus had no objection. He merely said: 'Look, at the moment we've accepted an invitation to dinner as teachers – don't let us waste the evening. Tomorrow, if this is the way you want it, I'll find myself lodgings and someone else to live with.'

'It's just wasting time,' I pointed out, 'why put off our pleasures?' My desires were responsible for the suddenness of this split. For some time now I had been wanting to be rid of my troublesome chaperon and be back on my old footing with dear little Giton.

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11. I looked everywhere in the town before going back to our little room. At last I enjoyed his kisses without looking for excuses. I held the boy in my arms as though I'd never let him go. I had what I wanted and anyone would have envied me my luck. But we were still in the middle of this when Ascyrtus came quietly to the door, forcibly shattered the bolts, and found me playing around with Giton. He filled the little room with laughter and applause. He rolled me out of the cloak I was lying in and said:

'What *were* you up to, my pious old friend? What's this? Are you just setting up house under the blanket?'

And he did not limit himself to words, but taking the strap from his bag he began to lay into me in earnest, punctuating it with insolent remarks like – 'So, that's your idea of fair shares, is it?'

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12. It was getting dark when we came into the square.¹⁵ We noticed a lot of things on sale, none of them of any great worth – in fact, the sort of things whose dubious origin is best concealed in the dim light of evening. As we ourselves had brought along the cloak we had stolen we decided to take advantage of this excellent opportunity by unfolding just the edge of it in a corner. Our hope was that the high-quality cloth would attract some chance buyer. It was not long before a countryman, who looked familiar to me, approached with a young woman companion and started examining the garment very closely. Ascyrtus in turn shot a keen glance at the tunic dangling over the shoulders of the country customer. Suddenly he almost fainted and couldn't open his mouth. Even I lost some of my composure when I looked at the man. He appeared to be the very person who had found our tunic in the wilds. Clearly it was the same man. Ascyrtus however was afraid to trust his

eyes in case he did something rash. So he began by moving closer like a customer, then he pulled the edge of it from his shoulders and ran his fingers carefully over it.

13. What a marvellous stroke of luck! The countryman's prying hands so far hadn't even tried the stitches. He was selling it like something a tramp had picked up and wanted to be rid of. As soon as Ascyrtus realized our hoard was intact and the man selling it was a person of no account, he took me a little way out of the crowd and said: 'Do you know, dearie, the loot I was so cross about has returned to us. That's our tunic and it looks as if it's still stuffed with the money – it hasn't been touched. Now what are we going to do? How are we going to claim our property?'

I was delighted not only because I saw the loot but because I was now fortunately free of that loathsome suspicion. I opposed anything underhand: legal methods were clearly our best line of attack. If he would not hand someone else's property over to its rightful owner, then it would come to a court-order.

14. Ascyrtus on the other hand was afraid of the law. 'Who knows us in this place?' he said. 'And who is going to believe what we say? I'm all for buying it now we have spotted it, even though it is our own. I would rather lay out a small sum to recover valuable property than go to court, where the outcome is very uncertain.'

'What use are laws where money is king,
Where poverty's helpless and can't win a thing?
Even Cynics¹⁶ who sneer are rarely averse
To selling their scruples to fill up their purse.
There's no justice at law – it's the bidding that counts
And the job of the judge is to fix the amounts.'

However, apart from a solitary coin which we had intended to spend on chickpeas and lupines, we had no ready money. So in case the loot should slip from our fingers in the meantime, we decided to knock down the price of the cloak and take a small loss for the sake of the greater gain. As soon as we unwrapped our merchandise, the woman standing by the countryman with her head uncovered carefully examined the marks on it, grabbed the edge with both hands and screamed at the top of her voice: 'Stop the thieves!' As for us, we became panicky in case we looked at a loss, so we began hanging on to the torn and shabby tunic, and shouting just as indignantly that they had *our* property. But

the two sides were in a very different position, and the dealers who had come milling round at the noise unanimously ridiculed our malicious charge. For they saw one side demanding back an extremely valuable cloak, while the other side was after a tattered old thing, which it would be a waste to use good patches on. Then Ascylltus suddenly managed to quieten their laughter and get himself heard:

15. 'Everyone obviously likes his own things best. Let them give us back our tunic and take back their cloak.' Although the countryman and the woman were in favour of this exchange, the night watchmen however had been summoned and they insisted that both articles should be deposited with them, so that a magistrate could look into the matter the next day. It was not merely the articles themselves that were at stake, but there was the quite different question that both parties were suspected of theft. It was agreed that persons to take charge of them should be appointed, and one of the dealers, a bald-headed man with a very knobbly forehead, who sometimes handled court cases too, had pounced on the cloak and was swearing that the exhibit would appear next day. Of course it was obvious what he was after: once the cloak was left with him it could be sat on by these thieves, and we would be too afraid of the legal proceedings to turn up at the appointed time. This was clearly what we wanted too, and by a piece of luck both sides got what they were after. The countryman, infuriated by our claim that this patched old thing was an exhibit, threw the tunic into Ascylltus' face. So much for our particular charge – the cloak was the only thing in dispute and we were told to hand it over into custody . . .

The prize was ours again, we thought, and we went hastily back to our lodgings. Once behind locked doors we began ridiculing the sharp wits of our accusers and the dealers equally – it was very smart of them to give us our money back.

Anything on which I'm set
Should be hard to get;
A ready-made victory
Never appeals to me.

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16. But we had only just filled ourselves up with the supper Giton had kindly prepared, when there came a knock, bold enough to make the door rattle. We turned pale and asked who it was. 'Open up and you'll find out!' came the answer. As we were speaking, the bolt gave way of

its own accord and fell to the floor: the door was suddenly thrown open to admit the caller. It was a woman, however, with her head covered.

'Did you think you could make a fool out of me?' she said. 'I am Quartilla's personal maid and it was her religious service you burst into at the entrance to the grotto. And now she is on her way to the inn and she wants to talk to you. Don't get upset. She won't blame you or punish you for your mistake. She is really wondering what in heaven brought such charming young men to her part of the world.'

17. We had not yet said a word nor had we agreed one way or the other, when the lady herself entered with one young girl in attendance. She sat on my bed and cried for a long time. Not even this drew comment from us: in complete amazement we waited for this tearful show of grief to end. When the calculated storm of tears subsided, she uncovered her haughty head and wrung her hands till the joints cracked.

'What monstrous conduct is this?' she said. 'Where did you pick up such unimaginably criminal ways? Heaven knows, I'm deeply sorry for you. You see, it's absolutely forbidden – no one has ever seen it without being punished. Especially as our part of the world is so full of watchful powers that it's easier to run across a god than a man. And don't think I have come here for vengeance. I am more worried about your youth than my own injuries. Through sheer ignorance – I still believe this – you have committed an unforgivable sin. That very night I was full of unrest: I shivered with such a deadly chill I was afraid it was an attack of fever. And so I looked for a cure in my dreams and I was instructed to get hold of you and alleviate the onset of the attack by a subtle method which was revealed to me. But it is not the remedy I am so greatly concerned about; there is a deeper pain raging in my heart, which has brought me almost to death's door – I am afraid that in your youthful recklessness you will be driven to make public what you saw in the shrine of Priapus¹⁷ and let out to all and sundry the workings of the divine mind. So I throw myself at your feet and I solemnly beg you not to make our nocturnal rites into a laughing-stock, and not to spread abroad the secrets of centuries – secrets which hardly three people know about.'

18. After this moving plea, she again burst into tears; shaking with great sobs, she pressed her face and bosom to my bed. I was torn between sympathy and fear. I told her not to be upset and not to worry on either score. No one would spread abroad her holy mysteries; and if

the god had revealed to her some further cure for her fever, then we were ready to assist the divine providence, no matter what the risk to us.

This promise made her more cheerful; she covered me with kisses, her tears turned to laughter, and she slowly smoothed the hair falling over my ears.

'I'll make a truce with you,' she said. 'I withdraw my charges. Though if you had not been amenable about this medicine I'm after, there was a mob waiting for tomorrow to avenge my injuries and vindicate my honour.

'Scorn only scoundrels; Pride makes its own laws:
My passion is to go as I please.
Even the wise man fights when offended,
And the victor is merciful, when the fight's ended.'

Then she clapped her hands and suddenly burst into such a peal of laughter that she frightened us. The maid who had arrived before her did the same, and so did the little girl who had come in with her.

19. The whole place rang with their theatrical laughter, while we were still wondering why this sudden change of mood and looking now at each other, now at the women.¹⁸

'Therefore, I have given orders that not a living soul is to be allowed into this inn today, so I can get from you the remedy for my fever without any interruption.'

As Quartilla said this, Ascylltus looked stupefied for a moment. I personally went colder than winter in Gaul, and I couldn't get a word out. But our numbers banished any fears I felt of worse to come. After all, they were three weak women, if they wanted to try anything; on the other side, we, if nothing else, were of the male sex, but, in addition, we were certainly less hampered by clothes. In fact, I had already decided how we were to be matched, so that if it came to a fight, I would face Quartilla myself, Ascylltus the maid, and Giton the girl.

Then all our courage absolutely vanished. Our surprise was complete. Our eyes began to close at the prospect of certain death.

20. 'Please lady,' I said, 'if you have anything worse in store for us, get

it over quickly. Surely we have not committed such a great crime that we deserve to be tortured before we die.'

The maid, whose name was Psyche, carefully spread a blanket on the hard floor.

She tried to excite me, but the thing was cold with the chill of a thousand deaths.

Ascylltus had pulled his cloak over his head; obviously he had been warned it was dangerous to pry into other people's secrets.

The maid produced two thongs from her pocket and tied our hands and feet with them.

Our amusing conversation was just tailing off, when Ascylltus asked: 'Hey, don't I deserve a drink?' Summoned by my laughter, the maid clapped her hands and said: 'I did put it down near you, young man. But have you drunk all that medicine by yourself?' 'Really?' said Quartilla. 'Has Encolpius drunk all the aphrodisiac there was?'

Her sides shook with her charming laughter.

In the end even Giton joined in the joke, particularly when the little girl threw her arms round his neck and kissed him an incredible number of times without any struggle.

21. In our desperation we wanted to shout for help, but there was no one to come to our aid. Besides, whenever I wanted to call for assistance from outside, Psyche stuck a hairpin into my cheeks. Meanwhile the girl was stifling Ascylltus with a cosmetic brush which she had soaked in aphrodisiac.

Finally, up came a male prostitute, dressed in myrtle-green shaggy felt, which was tucked up under a cherry-red belt. He pulled the cheeks of our bottoms apart and banged us, then he slobbered vile, greasy kisses on us, until Quartilla, carrying a whalebone rod, with her skirts up round her, ordered an end to our torments.

Both of us swore a solemn oath that such a dreadful secret would die with us.

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Some training attendants came in, who rubbed us with the appropriate oil and made us feel better. Somehow or other we threw off our weariness, put on dinner clothes again and were taken into the next room. There were three couches ready and every other refinement of gracious living magnificently laid out. We took our places as we were told, and beginning with some wonderful hors d'oeuvres we were then practically swimming in Falernian wine. After helping ourselves to a long series of dishes, we were beginning to fall asleep, when Quartilla said, 'Do you actually intend to go to sleep when you know the whole night has to be a vigil in honour of our guardian Priapus?'

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22. Ascylltus, overcome by all he had gone through, was dropping off to sleep, so the maid he had rudely rejected took some soot and rubbed it all down his face and, without his feeling it in his drunken stupor, she painted his sides and shoulders with wine lees. I was also worn out, and I had already dropped into the lightest possible doze. In fact, the whole household, indoors and out, had done the same. Some were lying here and there round the feet of the guests, others were propped up against the walls, a number stayed in the doorway with their heads together. The lamps were running out of oil too, and were casting only a dim dying light, when two Syrians on the prowl entered the dining-room. They began quarrelling greedily among the silver and smashed a decanter they'd taken. Over went the table, silver and all, and a cup which was knocked off from quite a height cracked the maid's skull as she drooped over the couch. The blow made her scream and she gave the thieves away, as well as waking up some of the drunken guests. The would-be thieves, realizing they were trapped, dropped side by side next to a couch – you'd have thought it was pre-arranged – and began snoring as though they had been asleep for hours.

By now the butler likewise was awake and poured oil into the guttering lamps. The slaves, after rubbing their eyes a bit, had returned to their duties, and a girl with cymbals entered and the clash of brass woke everyone up.

23. The party began again and Quartilla called us back to drinking, the songs of the girl with the cymbals adding to the conviviality.

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In comes a male prostitute, a low creature and just what you would expect in that house. Cracking his fingers with a groan, he blurted out some verses of this sort:

'Pansy boys, come out to play,
You've been cropped the Delian way:
Young or old, there's room for you
And room for roaming fingers too!
Hips and bottoms, waggle away,
Pansy boys, come out to play.'

Once his lines were finished, he slobbered a filthy kiss on me. Then he even came on the couch and tried with all his strength to pull my clothes off. He kept working away fruitlessly at my crotch. Trickles of acacia-pomade ran down his sweaty forehead and there was so much powder in the wrinkles on his cheeks that he looked like a peeling wall in a thunderstorm.

24. I couldn't keep my tears back any longer, I was in the depths of misery.

'Please lady,' I said, 'surely you ordered me a night-cap.'¹⁹ She clapped her hands daintily and said: 'Oh, you clever man. You're bubbling over with native wit. Well now, hadn't you discovered that a pansy could be a night-cap?'

Then in case my comrade-in-arms should get off too lightly, I said: 'Be fair. Is Ascylltus the only one at the table to have a holiday?'

'Really,' said Quartilla, 'let Ascylltus have a night-cap too.'

Thereupon the prostitute swapped horses and after making the changeover to my companion, pounded him with his buttocks and kisses.

Giton was standing there while all this went on and splitting his sides laughing. And Quartilla, catching sight of him, asked with great interest whose was the boy. I replied that he was my boy-friend.

'Then why hasn't he given me a kiss?' said Quartilla. And calling him to her, she pressed her lips to his. Then she slipped her hand into his clothes and felt his immature little tool. 'Tomorrow this will serve nicely as hors d'oeuvre to tempt my appetite,' she said. 'For the present, I don't want any ordinary stuffing after such a nice cod-piece.'

25. As she said this, Psyche came and laughingly whispered something in her ear:

'Yes, yes,' said Quartilla, 'thanks for reminding me. It's such an

excellent opportunity, why shouldn't our little Pannychis lose her virginity?'

The girl was brought forward immediately – quite a pretty thing who appeared no more than seven years old. Everyone applauded and called for a wedding. I was quite taken aback by this and insisted that Giton, who was a very nice boy, was not up to this loose behaviour, nor was the girl old enough to take on the heavy duties of womanhood.

'Really?' said Quartilla. 'Is she any younger than I was when I had my first man? Juno's curse on me, if I can even remember being a virgin. When I was a child I played dirty games with boys of the same age, then as the years went by, I turned to bigger boys till I reached maturity. I even think this is the origin of the proverb – if you carry the calf, you can carry the bull.'

So in case my little friend should suffer worse treatment out of my sight, I got up to help with the ceremony.²⁰

26. Psyche had already put a veil round the girl's head and old Night-cap was leading the way with a torch. The tipsy women, still clapping, had formed a long line and had fixed up a bridal chamber with draperies in the appropriate sacrilegious way. Then Quartilla, highly excited by all this playful obscenity, rose to her feet herself, seized Giton, and dragged him into the chamber.

It was obvious the boy had not struggled and even the girl had not been dismayed or scared by the mention of marriage. And so, when they were shut in and lying down, we sat round the chamber doorway, and Quartilla was one of the first to put an inquisitive eye to a crack she had naughtily opened, and spy on their childish play with prurient eagerness.²¹ Her insistent hand pulled me down also to have a similar look, and since our faces were pressed together as we watched, whenever she could spare a moment, she would move her lips close to mine in passing and bruise me with sly kisses.

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We threw ourselves on our beds and spent the rest of the night without fear.

DINNER WITH TRIMALCHIO

BOOK XV

26. The next day but one finally arrived [, and that meant the prospect of a free dinner]. But we were so knocked about that we wanted to run rather than rest. We were mournfully discussing how to avoid the approaching storm, when one of Agamemnon's slaves broke in on our frantic debate.

'Here,' said he, 'don't you know who's your host today? It's Trimalchio – he's terribly elegant . . . He has a clock in the dining-room and a trumpeter all dressed up to tell him how much longer he's got to live.'

This made us forget all our troubles. We dressed carefully and told Giton, who was very kindly acting as our servant, to attend us at the baths.

27. We did not take our clothes off but began wandering around, or rather exchanging jokes while circulating among the little groups. Suddenly we saw a bald old man in a reddish shirt, playing ball with some long-haired boys. It was not so much the boys that made us watch, although they alone were worth the trouble, but the old gentleman himself. He was taking his exercise in slippers and throwing a green ball around. But he didn't pick it up if it touched the ground; instead there was a slave holding a bagful, and he supplied them to the players. We noticed other novelties. Two eunuchs stood around at different points: one of them carried a silver pissing bottle, the other counted the balls, not those flying from hand to hand according to the rules, but those that fell to the ground. We were still admiring these elegant arrangements when Menelaus hurried up to us.

'This is the man you'll be dining with,' he said. 'In fact, you are now watching the beginning of the dinner.'

No sooner had Menelaus spoken than Trimalchio snapped his fingers. At the signal the eunuch brought up the pissing bottle for him, while

he went on playing. With the weight off his bladder, he demanded water for his hands, splashed a few drops on his fingers and wiped them on a boy's head.

28. It would take too long to pick out isolated incidents. Anyway, we entered the baths where we began sweating at once and we went immediately into the cold water. Trimalchio had been smothered in perfume and was already being rubbed down, not with linen towels, but with bath-robos of the finest wool. As this was going on, three masseurs sat drinking Falernian in front of him. Through quarrelling they spilled most of it and Trimalchio said they were drinking his health.¹ Wrapped in thick scarlet felt he was put into a litter. Four couriers with lots of medals went in front, as well as a go-kart in which his favourite boy was riding – a wizened, bleary-eyed youngster, uglier than his master. As he was carried off, a musician with a tiny set of pipes took his place by Trimalchio's head and whispered a tune in his ear the whole way.

We followed on, choking with amazement by now, and arrived at the door with Agamemnon at our side. On the door-post a notice was fastened which read:

ANY SLAVE LEAVING THE HOUSE WITHOUT HIS MASTER'S
PERMISSION WILL RECEIVE ONE HUNDRED LASHES

Just at the entrance stood the hall-porter, dressed in a green uniform with a belt of cherry red. He was shelling peas into a silver basin. Over the doorway hung – of all things – a golden cage from which a spotted magpie greeted visitors.

29. As I was gaping at all this, I almost fell over backwards and broke a leg. There, on the left as one entered, not far from the porter's cubbyhole, was a huge dog with a chain round its neck. It was painted on the wall² and over it, in big capitals, was written:

BEWARE OF THE DOG

My colleagues laughed at me, but when I got my breath back I went on to examine the whole wall. There was a mural³ of a slave market, price-tags and all. Then Trimalchio himself, holding a wand of Mercury and being led into Rome by Minerva. After this a picture of how he learned accounting and, finally, how he became a steward. The painstaking artist had drawn it all in great detail with descriptions underneath. Just where the colonnade ended Mercury hauled him up

by the chin and rushed him to a high platform. Fortune with her horn of plenty and the three Fates spinning their golden threads were there in attendance.

I also noticed in the colonnade a company of runners practising with their trainer. In one corner was a large cabinet, which served as a shrine for some silver statues of the household deities with a marble figure of Venus and an impressive gold casket in which, they told me, the master's first beard was preserved.⁴

I began asking the porter what were the pictures they had in the middle.

'The Iliad, the Odyssey,' he said, 'and the gladiatorial show given by Laenas.'

30. Time did not allow us to look at many things there . . . by now we had reached the dining-room, at the entrance to which sat a treasurer going over the accounts. There was one feature I particularly admired: on the door-posts were fixed rods and axes⁵ tapering off at their lowest point into something like the bronze beak of a ship. On it was the inscription:

PRESENTED TO C. POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO
PRIEST OF THE AUGUSTAN COLLEGE⁶
BY HIS STEWARD CINNAMUS

Beneath this same inscription a fixture with twin lamps dangled from the ceiling and two notices, one on each door-post. One of them, if my memory is correct, had written on it:

30 AND 31 DECEMBER
OUR GAIUS
IS OUT TO DINNER⁷

The other displayed representations of the moon's phases and the seven heavenly bodies. Lucky and unlucky days were marked with different coloured studs.⁸

Having had enough of these interesting things, we attempted to go in, but one of the slaves shouted: 'Right foot first!' Naturally we hesitated a moment in case one of us should cross the threshold the wrong way. But just as we were all stepping forward, a slave with his back bare flung himself at our feet and began pleading with us to get him off a flogging. He was in trouble for nothing very serious, he told us – the steward's clothes, hardly worth ten sesterces, had been stolen

from him at the baths. Back went our feet, and we appealed to the steward, who was counting out gold pieces in the office, to let the man off.

He lifted his head haughtily: 'It is not so much the actual loss that annoys me,' he said, 'it's the wretch's carelessness. They were my dinner clothes he lost. A client had presented them to me on my birthday – genuine Tyrian purple, of course; however they had been laundered once. So what does it matter? He's all yours.'

31. We were very much obliged to him for this favour; and when we did enter the dining-room, that same slave whose cause we had pleaded ran up to us and, to our utter confusion, covered us with kisses and thanked us for our kindness.

'And what's more,' he said, 'you'll know right away who it is you have been so kind to. "The master's wine is the waiter's gift."'

Finally we took our places.⁹ Boys from Alexandria poured iced water over our hands. Others followed them and attended to our feet, removing any hangnails with great skill. But they were not quiet even during this troublesome operation: they sang away at their work. I wanted to find out if the whole staff were singers, so I asked for a drink. In a flash a boy was there, singing in a shrill voice while he attended to me – and anyone else who was asked for something did the same. It was more like a musical comedy than a respectable dinner party.

Some extremely elegant hors d'œuvres were served at this point – by now everyone had taken his place with the exception of Trimalchio, for whom, strangely enough, the place at the top was reserved. The dishes for the first course¹⁰ included an ass of Corinthian bronze with two panniers, white olives on one side and black on the other. Over the ass were two pieces of plate, with Trimalchio's name and the weight of the silver inscribed on the rims. There were some small iron frames shaped like bridges supporting dormice sprinkled with honey and poppy seed. There were steaming hot sausages too, on a silver gridiron with damsons and pomegranate seeds underneath.

32. We were in the middle of these elegant dishes when Trimalchio himself was carried in to the sound of music and set down on a pile of tightly stuffed cushions. The sight of him drew an astonished laugh from the guests.¹¹ His cropped head stuck out from a scarlet coat; his neck was well muffled up and he had put round it a napkin with a broad purple stripe and tassels dangling here and there. On the little finger of his left hand he wore a heavy gilt ring and a smaller one on the last joint

of the next finger. This I thought was solid gold, but actually it was studded with little iron stars. And to show off even more of his jewellery, he had his right arm bare and set off by a gold armlet and an ivory circlet fastened with a gleaming metal plate.

33. After picking his teeth with a silver toothpick, he began: 'My friends, I wasn't keen to come into the dining-room yet. But if I stayed away any more, I would have kept you back, so I've deprived myself of all my little pleasures for you. However, you'll allow me to finish my game.'

A boy was at his heels with a board of terebinth wood with glass squares, and I noticed the very last word in luxury – instead of white and black pieces he had gold and silver coins.¹² While he was swearing away like a trooper over his game and we were still on the hors d'œuvres, a tray was brought in with a basket on it. There sat a wooden hen, its wings spread round it the way hens are when they are broody. Two slaves hurried up and as the orchestra played a tune they began searching through the straw and dug out peahens' eggs, which they distributed to the guests.

Trimalchio turned to look at this little scene and said: 'My friends, I gave orders for that bird to sit on some peahens' eggs. I hope to goodness they are not starting to hatch. However, let's try them and see if they are still soft.'

We took up our spoons (weighing at least half a pound each) and cracked the eggs, which were made of rich pastry. To tell the truth, I nearly threw away my share, as the chicken seemed already formed. But I heard a guest who was an old hand say: 'There should be something good here.' So I searched the shell with my fingers and found the plumpest little figpecker, all covered with yolk and seasoned with pepper.

34. At this point Trimalchio became tired of his game and demanded that all the previous dishes be brought to him. He gave permission in a loud voice for any of us to have another glass of mead if we wanted it. Suddenly there was a crash from the orchestra and a troop of waiters – still singing – snatched away the hors d'œuvres. However in the confusion one of the side-dishes happened to fall and a slave picked it up from the floor. Trimalchio noticed this, had the boy's ears boxed and told him to throw it down again. A cleaner came in with a broom and began to sweep up the silver plate along with the rest of the rubbish. Two long-haired Ethiopians followed him, carrying small skin bags like

those used by the men who scatter the sand in the amphitheatre, and they poured wine over our hands – no one ever offered us water.

Our host was complimented on these elegant arrangements. 'Mars loves a fair fight,' he replied. 'That is why I gave orders for each guest to have his own table. At the same time these smelly slaves won't crowd so.'

Carefully sealed wine bottles were immediately brought, their necks labelled:

FALERNIAN
CONSUL OPIMIUS
ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD¹³

While we were examining the labels, Trimalchio clapped his hands and said with a sigh:

'Wine has a longer life than us poor folks. So let's wet our whistles. Wine is life. I'm giving you real Opimian. I didn't put out such good stuff yesterday, though the company was much better class.'

Naturally we drank and missed no opportunity of admiring his elegant hospitality. In the middle of this a slave brought in a silver skeleton,¹⁴ put together in such a way that its joints and backbone could be pulled out and twisted in all directions. After he had flung it about on the table once or twice, its flexible joints falling into various postures, Trimalchio recited:

'O woe, woe, man is only a dot;
Hell drags us off and that is the lot;
So let us live a little space,
At least while we can feed our face.'

35. After our applause the next course was brought in. Actually it was not as grand as we expected, but it was so novel that everyone stared. It was a deep circular tray with the twelve signs of the Zodiac arranged round the edge. Over each of them the chef had placed some appropriate dainty suggested by the subject.¹⁵ Over Aries the Ram, chickpeas; over Taurus the Bull, a beefsteak; over the Heavenly Twins, testicles and kidneys; over Cancer the Crab, a garland; over Leo the Lion, an African fig; over Virgo the Virgin, a young sow's udder; over Libra the Scales, a balance with a cheesecake in one pan and a pastry in the other; over Scorpio, a sea scorpion; over Sagittarius the Archer, a sea bream with eyespots; over Capricorn, a lobster; over Aquarius the

Water-Carrier, a goose; over Pisces the Fishes, two mullets. In the centre was a piece of grassy turf bearing a honeycomb. A young Egyptian slave carried around bread in a silver oven . . . and in a sickening voice he mangled a song from the show *The Asafoetida Man*.

36. As we started rather reluctantly on this inferior fare, Trimalchio said:

'Let's eat, if you don't mind. This is the sauce of all order.' As he spoke, four dancers hurtled forward in time to the music and removed the upper part of the great dish, revealing underneath plump fowls, sows' udders, and a hare with wings fixed to his middle to look like Pegasus.¹⁶ We also noticed four figures of Marsyas¹⁷ with little skin bottles, which let a peppery fish-sauce go running over some fish, which seemed to be swimming in a little channel. We all joined in the servants' applause and amid some laughter we helped ourselves to these quite exquisite things.

Trimalchio was every bit as happy as we were with this sort of trick: 'Carve 'er!' he cried. Up came the man with the carving knife and, with his hands moving in time to the orchestra, he sliced up the victuals like a charioteer battling to the sound of organ music. And still Trimalchio went on saying insistently: 'Carve 'er, Carver!'

I suspected this repetition was connected with some witticism, and I went so far as to ask the man on my left what it meant. He had watched this sort of game quite often and said:

'You see the fellow doing the carving – he's called Carver. So whenever he says "Carver!" he's calling out his name and his orders.'

37. I couldn't face any more food. Instead I turned to this man to find out as much as I could. I began pestering him for gossip and information – who was the woman running round the place?

'Trimalchio's wife,' he told me, 'Fortunata is her name and she counts her money by the sackful. And before, before, what was she? You'll pardon me saying so, but you wouldn't of touched a bit of bread from her hand. Nowadays – and who knows how or why – she's in heaven, and she's absolutely everything to Trimalchio. In fact, if she tells him at high noon it's dark, he'll believe her. He doesn't know himself how much he's got, he's so loaded – but this bitch looks after everything; she's even in places you wouldn't think of. She's dry, sober and full of ideas – you see all that gold! – but she's got a rough tongue and she's a real magpie when she gets her feet up. If she likes you, she likes you – if she doesn't like you, she doesn't like you.'

'The old boy himself now, he's got estates it'd take a kite to fly over – he's worth millions of millions.¹⁸ There's more silver plate lying in his porter's cubbyhole than any other man owns altogether. As for his servants – boy, oh boy! I honestly don't think there's one in ten knows his own master. In fact he could knock any of these smart boys into a cocked hat.

38. 'And don't you think he buys anything, either. Everything is home-grown: wool, citrus, pepper. If you ask for hen's milk, you'll get it. In fact, there was a time when the wool he'd got wasn't good enough for him, so he brought some rams from Tarentum and banged them into his sheep. To get home-grown Attic honey, he ordered some bees from Athens – the Greek strain improved his own bees a bit at the same time.

'And here's something more – this last few days he wrote off for mushroom spores from India. Why, he hasn't a single mule that wasn't sired by a wild ass. You see all these cushions – every one of them has either purple or scarlet stuffing. There's happiness for you!

'But mind you, don't look down on the other freedmen here. They're dripping with the stuff. You see that man on the very bottom couch. At present he's got eight hundred thousand of his own. He started out with nothing. It's not long since he was humping wood on his own back. They say – I don't know myself, I've heard it – they say he stole a hobgoblin's cap and found its treasure. I don't begrudge anyone what God has given him. Besides, he can still feel his master's slap and wants to give himself a good time. For instance, the other day he put up a notice which said:

GAIUS POMPEIUS DIOGENES
IS MOVING TO HIS HOUSE AND
WILL LET THE ROOM OVER
HIS SHOP FROM 1 JULY

'Now that fellow in the freedman's place – look how well off he was once! I'm not blaming him – he had a million in his hands, but he slipped badly. I don't think he can call his hair his own. Yet I'd swear it wasn't his fault: there's not a better man alive. Some freedmen and crooks pocketed everything he had. One thing you can be sure of – you have partners and your pot never boils, and once things take a turn for the worse, friends get out from underneath. What a respectable business he had and look at him now! He was an undertaker. He used to eat like

a king – boars roasted in their skins, elaborate pastry, braised game birds, as well as fish and hares. More wine was spilt under the table than another man keeps in his cellar. He wasn't a man, he was an absolute dream! When things were looking black, he didn't want his creditors to think he was bankrupt, so he put up notice of an auction like this:

'GAIUS JULIUS PROCULUS
AUCTION OF SURPLUS STOCK'

Trimalchio interrupted these pleasant reminiscences. The dish had already been removed and the convivial guests had begun to concentrate on the drink and general conversation. Leaning on his elbow, Trimalchio said:

39. 'Now you're supposed to be enjoying the wine. Fishes have to swim. I ask you, do you think I'm just content with that course you saw in the bottom of the dish? "Is this like the Ulysses you know?"¹⁹ Well then, we've got to display some culture at our dinner. My patron – God rest his bones! – wanted me to hold up my head in any company. There's nothing new to me, as that there dish proves.²⁰ Look now, these here heavens, as there are twelve gods living in 'em, changes into that many shapes. First it becomes the Ram. So whoever is born under that sign has a lot of herds, a lot of wool, a hard head as well, a brassy front and a sharp horn. Most scholars are born under this sign, and most muttonheads as well.'

We applauded the wit of our astrologer and he went on:

'Then the whole heavens turns into the little old Bull. So bullheaded folk are born then, and cow-herds and those who find their own feed. Under the Heavenly Twins on the other hand – pairs-in-hand, yokes of oxen, people with big ballocks and people who do it both ways. I was born under the Crab, so I have a lot of legs to stand on and a lot of property on land and sea, because the Crab takes both in his stride. And that's why I put nothing over him earlier, so as not to upset my horoscope. Under Leo are born greedy and bossy people. Under the Virgin, effeminate, runaways and candidates for the chain-gang. Under the Scales, butchers, perfume-sellers and anyone who weighs things up. Under Scorpio poisoners and murderers. Under Sagittarius are born cross-eyed people who look at the vegetables and take the bacon. Under Capricorn, people in trouble who sprout horns through their

worries. Under the Water-Carrier, bartenders and jugheads. Under the Fishes, fish-fryers and people who spout in public.

'So the starry sky turns round like a millstone, always bringing some trouble, and men being born or dying.

'Now as for what you see in the middle, the piece of grass and on the grass the honeycomb, I don't do anything without a reason – it's Mother Earth in the middle, round like an egg, with all good things inside her like a honeycomb.'

40. 'Oh, clever!' we all cried, raising our hands to the ceiling and swearing that Hipparchus and Aratus²¹ couldn't compete with *him*.

Then the servants came up and laid across the couches embroidered coverlets showing nets, hunters carrying broad spears, and all the paraphernalia of hunting. We were still wondering which way to look when a tremendous clamour arose outside the dining-room, and – surprise! – Spartan hounds began dashing everywhere, even round the table. Behind them came a great dish and on it lay a wild boar of the largest possible size, and, what is more, wearing a freedman's cap on its head. From its tusks dangled two baskets woven from palm leaves, one full of fresh Syrian dates, the other of dried Theban dates. Little piglets made of cake were all round as though at its dugs, suggesting it was a brood sow now being served. These were actually gifts to take home. Surprisingly the man who took his place to cut up the boar was not our old friend Carver but a huge bearded fellow, wearing leggings and a damask hunting coat. He pulled out a hunting knife and made a great stab at the boar's side and, as he struck, out flew a flock of thrushes. But there were fowlers all ready with their limed reeds, who caught them as soon as they began flying round the room.

Trimalchio gave orders for each guest to have his own bird, then added: 'And have a look at the delicious acorns our pig in the wood has been eating.'

Young slaves promptly went to the baskets and gave the guests their share of the two kinds of date.

41. As this was going on, I kept quiet, turning over a lot of ideas as to why the boar had come in with a freedman's cap on it. After working through all sorts of wild fancies, I ventured to put to my experienced neighbour the question I was racking my brains with. He of course replied:

'Even the man waiting on you could explain this obvious point – it's not puzzling at all, it's quite simple. The boar here was pressed into

service for the last course yesterday, but the guests let it go. So today it returns to the feast as a freedman.'

I damned my own stupidity and asked no more questions in case I looked like someone who had never dined in decent company.

As we were talking, a handsome youth with a garland of vine-leaves and ivy round his head, pretending to be Bacchus the Reveller, then Bacchus the Deliverer and Bacchus the Inspirer, carried grapes round in a basket, all the time giving us a recital of his master's lyrics in a high-pitched voice. At the sound, Trimalchio called out, 'Dionysus, now be Bacchus the Liberator...'

The lad pulled the freedman's cap off the boar and stuck it on his head. Then Trimalchio commented:

'Now you won't deny my claim to be the liberated sort.'²² We applauded his joke and kissed the boy hard as he went round.

After this course Trimalchio got up and went to the toilet. Free of his domineering presence, we began to help ourselves to more drinks. Dama started off by calling for a cup of the grape.

'The day's nothin', he said. 'It's night 'fore y'can turn around. So the best thing's get out of bed and go straight to dinner. Lovely cold weather we've had too. M'bath hardly thawed me out. Still, a hot drink's as good as an overcoat. I've been throwin' it back neat, and you can see I'm tight – the wine's gone to m'head.'

Seleucus took up the ball in the conversation:

42. 'Me now,' he said, 'I don't have a bath every day. It's like getting rubbed with fuller's earth, havin' a bath. The water bites into you, and your heart begins to melt. But when I've knocked back a hot glass of wine and honey, "Go fuck yourself," I say to the cold weather. Mind you, I couldn't have a bath – I was at a funeral today. Poor old Chrysanthus has just given up the ghost – nice man he was! It was only the other day he stopped me in the street. I still seem to hear his voice. Dear, dear! We're just so many walking bags of wind. We're worse than flies – at least they have got some strength in them, but we're no more than empty bubbles.

'And yet he had been on an extremely strict diet? For five days he didn't take a drop of water or a crumb of bread into his mouth. But he's gone to join the majority. The doctors finished him – well, hard luck, more like. After all, a doctor is just to put your mind at rest. Still, he got a good send-off – he had a bier, and all beautifully draped. His mourners – several of his slaves were left their freedom – did him proud,

even though his widow was a bit mean with her tears. And yet he had been extremely good to her! But women as a sex are real vultures. It's no good doing them a favour, you might as well throw it down a well. An old passion is just an ulcer.'

43. He was being a bore and Phileros said loudly:

'Let's think of the living. He's got what he deserved. He lived an honest life and he died an honest death. What has he got to complain about? He started out in life with just a penny and he was ready to pick up less than that from a muck-heap, even if he had to use his teeth. So whatever he put a finger to swelled up like a honeycomb. I honestly think he left a solid hundred thousand and he had the lot in hard cash. But I'll be honest about it, since I'm a bit of a cynic: he had a foul mouth and too much lip. He wasn't a man, he was just trouble.

'Now his brother was a brave lad, a real friend to his friends, always ready with a helping hand or a decent meal.

'Chrysanthus had bad luck at first, but the first vintage set him on his feet. He fixed his own price when he sold the wine. And what properly kept his head above water was a legacy he came in for, when he pocketed more than was left to him. And the blockhead, when he had a quarrel with his brother, cut him out of his will in favour of some sod we've never heard of. You're leaving a lot behind when you leave your own flesh and blood. But he kept listening to his slaves and they really fixed him. It's never right to believe all you're told, especially for a businessman. But it's true he enjoyed himself while he lived. You got it, you keep it. He was certainly Fortune's favourite – lead turned to gold in his hand. Mind you, it's easy when everything runs smoothly.

'And how old do you think he was? Seventy or more! But he was hard as a horn and carried his age well. His hair was black as a raven's wing. I knew the man for ages and ages and he was still an old lecher. I honestly don't think he left the dog alone. What's more, he liked little boys – he could turn his hand to anything. Well, I don't blame him – after all, he couldn't take anything else with him.'

44. This was Phileros, then Ganymedes said:

'You're all talking about things that don't concern heaven or earth. Meanwhile, no one gives a damn the way we're hit by the corn situation. Honest to god, I couldn't get hold of a mouthful of bread today. And look how there's still no rain. It's been absolute starvation for a whole year now. To hell with the food officers! They're in with the bakers – "You be nice to me and I'll be nice to you." So the little man suffers,

while those grinders of the poor never stop celebrating. Oh, if only we still had the sort of men I found here when I first arrived from Asia. Like lions they were. That was the life! Come one, come all! If plain flour was inferior to the very finest, they'd thrash those bogeymen till they thought God Almighty was after them.

'I remember Safinius – he used to live by the old arch then; I was a boy at the time. He wasn't a man, he was all pepper. He used to scorch the ground wherever he went. But he was dead straight – don't let him down and he wouldn't let you down. You'd be ready to play *morra*²³ with him in the dark. But on the city council, how he used to wade into some of them – no beating about the bush, straight from the shoulder! And when he was in court, his voice got louder and louder like a trumpet. He never sweated or spat – I think he'd been through the oven all right. And very affable he was when you met him, calling everyone by name just like one of us. Naturally at the time corn was dirt cheap. You could buy a penny loaf that two of you couldn't get through. Today – I've seen bigger bull's-eyes.

'Ah me! It's getting worse every day. This place is going down like a calf's tail. But why do we have a third-rate food officer who wouldn't lose a penny to save our lives? He sits at home laughing and rakes in more money a day than anyone else's whole fortune. I happen to know he's just made a thousand in gold. But if we had any balls at all, he wouldn't be feeling so pleased with himself. People today are lions at home and foxes outside.

'Take me. I've already sold the rags off my back for food and if this shortage continues I'll be selling my bit of a house. What's going to happen to this place if neither god nor man will help us? As I hope to go home tonight, I'm sure all this is heaven's doing.

'Nobody believes in heaven, see, nobody fasts, nobody gives a damn for the Almighty. No, people only bow their heads to count their money. In the old days high-class ladies used to climb up the hill barefoot, their hair loose and their hearts pure, and ask God for rain. And he'd send it down in bucketfuls right away – it was then or never – and everyone went home like drowned rats. Since we've given up religion the gods nowadays keep their feet wrapped up in wool. The fields just lie ...'

45. 'Please, please,' broke in Echion the rag-merchant, 'be a bit more cheerful. "First it's one thing, then another," as the yokel said when he lost his spotted pig. What we haven't got today, we'll have tomorrow. That's the way life goes. Believe me, you couldn't name a better country,

if it had the people. As things are, I admit, it's having a hard time, but it isn't the only place. We mustn't be soft. The sky don't get no nearer wherever you are. If you were somewhere else, you'd be talking about the pigs walking round ready-roasted back here.

'And another thing, we'll be having a holiday with a three-day show that's the best ever – and not just a hack troupe of gladiators but freedmen for the most part. My old friend Titus has a big heart and a hot head. Maybe this, maybe that, but something at all events. I'm a close friend of his and he's no way wishy-washy. He'll give us cold steel, no quarter and the slaughterhouse right in the middle where all the stands can see it. And he's got the wherewithal – he was left thirty million when his poor father died. Even if he spent four hundred thousand, his pocket won't feel it and he'll go down in history. He's got some real desperadoes already, and a woman who fights in a chariot, and Glyco's steward who was caught having fun with his mistress. You'll see quite a quarrel in the crowd between jealous husbands and romantic lovers. But that half-pint Glyco threw his steward to the lions, which is just giving himself away. How is it the servant's fault when he's forced into it? It's that old pisspot who really deserves to be tossed by a bull. But if you can't beat the ass you beat the saddle. But how did Glyco imagine that poisonous daughter of Hermogenes would ever turn out well? The old man could cut the claws off a flying kite, and a snake don't hatch old rope. Glyco – well, Glyco's got his. He's branded for as long as he lives and only the grave will get rid of it. But everyone pays for their sins.

'But I can almost smell the dinner Mammaea is going to give us – two denarii apiece for me and the family. If he really does it, he'll make off with all Norbanus's votes, I tell you he'll win at a canter. After all, what good has Norbanus done us? He put on some half-pint gladiators, so done in already that they'd have dropped if you blew at them. I've seen beast fighters²⁴ give a better performance. As for the horsemen killed, he got them off a lamp – they ran round like cocks in a backyard. One was just a cart-horse, the other couldn't stand up, and the reserve was just one corpse instead of another – he was practically hamstrung. One boy did have a bit of spirit – he was in Thracian armour,²⁵ and even he didn't show any initiative. In fact, they were all flogged afterwards, there were so many shouts of "Give 'em what for!" from the crowd. Pure cowards, that's all.

"Well, I've put on a show for you," he says. "And I'm clapping

you," says I. "Reckon it up – I'm giving more than I got. So we're quits."

46. 'Hey, Agamemnon! I suppose you're saying "What is that bore going on and on about?" It's because a good talker like you don't talk. You're a cut above us, and so you laugh at what us poor people say. We all know you're off your head with all that reading. But never mind! Will I get you some day to come down to my place in the country and have a look at our little cottage? We'll find something to eat – a chicken, some eggs. It'll be nice, even though the weather this year has ruined everything. Anyway, we'll find enough to fill our bellies.

'And by now my little lad is growing up to be a student of yours. He can divide by four already. If he stays well, you'll have him ready to do anything for you. In his spare time, he won't take his head out of his exercise book. He's clever and there's good stuff in him, even if he is crazy about birds. Only yesterday I killed his three goldfinches and told him a weasel ate them. But he's found some other silly hobbies, and he's having a fine time painting. Still, he's already well ahead with his Greek, and he's starting to take to his Latin, though his tutor is too pleased with himself and unreliable. He's well-educated but doesn't want to work. There is another one too, not so trained but he is conscientious – he teaches the boy more than he knows himself. In fact, he even makes a habit of coming around on holidays, and whatever you give him, he's happy.

'Anyway, I've just bought the boy some law books, as I want him to pick up some legal training for home use. There's a living in that sort of thing. He's done enough dabbling in poetry and such like. If he objects, I've decided he'll learn a trade – barber, auctioneer, or at least a barrister – something he can't lose till he dies. Well, yesterday I gave it to him straight: "Believe me, my lad, any studying you do will be for your own good. You see Phileros the lawyer – if he hadn't studied, he'd be starving today. It's not so long since he was humping round stuff to sell on his back. Now he can even look Norbanus in the face. An education is an investment, and a proper profession never goes dead on you."

47. This was the sort of chatter flying round when Trimalchio came in, dabbed his forehead and washed his hands in perfume. There was a very short pause, then he said:

'Excuse me, dear people, my inside has not been answering the call for several days now. The doctors are puzzled. But some pomegranate

rind and resin in vinegar has done me good. But I hope now it will be back on its good behaviour. Otherwise my stomach rumbles like a bull. So if any of you wants to go out, there's no need for him to be embarrassed. None of us was born solid. I think there's nothing so tormenting as holding yourself in. This is the one thing even God Almighty can't object to. Yes, laugh, Fortunata, but you generally keep me up all night with this sort of thing.

'Anyway, I don't object to people doing what suits them even in the middle of dinner – and the doctors forbid you to hold yourself in. Even if it's a longer business, everything is there just outside – water, bowls, and all the other little comforts. Believe me, if the wind goes to your brain it starts flooding your whole body too. I've known a lot of people die from this because they wouldn't be honest with themselves.'

We thanked him for being so generous and considerate and promptly proceeded to bury our amusement in our glasses. Up to this point we'd not realized we were only half-way up the hill, as you might say.

The orchestra played, the tables were cleared, and then three white pigs were brought into the dining-room, all decked out in muzzles and bells. The first, the master of ceremonies announced, was two years old, the second three, and the third six. I was under the impression that some acrobats were on their way in and the pigs were going to do some tricks, the way they do in street shows. But Trimalchio dispelled this impression by asking:

'Which of these would you like for the next course? Any clodhopper can do you a barnyard cock or a stew and trifles like that, but my cooks are used to boiling whole calves.'

He immediately sent for the chef and without waiting for us to choose he told him to kill the oldest pig.

He then said to the man in a loud voice:

'Which division are you from?'

When he replied he was from number forty, Trimalchio asked:

'Were you bought or were you born here?'

'Neither,' said the chef, 'I was left to you in Pansa's will.'

'Well, then,' said Trimalchio, 'see you serve it up carefully – otherwise I'll have you thrown into the messengers' division.'

So the chef, duly reminded of his master's magnificence, went back to his kitchen, the next course leading the way.

48. Trimalchio looked round at us with a gentle smile: 'If you don't like the wine, I'll have it changed. It is up to you to do it justice. I don't

buy it, thank heaven. In fact, whatever wine really tickles your palate this evening, it comes from an estate of mine which as yet I haven't seen. It's said to join my estates at Tarracina and Tarentum.²⁶ What I'd like to do now is add Sicily to my little bit of land, so that when I want to go to Africa, I could sail there without leaving my own property.

'But tell me, Agamemnon, what was your debate about today? Even though I don't go in for the law, still I've picked up enough education for home consumption. And don't you think I turn my nose up at studying, because I have two libraries, one Greek, one Latin. So tell us, just as a favour, what was the topic of your debate?'

Agamemnon was just beginning, 'A poor man and a rich man were enemies . . .' when Trimalchio said: 'What's a poor man?' 'Oh, witty!' said Agamemnon, and then told us about some fictitious case or other. Like lightning Trimalchio said: 'If this happened, it's not a fictitious case – if it didn't happen, then it's nothing at all.'

We greeted this witticism and several more like it with the greatest enthusiasm.

'Tell me, my dear Agamemnon,' continued Trimalchio, 'do you remember the twelve labours of Hercules and the story of Ulysses – how the Cyclops tore out his eye with his thumb.²⁷ I used to read about them in Homer, when I was a boy. In fact, I actually saw with my own eyes the Sybil at Cumae²⁸ dangling in a bottle, and when the children asked her in Greek: "What do you want, Sybil?" she used to answer: "I want to die."'

49. He was still droning on when a server carrying the massive pig was put on the table. We started to express our amazement at this speed and swear that not even an ordinary rooster could be cooked so quickly, the more so as the pig seemed far larger than it had appeared before. Trimalchio looked closer and closer at it, and then shouted:

'What's this? Isn't this pig gutted? I'm damn certain it isn't. Call the chef in here, go on, call him!'

The downcast chef stood by the table and said he'd forgotten it.

'What, you forgot!' shouted Trimalchio. 'You'd think he'd only left out the pepper and cumin. Strip him!'

In a second the chef was stripped and standing miserably between two guards. But everyone began pleading for him:

'It does tend to happen,' they said, 'do let him off, please. If he does it any more, none of us will stand up for him again.'

Personally, given my tough and ruthless temperament, I couldn't contain myself. I leaned over and whispered in Agamemnon's ear:

'This has surely got to be the worst slave in the world. Could anyone forget to clean a pig? I damn well wouldn't let him off if he forgot to clean a fish.'

But not Trimalchio. His face relaxed into a smile.

'Well,' he said, 'since you have such a bad memory, gut it in front of us.'

The chef recovered his shirt, took up a knife and with a nervous hand cut open the pig's belly left and right. Suddenly, as the slits widened with the pressure, out poured sausages and blood-puddings.

50. The staff applauded this trick and gave a concerted cheer – 'Hurray for Gaius!' The chef of course was rewarded with a drink and a silver crown, and was also given a drinking cup on a tray of Corinthian bronze. Seeing Agamemnon staring hard at this cup, Trimalchio remarked:

'I'm the only person in the world with genuine Corinthian.'

I was expecting him with his usual conceit to claim that all his plate came from Corinth. But he was not as bad as that.

'Perhaps you're wondering,' he went on, 'how I'm the only one with genuine Corinthian dishes. The simple reason is that the manufacturer I buy from is named Corinth – but what can be Corinthian, if you don't have a Corinth to get it from?'

'You mustn't take me for a fool: I know very well where Corinthian metalwork first came from. When Troy was captured that crafty snake Hannibal piled all the bronze, silver and gold statues into one heap and set them on fire, and they were all melted to a bronze alloy. The metalworkers took this solid mass and made plates, dishes, and statuettes out of it. That is how Corinthian plate was born, not really one thing or another, but everything in one.²⁹ You won't mind my saying so, but I prefer glass – that's got no taste at all. If only it didn't break, I'd prefer it to gold, but it's cheap stuff the way it is.'

51. 'Mind you, there was a craftsman once who made a glass bowl that didn't break. So he got an audience with the Emperor,³⁰ taking his present with him ... Then he made Caesar hand it back to him and dropped it on the floor. The Emperor couldn't have been more shaken. The man picked the bowl off the ground – it had been dented like a bronze dish – took a hammer from his pocket and easily got the bowl

as good as new. After this performance he thought he'd be in high heaven, especially when the Emperor said to him:

'“Is there anyone else who knows this process for making glass?”'

'But now see what happens. When the man said no, the Emperor had his head cut off, the reason being that if it was made public, gold would have been as cheap as muck.'

52. 'Now I'm very keen on silver. I have some three-gallon bumpers more or less ... how Cassandra killed her sons,³¹ and the boys are lying there dead – very lifelike. I have a bowl my patron left to me with Daedalus shutting Niobe in the Trojan Horse. What's more, I have the fights of Hermeros and Petraitēs on some cups – all good and heavy. No, I wouldn't sell my know-how at any price.'

While he was talking, a young slave dropped a cup. Trimalchio looked in his direction.

'Get out and hang yourself,' he said, 'you're utterly useless.' Immediately the boy's lips trembled and he begged Trimalchio's pardon.

'What are you asking me for?' snapped his master, 'as though I was the trouble! I'm just asking you not to let yourself be such a useless fool.'

In the end however, as a favour to us, he let him off and the boy ran round the table to celebrate ... and shouted, 'Out with the water – in with the wine!'

We all showed our appreciation of his amusing wit – especially Agamemnon, who knew how to angle for further invitations. But our admiration went to Trimalchio's head. He drank with even greater cheerfulness and was very nearly drunk by now.

'Doesn't anyone want my dear Fortunata to dance?' he said. 'Honestly, no one dances the *Cordax*³² better.'

Then he stuck his hands up over his forehead and gave us a personal imitation of the actor Syrus, while all the staff sang in chorus:

'Madeia, Perimadeia.'

In fact, he would have taken the floor, if Fortunata had not whispered in his ear. She must have told him, I suppose, that such low fooling did not suit his dignity. But you never saw anyone so changeable – one minute he would be frightened of Fortunata and the next minute he would be back in character again.

53. What really interrupted his coarse insistence on dancing was his

accountant, who sounded as though he was reading out a copy of the Gazette:

'26 July: Births on the estate at Cumae: male 30, female 40. Wheat threshed and stored: 500,000 pecks. Oxen broken in: 500.

'On the same date: the slave Mithridates crucified³³ for insulting the guardian spirit of our dear Gaius.

'On the same date: Deposits to the strong-room (no further investment possible): 10,000,000 sesterces.

'On the same date: a fire broke out on the estate at Pompeii beginning at the house of Nasta the bailiff.'

'What!' said Trimalchio. 'When was an estate bought for me at Pompeii?'

'Last year,' said the accountant, 'so it hasn't yet come on the books.'

Trimalchio flared up:

'If any land is bought for me and I don't hear of it within six months, I refuse to have it entered on the books.'

The official edicts were read out and the wills of certain gamekeepers. In specific codicils they said they were leaving Trimalchio nothing. Then the names of some bailiffs; the divorce of a freedwoman, the wife of a watchman, on the grounds of adultery with a bath-attendant; the demotion of a hall-porter to a job at Baiae; the prosecution of a steward; and the result of an action between some bedroom attendants.

Finally the acrobats arrived. One was a silly idiot who stood there holding a ladder and made his boy climb up the rungs, give us a song and dance at the top, then jump through blazing hoops, and hold up a large wine-jar with his teeth.

Only Trimalchio was impressed by all this: art wasn't appreciated, he considered, but if there were two things in the world he really liked to watch, they were acrobats and horn-players. All the other shows were not worth a damn.

'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'once I even bought some comic-actors, but I preferred them putting on Atellan farces,³⁴ and I told my conductor to keep his songs Latin.'

54. Just as he was saying this, the boy tumbled down on Trimalchio's couch. Everyone screamed, the guests as well as the servants – not because they were worried over such an awful person (they would happily have watched his neck being broken) but because it would have been a poor ending to the party if they had to offer their condolences for a comparative stranger. Trimalchio himself groaned heavily and

leaned over his arm as though it were hurt. Doctors raced to the scene, but practically the first one there was Fortunata, hair flying and cup in hand, telling the world what a poor unfortunate thing she was. As for the boy who had fallen, he was already crawling round our feet, begging for mercy. I had a very uneasy feeling that his pleadings might be the prelude to some funny surprise ending, as I still remembered the chef who had forgotten to gut his pig. So I began looking round the dining-room for some machine to appear out of the wall, especially after a servant was beaten for using white instead of purple wool to bandage his master's bruised arm.

Nor were my suspicions far out, because instead of punishment, there came an official announcement from Trimalchio that the boy was free, so that no one could say that such a great figure had been injured by a slave.

55. We all applauded his action and started a desultory conversation about how uncertain life was.

'Well,' says Trimalchio, 'an occasion like this mustn't pass without a suitable record.' He immediately called for his notebook, and without much mental exertion he came out with:

'What comes next you never know,
Lady Luck runs the show,
So pass the Falernian, lad.'

This epigram brought the conversation round to poetry and for quite a time the first place among poets was given to Mopsus of Thrace³⁵ until Trimalchio said:

'Tell me, professor, how would you compare Cicero and Publilius? I think Cicero was the better orator, but Publilius the better man. Now could there be anything finer than this:

'Down luxury's maw, Mars' walls now wilt.
Your palate pens peacocks in plumage of gilt:
These Babylon birds are plumped under lock
With the guinea hen and the capon cock.
That long-legged paragon, winged castanet,
Summer's lingering lease and winter's regret –
Even the stork, poor wandering guest,
Is put in your pot and makes that his nest.
Why are Indian pearls so dear in your sight?
So your sluttish wife, draped in the diver's delight,

May open her legs on her lover's divan?
 What use are green emeralds, glass ruin of man,
 Or carbuncles from Carthage with fire in their flint?
 Unless to let goodness gleam out in their glint.
 Is it right for a bride to be clad in a cloud
 Or wearing a wisp show off bare to the crowd?

56. 'Well now, whose profession do we think is most difficult after literature? I think doctors and bankers. A doctor has to know what people have in their insides and what causes a fever – even though I do hate them terribly the way they put me on a diet of duck. A banker has to spot the brass under the silver. Well, among dumb animals the hardest worked are cattle and sheep. It's thanks to cattle we have bread to eat, and it's thanks to sheep and their wool that we're well dressed. It's a low trick the way we eat mutton and wear woollens. Bees, now, I think are heavenly creatures – they spew honey, though people suppose they get it from heaven. But at the same time they sting, because where there's sweet you'll find bitter there too.'

He was still putting the philosophers out of work when tickets were brought round in a cup and the boy whose job it was read out the presents.³⁶ *Rich man's prison* – a silver jug. *Pillow* – a piece of neck came up. *Old man's wit and a sour stick* – dry salt biscuits came up and an apple on a stick. *Lick and spit* got a whip and a knife. *Flies and a fly-trap* was raisins and Attic honey. *Dinner-clothes and city-suit* got a slice of meat and a notebook. *Head and foot* produced a hare and a slipper. *Lights and letters* got a lamprey and some peas.' We laughed for ages. There were hundreds of things like this but they've slipped my mind now.

57. Ascylltus, with his usual lack of restraint, found everything extremely funny, lifting up his hands and laughing till the tears came. Eventually one of Trimalchio's freedman friends flared up at him.

'You with the sheep's eyes,' he said, 'what's so funny? Isn't our host elegant enough for you? You're better off, I suppose, and used to a bigger dinner. Holy guardian here preserve me! If I was sitting by him, I'd stop his bleating! A fine pippin he is to be laughing at other people! Some fly-by-night from god knows where – not worth his own piss. In fact, if I pissed round him, he wouldn't know where to turn.'

'By god, it takes a lot to make me boil, but if you're too soft, worms like this only come to the top. Look at him laughing! What's he got to

laugh at? Did his father pay cash for him? You're a Roman knight, are you? Well, my father was a king.

'*“Why are you only a freedman?”* did you say? Because I put myself into slavery. I wanted to be a Roman citizen, not a subject with taxes to pay.³⁷ And today, I hope no one can laugh at the way I live. I'm a man among men, and I walk with my head up. I don't owe anybody a penny – there's never been a court-order out for me. No one's said *“Pay up”* to me in the street.'

'I've bought a bit of land and some tiny pieces of plate. I've twenty bellies to feed, as well as a dog. I bought my old woman's freedom so nobody could wipe his dirty hands on *her* hair. Four thousand I paid for myself. I was elected to the Augustan College and it cost me nothing. I hope when I die I won't have to blush in my coffin.'

'But you now, you're such a busybody you don't look behind you. You see a louse on somebody else, but not the fleas on your own back. You're the only one who finds us funny. Look at the professor now – he's an older man than you and we get along with him. But you're still wet from your mother's milk and not up to your ABC yet. Just a crackpot – you're like a piece of wash-leather in soak, softer but no better! You're grander than us – well, have two dinners and two suppers! I'd rather have my good name than any amount of money. When all's said and done, who's ever asked me for money twice? For forty years I slaved but nobody ever knew if I was a slave or a free man. I came to this colony when I was a lad with long hair – the town hall hadn't been built then. But I worked hard to please my master – there was a real gentleman, with more in his little finger-nail than there is in your whole body. And I had people in the house who tried to trip me up one way or another, but still – thanks be to his guardian spirit! – I kept my head above water. These are the prizes in life: being born free is as easy as all get-out. Now what are you gawping at, like a goat in a vetch-field?'

58. At this remark, Giton, who was waiting on me, could not suppress his laughter and let out a filthy guffaw, which did not pass unnoticed by Ascylltus' opponent. He turned his abuse on the boy.

'So!' he said. 'You're amused too, are you, you curly-headed onion? A merry Saturnalia to you! Is it December, I'd like to know?³⁸ When did *you* pay your liberation tax?³⁹ ... Look, he doesn't know what to do, the gallow's bird, the crow's meat.'

'God's curse on you, and your master too, for not keeping you under control! As sure as I get my bellyful, it's only because of Trimalchio

that I don't take it out of you here and now. He's a freedman like myself. We're doing all right, but those good-for-nothings, well – . It's easy to see, like master, like man. I can hardly hold myself back, and I'm not naturally hot-headed – but once I start, I don't give a penny for my own mother.

'All right! I'll see you when we get outside, you rat, you excrescence. I'll knock your master into a cocked hat before I'm an inch taller or shorter. And I won't let you off either, by heaven, even if you scream down God Almighty. Your cheap curls and your no-good master won't be much use to you then – I'll see to that. I'll get my teeth into you all right. Either I'm much mistaken about myself or you won't be laughing at us behind your golden beard. Athena's curse on you and the man who first made you such a forward brat.

'I didn't learn no geometry or criticism and such silly rubbish, but I can read the letters on a notice board and I can do my percentages in metal, weights, and money. In fact, if you like, we'll have a bet. Come on, here's my cash. Now you'll see how your father wasted his money, even though you do know how to make a speech.

'Try this:

'Something we all have.

Long I come, broad I come. What am I?

'I'll give you it: something we all have that runs and doesn't move from its place: something we all have that grows and gets smaller.⁴⁰

'You're running round in circles, you've had enough, like the mouse in the pisspot. So either keep quiet or keep out of the way of your betters – they don't even know you're alive – unless you think I care about your box-wood rings that you swiped from your girl-friend! Lord make me lucky! Let's go into town and borrow some money. You'll soon see they trust this iron one.

'Pah! a drowned fox makes a nice sight, I must say. As I hope to make my pile and die so famous that people swear by my dead body, I'll hound you to death. And he's a nice thing too, the one who taught you all these tricks – a muttonhead, not a master. We learned different. Our teacher used to say: "Are your things in order? Go straight home. No looking around. And be polite to your elders." Nowadays it's all an absolute muck-heap. They turn out nobody worth a penny. I'm like you see me and I thank god for the way I was learnt.'

59. Ascylltus began to answer this abuse, but Trimalchio, highly amused by his friend's fluency, said:

'No slanging matches! Let's all have a nice time. And you, Hermeros, leave the young fellow alone. His blood's a bit hot – you should know better. In things like this, the one who gives in always comes off best. Besides, when you were just a chicken, it was cock-a-doodle too, and you had no more brains yourself. So let's start enjoying ourselves again, that'll be better, and let's watch the recitations from Homer.'

In came the troupe immediately and banged their shields with their spears. Trimalchio sat up on his cushion and while the reciters spouted their Greek lines at one another in their usual impudent way, he read aloud in Latin in a sing-song voice. After a while, he got silence and asked:

'Do you know which scene they were acting? Diomede and Ganymede were the two brothers. Their sister was Helen. Agamemnon carried her off and offered a hind to Diana in her place. So now Homer is describing how the Trojans and Tarentines fought each other. Agamemnon, of course, won and married off his daughter Iphigenia to Achilles. This drove Ajax insane, and in a moment or two he'll explain how it ended.'⁴¹

As Trimalchio said this, the reciters gave a loud shout, the servants made a lane, and a calf was brought in on a two-hundred pound plate: it was boiled whole and wearing a helmet. Following it came Ajax, slashing at the calf with a drawn sword like a madman. After rhythmically cutting and slicing, he collected the pieces on the point and shared them among the surprised guests.

60. But we were not given long to admire these elegant turns, for all of a sudden, the coffered ceiling began rumbling and the whole dining-room shook. I leapt to my feet in panic, as I was afraid some acrobat was coming down through the roof. The other guests also looked up to see what strange visitation this announced. Would you believe it – the panels opened and suddenly an enormous hoop was let down, with gold crowns and alabaster jars of toilet cream hanging from it. While we were being told to accept these as presents, I looked at the table ... Already there was a tray of cakes in position, the centre of which was occupied by a Priapus made of pastry, holding the usual things in his very adequate lap – all kinds of apples and grapes.

Greedily enough, we stretched out our hands to this display, and in a flash a fresh series of jokes restored the general gaiety. Every single cake and every single apple needed only the slightest touch for a cloud

of saffron to start pouring out and the irritating vapour to come right in our faces.

Naturally we thought the fish must have some religious significance to be smothered in such an odour of sanctity, so we raised ourselves to a sitting position and cried:

'God save Augustus, the Father of his People!'

All the same, even after this show of respect, some of the guests were snatching the apples – especially me, because I didn't think I was pushing a generous enough share into Giton's pocket.

While all this was going on, three boys in brief white tunics came in. Two of them set down on the table the household deities,⁴² which had amulets round their necks; the other, carrying round a bowl of wine, kept shouting: 'God save all here!' . . .

Our host said that one of the gods was called Cobbler, the second Luck, and the third Lucre. There was also a golden image of Trimalchio himself, and as all the others were pressing their lips to it we felt too embarrassed not to do the same.

61. After we had all wished each other health and happiness, Trimalchio looked at Niceros and said:

'You used to be better company at a party. You're keeping very quiet nowadays: you don't say a word – I don't know why. Do me a favour to please me. Tell us about that adventure you had.'

Niceros was delighted by his friend's affable request and said:

'May I never make another penny if I'm not jumping for joy to see you in such form. Well, just for fun – though I'm worried about those schoolteachers there in case they laugh at me. That's up to them. I'll tell it all the same. Anyway, what do I care who laughs at me. It's better to be laughed at than laughed down.'

'*When thus he spake,*' he began this story:

'When I was still a slave, we were living down a narrow street – Gavilla owns the house now – and there as heaven would have it, I fell in love with the wife of Terentius the innkeeper.

'You all used to know Melissa from Tarentum, an absolute peach to look at. But honest to god, it wasn't her body or just sex that made me care for her, it was more because she had such a nice nature. If I asked her for anything, it was never refused. If I had a penny or halfpenny, I gave it to her to look after and she never let me down.

'One day her husband died out at the villa. So I did my best by hook

or by crook to get to her. After all, you know, a friend in need is a friend indeed.

62. 'Luckily the master had gone off to Capua to look after some odds and ends. I seized my chance and I talked a guest of ours into walking with me as far as the fifth milestone. He was a soldier as it happened, and as brave as hell. About cock-crow we shag off, and the moon was shining like noontime. We get to where the tombs are and my chap starts making for the grave-stones, while I, singing away, keep going and start counting the stars. Then just as I looked back at my mate, he stripped off and laid all his clothes by the side of the road. My heart was in my mouth, I stood there like a corpse. Anyway, he pissed a ring round his clothes and suddenly turned into a wolf. Don't think I'm joking, I wouldn't tell a lie about this for a fortune. However, as I began to say, after he turned into a wolf, he started howling and rushed off into the woods.

'At first I didn't know where I was, then I went up to collect his clothes – but they'd turned to stone. If ever a man was dead with fright, it was me. But I pulled out my sword, and I fairly slaughtered the early morning shadows till I arrived at my girl's villa.

'I got into the house and I practically gasped my last, the sweat was pouring down my crotch, my eyes were blank and staring – I could hardly get over it. It came as a surprise to my poor Melissa to find I'd walked over so late.

"'If you'd come a bit earlier," she said, "at least you could've helped us. A wolf got into the grounds and tore into all the livestock – it was like a bloody shambles. But he didn't have the last laugh, even though he got away. Our slave here put a spear right through his neck."

'I couldn't close my eyes again after I heard this. But when it was broad daylight I rushed off home like the innkeeper after the robbery. And when I came to the spot where his clothes had turned to stone, I found nothing but bloodstains. However, when I got home, my soldier friend was lying in bed like a great ox with the doctor seeing to his neck. I realized he was a werewolf and afterwards I couldn't have taken a bite of bread in his company, not if you killed me for it. If some people think differently about this, that's up to them. But me – if I'm telling a lie may all your guardian spirits damn me!'

63. Everyone was struck with amazement.

'I wouldn't disbelieve a word,' said Trimalchio. 'Honestly, the way

my hair stood on end – because I know Niceros doesn't go in for jokes. He's really reliable and never exaggerates.

'Now I'll tell you a horrible story myself. A real donkey on the roof! When I was still in long hair (you see, I led a very soft life from my boyhood) the master's pet slave died. He was a pearl, honest to god, a beautiful boy, and one of the best. Well, his poor mother was crying over him and the rest of us were deep in depression, when the witches suddenly started howling – you'd think it was a dog after a hare.

'At that time we had a Cappadocian chap, tall and a very brave old thing, quite the strong man – he could lift an angry ox. This fellow rushed outside with a drawn sword, first wrapping his left hand up very carefully, and he stabbed one of the women right through the middle, just about here – may no harm come to where I'm touching! We heard a groan but – naturally I'm not lying – we didn't see the things themselves. Our big fellow, however, once he was back inside, threw himself on his bed. His whole body was black and blue, as though he'd been whipped. The evil hand, you see, had been put on him.

'We closed the door and went back to what we had to do, but as the mother puts her arms round her son's body, she touches it and finds it's only a handful of straw. It had no heart, no inside, no anything. Of course the witches had already stolen the boy and put a straw baby in its place.

'I put it to you, you can't get away from it – there are such things as women with special powers and midnight hags that can turn everything upside down. But that great tall fellow of ours never got his colour back after what happened. In fact, not many days later, he went crazy and died.'

64. Equally thrilled and convinced, we kissed the table and asked the midnight hags to stay at home till we got back from dinner.

By this time, to tell the truth, there seemed to be more lights burning and the whole dining-room seemed different,⁴³ when Trimalchio said:

'What about you, Plocamus, haven't you a story to entertain us with. You used to have a fine voice for giving recitations with a nice swing and putting songs over – ah me, the good old days are gone.'

'Well,' said Plocamus, 'my galloping days finished after I got gout. Besides, when I was really young I nearly got consumption through singing. How about my dancing? How about my recitations? How about my barber's shop act? When was there anybody so good apart from Apelles himself?'⁴⁴

Putting his hand to his mouth he let out some sort of obscene whistle which he afterwards insisted was Greek.

Trimalchio, after giving us his own imitation of a fanfare of trumpets, looked round for his little pet, whom he called Croesus. The boy, however, a bleary-eyed creature with absolutely filthy teeth, was busy wrapping a green cloth round a disgustingly fat black puppy. He put half a loaf on the couch and was cramming it down the animal's throat while it kept vomiting it back. This business reminded Trimalchio to send out for Scylax, 'protector of the house and the household'.

A hound of enormous size was immediately led in on a chain. A kick from the hall-porter reminded him to lie down and he stretched himself out in front of the table. Trimalchio threw him a piece of white bread, remarking:

'Nobody in the house is more devoted to me.'

The boy, however, annoyed by such a lavish tribute to Scylax, put his own little pup on the floor and encouraged her to hurry up and start a fight. Scylax, naturally following his canine instincts, filled the dining-room with a most unpleasant barking and almost tore Croesus' Pearl to pieces. Nor was the trouble limited to the dog-fight. A lampstand was upset on the table as well and not only smashed all the glass but spilled hot oil over some of the guests.

Not wanting to seem disturbed by the damage, Trimalchio gave the boy a kiss and told him to climb on his back. The lad climbed on his mount without hesitation, and slapping his shoulder blades with the flat of his hand, shouted amid roars of laughter:

'Big mouth, big mouth, how many fingers have I got up?'

So Trimalchio was calmed down for a while and gave instructions for a huge bowl of drink to be mixed and served to all the servants, who were sitting by our feet. He added the condition:

'If anyone won't take it, pour it over his head. Day's the time for business, now's the time for fun.'

65. This display of kindness was followed by some savouries, the very recollection of which really and truly makes me sick. Instead of thrushes, a fat capon was brought round for each of us, as well as goose-eggs in pastry hoods. Trimalchio surpassed himself to make us eat them; he described them as boneless chickens. In the middle of all this, a licitor knocked at the double doors and a drunken guest entered wearing white, followed by a large crowd of people. I was terrified by this lordly apparition and thought it was the chief magistrate arriving.

So I tried to rise and get my bare feet on the floor. Agamemnon laughed at this panic and said:

'Get hold of yourself, you silly fool. This is Habinnas – Augustan College and monumental mason.'

Relieved by this information I resumed my position and watched Habinnas' entry with huge admiration. Being already drunk, he had his hands on his wife's shoulders; loaded with several garlands, oil pouring down his forehead and into his eyes, he settled himself into the praetor's place of honour⁴⁵ and immediately demanded some wine and hot water. Trimalchio, delighted by these high spirits, demanded a larger cup for himself and asked how he had enjoyed it all.

'The only thing we missed,' replied Habinnas, 'was yourself – the apple of my eye was here. Still, it was damn good. Scissa was giving a ninth-day dinner⁴⁶ in honour of a poor slave of hers she'd freed on his death-bed. And I think she'll have a pretty penny to pay with the five per cent liberation tax, because they reckon he was worth fifty thousand. Still, it was pleasant enough, even if we did have to pour half our drinks over his wretched bones.'

66. 'Well,' said Trimalchio, 'what did you have for dinner?'

'I'll tell you if I can – I've such a good memory that I often forget my own name. For the first course we had a pig crowned with sausages and served with blood-puddings and very nicely done giblets, and of course beetroot and pure wholemeal bread – which I prefer to white myself: it's very strengthening and I don't regret it when I do my business. The next course was cold tart and a concoction of first-class Spanish wine poured over hot honey. I didn't eat anything at all of the actual tart, but I got stuck into the honey. Scattered round were chickpeas, lupines, a choice of nuts and an apple apiece – though I took two. And look, I've got them tied up in a napkin, because if I don't take something in the way of a present to my little slave, I'll have a row on my hands.

'Oh yes, my good lady reminds me. We had a hunk of bear-meat set before us, which Scintilla was foolish enough to try, and she practically spewed up her guts; but I ate more than a pound of it, as it tasted like real wild-boar. And I say if bears can eat us poor people, it's all the more reason why us poor people should eat bears.

'To finish up with, we had some cheese basted with new wine, snails all round, chitterlings, plates of liver, eggs in pastry hoods, turnips, mustard, and then, wait a minute, little tunny fish! There were pickled

cumin seeds too, passed round in a bowl, and some people were that bad-mannered they took three handfuls. You see, we sent the ham away.

67. 'But tell me something, Gaius, now I ask – why isn't Fortunata at the table?'

'You know her,' replied Trimalchio, 'unless she's put the silver away and shared out the left-overs among the slaves, she won't put a drop of water to her mouth.'

'All the same,' retorted Habinnas, 'unless she sits down, I'm shagging off.'

And he was starting to get up, when at a given signal all the servants shouted '*Fortunata*' four or more times. So in she came with her skirt tucked up under a yellow sash to show her cerise petticoat underneath, as well as her twisted anklets and gold-embroidered slippers. Wiping her hands on a handkerchief which she carried round her neck, she took her place on the couch where Habinnas' wife was reclining. She kissed her. 'Is it really you?' she said, clapping her hands together.

It soon got to the point where Fortunata took the bracelets from her great fat arms and showed them to the admiring Scintilla. In the end she even undid her anklets and her gold hair net, which she said was pure gold. Trimalchio noticed this and had it all brought to him and commented:

'A woman's chains, you see. This is the way us poor fools get robbed. She must have six and a half pounds on her. Still, I've got a bracelet myself, made up from one-tenth per cent to Mercury⁴⁷ – and it weighs not an ounce less than ten pounds.'

Finally, for fear he looked like a liar, he even had some scales brought in and had them passed round to test the weight.

Scintilla was no better. From round her neck she took a little gold locket, which she called her 'lucky box'. From it she extracted two earrings and in her turn gave them to Fortunata to look at.

'A present from my good husband,' she said, 'and no one has a finer set.'

'Hey!' said Habinnas. 'You cleaned me out to buy you a glass bean. Honestly, if I had a daughter, I'd cut her little ears off. If there weren't any women, everything would be dirt cheap. As it is, we've got to drink cold water and piss it out hot.'

Meanwhile, the women giggled tipsily between themselves and kissed each other drunkenly, one crying up her merits as a housewife, the other

crying about her husband's demerits and boy-friends. While they had their heads together like this, Habinnas rose stealthily and taking Fortunata's feet, flung them up over the couch.⁴⁸

'Oh, oh!' she shrieked, as her underskirt wandered up over her knees. So she settled herself in Scintilla's lap and hid her burning red face in her handkerchief.

68. Then came an interval, after which Trimalchio called for dessert. Slaves removed all the tables and brought in others. They scattered sawdust tinted with saffron and vermilion, and something I had never seen before – powdered mica. Trimalchio said at once:

'I could make you just settle for this. There's dessert for you! The first tables've deserted.⁴⁹ However, if you people have anything nice, bring it on!'

Meanwhile a slave from Alexandria, who was taking round the hot water, started imitating a nightingale, only for Trimalchio to shout: 'Change your tune!'

More entertainment! A slave sitting by Habinnas' feet, prompted, I suppose, by his master, suddenly burst out in a sing-song voice:

'Meantime Aeneas was in mid-ocean with his fleet.'⁵⁰

No more cutting sound ever pierced my eardrums. Apart from his barbarous meandering up and down the scale, he mixed in Atellan verses,⁵¹ so that Virgil actually grated on me for the first time in my life. When he did finally stop through exhaustion, Habinnas said:

'He's never had any real training. I just had him taught by sending him along to peddlers on the street corner. He's no one to equal him if he wants to imitate mule-drivers or hawkers. He's terribly clever, really. He's a cobbler, a cook, a confectioner – a man that can turn his hand to anything. But he's got two faults; if he didn't have them, he'd be one in a million – he's circumcised and he snores. I don't mind him being cross-eyed – so is Venus. That's why he's never quiet and his eyes are hardly ever still. I got him for three hundred denarii.'

69. Scintilla interrupted him: 'Of course, you're not telling them all the tricks that wretch gets up to. He's a pimp – but I'll make sure he gets branded for it.'

Trimalchio laughed: 'I know a Cappadocian⁵² when I see one. He's not slow in looking after himself and, by heaven, I admire him for it. You can't take it with you.'

'Now, Scintilla, don't be jealous. Believe me, we know all about you

women too. As sure as I stand here, I used to bang the mistress so much that even the old boy suspected; so he sent me off to look after his farms. But I'd better save my breath to cool my porridge.'

As though he'd been complimented the wretched slave took out an earthenware lamp from his pocket and for more than half an hour gave imitations of trumpet-players, while Habinnas hummed an accompaniment, pressing down his lower lip with his hand. Finally coming right into the middle, he did a flute-player with some broken reeds, then he dressed up in a greatcoat and whip and did the Life of the Muleteer, till Habinnas called him over, kissed him, and gave him a drink:

'Better and better, Massa!' he said. 'I'll give you a pair of boots.'

There would have been no end to all these trials if an extra course had not arrived – pastry thrushes stuffed with raisins and nuts. After them came quinces with thorns stuck in them to look like sea-urchins. All this would have been all right, but there was a far more horrible dish that made us prefer even dying of hunger. When it was put on the table, looking to us like a fat goose surrounded by fish and all sorts of game, Trimalchio said:

'Whatever you see here, friends, is made from one kind of stuff.'

I, of course, being very cautious by nature, spotted immediately what it was and glancing at Agamemnon, I said:

'I'll be surprised if it isn't all made of wax, or any rate mud. I've seen that sort of imitation food produced at the Saturnalia in Rome.'

70. I hadn't quite finished what I was saying when Trimalchio said:

'As sure as I hope to expand – my investments of course, not my waist-line – my chef made it all from pork. There couldn't be a more valuable man to have. Say the word and he'll produce a fish out of a sow's belly, a pigeon out of the lard, a turtle dove out of the ham, and fowl out of the knuckle. So he's been given a nice name I thought of myself – he's called Daedalus.⁵³ And seeing he's a clever lad, I brought him some carvers of Styrian steel as a present from Rome.'

He immediately had them brought in and gazed at them with admiration. He even allowed us to test the point on our cheeks.

All of a sudden in came two slaves, apparently having had a quarrel at the well; at any rate they still had water jugs on their shoulders. But while Trimalchio was giving his decision about their respective cases, neither of them paid any attention to his verdict: instead they broke each other's jugs with their sticks. Staggered by their drunken insolence, we couldn't take our eyes away from the fight till we noticed oysters

and scallops sliding out of the jugs, which a boy collected and carried round on a dish. The ingenious chef was equal to these elegant refinements – he brought in snails on a silver gridiron, singing all the time in a high grating voice.

I blush to say what happened next. Boys with their hair down their backs came round with perfumed cream in a silver bowl and rubbed it on our feet⁵⁴ as we lay there, but first they wrapped our legs and ankles in wreaths of flowers. Some of the same stuff was dropped into the decanter and the lamp.

Fortunata was now wanting to dance,⁵⁵ and Scintilla was doing more clapping than talking, when Trimalchio said:

‘Philargyrus – even though you are such a terrible fan of the Greens⁵⁶ – you have my permission to join us. And tell your dear Menophila to sit down as well.’

Need I say more? We were almost thrown out of our places, so completely did the household fill the dining-room. I even noticed that the chef, the one who had produced the goose out of pork, was actually given a place above me, and he was reeking of pickles and sauce. And he wasn’t satisfied with just having a place, but he had to start straight off on an imitation of the tragedian Ephesus,⁵⁷ and then challenge his master to bet against the Greens winning at the next races.

71. Trimalchio became expansive after this argument.

‘My dear people,’ he said, ‘slaves are human beings too. They drink the same milk as anybody else, even though luck’s been agin ’em. Still, if nothing happens to me, they’ll have their taste of freedom soon. In fact, I’m setting them all free in my will. I’m giving Philargyrus a farm, what’s more, and the woman he lives with. As for Cario, I’m leaving him a block of flats, his five per cent manumission tax, and a bed with all the trimmings. I’m making Fortunata my heir, and I want all my friends to look after her.’

‘The reason I’m telling everyone all this is so my household will love me now as much as if I was dead.’

Everyone began thanking his lordship for his kindness, when he became very serious and had a copy of his will brought in. Amid the sobs of his household he read out the whole thing from beginning to end.

Then looking at Habinnas, he said:

‘What have you to say, my dear old friend? Are you building my monument the way I told you? I particularly want you to keep a place

at the foot of my statue and put a picture of my pup there, as well as paintings of wreaths, scent-bottles, and all the contests of Petraitas, and thanks to you I’ll be able to live on after I’m dead. And another thing! See that it’s a hundred feet facing the road and two hundred back into the field. I want all the various sorts of fruit round my ashes and lots and lots of vines. After all, it’s a big mistake to have nice houses just for when you’re alive and not worry about the one we have to live in for much longer. And that’s why I want this written up before anything else:

THIS MONUMENT DOES NOT GO TO THE HEIR

‘But I’ll make sure in my will that I don’t get done down once I’m dead. I’ll put one of my freedmen in charge of my tomb to look after it and not let people run up and shit on my monument. I’d like you to put some ships there too, sailing under full canvas, and me sitting on a high platform in my robes of office, wearing five gold rings⁵⁸ and pouring out a bagful of money for the people. You know I gave them all a dinner and two denarii apiece. Let’s have in a banqueting hall as well, if you think it’s a good idea, and show the whole town having a good time. Put up a statue of Fortunata on my right, holding a dove, and have her leading her little dog tied to her belt – and my little lad as well, and big wine-jars tightly sealed up so the wine won’t spill. And perhaps you could carve me a broken one and a boy crying over it. A clock in the middle, so that anybody who looks at the time, like it or not, has got to read my name. As for the inscription now, take a good look and see if this seems suitable enough:

‘HERE SLEEPS

GAIUS POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO
MAECENATIANUS⁵⁹

ELECTED TO THE AUGUSTAN COLLEGE IN HIS ABSENCE
HE COULD HAVE BEEN ON EVERY BOARD IN ROME

BUT HE REFUSED

GOD-FEARING BRAVE AND TRUE

A SELF-MADE MAN

HE LEFT AN ESTATE OF 30,000,000

AND HE NEVER HEARD A PHILOSOPHER

FAREWELL

AND YOU FARE WELL, TRIMALCHIO’

72. As he finished Trimalchio burst into tears. Fortunata was in tears,

Habinnas was in tears, in the end the whole household filled the dining-room with their wailing, like people at a funeral. In fact, I'd even begun crying myself, when Trimalchio said:

'Well, since we know we've got to die, why don't we live a little. I want to see you enjoying yourselves. Let's jump into a bath – you won't be sorry, damn me! It's as hot as a furnace.'

'Hear! Hear!' said Habinnas. 'Turning one day into two – nothing I like better.' He got up in his bare feet and began to follow Trimalchio on his merry way.

I looked at Ascyllus. 'What do you think?' I said. 'Now me, if I see a bath, I'll die on the spot.'

'Let's say yes,' he suggested, 'and while they're going for their bath, we can slip out in the crowd.'

This seemed a good idea, so Giton led us through the portico till we reached the door, where the hound chained there greeted us with such a noise that Ascyllus actually fell into the fishpond. Not only that, as I was drunk too, when I tried to help the struggling Ascyllus I was dragged into the same watery trap. However, the hall-porter saved us and by his intervention pacified the dog and dragged us trembling to dry land. Giton had already bought off the beast in a most ingenious way. He had scattered whatever he had got from us at dinner in front of the barking hound, and distracted by the food, it had choked down its fury.

Nevertheless, when, shivering and wet, we asked the hall-porter to let us out through the front door, he said: 'You're wrong if you think you can leave through the door you came in. No guest has ever been let out through the same door. They come in one way and go out another.'

73. What could we do after this piece of bad luck, shut up in this modern labyrinth and now beginning to regret that bath? We asked him to please show us the way to the bath-hall, and, throwing off our clothes, which Giton began drying at the door, we went in. There stood Trimalchio, and not even there could we get away from his filthy ostentation. He told us there was nothing better than a private bath, and that there had once been a bakery on that very spot. Then he sat down as though tired, and being tempted by the acoustics of the bath, with his drunken mouth gaping at the ceiling, he began murdering some songs by Menecrates⁶⁰ – or so we were told by those who understood his words.

The rest of the guests ran round the edge hand in hand, roaring away

with a tremendous noise. Some were trying to pick up rings from the floor with their hands tied behind their backs, or were kneeling and trying to bend their necks backwards and touch the tips of their big toes. We left them to their games and sat down in the hot tub, which was being heated to Trimalchio's liking.

Well, after shaking off our drunken stupor, we were taken to another dining-room where Fortunata had laid out an elegant spread . . . In fact, I noticed some bronze fishermen on the lamps as well as tables of solid silver, with gold inlaid pottery spread around and wine pouring from a leather wine-flask before our very eyes.

'Today, my friends,' said Trimalchio, 'my little slave had his first shave: he's a careful fellow – no offence meant! – who watches the pennies. So let's whet our throttles and not stop eating till daylight.'

74. Just as he was speaking, a cock crowed. Upset by this, Trimalchio ordered some wine to be poured out under the table and even had the lamps sprinkled with it undiluted. He actually changed his ring to his right hand.⁶¹

'That trumpeter,' he said, 'didn't give the signal without good reason. There should be a fire next or else somebody will be dying in the neighbourhood – God spare us! So whoever gets me that bringer of bad news, there's a tip for him.'

Before the words were out of his mouth, a cock was brought in and Trimalchio ordered it to be put in the pan and cooked. It was cut up by that very skilful chef and it was thrown into the pot. While Daedalus drew the scalding liquid, Fortunata ground pepper in a box-wood grinder.

After this dish Trimalchio looked at the servants and said:

'Why haven't you had dinner yet? Off you go and let some others come on duty.'

Up came another squad and as the first set called out: 'Good night, Gaius!' the new arrivals shouted: 'Good evening, Gaius!'

This led to the first incident that damped the general high spirits. Not a bad-looking boy entered with the newcomers and Trimalchio jumped at him and began kissing him at some length. Fortunata, asserting her just and legal rights, began hurling insults at Trimalchio, calling him a low scum and a disgrace, who couldn't control his beastly desires. 'You dirty dog!' she finally added.

Trimalchio took offence at this abuse and flung his glass into Fortunata's face. She screamed as though she'd lost an eye and put her

trembling hands across her face. Scintilla was terrified too and hugged the quaking woman to her breast. An obliging slave pressed a little jug of cold water to her cheek, while Fortunata rested her head on it and began weeping. Trimalchio on the other hand said:

'Well, well, forgotten her flute-girl days, has she? She doesn't remember, but she was bought and sold, and I took her away from it all and made her as good as the next. Yet she puffs herself up like a frog and doesn't even spit for luck. Like wood, not woman. But those as are born over a shop don't dream of a house. May I never have a day's good luck again, if I don't teach that Cassandra⁶² in clogs some manners!

'There was I, not worth twopence, and I could have had ten million. And you know I'm not lying about it. Agatho, who runs the perfume shop, he took me on one side just recently and said: "You don't want to let your family die out, you know!" But me, trying to do the right thing and not wanting to look changeable, I cut my own throat.

'All right! I'll make you want to dig me up with your bare nails. Just so you'll know on the spot what you've done for yourself – Habinnas! I don't want you to put her statue on my tomb, so at least when I'm dead I won't have any more squabbles. And another thing! Just to show I can get my own back – when I'm dead I don't want her to kiss me.'

75. After this thunderbolt, Habinnas began asking him to calm down: 'There's none of us does no wrong,' he said, 'we're human beings, not gods!' Scintilla said the same, calling him Gaius, and she began asking him, in the name of his guardian spirit, to give in.

Trimalchio held back his tears no longer. 'I ask you, Habinnas,' he said, 'as you hope to enjoy your bit of savings – if I did anything wrong, spit in my face. I kissed this very careful little fellow, not for his pretty looks, but because he's careful with money – he says his ten times table, he reads a book at sight, he's got himself some Thracian kit out of his daily allowance, and he's bought himself an easy chair and two cups out of his own pocket. Doesn't he deserve to be the apple of my eye? But Fortunata won't have it.

'Is that the way you feel, high heels? I'll give you a piece of advice: don't let your good luck turn your head, you kite, and don't make me show my teeth, my little darling – otherwise you'll feel my temper. You know me: once I've decided on something, it's fixed with a twelve-inch nail.

'But to come back to earth – I want you to enjoy yourselves, my dear people. After all, I was once like you are, but being the right sort I got

where I am. It's the old headpiece that makes a man, the rest is all rubbish. "Buy right – sell right!" – that's me! Different people will give you a different line. I'm just on top of the world, I'm that lucky.

'But you, you snoring thing, are you still moaning? I'll give you something to moan about in a minute.

'However, as I'd started to say, it was my shrewd way with money that made me my fortune. I came from Asia as big as this candlestick. In fact, every day I used to measure myself against it, and to get some whiskers round my beak quicker, I used to oil my lips from the lamp. Still, for fourteen years I was the old boy's fancy. And there's nothing wrong if the boss wants it. But I did all right by the old girl too. You know what I mean – I don't say anything because I'm not the boasting sort.

76. 'Well, as heaven will have it, I became boss in the house, and the old boy, look, was mine, heart and soul. That's about it – he made me co-heir with the Emperor⁶³ and I got a senator's fortune.⁶⁴ But nobody gets enough, never. I wanted to go into business. Not to make a long story of it, I built five ships, I loaded them with wine – it was absolute gold at the time – and I sent them to Rome. You'd have thought I ordered it – every single ship was wrecked. That's fact, not fable! In one single day Neptune swallowed up thirty million. Do you think I gave up? This loss, I swear, just whetted my appetite – it was as if nothing had happened. I built more boats, bigger and better and luckier, so nobody could say I wasn't a man of courage. You know, the greater the ship, the greater the confidence. I loaded them again – with wine, bacon, beans, perfumes and slaves. At this point Fortunata did the decent thing, because she sold off all her gold trinkets, all her clothes, and put ten thousand in gold pieces in my hand. This was the yeast my fortune needed to rise. What heaven wants soon happens. In one voyage I carved out a round ten million. I immediately bought back all my old master's estates. I build a house, I invest in slaves and haulage. Whatever I touched grew like a honeycomb. Once I had more than the whole country, then down tools! I retired from business and began advancing loans to freedmen.

'Actually I was tired of trading on my own account, but it was an astrologer who convinced me. He happened to come to our colony, a sort of Greek, Serapa by name, and he could have told heaven itself what to do. He even told me things I'd forgotten. He went through everything for me from A to Z. He knew me inside out – the only thing

he didn't tell me was what I ate for dinner the day before. You'd have thought he'd never left my side.

77. 'Wasn't there that thing, Habinnas? – I think you were there: "You got your lady wife out of those *certain circumstances*. You are not lucky in your friends. Nobody thanks you enough for your trouble. You have large estates. You are nursing a viper in your bosom."

'And he said – though I shouldn't tell you – I have thirty years, four months, and two days to live. What's more, I shall soon receive a legacy. My horoscope tells me this. If I'm allowed to join my estates to Apulia,⁶⁵ I'll have lived enough.

'Meantime, under the protection of Mercury, I built this house. As you know, it was still a shack, now it's a shrine. It has four dining-rooms,⁶⁶ twenty bedrooms, two marble colonnades, a row of box-rooms up above, a bedroom where I sleep myself, a nest for this viper, and a really good lodge for the porter. In fact, when Scaurus⁶⁷ came here, he didn't want to stay anywhere else, even though he's got his father's guest house down by the sea. And there are a lot of other things I'll show you in a second.

'Believe me: have a penny, and you're worth a penny. You got something, you'll be thought something. Like your old friend – first a frog, now a king.

'Meantime, Stichus, bring out the shroud and the things I want to be buried in. Bring some cosmetic cream, too, and a sample from that jar of wine I want my bones washed in.'

78. Stichus did not delay over it, but brought both his white shroud and his purple-edged toga into the dining-room . . . Trimalchio told us to examine them and see if they were made of good wool. Then he said with a smile:

'Now you, Stichus, see no mice or moths get at those – otherwise I'll burn you alive. I want to be buried in style, so the whole town will pray for my rest.'

He opened a bottle of nard on the spot, rubbed some on all of us and said:

'I hope this'll be as nice when I'm dead as when I'm alive.' He now ordered wine to be poured into a big decanter and he said:

'I want you to think you've been invited to my wake.'

The thing was becoming absolutely sickening, when Trimalchio, showing the effects of his disgusting drunkenness, had a fresh entertainment brought into the dining-room, some cornet players. Propped up

on a lot of cushions, he stretched out along the edge of the couch and said: 'Pretend I'm dead and say something nice.'

The cornet players struck up a dead march. One man in particular, the slave of his undertaker (who was one of the most respectable persons present), blew so loudly that he roused the neighbourhood. As a result, the fire brigade in charge of the nearby area, thinking Trimalchio's house was on fire, suddenly broke down the front door and began kicking up their usual sort of din with their water and axes.

Seizing this perfect chance, we gave Agamemnon the slip and escaped as rapidly as if there really were a fire . . .

79. There was no torch available to show us the way, and as it was half-way through the night, the silence gave us little hope of meeting anyone with a light. Add to this too much wine and our ignorance of the place, which would have been a problem even in daylight. So after we had dragged our bleeding feet over all the sharp stones and jutting pieces of broken crockery for nearly a full hour, we were rescued by Giton's ingenuity. Afraid of losing his way even in daytime, the lad had shrewdly marked all the pillars and posts with chalk, and the bright marks, gleaming through even the thickest darkness, showed us the way. Yet we had to sweat just as much once we arrived at the inn. The old woman, after soaking herself so long with her guests, wouldn't have felt it if you'd put a fire under her, and we should probably have had to spend the night on the doorstep if the landlord, returning from the coaches, had not turned up. He naturally didn't make a noise very long but just broke the inn-door down and finally let us in through the same way.

Ye gods and goddesses! O what a night!
How soft the bed! We clung so warm and tight,
Our lips exchanged our souls in mingled breath.
Farewell, all worldly cares! O welcome, death!

I congratulated myself too soon. For once the wine had made me relax my drunken hands; Ascylltus, utterly unscrupulous, took the boy away from me in the night and transferred him to his bed. And rolled up coolly with someone else's boy-friend (was Giton conscious of the assault or was he pretending?) he fell asleep wrapped in an embrace he had no right to, lost to all sense of justice.

When I awoke and ran my hands over the empty joyless bed . . . if you can trust what a lover says, I wondered whether to run my sword through both of them and continue their sleep into death. Following a

safer policy, I roused Giton with my fists, but looking at Ascylltus with a savage expression I said:

'You have wrecked all mutual confidence and friendship with your criminal ways, so pack up right away and find somewhere else to practise your filthy habits.'

He made no opposition but once we had shared the loot equally, he said:

'Right, now let's split the boy too.'

80. I thought this was a parting joke. But he drew his sword with a murderous hand, saying:

'You are not going to enjoy this prize you are sitting on alone. I must have my share even if I cut it off with this sword to avenge myself.'

I did the same and wrapping my cloak round my arm, dropped into a fighting crouch. In the middle of this heartbreaking lunacy the poor boy held on to our knees in tears and begged us not to let the inn see another pair of Theban brothers¹ or to sully the sanctity of our beautiful friendship with each other's blood.

'If there must be bloodshed at any price,' he cried, 'look, I offer you my throat, get your hands on it, press your points home. I'm the one to die, because I broke up a sworn friendship.'

We put up our steel after this plea. Ascylltus was the first to speak:

'I'll put an end to this quarrel. Let the boy himself go with the one he wants, so that he at least may have the liberty of choosing his lover.'

Imagining our long intimacy had come to mean as much as ties of blood, I had no fears. On the contrary, I jumped headlong at the offer and gave the decision to the judge. There was no hesitation, not the slightest appearance of it. The last syllable was scarcely out of my mouth when he got up and chose Ascylltus as his lover. Thunderstruck by this verdict, just as I was, I fell on the bed. I would have laid violent hands on myself like an executioner, if I hadn't begrudged my rival that victory. Ascylltus left proudly with his prize and abandoned his comrade-in-arms, his dearest friend a little while ago, his companion even in misfortune; he abandoned him in all his misery in a place full of strangers.

Friendship's a word and friends know its value —
The counters slide merrily all through the game —
Your friends broadly smiling, while fortune was by you:
Their backs even broader when trouble came.

[The mime has begun
 And the father is there,
 And here is the son
 And the millionaire.
 Then closes the page,
 When played is their part,
 On the laughter upstage
 And the masks of their art –
 Then their true faces appear.]²

81. I soon dried my tears but being afraid that, in addition to all my other troubles, Menelaus the assistant lecturer might find me alone in my lodgings, I collected my bags and sadly rented a quiet place along the seafront. I holed up there for three days, constantly aware of my loneliness and humiliation; I would beat my breast, already sore with sobbing, and again and again I'd cry out loud through all the groans that racked me:

'Why couldn't that earthquake have swallowed me up? Or the sea, such a menace even to innocent people? Did I escape the law, did I outwit the arena, did I kill my host, only to end up, despite my claims to be a daring criminal, just lying here, a beggar and an exile, abandoned in a lodging-house in a Greek town? And who brought this loneliness upon me? An adolescent wallowing in every possible filth, who even on his own admission had been rightly run out of town, free – for sex, freeborn – for sex, whose youth you'd buy with a ticket, who had been hired as a girl even by someone who thought he was a male. As for the other one! Putting on women's clothes the day he became a man, talked into effeminacy by his mother, doing only woman's work in the slave pen, and after he couldn't meet his debts and had to change his sexual ground, he abandoned the claims of an old friendship and – in the name of decency! – sold out everything like a whore on the strength of a one-night stand. Now the loving pair lie clutching each other whole nights on end and perhaps when they are worn out by their love-play, they laugh at my loneliness. But they won't get away with it. As sure as I'm a man and not a slave, I'll right my wrongs with their guilty blood.'

82. With these words I fastened my sword to my side and, not to let bodily weakness endanger my mission, I restored my strength with a heavy meal. Then I rushed out into the street and went round all the arcades like a madman. But while I was thinking of nothing but blood and destruction, my face like thunder and full of rage (I was dropping

my hand continually to my dedicated hilt), a soldier noticed me, a con man or a thug.

'Hey there, friend,' he said, 'what's your regiment and who's your company commander?'

Although I lied boldly about my commander and my regiment, he said:

'Well, tell me something. Do the soldiers in your army walk about in slippers?'

As my face and my very trembling betrayed the lie, he told me to give up my weapons and keep out of trouble. I'd been robbed and, worse, my revenge had been nipped in the bud. I walked back towards my lodgings and gradually, as my boldness decreased, I began to feel grateful for the thug's audacity.

*

Craving the water around, apples above his head,

Poor Tantalus can neither drink nor eat.³

This is the rich man's image: in plenty dogged by dread

To drink dry-mouthed, to choke and starve on meat.

*

One should not rely a great deal on one's plans as fate has a way of her own.

*

83. I went into an art gallery, which had a wonderful variety of paintings. For instance, I even saw work by Zeuxis⁴ still unaffected by the ravages of time. And I examined, not without a certain thrill, some sketches by Protogenes,⁵ so lifelike they were a challenge to nature herself. I practically worshipped that masterpiece of Apelles⁶ that they call *The Goddess on One Knee*. The lines of the paintings were so subtle and clear-cut that you could see them as expressing the subjects' very souls. Here the eagle, way up high, was carrying off the Idaean youth⁷ to heaven, there a dazzling white Hylas repulsed the lascivious Naiad. Apollo cursed his murderous hands and decorated his unstrung lyre with a new flower. Surrounded by the faces of these lovers, I burst out as though I were alone:

'So love affects gods, too. Jupiter didn't find anything to love in heaven, but at least when going to sin on earth he injured no one. The nymph that snatched Hylas away would have controlled her passion if she had thought Hercules would come to restrain her. Apollo called

back the boy's soul into a flower – all of them enjoyed embraces free from rivalry. But I took to my heart a crueller friend than Lycurgus.⁸

All of a sudden, however, as I was arguing with the wind, a white-haired old man entered the gallery. His face was lined and seemed to have in it a promise of something impressive. But his clothes were shabby and this made it clear that he belonged to the class of intellectuals so hated generally by the rich. He therefore came and stood by my side ...

'I am a poet,' he said, 'and a poet of no mean ability, I like to think, at least if poetry prizes are to be trusted when favouritism confers them even on mediocrity. "Why," you ask, "are you so badly dressed then?" For this one reason – concern for the intellect never made anyone rich.

The trader trusts the sea: his goods are sold;
The soldier from campaigns wears belted gold;
Cheap flatterers sprawl drunk in purple shirts;
Seducers courting newly married flirts
Are rich from playing their seductive parts.
Only a poet is a tattered thing,
Cold scarecrow, mute and endlessly sighing
For the lonely, lost and now deserted arts.

84. 'No doubt about it. If a man sets his face against every temptation and starts off on the straight and narrow, he's immediately hated because of his different ways. No one can approve of conduct different from his own. And secondly, those who are interested in piling up money don't want anything else in life regarded as better than what they have themselves. So lovers of literature are sneered at by whatever means possible to show that they too are inferior to wealth.'

*
'I suspect somehow that poverty is the twin sister of talent.'

*
'I'd like to think that the man who hounds me in my hard life were honest enough to be conciliated. As it is, he's hardened in crime and cleverer than the very pimps.'

*
85. [*Eumolpus*] 'When I was taken out to Asia on the paid staff of a treasury official, I accepted some hospitality in Pergamum.⁹ I was very pleased to accept this invitation not only because of the elegance of the quarters but also because my host had a very good-looking son, and I

thought up a way to prevent his father becoming suspicious of me. Whenever any mention was made at the table of taking advantage of pretty boys, I flared up so violently and I was so stern about my ears being offended by obscene talk that the mother especially regarded me as a real old-world philosopher. From then on I escorted the young lad to the gymnasium, I organized his studies, I taught him and gave him good advice. After all, we didn't want any greedy seducer admitted to the house.

*

'One holiday, when the celebrations had given him time to play, we were lounging in the dining-room, since the long day's enjoyment had made us too lazy to go to bed. About midnight, I realized the boy was awake. So in a very nervous whisper I breathed a prayer.

"Dear Venus," I said, "if I can kiss this boy without his knowing it, I'll give him a pair of doves tomorrow."

'Hearing the price of my pleasure, the boy started snoring, and I therefore went to work on the faker and kissed him several times. Content with this beginning, I rose early next morning and brought him the choice pair of doves he was expecting and fulfilled my vow.

86. 'Next night, given the same opportunity, I altered my prayer.

"If I can run my hands all over him," I said, "without his feeling anything, I'll give him two really savage fighting cocks for his patience."

'At this offer the boy moved over to me of his own accord. I think he was getting afraid I might fall asleep. Naturally I dispelled his worries and his whole body became a whirlpool in which I lost myself, although I stopped short of the ultimate pleasure. Then when day came, I brought the delighted boy what I'd promised.

'The third night gave me similar licence, and I got up, and close to his ear, as he tossed restlessly, I said:

"O eternal gods, if I can get the full satisfaction of my desires from him in his sleep, for this happiness tomorrow I shall give the boy the finest Macedonian thoroughbred – but with this proviso, only if he feels nothing."

'The lad had never slept so soundly before. First I filled my hands with his milk-white breasts, then I clung to his lips, and finally I reduced all my longings to one climax.

'In the morning he sat in his room and waited for me to follow my usual practice. Of course, you know how much easier it is to buy doves and cocks than a thoroughbred, and besides, I was nervous in case such

an extravagant gift should make my kindness suspect. So after walking round for a few hours, I returned to my host's house and gave the boy nothing more than a kiss. He looked round, as he threw his arms about my neck, and said:

"Please, sir, where's my thoroughbred?"

*

87. 'This offence had lost me the headway I had made, nevertheless I returned to my old freedom. A few days later when a similar chance left us in the same position, hearing the father snoring, I began asking the boy to become friends with me again, and I said all the other things that a strong physical urge dictates. But clearly annoyed, he only said:

"Just go to sleep or I'll tell father."

'Nothing is too hard to get if you're prepared to be wicked. Even while he was saying, "I'll wake father," I slipped into the bed and without much of a fight from him I took my pleasure by force. Actually he was not displeased that I'd been so naughty, and after complaining for a long time that he'd been tricked and that he'd been laughed at and talked about among his schoolfriends because he had boasted to them of my wealth, he said finally:

"But you'll see I'm not like you. Do it again, if you wish."

'Well, I was back in the boy's favour with all his hard feelings gone, and after taking advantage of his kindness, I fell asleep. The boy, however, being fully mature and of an age very much able to take it, was not content with the repeat performance. He woke me up from my sleep saying:

"Don't you want anything?"

'Of course it wasn't a tiresome job yet, so somehow, ground between the panting and sweating, he got what he wanted and I fell back asleep, exhausted with passion. Less than an hour later he began poking me with his hand and saying,

"Why aren't we getting on with it?"

'Being woken up so often, I really flared up. I gave him his own back:

"Just you go to sleep or I'll tell your father."

*

88. Cheered by this conversation, I began to ask my mentor . . . about the age of the pictures and the subject of some of the obscure ones, at the same time pressing him for reasons for the present decadence, when the loveliest of the arts were dying out, not least painting, which had vanished without the slightest trace. His reply was:

'Financial greed has caused this change. In former days when sheer merit was still sufficient, the liberal arts flourished and there was great competition to bring to light anything of benefit to posterity. Democritus, for instance, distilled all forms of vegetable life and spent his days in scientific experiments to discover the properties of minerals and plants.¹⁰ Eudoxus¹¹ grew old on the top of one of the highest mountains to further his knowledge of astronomy, and Chrysippus purged his brain three times with hellebore to allow himself to continue his investigations.

'To turn to the plastic arts, Lysippus¹² was so preoccupied with the lines of one statue that he died of poverty, and Myron, who almost captured the souls of men and animals in his bronzes, left no heir. But we, besotted with drink and whoring, daren't study even arts with a tradition. Attacking the past instead, we acquire and pass on only vices. What has happened to dialectic?¹³ Astronomy? Or the road most cultivated to wisdom? Who has ever gone into a temple and prayed to become eloquent – or to approach the fountainhead of philosophy? People do not even ask for a sound mind or body, but before they touch the threshold one man immediately promises an offering if he can arrange the funeral of a rich relation, another if he can dig up some treasure, another if he can come into a safe thirty million. Even the senate, the standard of rectitude and goodness, habitually promises the Capitol a thousand pounds of gold, and to remove anyone's doubts about financial greed, tries to influence even Jove with money.

'So don't be surprised that painting is on the decline, when a lump of gold seems more beautiful to everybody, gods and men, than anything those crazy little Greeks, Apelles and Phidias¹⁴, ever made.

89. 'But I notice you can't pull yourself away from that painting of the Fall of Troy.¹⁵ Well, I'll try and interpret its subject in verse:

'The tenth harvest, tenth year of the Troy-siege,
The Phrygians forlorn, doubt-fraught and frightened,
Calchas the soothsayer downcast,
A dark daunting upon him.
The Delian doled out his destinies
And tall trees toppled on Ida,
Their boles borne from the mountain;
Trunks trimmed, massed for its making,
For hewing the horse, shaping the fell shape.

A cave is uncovered, a cavern to capture the foe-camp.
 Into it, taut from the ten-year taking, 10

Their valour is hidden, deep in the gods' veil;
 Doughty Danaans dwell in the depths of it.

The thousand-fold fleet we felt was in full flight,
 Your fields, O my fatherland, freed from the fighting. 15

Words so declared on horse side,
 Sinon, steady in death's sight, said it,
 And our hearts ever steady for our destruction.

Uncaged, careless of combat, the crowd came,
 Praising and prayerful. Cheeks washed with weeping,
 Joy in the faint heart, tears yet trickling – 20
 Terror retracts them.

Priest of the sea god,
 Loud Laocoön, locks lank, hails the assemblage,
 His flung spear wounding the wide womb: 25
 Fate slows his sinews; blade-point rebounding
 Makes us trust; more truth in the treachery.
 Yet again Laocoön, hardening his halt hands,
 Aims at the sheer side his double axe-stroke.
 Hear cry of captives, lo, at their murmuring 30
 The oak-bulk breathes of foreigners' faintness –
 The captured captains move to Troy's capture,
 With fresh frauds reviving the fighting.

Other prodigies press us and portents.
 Where tall Tenedos breaks back the billows, 35
 Swollen the straits surge up with sea-surf,
 And the waters, broken, wince back, breaking the sea-calm.
 As in the nightwatch oars sound from far-off,
 Of fleets faring through sea foam, sea face
 Groaning of grazes from fir-keels coursing. 40
 Back stare we.

Waves speed snakes, sinuously doubling, rockwards;
 As tall ships, their breasts scatter spindrift;
 Tails tolling thunder, head fringes, foam-freed,
 Shine as their eyes shine. Thundery skin-sheen 45
 Shines on the water, as waves hiss and tremble.
 Men stand mindless. Laocoön's loved ones,
 In sacred ribbons and Phrygian tiring, his twin sons,
 Are suddenly twined in the twinkling snake-coils.

They lock little fingers into the snake-jaws, 50

Each for the other, neither from self-love –

Brother for brother, their love is requited,

Death a deliverance from mutual mourning.

Added then unto their doom is the old one,

Hopeless as helper. 55

The serpents, sated from slaying,

Beset him, bear to the earth his body,

He lies mid the altars, priest now a victim,

Making the ground groan.

What is sacred is soiled, Troy, doomed to destruction, 60

Destroys first its godhead.

Full moon aloft had lifted its white glow,

Leading the lesser lights with radiant torchbrand:

The sons of Priam were sleeping and wine-soaked –

"Undo the bolts, ye Danaans, bring out your brave ones!" 65

Chieftains acquitting themselves in combat,

As in Thessalian hills a horse out of halter

Shakes its neck and its mane, for the onrush.

Swords now unsheathed, brandishing bucklers, 70

They fly to the fray, dealing death to the drunken,

Sent in their sleep to the death-sleep;

Here brands are brought from the altars

To turn against Troy town the worship of Trojans.'

90. Some of the people walking about in the colonnades interrupted Eumolpus' recitation with a shower of stones. Being familiar with this sort of appreciation of his genius, he covered his head and fled from the sanctuary. I was nervous myself in case they should call me a poet too. So I followed his fleeing figure and arrived at the seafront. As soon as we were out of range and could stop, I said:

'Listen, what's wrong with you? You've been with me for less than two hours and you've spoken more often like a poet than a human being. I'm not surprised people chase you with stones. I'm going to fill my pockets with rocks and whenever you start taking wings, I'll let some blood from your head.'

His face changed and he said:

'My lad, today is not the first time I've tested the air like that. In fact I've never gone into a theatre to give a recitation without getting this sort of unexpected reception from the spectators. But I don't want to quarrel with you as well, so I'll keep off the stuff for the whole day.'

'Right,' I said, 'if you swear off this madness for today, we'll dine together.'

I gave the landlord of my little place the task of preparing a simple meal.

91. I saw Giton leaning against the wall with towels and scrapers,¹⁶ and looking depressed and confused. You could tell he didn't like his menial position. To confirm my observation . . . He turned towards me, his face softening with pleasure:

'Don't be hard on me, my dear. Where there are no weapons around, I speak freely. Take me away from this bloody criminal and punish me as savagely as you like for what I've been regretting. I feel so bad about everything, it will be a sufficient consolation to die because you wanted me to.'

I told him to stop complaining in case someone should guess our plans, and abandoning Eumolpus, who was reciting a poem in the main bath, I dragged Giton through a dark and sordid exit and flew hastily to my lodgings. Then, with the doors barred, I rushed to take him in my arms and press my cheeks to his tearful face. For a long time neither of us recovered his voice. The boy's lovely breast heaved with a succession of sighs.

'Oh, this shouldn't happen,' I said, 'for me to love you, though I was deserted, and for there to be no scar on my heart from that great wound. What have you to say after giving yourself to another lover? Did I deserve this treatment?'

When he realized he was still loved, he raised his eyebrows . . .

'I left the decision about our love to no other judge but you. But I won't complain of anything any more, I won't remember anything any more, if you prove your regrets by behaving honourably.'

As I poured all this out with sobs and tears, he wiped my face with a cloak and said:

'Encolpius, please, I appeal to your memory to be honest. Did I desert you or did you betray me? I admit this and I'm not ashamed of it - when I saw two armed men, I went to the stronger.'

I kissed that wise little breast and threw my arms round his neck, and to let him fully realize that I was reconciled and I was renewing our friendship as sincerely as ever, I hugged him to my heart.

92. It was well into the night and the woman had taken care of our orders for dinner, when Eumolpus hammered on the door.

'How many of you are there?' I asked, and meanwhile began peeping carefully through a chink in the door to see if Ascylltus had come with him. Then seeing my guest by himself, I let him in immediately. As he threw himself on the bed and saw Giton in full view fixing the table, he nodded his head, saying:

'There's a pretty Ganymede. It should be a nice day.'

Such a studied opening did not make me happy and I was afraid I had joined up with someone just like Ascylltus. Eumolpus pressed on, and when the boy gave him a drink, he said:

'I prefer you to the whole bathful of them,' and after greedily emptying the glass, he said he had never had such a disagreeable time and he explained:

'You know, I was almost beaten up even while I was taking my bath, just because I tried to recite a poem to the people sitting round my tub. After I'd been thrown out of the bath, I began going round every nook and cranny and calling out "Encolpius" in a loud voice. And somewhere else a naked young man, who had lost his clothes, was demanding someone called Giton with equally indignant shouts. And while the boys just ridiculed me for a lunatic with the most impudent imitations, a huge crowd surrounded him with applause and the most awestruck admiration. You see, he had such enormous sexual organs that you'd think the man was just an attachment to his penis. What a man for the job! I think he starts yesterday and finishes tomorrow. So he found help in no time. Someone or other, a Roman knight and notorious for his tastes, the loungers said, covered him with his own clothes as he went wandering round and took him off home - to enjoy such a piece of luck on his own, I suppose. Whereas I wouldn't have got even my own clothes back from the sneaky attendant there if I hadn't produced someone who knew me. A polished wick is much more profitable than a polished wit.'

While Eumolpus was telling us this, my expression kept changing all the time, now through amusement at my rival's misfortunes, now through annoyance at his successes. But all the same, I said nothing and passed the food, pretending the story had no personal interest for me.

93. 'What's legitimate we hold cheap; our wayward hearts love our offences.'¹⁷

Pheasants snared in Colchis, in Africa game-birds,
These are the rarities that have to be chased;
White goose and duckling,
Gaudy in their gay plumes,
Are left to the populace, not to our taste.

Parrot-wrasse from far shores, haul from Syrtes,
Bought at the price of some great shipwreck,
These are for the table –
Mullet's indigestible –
Don't ask the cost: you can pay by cheque.

Wives are out of fashion. Better get a girl-friend –
A little more expensive but really very nice.
Rose leaves are out of date,
Cinnamon's the thing now.
Anything hard to get is well worth the price.'

'Is this how you keep your promise,' I said, 'not to produce any verse today? As a favour, at least let *us* off – we never threw stones at you. Because if anyone drinking in the same house we're in smells the suggestion of a poet, he'll rouse the whole neighbourhood and finish us all off for the same reason. Have some thought for us and remember the art gallery or the public baths.'

Giton, being a very gentle boy, remonstrated with me for this way of speaking, and said it wasn't right for me to abuse someone older than myself, while forgetting my obligations and letting my insults spoil the meal I had provided in all kindness. And there was a lot of other moderate and courteous things he said, which came very well from his pretty lips.

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94. [*Eumolpus to Giton*] 'What a lucky mother,' said he, 'to have such a child! Bravo! Your good looks and your good sense make a rare mixture. Don't think you've wasted all that breath: you've found someone who loves you. I'll fill poems with your praises. I'll follow you as your teacher and guardian, even when you don't ask me to. And Encolpius is not losing, he's in love with someone else.'

That soldier who took away my sword was a piece of luck for

Eumolpus too. Otherwise I would have cooled the spleen I'd felt against Ascylltus in Eumolpus' blood. Giton was not unaware of this. He went out of the room on the pretext of getting some water and by his prudent withdrawal damped my anger. Then a few moments later, as my fury rekindled, I said:

'Eumolpus, I prefer you even speaking in verse to the sort of thoughts you are having. Now I'm a hot-tempered man and you are a lecherous one. You can see how these temperaments don't go together. So you have to regard me as a madman and give in to my insanity – now get out quick!'

Confused by this outburst, Eumolpus did not ask the reason for my anger, but going straight out over the threshold, suddenly slammed the door of the room, and, as I was expecting nothing of the sort, shut me in; he swiftly removed the key and ran off to look for Giton.

Shut up inside like that, I decided to finish everything by hanging myself. I had already put the bed frame against the wall, tied a belt to it, and was inserting my neck in the noose when the door was unlocked and Eumolpus came in with Giton and in a race against death brought me back to life. In his grief Giton, unlike Eumolpus, went mad with rage; he raised a great outcry and pushing me with both hands precipitated me on top of the bed.

'You're wrong, Encolpius,' he said, 'if you think by any possible chance you can die before me. I tried first: I looked for a sword in Ascylltus' rooms. If I had not found you, I was going to throw myself to my death. To make you realize death isn't far away if you look for it, see in your turn what you wanted me to see.'

With this he snatched a razor from Eumolpus' hired servant and slashing his throat once and then twice, collapsed at our feet.

Thunderstruck, I let out a cry and following his collapsing body to the floor, I looked for a way to die with the same instrument. But Giton showed not the slightest suspicion of a wound nor could I feel any pain myself. It was a practice razor and blunted for the purpose: to give apprentices the courage a barber needs, it had a sheath fitted round it. This was the reason why the servant had not panicked at his snatching the razor and why Eumolpus had not intervened in this fake death scene.

95. While this love drama was being played out, the landlord came in with the rest of our little dinner and at the sight of the disgraceful sprawling heap on the floor, he shouted:

'Hey, are you people drunk or runaway slaves? Or both? Who turned that bed up? What's the meaning of all this criminal behaviour? But of course – you were going to do a moonlight flit to avoid paying your room rent. But you're not getting away with it. Because I'll have you know the place doesn't belong to some widow but to Marcus Mannicius.'

Eumolpus yelled back: 'Are you threatening us?' and at the same time he hit the man hard in the face with the flat of his hand. Reckless from so much drinking with the guests, the fellow hurled an earthenware pot at Eumolpus' head, split his forehead in mid-shout, and flung himself out of the room. Eumolpus was not standing for this insult; he snatched up a wooden candlestick, followed him as he made off and avenged his pride with a tremendous shower of blows. The whole household came rallying round, as well as a crowd of drunken guests. I, however, took this opportunity for my revenge by shutting Eumolpus out. Having put paid to the bastard, I was of course without a rival and I went on to put the room and the evening to their full use.

Meanwhile the kitchen staff and the people who lived in the building were beating up Eumolpus now that he couldn't get inside – one was aiming for his eyes with a spit covered with sizzling tripes, while another went through his battle-drill with a butcher's hook. One old woman in particular, a bleary old hag, dressed in the filthiest clothes and wearing odd wooden clogs, came dragging along an enormous dog on a chain and set him on Eumolpus. But he defended himself from all these threats with his candlestick.

96. We were watching everything through a hole left in the door when the handle had been pulled off a little while ago, and I was cheering every blow that reached Eumolpus. Giton, however, with his usual compassion pressed me to open the door and rescue him. As my resentment was still with me, I didn't restrain myself but smashed him on the head with a sharp bended knuckle for his pains. He sat down on the bed in tears while I applied each eye alternately to the hole and feasted my eyes on the sight of Eumolpus in trouble – this was rich food indeed! I was recommending him to a good lawyer when the manager of the lodging house, Bargates by name, who had been disturbed at his dinner, was carried into the centre of the brawl by two porters – he had bad feet, it seems. After coming out with a long and furious diatribe in a foreign accent about drunken sots and runaway slaves, he then looked at Eumolpus and said:

'It was you, was it, you wonderful poet? Now why don't these no-good slaves get off quick and stop fighting? ...'

'The woman I'm living with is acting high and mighty with me. So be a friend and write some nasty verses about her so she'll know her place.'

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97. While Eumolpus was talking privately to Bargates, a town crier entered the hotel accompanied by a policeman and quite a number of other people. Waving a torch that gave out more smoke than light, he made the following announcement:

'LOST, A SHORT WHILE AGO IN THE BATHS, A BOY AGED ABOUT SIXTEEN. HE IS CURLY-HAIRED, SOFT-SKINNED, GOOD-LOOKING, AND GOES BY THE NAME OF GITON. THERE IS A REWARD OF ONE THOUSAND SESTERCES FOR ANYONE WHO WILL BRING HIM BACK OR GIVE ANY INFORMATION OF HIS WHEREABOUTS.'

Not far from the announcer stood Ascylltus, wearing a multi-coloured shirt and displaying the description and the reward on a silver plate.

I ordered Giton to get immediately under the bed and tie his hands and feet to the webbing that held the mattress on the frame – the way Ulysses had once clung to the ram – and so stay out of the hands of the searchers.

Giton was not slow to obey and in a moment he inserted his hands in the fastenings and beat Ulysses at his own tricks. To avoid leaving any room for suspicion, I filled the bed with clothes and made up the traces of a man about my size.

Meanwhile Ascylltus, after going round all the occupied rooms, came to mine and became more hopeful because he found the doors more carefully bolted. The policeman, however, inserting an axe where the doors joined, loosened the bolts from their hold.

I fell at Ascylltus' knees and, appealing to the memory of our friendship and our companionship in misfortune, I begged him at least to let me see my little friend. In fact, to lend some sincerity to my hypocritical appeals, I said:

'I know you've come to kill me, Ascylltus. Why else have you brought an axe? Well, vent your rage on me. Look, I'm showing you my neck, spill the blood you really came for under the pretence of a search.'

Ascylltus rejected the injustice of the charge and assured me he was only looking for the runaway who belonged to him and didn't want to

kill a helpless man, least of all a man he regarded as a very dear friend even after that fateful quarrel.

98. The policeman on the other hand did not take things so easily. Snatching a rod from the innkeeper he pushed it under the bed and even tried all the cracks in the wall. Giton pulled himself away from the poking, and holding his breath in a great panic, pressed his mouth to the very bedbugs . . .

But as the broken door could keep no one out of the room, Eumolpus burst in excitedly:

'I've got the thousand sesterces,' he said. 'I'm going after the advertiser now – he's only just leaving. I'm fully justified in betraying you; I'll explain that Giton is in your possession.'

He was determined about this even as I clasped his knees and begged him not to kill two dying men.

'You would be quite right to be flaming mad,' I added, 'if you could bring forward your prisoner. The boy just got away among the crowd and I haven't a suspicion where he's going to. For pity's sake, Eumolpus, bring the lad back – even hand him over to Ascyllus.'

While I was persuading him till he almost believed this, Giton, through holding his breath to bursting point, sneezed three times in rapid succession, so hard that the bed shook. At the noise Eumolpus said: 'God bless you, Giton!'

When the mattress was pulled back too, he saw our Ulysses, and even a hungry Cyclops would have had pity on him. Turning to me, he said:

'What's this, you thief? You didn't have the courage to tell me the truth even when you were caught. Why, if the god in charge of human destinies hadn't forced a sign from the lad as he hung there, I'd have been wandering round the bar-rooms like a fool.'

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Giton, far more conciliatory than I, first of all bound up the cut on his forehead with cobwebs soaked in oil; then he replaced his tattered clothes with his own little cloak, and embracing the now mollified poet and pressing kisses on him like poultices, said to him:

'My dear, dear father, we are all completely in your hands. If you love your little Giton, now is the time to save him. I wish some terrible fire would burn me up, just me, or some freezing sea would cover me. I'm the object of all these crimes, I'm the cause. If I were to die, it would reconcile the people at each other's throats.'

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99. [*Eumolpus*] 'Always and everywhere I have lived as though each day were my last and would never return.'

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With tears flowing from my eyes, I begged him to become my friend again too: the madness of jealousy was not in a lover's control. Nevertheless I would take great care never to say or do anything again that could offend him. Only let him, as befitted a poet and scholar, smooth away without a scar all the rancour festering in his heart.

'The snows cling longer in rough and uncultivated regions, but where the ground has come under the plough, the light frost vanishes from its bright expanse even while you are speaking. It's the same way with anger in human breasts: it chokes an untutored heart, but slips away from a cultivated mind.'

'What you say is true,' said Eumolpus, 'and to prove it, look, I'll even kiss you and put an end to our quarrel. Well now, I hope everything will be all right. Get your things together and follow me, or if you prefer, you lead the way.'

He was still talking when the door was pushed and creaked open, and a rough-bearded sailor stood in the doorway.

'You're late, Eumolpus,' he said. 'You'd think you didn't know we have to hurry.'

We all got up without delay, and Eumolpus ordered his servant, who had been asleep for some time, to start moving with his baggage. Giton and I got together what we had for the journey; I sent up a prayer to the stars and passed aboard.

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100. 'It's annoying that our new acquaintance likes the boy. But aren't the best things in life free to all? The sun shines on everyone. The moon, accompanied by countless stars, leads even the beasts to pasture. What can you think of lovelier than water? But it flows for the whole world. Is love alone then to be something furtive rather than something to be gloried in? Exactly, that's just it – I don't want any of the good things of life unless people are envious of them. One man, and old at that, will be no trouble: even if he wished to try something, he'll give himself away through panting.'

I put forward these considerations with something less than confidence and managed to overcome my inward disagreement. Then, with my head buried in my tunic, I began pretending to sleep.

But suddenly as though fortune were determined to take all the heart out of me, a voice on deck could be heard complaining:

'So he made a fool of me, did he?'

It was a male voice that sounded to my ears like an old friend and sent me into palpitations. Then a woman, apparently cut to the quick and equally indignant, blazed out with even greater vehemence:

'If only some god would put Giton into my hands, what a welcome I'd have for the wanderer!'

Both of us were so shaken by these unexpected sounds that the blood drained from our faces. Myself in particular, as though caught up in some distressing nightmare, found my voice only after a long interval and with trembling hands I pulled at Eumolpus' cloak, just as he was falling off to sleep.

'For heaven's sake, sir, can you tell us whose ship this is and who are aboard?'

He was annoyed at being awakened.

'Was this the reason why you wanted us to occupy the most secluded place on the ship, so that you could stop us sleeping? Anyway, suppose I told you that Lichas of Tarentum was the owner of this boat and that he was taking Tryphaena to Tarentum into exile, what does it matter?'

101. Thunderstruck by this, I broke out trembling and, baring my throat, I said:

'Fate has utterly defeated me at last.'

Giton indeed fainted across my chest and went on lying there. When the sweat broke out and revived us, I gripped Eumolpus by the knees.

'Show some pity for us,' I said, 'we're as good as dead. In the name of our common education, lend us a helping hand. Our last hour has come and unless you prevent it, it can only be a blessing.'

Overwhelmed by this wrongful accusation, Eumolpus swore by all the gods and goddesses that he neither knew what had happened nor had he planned any deliberate treachery – with the most straightforward of intentions and in all good faith he had brought his friends to the boat he'd long before planned to take.

'Anyway,' he said, 'what is the trap here? Who is the Hannibal sailing with us? It's just Lichas of Tarentum, a very respectable man, who is not only the owner of this boat which he's in command of, but also of a number of farms and a trading company. He's carrying a commercial cargo to market. This is your Cyclops and pirate-captain, and we owe our passage to him. And as well as this man, there's Tryphaena, the

loveliest woman in the world, who travels from place to place in the service of pleasure.'

'These are the people we're running away from,' said Giton and went on to explain briefly to the frightened Eumolpus the reasons for their hatred and the seriousness of the danger.

Confused and not knowing what to do, Eumolpus suggested we each put forward our ideas:

'You have to imagine we've got into the Cyclops' cave. Some way of escape has to be found, short of involving ourselves in a shipwreck and extricating ourselves from every possible risk.'

'No,' said Giton, 'better get the pilot to take the ship back into some port – not for nothing, obviously – and tell him your brother is not a good sailor and is in the final stages. You can cover up the deception by looking worried and shedding some tears, so the pilot will be touched and do what you want.'

Eumolpus argued that this wasn't possible. 'You see,' he said, 'large ships make their way into well-curved harbours, and it is not likely that my brother could have fallen ill so quickly. And another thing, perhaps Lichas will want to look at the sufferer out of a feeling of duty. You can see how very useful that would be to us, deliberately summoning the captain to the very ones running away from him. But suppose the ship could be diverted from its long voyage and suppose Lichas did not go round the sick-beds no matter what, how could we leave the ship without being seen by everyone? With heads covered or bare? Covered? Then everyone would want to give a hand to the invalids. Bare? Then that would be simply advertising ourselves.'

102. I interposed: 'Why don't we rely on really bold measures, slip down a rope, get into the ship's boat, cut the painter and leave the rest to fortune? Not that I'm calling on Eumolpus to share this risk. I'm happy if luck's on our side as we go down.'

'Not a bad plan,' said Eumolpus, 'if it would work. But everyone will notice you leave, especially the pilot, who stays on watch all night and also observes the movement of the stars. Now you might trick him somehow, even with his eyes open, if you were taking your leave by another part of the ship. As it is, you have to slide down by the stern, by the very steering gear where the painter hangs down. Besides, I'm surprised, Encolpius, that it hasn't occurred to you that one sailor stays in the boat on continuous day and night watch and you couldn't get rid of him without killing him or throwing him overboard by brute force.'

For this you must ask yourselves how brave you are. As for my coming with you, I shirk no danger that offers any hope of safety. I presume that not even you would want to risk your lives for nothing as though they were trifles. See whether you like this idea: I'll drop you into two leather bags, tie them up with straps and put you among my clothes, leaving the tops a little way open of course, so you can get air and food. Then I'll raise the alarm that my two slaves have thrown themselves in the sea during the night through fear of worse punishment. Then on arrival in port, I'll carry you off like luggage without any suspicion.'

'Oh, really,' I said, 'you'd tie us up as though we were solid right through and our bellies didn't give us any trouble, or as though we didn't even sneeze or snore? Or just because this type of trick did work nicely once? But suppose we could stand being tied up for one day. What happens if either a calm or bad weather holds us up longer? What would we do? Clothes tied up too long get ruined by creases and papers tied together lose their shape. We're young and not used to hard work; will we stand up to being tied and covered like statues?'

'Some safe way still has to be found. You look at my idea. Eumolpus as a literary man surely has some ink. So let's use this as a dye and change our colour – hair right down to fingernails. Disguised as Ethiopian slaves, we can wait on you quite happily without any chance of being tortured and at the same time we can trick our enemies by our change of colour.'

Giton added: 'Why not circumcise us too, so we look like Jews, and bore holes in our ears to imitate Arabs, and whiten our faces so Gauls would take us as fellow-countrymen. As though this colouring by itself could change our shapes. A lot of details have to be consistent to keep up the deception! Suppose a face could stay stained for some time. Suppose no drops of water produce spots on our skins and our clothes don't cling to the ink. Well then, can we also puff out our lips into that hideous swollen look? Can we change our hair with a curling-iron? Can we cut our foreheads with scars? Can we open our legs till they're bandy? Can we touch the ground with our ankles? Can we produce foreign-looking beards? Artificial dye stains your body, it doesn't change it. Listen to my coward's way out – let's tie our heads in our clothes and throw ourselves to the bottom.'

103. 'Gods and men forbid,' Eumolpus exclaimed, 'that you should end your lives in so ugly a fashion. Better do what I tell you. My hired man, as you know from the razor, is a barber. Let him shave the hair

off both of you right away, not just your heads but your eyebrows too. I'll follow up by marking your foreheads with an artistic inscription, so you'll appear to have been punished with branding. The letters will simultaneously lull the suspicions of the people looking for you and hide your faces under cover of the punishment marks.'

No time was lost working the trick. We went stealthily to the side of the ship and presented our heads and eyebrows to the barber to be shaved. Eumolpus covered both our foreheads with the huge letters and with a liberal hand extended the notorious inscription for runaway slaves over the whole of our faces.

As it happened, one of the passengers, who was leaning against the side of the ship and emptying his sick stomach, noticed in the moonlight the barber bent over his unseasonable office. Swearing at the bad omen which was reminiscent of a last offering in a shipwreck, he flung himself back to his berth. Pretending to ignore the seasick man and his curse, we returned to our melancholy procedures and, wrapped in silence, spent the remaining hours of the night sleeping fitfully.

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104. [*Lichas*] 'I dreamt Priapus said to me: "Since you are looking for him, I want you to know that Encolpius has been brought aboard your boat through my agency."' ¹⁸

Tryphaena shuddered and said:

'You would think we'd slept in the one bed. I dreamt that the statue of Neptune that I'd noticed in the great temple at Baiae said: – "You will find Giton on *Lichas*' ship.'"

'You should realize from this,' said Eumolpus, 'how godlike a man Epicurus¹⁹ was. He condemned this sort of nonsense in a very humorous way.' ... ²⁰

But *Lichas*, to play safe with Tryphaena's dream, said: 'Who's going to stop us searching the boat? That way we'll avoid any appearance of condemning the workings of the divine mind.' ... The man who had noticed our furtive and worried behaviour in the dark (*Hesus* was his name) suddenly shouted:

'Then those are the ones who were having a shave in the dark – and that's a terrible thing to do, by god! I'm told no mortal soul should cut his nails or hair on a ship unless the wind and the sea are at odds.'²¹

105. *Lichas*, shocked by this report, started blazing:

'Is it true that someone cut his hair on the ship, and in the dead of

night at that? Bring the culprits out here immediately, so I'll know whose heads should roll to purify the ship.'

'I gave the orders,' said Eumolpus. 'And as I was going to be on the same ship I didn't intend any bad omen for myself, but since they had long shaggy hair, in case I appeared to be making a prison out of the ship, I gave orders for the condemned men to be cleaned up. Another reason was to allow the marks of the letters to be entirely visible to the eyes of readers and not hidden by their covering of hair. Among other things they spent my money on a whore the two of them kept, and I dragged them from her last night soaked in wine and scent. In fact they still smell of what was left of my inheritance.' . . .

So to appease the guardian spirit of the ship, it was decided to give each of us forty lashes. So there was no delay. The furious sailors laid into us with ropes and tried to placate the ship's guardian with our worthless blood. I personally absorbed three lashes with Spartan disdain. But Giton after one blow cried out so loudly that Tryphaena's ears could hear nothing but that well-known voice. And it was not merely the mistress who was thrown into confusion; her maids too, pulled by the familiar tones, rushed to the victim. Giton with his marvellous body had already made the sailors drop their whips and his silent appeal had even begun working on their savage hearts before the maids cried out in chorus:

'It's Giton, Giton! Keep your cruel hands off him. It's Giton, lady. Help him!'

Tryphaena lent an already believing ear to their cries and flew quickly to the boy's side. Lichas, who knew me best, as though he too had vocal testimony, ran to me and without considering my hands or face, but immediately stretching out an investigating hand to my private parts, he said:

'How are you, Encolpius?'

Will anyone now be surprised that Ulysses' nurse after twenty years found a scar sufficient identification²² when this shrewd man so cleverly went straight to the one thing that identified the runaway, despite the total confusion of the lines we use for physical identification?

Tryphaena began to cry, taking the punishment for real – for she believed that the marks really had been branded on our foreheads – and in a rather subdued manner she began to ask what prison had got hold of us in our travels, and whose hands had been cruel enough to carry out this punishment, making it clear, however, that some of the

maltreatment had been richly deserved by us for running away and for hating a situation where we were so well off . . .

106. Highly irritated, Lichas leapt forward:

'You simple-minded woman! As though burns from the iron had absorbed the letters. I wish they *had* branded themselves with the inscription. We would have had this consolation at the very least. As it is we have been the victims of a pure farce and made ridiculous by a mere outline.'

Tryphaena was prepared to be merciful, seeing she had not lost her pleasures forever, but Lichas, still remembering his wife's seduction and the affronts he had received in the colonnade of Hercules,²³ exclaimed with a violently contorted face:

'You've realized, I suppose, Tryphaena, that heaven takes some interest in human affairs. It brought the culprits unawares to our ship and warned us of what they'd done in a pair of corroborating dreams. So think, what possibility is there of pardoning men that the god himself has handed over for punishment? As for me, I'm not a cruel man, but I'm afraid I'd suffer whatever penalty I remitted.'

Swayed by so superstitious an argument, Tryphaena said she would not interfere with the punishment; on the contrary, she was even in favour of such richly deserved reprisals. She had suffered no less serious an injury than Lichas – her reputation as a decent woman had been impugned at a public meeting.

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107. [*Eumolpus*] 'They chose me for this task, I suppose, because I'm well known and they asked me to reconcile them to their own one-time dearest friends.²⁴ Unless perhaps you think the young men fell into this trap accidentally, even though the first thing every traveller asks is into whose care he is committing himself. So let your hearts be softened now reparations have been made and allow these free citizens to go where they are bound without interference. Slave owners who are brutal and unrelenting actually hinder the satisfaction of their sadistic impulses if conscience is ever likely to bring runaways back. And we don't kill enemies who are handed over to us. What more are you after? What more do you want? Lying before your eyes, begging for mercy, are two young men, respectable, honest and what is more important than either of these things, once bound in friendship to you. For god's sake, if they had run off with your money or had betrayed your trust, yet you might still be well satisfied by these punishment marks you see. Look, you can

trace the brand of slavery on their foreheads and their respectable faces have voluntarily undergone a penalty that puts them outside society.'

Lichas interrupted this plea for mercy and said:

'Don't confuse the issue, but deal with each item. And first of all, if they came of their own accord, why did they cut all the hair from their heads? Anyone who disguises his face is planning deception, not satisfaction. And another thing, if they were trying to ingratiate themselves through an intermediary, why did you do everything you could to keep your protégés out of sight? It is obvious from this that the culprits fell into the trap through sheer chance and you looked for a way to baffle our revenge. As for the odium you are bringing on our heads by shouting about their respectability and honesty, watch you don't damage your case through over-confidence. What should the injured parties do when the guilty come running to be punished? They were our friends, of course! Then they deserve all the greater punishment. A man who attacks strangers is called a criminal, a man who attacks friends, a monster.'

Eumolpus refuted this unjust attack.

'I see,' he said, 'that the greatest objection to these poor young men is the fact that they cut off their hair during the night. According to this argument, they apparently came on the ship by accident, not deliberately. Now I'd like you to hear an account as frank as the matter was simple. Before they embarked, they wanted to rid their heads of a troublesome and superfluous burden, but the unexpectedly favourable wind caused them to delay carrying out their intention. However they didn't think it mattered when they began doing what they had wanted to do, because they didn't know about sailors' superstitions and the code of the sea.'

To this Lichas said:

'What use was it in their helpless position to shave their heads? Unless perhaps bald men tend to be more pitiful objects? In any case what use is it looking for the truth from an interpreter?

'What have you to say, you criminal? Did a salamander burn your eyebrows off? What god did you dedicate your hair to? Speak up, you poisonous creature!'

108. I simply gaped, terrified by the thought of being punished, and I could find nothing to say, the case was so open and shut. I was such a confused and ugly object – for besides the disgrace of my shorn head, my eyebrows were as bare as my forehead – that didn't seem right

for me to say or do anything. But once a dripping sponge had been wiped over my tearful face, and the wetted ink, streaming over it, reduced all my features to a dark cloud, anger turned to hatred . . .

Eumolpus however said he would not allow anyone to outrage respectable people contrary to all moral and legal principles, and he not only verbally but bodily interposed himself between us and their threatening temper.

His travelling servant was there to help him in his intervention as well as one or two very feeble passengers – giving moral support in the dispute rather than any physical aid. And I was not asking anything for myself, but holding my fists before Tryphaena's eyes I said loudly in firm clear tones that I would resort to what force I had, if that criminal woman, the only one who deserved a thrashing on the whole ship, did not leave Giton alone. At my boldness Lichas blazed up into further anger: he was indignant with me for forgetting my own situation to shout so loudly for someone else. Tryphaena, blazing at the insult, was in just as much of a rage and she forced the whole ship's company to take sides. On our side Eumolpus' man armed himself and distributed his razors amongst us. On their side Tryphaena's entourage put up their bare fists and even the maids, yelling away, did not abandon the front line. There was only the navigator, who threatened to give up steering the ship if this madness brought on by the lust of the dregs of society did not stop. But the crazy struggle continued raging none the less, they fighting for revenge, we for our lives.

A good many went down on both sides without any fatalities. Even more retreated from the battlefield bleeding from their wounds. And yet no one's anger abated. Then Giton, like the hero he was, held his menacing razor over his genitals and threatened to cut off the cause of all our misery. Tryphaena averted this extreme action by an unambiguous pardon. Several times I myself put the barber's razor to my throat with no more intention of killing myself than Giton had of carrying out his threat. But he played his tragic role more boldly because he knew he had the razor he'd already cut his throat with.

Both lines stood there in position. So when it was obvious that it was going to be no ordinary battle, the navigator managed with difficulty to persuade Tryphaena to accept the role of ambassador and make a truce. The requisite promises were solemnly offered and accepted. Tryphaena then extended an olive-branch plucked from the ship's figurehead and boldly began the negotiations.

'What madness,' she cries, 'makes peace become war?
 What guilt is on our hands? No hero from Troy
 Elopes on this ship, no Paris with the betrothed
 Of Menelaus tricked. No maddened Medea
 Makes of her brother's blood a weapon.²⁵
 Rejected love is the driving force.
 Ah me! Who takes to arms and calls for death
 Amid these waves?
 Is one death not enough?
 Surpass not the sea – send no fresh floods
 To swell the savage waves.'

109. As the woman poured all this out in shrill distressed tones, the lines hesitated a moment and our hands dropped peaceably – the fight was over. Eumolpus took command and made full use of this change of heart. Prefacing it with a violent attack on Lichas, he wrote out and signed a treaty, the formula of which was:

'You, Tryphaena, sincerely undertake not to complain of any past injury done to you by Giton or to bring up, avenge, or by any other method attempt to pursue any action committed before today. You undertake not to impose any service on the boy against his will, whether it be an embrace, kiss, or sexual intercourse, unless for each service you pay one hundred denarii in cash.

'Secondly: you, Lichas, sincerely undertake not to persecute Encolpius with insulting words or looks or make any inquiries as to where he sleeps at night. Otherwise you are to pay two hundred denarii in cash for each separate offence.'

Once the treaty was concluded on these terms, we put away our weapons and, to avoid any lingering resentment after the ceremony, we agreed to put the past behind us with an exchange of kisses. Amid the general encouragement our hatred simmered down and a picnic was brought out on the battlefield, which restored everyone's high spirits. The whole ship rang with the songs and as a sudden calm had interrupted the voyage, we had one man trying to harpoon the fish as they jumped out of the water and another trying to drag the struggling catch aboard with baited fishhooks. And surprise, sea-birds had even perched along the yard and a clever bird-catcher got at them with reeds woven together. They stuck to the limed twigs and were brought down into his hands. The air took hold of the floating plumes and the light spray whirled the feathers over the sea.

Lichas was beginning to be friendly to me again. Tryphaena was splashing Giton with the dregs of her drink, when Eumolpus, being well into his cups, got the idea of throwing out some quips about bald heads and brandmarks, until, exhausting his weak witticisms, he went back to his poetry and began reciting a little elegy on hair:

'Your hair has fallen out – your only good feature;
 A cruel storm has stripped the foliage of spring.
 Each temple misses its natural shade
 And a bare expanse grins under worn stubble.
 Oh, the gods, the gods cheat us!
 Our Youth's first glories are Youth's first forfeits.

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Poor boy,
 One moment your hair
 Was shining gold
 And you were more beautiful
 Than Phoebus or his sister.
 Now you are shinier
 Than a bronze
 Or the round cap
 Of a mushroom after rain.
 You run nervously
 From the laughter of ladies.
 Death's sooner than you think,
 You must believe –
 See now, Death has begun at the top.'

110. He was ready to give us more of the same, I think, or worse, but Tryphaena's maid takes Giton down to the lower half of the ship and dresses the boy's head in one of her mistress's curly wigs. In fact, she even produces eyebrows from a box and, by cunningly following the outlines of the missing features, entirely restored his appearance.

Tryphaena recognized the real Giton and, moved to tears, gave the boy this time a really sincere kiss.

For myself, although I was delighted to see the boy restored to his pristine glory, I began covering my face more than ever. I realized how bizarre my deformity was – not even Lichas thought me worth talking to. But the same girl got me out of my depression by taking me to one side and fixing me up with an equally handsome head of hair. In fact,

my face was brighter and more attractive, because mine was a yellow wig.

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However, Eumolpus, our champion in time of trouble and the author of the present harmony, to prevent the general merriment lapsing into silence without a few stories, began a succession of gibes about feminine fickleness – how easily they fell in love, how quickly they forgot even their children. There was no woman so pure that she could not be driven crazy by some stranger's physical attractions. He wasn't thinking of old tragedies or famous historical names but of something that happened within his own living memory, and he would tell us about it if we wanted to hear it. So when everyone's eyes and ears were turned to him, he began the following story.

111. 'There was once a lady of Ephesus²⁶ so famous for her fidelity to her husband that she even attracted women from neighbouring countries to come just to see her. So when she buried her husband, she was not satisfied with following him to his grave with the usual uncombed hair or beating her breast in front of the crowd, but she even accompanied the dead man into the tomb, and when the corpse was placed in the underground vault, she began watching over it from then on, weeping day and night. Neither her parents nor her relations could induce her to stop torturing herself and seeking death by starvation. Finally the magistrates were repulsed and left her, and this extraordinary example to womankind, mourned by everyone, was now spending her fifth day without food. A devoted servant sat with the ailing woman, added her tears to the lady's grief, and refilled the lamp in the tomb whenever it began to go out. Naturally there was only one subject of conversation in the whole town: every class of people admitted there had never been such a shining example of true fidelity and love.

'In the meantime the governor of the province ordered the crucifixion of some thieves to be carried out near the humble abode where the wife was crying over the corpse of the lately deceased. Next night the soldier who was guarding the crosses to prevent anyone removing one of the bodies for burial noticed a light shining clearly among the tombs and, hearing the sounds of someone mourning, he was eager to know – a general human failing – who it was and what was going on. Naturally he went down into the vault and, seeing a beautiful woman, at first stood rooted to the spot as though terrified by some strange sight or a vision from hell. When he observed the dead man's body and noted the

woman's tears and scratched face, surmising rightly that here was a woman who could not bear her intense longing for the dead man, he brought her his bit of supper and began pleading with the weeping woman not to prolong her hopeless grief and break her heart with useless lamentation. The same end, the same resting-place awaited everyone, he told her – along with all the other things that restore grief-stricken minds to sanity. But in spite of the stranger's consoling words, the woman only tore at her breast more violently and draped her mangled hair over the body of the dead man. The soldier still refused to withdraw; instead, using the same arguments, he tried to press food on her servant until the girl, seduced by the smell of the wine, first gave in herself, stretched out her hand to his tempting charity, and then, refreshed by the food and drink, began to lay siege to her mistress's resolution.

"What good is it," she said to her, "for you to drop dead of starvation, or bury yourself alive or breathe your last innocent breath before fate demands it?"

Believe you that ashes or the buried ghosts can know?²⁷

Won't you come back to life? Won't you give up your womanly error and enjoy the comforts of life as long as you can? That very corpse lying there should be your encouragement to live."

'No one is ever reluctant to listen when pressed to eat or stay alive. Parched from taking nothing day after day, the woman allowed her resolution to be sapped and filled herself with food no less avidly than the girl who had given in first.

112. 'But you know what temptations follow on a full stomach. The inducements the soldier had used to persuade the lady into a desire to live became part also of an attempt on her virtue. For all her chastity the man appealed to her: he was neither unpleasing nor ill-spoken, she thought. Moreover, her maid spoke on his behalf and quoted the line:

Would you fight even a pleasing passion?²⁸

'Need I say more? The woman couldn't refuse even this gratification of the flesh and the triumphant soldier talked her into both. They then slept together, not just the night they first performed the ceremony but the next night too, and then a third. The doors of the vault were of course closed, so if a friend or a stranger came to the tomb, he thought that the blameless widow had expired over her husband's body.

'Actually the soldier, delighted with the lady's beauty and the whole secret liaison, had bought whatever luxuries he could afford and carried them to the tomb on the very first night. As a result, the parents of one of the crucified men, seeing the watch had been relaxed, took down the hanging body in the dark and gave it the final rites. The soldier, tricked while he lay enjoying himself and seeing next day one of the crosses without a corpse, in terror of punishment, explained to the woman what had happened. He would not wait for the judge's verdict, he said – his own sword would carry out sentence for his dereliction of duty. Only let her provide a place for him in death and let the tomb be the last resting-place for both her lover and her husband. The woman's pity was equal to her fidelity:

"Heaven forbid," she said, "that I should see simultaneously two funerals, for the two men I hold dearest. I'd rather hang the dead than kill the living."

'Suiting the deed to the word, she told him to take the body of her husband from the coffin and fix it to the empty cross. The soldier followed the sensible woman's plan, and next day people wondered how on earth the dead man had managed to get up on the cross.'

113. The sailors greeted the story with roars of laughter; Tryphaena blushed rather and laid her cheek affectionately on Giton's neck. Lichas however was not amused. Shaking his head angrily, he said:

'If his commander-in-chief had been an honourable man, he should have put the husband's body back in the tomb and nailed the woman to the cross.'

No doubt he had remembered Hedyle and the robbery on his ship before the lecherous elopement. But the terms of the treaty did not permit him to recall this and the prevailing high spirits left no room for bad temper. Tryphaena however was settled on Giton's lap, covering his chest with kisses and occasionally titivating his depilated appearance. Being depressed and annoyed with the recent treaty, I took nothing to eat or drink, but looked at both of them with oblique and hostile glances. All the kisses and all the endearments that the lecherous woman thought up wounded me deeply. Yet I still wasn't sure whether I was more angry with the boy for stealing my mistress or with my mistress for seducing the boy. Both acts were offensive to my eyes and more saddening than my past captivity. Added to this was the fact that Tryphaena would not talk to me like an old friend and once pleasing lover, and Giton did not regard me as worth even the usual toasts – at

least he didn't address me in the general conversation, which was the least he could do. He was nervous, I imagine, of opening some fresh scar in the initial stages of the reconciliation. Tears of vexation choked me, and my groans, which I smothered into sighs, almost made me faint.

*

[*Lichas*] tried to get invited to the party, putting on no lordly airs but acting like a friend asking a favour.

*

[*Tryphaena's maid to Encolpius*] 'If you had any decent blood in your veins, you wouldn't regard him as anything more than a whore. If you were a man, you wouldn't go to such a perverted creature.'²⁹

*

Nothing embarrassed me more than the possibility of Eumolpus' realizing what had gone on, and, with his usual fluency, taking revenge in verse.

*

Eumolpus swore in the most solemn terms

*

114. While we were talking about this and similar things, the sea grew rough; clouds gathered from all directions and turned the day into darkness. The sailors scampered nervously to their duties and took down the sails before the storm. But there was no consistent wind driving the waves and the helmsmen did not know which way to head the ship. Sometimes the south-east wind blew towards Sicily, then time and again the north-east wind, dominating the Italian shoreline, would take over and turn the helpless ship this way and that.³⁰ And what was far more dangerous than all the gales, the sudden pitch-black darkness had quenched the light so completely that the navigator could not even see the length of the prow. When the strength of the storm was at its height, Lichas, trembling, stretched out his hands to me pleadingly and said:

'You're the one, Encolpius. Save us from this danger. Just restore to the ship that sacred robe and the goddess's rattle.³¹ In heaven's name, have some pity for us, as surely you used to.'

And then in mid-shout the wind flung him into the sea. He was caught up in a raging whirlpool and the blast whirled him round and sucked him under. Loyal servants however caught hold of Tryphaena, who was almost lifeless, put her in a boat with most of the luggage and

snatched her from certain death . . . Claspings Giton to me with a cry, I wept and said:

'We deserved this of heaven – death alone would unite us. But our cruel luck does not allow it. Look, the waves are already overturning the ship. Look, the angry sea is trying to break our affectionate embraces. If you ever really loved Encolpius, kiss him while you can and snatch this last pleasure from the jaws of death.'

As I said this, Giton took off his clothes and, covered in my tunic, brought up his head for a kiss. And in case the envious waves should drag us apart even when clinging together like this, he tied his belt round both of us and said:

'If nothing else, we will float longer if we are tied together in death, or if out of pity the sea is likely to throw us up on the same shore, either some passing stranger will throw stones over us out of common humanity or, as a last favour that even the angry waves cannot refuse, the heedless sand will cover us.'

For the last time I felt bonds about me and as though laid out on a bier I waited for death – no longer an enemy. Meanwhile the storm executed the commands of fate and carried away all that was left of the ship. No mast, no helm, no rope or oar was left, but like a rough and shapeless log it went with the waves.

*

Fishermen came hurrying out in little boats to do some looting. When they saw there were people to defend their property, their greed was replaced by the wish to help.

*

115. We heard a strange murmur and moaning from the captain's cabin, as though an animal were trying to escape. We followed the sound and found Eumolpus sitting there and turning out verses on a great sheet. Surprised that he had leisure in the face of death to write poems, we dragged him out protesting and told him not to worry. But he was blazing with anger for being interrupted, and said:

'Allow me to get this line right. The poem is almost finished.'

I grabbed the lunatic and told Giton to come and drag the bellowing poet to land.

*

Finally the job was done and we sorrowfully entered the fisherman's cottage. Satisfying ourselves somehow with spoilt food from the wreck we passed a very miserable night. Next day, when we were discussing

where in the world we could safely go, I suddenly saw a body turning in a gentle eddy and drifting to the shore.

I stopped sadly and began gazing at this example of the sea's treachery with moist eyes.

'Perhaps somewhere,' I said aloud, 'a carefree wife waits for him, perhaps a son, not knowing about the storm. Or perhaps it was his father he left, at least someone he kissed when he set out. So much for mortal schemes and mortal desires. Look at him – how the man floats!'

I was still mourning for what I supposed was a stranger, when the tide turned his undamaged face to the shore and I recognized almost underneath my feet what had been a little while ago the terrible and implacable Lichas. I could hold back my tears no longer. In fact, I beat my breast again and again and said: 'Where are your bad tempers and your ungovernable rages now? You have been at the mercy of fishes and other horrible creatures. A little while ago you boasted of your power and your position, but you haven't even a plank left from the wreck of your great ship. Go now, mortals, and fill your hearts with great schemes. Go and carefully invest your ill-gotten gains for a thousand years. Yesterday he must have looked at the accounts of his investments, he must have fixed the day he would reach his home town. O heavens, how far away he lies from his destination! Yet it is not only the seas that serve mortals like this. Weapons play a man false in wartime; the collapse of his family shrine buries a man giving thanks to heaven; a man falls from his carriage and hastily gasps his last. Food chokes the glutton, abstinence the abstemious. If you think it over properly, there is shipwreck everywhere. Mind you, a man drowned at sea does not get buried – as though it matters what destroys a perishable corpse – fire, water, or time! Whatever you do, all these things come to the same thing. But of course, wild beasts will mangle the carcass. As though it were better that fire should have it – and yet we consider this the severest possible punishment when we are angry with our servants. So what is the point of this craze to make sure that no part of us is left behind after burial?'

*

And the pyre, built by his enemies' hands, reduced Lichas to ashes.

While Eumolpus was composing an epigram on the dead man, he gazed into the distance in search of inspiration.

*

116. We gladly performed this duty and then we took the road we had decided on and in a short time we were sweating our way up a mountain, from which we saw in the near distance a town situated on a lofty height. Being lost, we did not know what town it was until we learnt from some farm overseer that it was Croton, a very ancient city, once the foremost in Italy.¹ We then inquired most carefully what sort of people lived in this noble area and what type of business they particularly favoured, since their wealth had been diminished by a long series of wars.

'My dear sirs,' he said, 'if you are businessmen, change your plans and look for some other source of livelihood. If, however, you are a more sophisticated type and you can take incessant lying, you are following the right road to riches. You see, in this city no literary pretensions are honoured, eloquence has no standing, sobriety and decent behaviour are not praised and rewarded – no, whatever people you see, you must consider as divided into two classes. Either they have fortunes worth hunting or they are fortune-hunters. In this city no one raises children because anyone who has heirs of his own is not invited out to dinner or allowed into the games; he is deprived of all amenities and lives in ignominious obscurity. But those who have never married and have no close ties attain the highest honours – only these have real courage, or even blameless characters. You are on your way to a town that is like a plague-ridden countryside, where there is nothing but corpses being pecked and crows pecking them.'

117. Eumolpus, the wiser head, turned his thoughts to this novel situation and confessed that this method of enrichment appealed to him. I imagined that the old man was joking, just like a poet, until he said:

'I wish we had more elaborate stage-properties, more civilized costumes, and a more splendid set-up to give plausibility to the

imposture. I wouldn't postpone grabbing it, by god! I'd lead you straight to a fortune. Even so, I promise ...'

*

... whatever he should ask for, provided that our old companion in crime, the robe I'd stolen, would do and also whatever Lycurgus' burgled villa had yielded.² The mother of the gods with her usual good faith would send us money for immediate use.

*

'Why delay the start of the show then?' said Eumolpus. 'Make me your master, if you like the business.'

No one dared condemn a scheme that would cost nothing. And so, to safeguard the imposture in which we were all involved, we swore an oath dictated by Eumolpus, that we would be burned, flogged, beaten, killed with cold steel or whatever else Eumolpus ordered. Like real gladiators we very solemnly handed ourselves over, body and soul, to our master. After swearing the oath we saluted our master in our role as slaves, and we were all instructed that Eumolpus had buried his son, a young man of great oratorical abilities and high promise, and the unhappy old man had therefore left his native city so that he should not have daily cause for tears at the sight of his son's followers and friends or his tomb. Shipwreck was next added to this grief, in which he had lost more than twenty million sesterces. But he was not worried by the loss, except that being deprived of his servants he did not see about him what was proper to his rank. Besides, he had thirty million invested in Africa in farms and loans; in fact, he had such a large number of slaves spread among his estates in Numidia that they could even capture Carthage.

Following this pattern, we told Eumolpus to cough a lot, get first constipation, then diarrhoea, and curse all his food openly. He was to talk about gold and silver, unreliable farms and his invariably unproductive lands. Moreover he was to sit down every day at his accounts and renew the terms of his will every month. And, to complete the farce, whenever he tried to call one of us he was to call out the wrong name, to make it clear that their master remembered even the ones who were no longer with him.

After making these arrangements, we prayed to heaven that it would all turn out well and happily, and set off down the road. Giton however, could not manage the unaccustomed pack and Corax the hired man, a constant grumbler in his job, kept putting his bag down, hurling insults

at us for hurrying, and vowing that he'd throw away the bags and run off with his load.

'What is this, you people?' he said. 'Do you think I'm a beast of burden or a ship for carrying stones? I contracted for a man's job, not a dray-horse's. I'm a free man as much as you are, even if my father did leave me poor.'

Not content with cursing, every so often he lifted his leg right up and filled the road with obscene sounds and smells. Giton laughed at his bad behaviour and followed each of his farts with an equally loud imitation.

*

118. 'Poetry,³ my young friends,' said Eumolpus, 'has cheated many people. As soon as each of them has made his lines scan and woven some idea into a delicate web of words, he thinks he's gone straight up Helicon. Tired by their legal practice they often fly to the calm waters of poetry, as though it were a lucky port in a storm, believing it must be easier to construct an epic poem than a speech that glows with scintillating epigrams. But noble inspiration hates empty verbiage and a mind cannot conceive or bear fruit unless it is soaked in a mighty flood of great works. One must avoid all vulgarity of language and one must select expressions not in common use; the effect should be "I hate the vulgar crowd and fend them off". Besides this, one must be careful that witty lines are not made to stand out from the body of the narrative, but add their colour and brilliance to the texture of the poem. Witness Homer and the lyric poets, Roman Virgil, and Horace's careful felicity. Other poets either have not seen the way to approach poetry, or if they have seen it have been frightened to take it. Above all, whoever attempts the great theme of the Civil War without being full of the great writers will fail under the task. For it is not historical fact that has to be handled in the poem – historians do this far better. No, the unfettered inspiration must be sent soaring from the catapult of wit through dark messages and divine interventions and stories, so that it gives the impression of prophetic ravings rather than the accuracy of a solemn speech before witnesses.

'As an example, if you like, here's this bold attempt, even though it has not yet received the final touches:⁴

I

119. 'All-conquering Rome was mistress of the globe,
By land and sea an empire to the poles,
but still unsatisfied.
Sea-lanes battered by heavy hulks;
A hidden bay, a gold-producing region – 5
this was the ENEMY.
The Fates are bent on war,
The search for wealth continues.
Ordinary pleasures,
plebeian enjoyments 10
are tedious,
Soldiers connoisseurs of Corinthian bronze.
Gems from deep mines
flash challenges to purple.
From Numidia marble – 15
From China new silks –
The Arabian countryside
stripped bare for profits.
Further disasters, more stabs at a stricken Peace (hear ye!):
Wild beasts are stalked in the woods of Taurus, 20
Ammon in darkest Africa
flushed for the monster
"which is slain
because his tooth sells dear".
Starvation in strange forms 25
weighs down the ships;
The prowling tiger hauled in a bronze cage
To gorge on human blood for the cheering PLEBS.
Shame chokes my spleen and voice.
How to reveal those doomed lives? 30
The genitals removed,
Organs mutilated under the knife
And broken into the services of lust.
The solemn march of time is checked,
The speeding years retarded, 35
Nature seeking herself finds nothing.
Each man has his catamite
(The soft enervated gait,
The floating hair,
The fashions in clothes, 40
Tokens of absent virility.)

Eye-catching tables of citron-wood from Africa (look ye!)
 Mirror the splash of purple and lackeys;
 Imitate in mottled surfaces disvalued gold.
 About the useless wood, the pride of fools,
 The mob moves tipsily. 45

Footloose, the soldier hefts his tackle,
 an esurient mercenary.

The Belly, miracle of ingenuity,
 Brings the parrot-wrasse,
 Submerged in Sicilian water, 50
 Alive to the table;
 Pulls oysters from the Lucrine Lake,
 To make a sale to the palate,
 The high price most of the flavour. 55

The Phasian Lake emptied of birds,
 Along that silent shore
 Only the wind breathes upon the deserted leaves.
 The same madness in politics:
 A bribed electorate changing sides for silver. 60
 On sale: one people and one senate

CHEAP!

Votes are for selling.
 Even old men forget
 the strenuous requirements of freedom. 65

A change of government for small change,
Auctoritas corrupt and humiliated.
 Cato is defeated,
 rejected by the electorate;

The victorious candidate is embarrassed, 70
 Ashamed to snatch
 the *fasces* from Cato.

Not the defeat of a candidate,
 The death-blow of a great people –
 Rome a lost city, 75
 merchant and merchandise,
 plunderer and plundered.

A vile vortex, a gaping whirlpool,
 The people drowning.

With *Usura* comes there greed, 80
 With usura hath no man a house,
 With usura hath no man a hand free,
 A canker born in the hidden marrow,
 A madness raging in the limbs of the body politic
 And wandering with its sorrows 85
 Like a pack of hounds.
 And out of this Revolution,
 Revolution from poverty.

War tempts the poor.
 Dissipated fortunes are recouped by murder, 90
 Boldness with nothing has nothing to lose.
 Drowned in this filth, sodden with this sleep,
 What practitioner's skill can rouse Rome surely?
Furor militaris
 None but the soldier's, *furor militaris*, 95
 desire pricked by the sword.

II

120. 'Fortune produced three captains.
 Enyo, murderous goddess of War,
 Crushed each on different battlefields.
 Parthia kept Crassus, 100
 In the Libyan Sea lay Pompey (surnamed Magnus)
 And Julius –
 his blood incarnadined ungrateful Rome.
 The earth,
 Intolerant of so many tombs together 105
 Divided their ashes.
 Such are fame's privileges.
 The scene:
 Deep in a hollow cleft
 Between Neapolis and Puteoli, 110
 A cleft awash with water from Cocytus,
 Hot with eternal exhalations,
 Damp with a deadly dew.
 No autumn green here,
 No green fields of pleasant turf, 115

No echoing thickets
 Or sweet discords of spring song.
 But CHAOS,
 foul black pumice rock,
 In triumphant isolation,
 And a ring of depressed cypresses above.
 Father Dis, appearing from below,
 Head powdered with white ash
 And flames from funeral pyres,
 Sardonicly to Fortune, winged goddess: 125
 "O mistress of all divine and human things,
 Hater of all security of power,
 Lover of the new, forsaker of triumphs,
 Art thou not crushed
 By the weight of Rome? 130
 Canst thou raise higher that doomed mass?
 The new generation frets at its strength,
 Burdened by accumulated wealth.
 See, everywhere rich pickings of victory,
 Prosperity raging to its ruin. 135
 They build in gold and raise their mansions to the stars.
 The seas are dammed by dykes of stone
 And other seas spring up within their fields –
 A rebellion against the order of all things.
 The tunnelled earth yawns under insane buildings; 140
 Caverns groan in hollowed mountains;
 As long as frivolous employments are found for stone,
 My ghosts confess their hopes of heaven.
 On then, Fortune –
 Change thy looks of peace for the face of war. 145
 Rouse Rome and give my kingdom its dead.
 I have felt no blood on my face,
 My Tisiphone has not bathed her parched limbs,
 Since Sulla's sword drank deep
 And the bristling earth produced its bloody crops." 150

121. 'He tries to take her right hand,
 But the ground breaks into a yawning chasm.

Fickle-hearted Fortune so replies:
 "Father, lord of inmost Cocytus,
 If I may with impunity reveal 155
 what must come to pass,

Thy wishes are granted.
 The mad rage inside me no less than thine,
 A more wayward fire eats my heart.
 All I have heaped upon the Roman citadels 160
 I now detest,
 resenting my generosity.
 The same power that built
 will destroy their mighty works.
 I have in mind 165
 to immolate their warriors,
 Choke their decadence with blood.
 Now rings through timorous ears the clash of arms:
 I see Philippi strewn with double slaughter,
 Thessalian pyres, Spanish and Libyan dead; 170
 I see Nile's barriers groaning,
 The bays of Actium,
 warriors terrified of Apollo's
 martial port.
 Go then, open the thirsty territories of thy kingdom 175
 To beckon in new ghosts.
 The ferryman Charon will be too weak
 To ferry the shades in his boat –
 there will be need of a fleet.
 Glut thyself on the great disaster, pale Tisiphone, 180
 Bite into the open wounds.
 The torn world is led to the Stygian shades."

122. 'As she finished a cloud shook
 And with abrupt flashes of fire
 Broke apart for a gleaming thunderbolt, 185
 Closing behind the jetting flame.
 The father of the shades retreated,
Pater umbrarum
 Closed the gaping breast of the earth
 in panic, 190
 Paling before fraternal bolts.

III

'At once mankind's disaster, the dooms to come,
 Are revealed by heavenly omens.

Hyperion, ugly with bloody face,
 hid his orb in darkness, 195
 As though he saw civil-war already.
 Elsewhere Cynthia dimmed her full face,
 Withdrew her light from the scene of the crime.
 Mountain ridges thundered into fragments,
 As peaks collapsed, 200
 And rivers wandered no longer free,
 dying slowly between familiar banks.
 Heaven a pandemonium of military excursions;
 A tremulous trumpet from the stars
 took Mars by the ears. 205
 Etna, eaten by strange fires,
 flung its eruptions into the skies.
 Amid the tombs and unburned bones
 the faces of the dead appear
 With terrible menacing shrieks. 210
 A comet trailing new stars, bearing fire;
 A new Jove,
 A new sky descending in bloody rain.
 Portents soon clarified by God.

Caesar brooks no delay, 215
 Pricked by lust for revenge
 He abandons the Gallic,
 begins the Civil
 War.

IV

'In airy Alps 220
 Where the rocks once pounded by a Greek divinity
 Slope softly to let men enter,
Est locus,
 a holy place with altars there to Hercules.
 Winter blocks it with tight-packed snow 225
 And lifts it to the stars with a blanching peak.
 The heavens might have fallen from its top.
 It does not melt in midsummer rays, spring breezes,
 Its packed surface stays stiff with ice and winter frost,
 It could carry the globe on its threatening shoulders. 230

When Caesar tramped these ridges with his exulting
 soldiers and chose his site,
 He looked out
 over the wide Italian plains from the summit,
 Pointed both hands to the stars: 235
 "Jupiter Omnipotent,
 Saturnian land once glad of my armies,
 And loaded down with my triumphs,
 I call you to witness:
 Mars summons me to war, 240
 an unwilling warrior.
 I bring unwilling hands to the execution,
 Foreed by my grievances,
 Driven from my city
 while I reddened the Rhine with blood. 245
 And blocked the Gauls from the Alps
 (Their second attempt on the Capitol).
 Exile the surer for my victory!
 In German blood my guilt is rooted,
 in a hundred triumphs. 250
 Yet who are they my glory terrifies?
 Who are they who would end my wars?
 Cheap operators bought and sold,
 hirelings,
 My Rome their step-mother. 255
 But not with impunity, nor without revenge, I think,
 Shall a coward tie my hands.

Run mad, my victorious ones!
 Go, comrades, plead my case with a sword!
 The same charge laid at our doors, 260
 The same disaster over us all.
 I owe you thanks –
 I did not win alone.
 So, since there are penalties
 for the acquisition of trophies, 265
 And victory celebrations see us in convicts' dress,
 Fortune be the judge –
 Let the die be cast.
 Begin the war and try your mettle.
 Yet my case is already won – 270
 With so many brave around me

- I do not know the meaning of defeat.”
 ‘At the trumpet of his voice
 A raven, *Delphicus ales*,
 Was a glad omen in the sky,
 Cleaving the air. 275
 From the left of the dread grove
 Strange voices sounded
 and flames rose.
 The brightness of the Sun grew brighter than its wont 280
 And set a burning halo of gold about its face.
123. ‘Caesar deployed his standards of war,
 Heartened by omens,
 First to attempt these new audacities.
 The icy surface and frost-hard ground 285
 Made no resistance,
 lay quiet, crunching gently.
 But the squadrons shattered the bound clouds,
 The horses panicking unfettered the ice,
 the snow melted. 290
 Rivers of sudden origin ran from the mountain heights,
 Yet these too (as at a command)
 Halted and the flow was still,
 (chained downpour).
 One moment a mire, then a hardened floor. 295
 Treacherous before, it now mocked at their steps,
 deceived each foot.
 Men, horses equally, arms and armour
 Lay piled in sorry confusion.
 Now the clouds, hit by the cutting wind,
 Let fall their loads, 300
 Winds torn by whirlwinds,
 Skies rent by swollen hailstones.
 The very clouds were tatters
 and fell about their armour. 305
 The frozen ice heaved like ocean waves.
 The earth was covered by the storm of snow,
 The stars were covered
 And the rivers stuck to their banks
 covered too. 310
 Only Caesar above it –
 Leaning on his great spear,

With sure strides breaking across the cracking fields,
 Like Hercules, Amphitryonides, striding, head-high,
 From the Caucasian peak, 315
 Or like a frowning Jupiter,
 Rushing from the towering tops of Olympus,
 Hurling his bolts at the doomed race of Giants.

V

While Caesar angrily trod underfoot
 the haughty pinnacles, 320
 Winged Rumour, wings fluttering in terror,
 Took flight to the high ridges of the Palatine,
 And with this thunder of rumours smote
 Every statue in the city:
 “The fleets are on the sea, 325
 The whole Alps a blaze of squadrons
 Spattered with German blood.”
 Armies, blood, slaughter, fire, whole wars
 Flit before their eyes.
 Their hearts battered by this din 330
 Were torn in two and much afraid.
 Flight by land, said one –
 The sea is better, said another:
 The sea is now safer than our country.
 Not wanting were those who favoured fight, 335
 Accepting the command of Fate.
 The people trailed from the desolate city,
 To wherever their stunned minds moved,
 saddest of scenes.
 Rome’s heart is in the rout, 340
 Beaten already the Quirites
 Leave their sad homes when they hear the rumour.
 One clutches his children in trembling hands,
 One hides his family gods beneath his coat,
 Leaving the sad hallway 345
 cursing to death the distant enemy.
 Some clasp wives to their sad breasts
 And young men who never felt a load
 Clasp aged fathers,
 Carrying only what they fear for most. 350
 Others unwarily take all they have,

Carrying booty to battle.
 In a storm at sea,
 When great Auster starts to roughen the deep
 And sends the driven waves toppling, 355
 When rigging and rudder fail,
 One man battens down,
 Another looks for safe harbour, tranquil shore,
 And another hoists sail to fly the storm,
 Trusting his all to Fortune. 360

An end to these minor catastrophes:
 Pompeius Magnus with both consuls,
 Pompey, terror of the Pontus,
 Explorer of savage Hydaspes,
 The rock that wrecked the pirates, 365
 For all his three triumphs that made Jupiter tremble,
 For all the veneration of Pontus
 After he sheered through its maelstrom,
 And the submission of the waves of the Bosphorus,
 Took to flight, 370
 Shame on 't!
 His title to power forgotten,
 So fickle Fortuna might see the back
 Of even Pompeius Magnus.

VI

124. 'Such a great infection spread even to the skies,
 The timorousness of heaven set the seal on flight. 375
 And through the world a gentle host of gods,
 Abominating earth's madness, abandoned earth,
 Avoiding the armies of the doomed.
 First Pax, first of them all, 380
 Bruising her white arms, hid her defeated head
 In a helmet, left earth in haste
 For the implacable kingdom of Dis.
 Submissive Honour her companion,
 And Justitia, hair ragged, 385
 Concordia sobbing in her torn dress.
 The flight not all in one direction:
 Where the realm of Erebus yawned,
 Emerged in broad array the troop of Dis:

Bristling Erinys, Bellona, menacing, 390
 Megaera with her armoury of torches,
 Doom, Treachery and the pale image of Death.

In their midst went Furor, Madness,
 Like a horse trailing broken reins,
 Her bloody head held up to the world 395
 Her face, pitted with a thousand wounds,
 Hid in a bloodstained helmet:
 The battered shield of Mars,
 heavy with innumerable arrows,
 Gripped in her left hand, 400
 In her right the threat of a burning torch
 Carrying fires to earth.

VII

The earth feels the weight of the gods,
 Stars shifted, losing equilibrium,
 The whole kingdom of heaven divided. 405
 Dione first heads the armies of her Caesar,
 Pallas moving to her side and Romulus (Mavortius)
 beating his great spear.
 Phoebus and Phoebus' sister,
 And Mercury, on Cyllene born, took Pompey away, 410
 And Hercules Tiryntius like him in all his deeds.
 The trumpets sounded.
 Discordia with her torn hair
 Raised to the gods above her Stygian head.
 Clotted blood in her mouth, 415
 Tears in her battered eyes,
 Her teeth mailed with a scurf of rust,
 Her tongue dripping with foulness,
 Her face in a ring of snakes;
 With bosom convulsed beneath her tattered dress, 420
 She waved in a shaking hand a bloody torch.
 Left Tartarus, the darknesses of Cocytus,
 Striding up to the high ridges
 Of the lordly Appennines,
 Vantage-point for all lands, all seas, 425
 And the forces flooding the world.
 From her mad breast these cries erupted:

"To arms, ye nations – now your hearts are on fire.
 To arms and throw your torches
 into the hearts of cities. 430
 Whoever hides will be defeated.
 Let no woman lag behind, or child,
 Or age-torn man.
 Earth trembles, the ripped houses revolt.
 Cling to your Law, Marcellus. 435
 Shake up the masses, Curio.
 Lentulus, quench not that brave and martial ardour.
 And you, son of heaven,
 Why do you delay with your armies?
 Why are you not battering at gates, 440
 Tearing away town walls, hauling off treasure?
 Can you not guard the Roman fortress, Pompey?
 Look then to the walls of Epidamnus,
 And dye Thessalian bays with human blood."
 And all Discordia commanded 445
 so came to pass on earth.'

CROTON

When Eumolpus had poured all this out in a great flow of words, we finally entered Croton. Here we recuperated at a little inn and next day, looking for a house on a larger scale, we fell in with a crowd of legacy-hunters, who asked us what sort of people we were and where we came from. Following our concerted plan we told the gullible inquirers where we were from and who we were.

Immediately they did their best to outdo each other in putting their financial resources at Eumolpus' service . . . All of the legacy-hunters vied with each other to get into Eumolpus' good graces with presents.¹

*

125. While all this was taking place in Croton over a considerable period of time . . . Eumolpus, full of happiness, was so forgetful of his previous fortune, that he often boasted that no one in the place could stand up against his influence, and his own people, through the good offices of his friends, would get off scot-free for any crime they committed.

Personally, although I fattened myself up every day with more and more of these over-abundant luxuries and thought Fortune had taken her eyes off me, yet quite often I was worried not from any real cause, but from thinking of my usual luck: 'What if some shrewd legacy-hunter sends a spy to Africa and exposes our whole deception? What if the hired man gets tired of our present happy position, turns over evidence to our friends, and uncovers the whole scheme by his spiteful treachery? We'll obviously have to run away once more and just when we were rid of it, we'll be reduced to poverty again for a fresh period of beggary. Heavens above, how terrible it is to live outside the law – one is always expecting what one rightly deserves.'²

*

126. [*Circe's maid, Chrysis, is talking to Polyaeus, i.e. Encolpius*] 'Because you're aware of your sexual charms, you put on an arrogant air and sell your favours instead of giving them free. Otherwise, what's

the point of your combed wavy hair, the heavy make-up, the soft sulkiness in your eyes, the self-conscious walk, the carefully measured steps? What's the object unless you're prostituting your good looks for money? You look at me – I'm no fortune-teller, and I don't go in for astrology, but I tell people's characters from their faces, and when I've seen how someone walks, I know what he's thinking. If you're selling what I've come for, there's a customer waiting. Or if you're giving it free – which is nicer – put me under an obligation for your kindness. You say you're just a poor slave, but you're only exciting her desire to boiling point. Some women get heated up over the absolute dregs and can't feel any passion unless they see slaves or bare-legged messengers. The arena sets some of them on heat, or a mule-driver covered with dust, or actors displayed on the stage. My mistress is one of this type. She jumps across the first fourteen seats from the orchestra and looks for something to love among the lowest of the low.³

I said in a voice full of sweetness: 'Tell me, are you the one who is in love with me?'

The maid laughed heartily at such an unlikely notion.

'I wouldn't make you so pleased with yourself. I have never yet gone to bed with a slave, and heaven forbid I should ever see a lover of mine crucified. That's for ladies who kiss the whip-marks. Even though I'm a servant, I've never sat anywhere except in the lap of knights.'

I couldn't help some surprise at such contrasting sexual desires. I thought it very strange that the maid should cultivate the superior outlook of a lady and the lady the low taste of a maid.

Then as the joking continued, I asked her to bring her mistress to the copse of plane trees. The girl agreed to the suggestion. She tucked up her tunic and turned into the laurel grove bordering the walk. Without any long delay she brought out of the shadows a woman who was lovelier than any work of art, and led her to my side.

No words could do justice to her charms – whatever I said would not be enough. Her curls flowed naturally over the whole breadth of her shoulders and waved back at the hairline from her exquisitely narrow brow. Her eyebrows ran down to the contour of her cheeks and almost met over the bridge of her nose. Her eyes were brighter than stars shining outside the glow of the moon. Her nostrils curved in a little, and her little mouth was as Praxiteles⁴ imagined Diana's.⁵ Now her chin, now her neck, now her hands, now the pearly lustre of her feet clasped by a thin gold chain – each in turn would have put Parian

marble⁶ to shame. Then for the first time I despised my old passion for Doris.⁷

*

What has happened, Jove, what has happened
To make you throw down your arms,
To become an old story in heaven,
To disdain these terrestrial charms?

Now here was a worthy occasion
To beetle your brows and put on
Two horns or cover your white hair
With the feathers and form of a swan.⁸

Here, here is a real Danaë –
She would kindle your lust even higher.
One touch, one mere touch of her body
And your limbs would be melting in fire.

*

127. She was delighted and smiled so sweetly I thought the full moon had shown her face out of a cloud. Then modulating her voice to her gestures, she said:

'If you don't find a smart lady distasteful, one who had a man for the first time only this year, let me introduce to you a new girl-friend, young man. Of course, you have a boy-friend too – I wasn't ashamed of making inquiries, you see – but what's to stop you adopting a girl-friend as well? I shall come on the same footing. You have only to agree to put up with my kisses as well, whenever you like.'

'On the contrary,' I replied, 'I must beg you, you beautiful creature, not to disdain to number a poor stranger among your adorers. You will find him religiously devoted if you permit him to worship you. And don't imagine I am entering this temple without an offering. I give up my boy-friend for you.'

'What?' she said. 'Are you giving up for me the boy you cannot live without, the lips you cling to, the one you love the way I want to love you?'

As she said this, there was such charm in her voice, such a sweet sound caressed the enraptured air that it was as though the song of the Sirens sang through the breezes. And then in my amazement – the whole sky seemed somehow brighter – it occurred to me to ask the goddess her name.

'So my maid hasn't told you,' she said, 'that I'm called Circe?' Not that I am the child of the Sun – my mother never stopped at will the course of the revolving heavens. Yet if the fates unite us, I shall have something to thank heaven for. A god, in fact, is already working his mysterious purposes to some end. It is not by chance that Circe is in love with Polyaeus – a great flame is always kindled between these names. Take me in your arms, if you wish: there is no reason to fear any prying eyes. Your beloved boy is a long way from here.'

Saying this, Circe drew me, entwined in arms softer than swansdown, on to the grassy ground.

Flowers such as the Earth Mother spread on Ida's top
When Jove and his wifely love united¹⁰

(His breast one raging fire).

Roses, violets, soft rushes glinting there

And the white lilies smiling

from the green meadows.

Such a place cried for love on its soft grass

The day brightened like a blessing

On our secret amours.

Side by side there in the grass we kissed a thousand times in our love-play, groping towards more strenuous pleasures.

*

128. [*Circe to Polyaeus*] 'What is it?' she said. 'Does my mouth offend you in some way? Does my breath smell through not eating? Is it the unwashed sweat from my armpits? If it's not any of these, am I to suppose you're somehow frightened of Giton?'

Flushed with obvious embarrassment, I even lost whatever virility I had. My whole body was limp, and I said:

'Please, my queen, don't add insults to my misery. I've been bewitched.'

*

[*Circe*] 'Tell me, Chrysis – but the truth, mind! Am I somehow unpleasant? Am I untidy? Am I somehow obscuring my beauty because of some natural defect? Don't deceive your mistress. I've done something wrong.'

Then as Chrysis remained silent, she snatched a mirror from her and after trying every expression that lovers usually put on to amuse each other, she shook out her dress, ruffled from contact with the ground, and rushed into the shrine of Venus. On my part, like a guilty thing,

trembling as though I'd seen a horrible vision, I began asking myself mentally whether I had been robbed of the chance of true pleasure.

Any soporific midnight an instance,
When the unfocused eyes are dream-deluded:
The spaded earth exposing gold,
Guilty hands fingering criminal gains,
Snatching at jewels,
Sweat too bathing the face,
And a deep fear in the mind
That mere awareness of gold on the person
May dislodge it

even from the breast pocket.

The images of joy recede from the mocked brain;
Reality returns
To a heart longing for lost pleasures
Lingering in vanished illusions.

*

[*Giton to Encolpius*] 'So thank you for loving me in such an honourable Platonic way.¹¹ Alcibades himself couldn't have been safer when he slept in his teacher's bed.'

*

129. [*Encolpius to Giton*] 'Honestly, dear lad, I can't realize I'm a man, I don't feel it. The part of my body that once made me an Achilles is dead and buried.'¹²

*

The boy was frightened of being discovered alone with me and giving rise to gossip, so he rushed off and took refuge in the inner part of the house.

*

Chrysis however entered my room and delivered to me a letter from her mistress, which read as follows:

Dear Polyaeus,

If I were a sensual woman, I would complain I had been tricked. As it is, I am positively grateful for your weakness. I've played too long in the mere shadows of pleasure. However I'm writing to ask how you are and whether you got home on your own feet. Doctors say a man can't walk if he has no strength. I'll tell you something, my young friend – beware of paralysis. I have never seen a sick man in such great danger – you are as good as dead, for heaven's sake. If that same chill got into your knees and hands, you could send for the undertaker. To come to the point: although I was deeply offended, still I don't begrudge a sick man his prescription. If you wish to get better, send Giton

away. You will get your strength back, I can tell you, if you sleep without your darling boy for three days. As far as I am concerned, I'm not afraid of meeting someone who will like me less. The mirror doesn't lie, nor does my reputation.

Get well soon – if you can.

Circe

When Chrysis saw I had read the whole insulting screed, she said:

'These things tend to happen, particularly in this part of the country, where women even drag down the moon . . . This problem will be taken care of too. Just write a soothing reply to my mistress and restore her good spirits with a frank and natural answer. If the truth must be told, from the moment she was so insulted, she has not been her usual self.'

130. I gladly took the maid's advice and wrote some such letter as this:

Dear Circe,

I admit I have done many bad things. After all, I am a man and still young. But I have never till today committed a really deadly sin. You have the culprit's confession. Whatever you order, I deserve it. I have been guilty of treachery, I've killed a man, and I've robbed a temple – find a punishment for these crimes. If you wish to kill me, I'll come and bring my sword. If you are content with just whipping, I'll run naked to my beloved. Remember this one thing, not I but my instruments were at fault. The soldier was ready, but had no weapons. Who caused this trouble I don't know. Perhaps my thoughts ran ahead of my lagging body; perhaps in my keen desire to enjoy every last thing, I used up the pleasure in dallying. I have not discovered what I did. Still, you tell me to beware of paralysis – as though it could become any worse, now it has deprived me of the ability to possess you of all women. However this is what my excuses come to: I will give you satisfaction, if you allow me to atone for my fault.

Your slave,
Polyaenus

I sent Chrysis off with this sort of promise and carefully attended to my treacherous body. Omitting a bath, I used a very moderate amount of oil to rub myself down, then dining on more solid dishes than usual, onions and the heads of snails without seasoning, I drank a sparing quantity of wine. After this, setting myself up with a very gentle stroll before bed, I went to my room without Giton. So great was my anxiety to placate her that I was afraid my boy-friend might impair my virility.

131. Getting up next day without any mental or physical strain, I

went down to the same grove of plane-trees, although I was nervous of such an inauspicious place, and began waiting among the trees for my guide, Chrysis. I walked round for a short while and I had only just sat down where I had been the day before when she turned up, bringing a little old woman with her. When she greeted me, she said:

'How are you, my fine friend? Have you begun to feel in better spirits?' . . .

The old woman brought out of her dress a string of variously coloured threads twisted together and bound it round my neck. Then mixing some dust with spittle, she took it on her middle finger and ignoring my repugnance, marked my forehead with it.

*

After completing this spell, she instructed me to spit three times and drop down my chest, again three times, some pebbles which she had charmed and wrapped in purple. Then she began to test my virility with her hands. Faster than you could speak, the nerves obeyed the command, and the little old woman's hands were filled with a mighty throbbing. Leaping with joy, she said: 'Do you see, my dear Chrysis, do you see how I've started a hare for others to hunt?'

*

The lofty plane-tree spreads its summer shade,
Metamorphosed Daphne near by,¹³ crowned with berries.
Cypresses tremulous, clipped pines around
Shuddering at their tops.

Playing among them
A stream with wandering waters,
Spume-flecked, worrying the stones
with a querulous spray.
A place right for love.

Witness the woodland nightingale,
and Procne¹⁴ turned urban swallow –
Everywhere amid the grass and soft violets,
Their woodland homes a temple of song.

*

She lay relaxed, her marble neck resting on a golden couch, and she beat the tranquil air with a branch of flowering myrtle. When she saw me, she blushed a little, obviously remembering yesterday's affront. Then when everyone had gone, and I had sat down beside her at her invitation, she placed the branch over my eyes, and with this wall between us she became bolder.

'How are you, you paralytic?' she said. 'Have you come intact today?'

'Why ask me?' said I. 'Try me!' and I threw myself bodily into her arms and kissed her till I could kiss no more – no magic spells there.

*

132. Her sheer physical beauty cried out to me and she pulled me down to make love to her. Our lips ground noisily together in kiss after kiss. Our locked hands found every possible way of making love. Our bodies wrapped in a mutual embrace united even our very souls.¹⁵

*

Smarting from these open insults, the lady finally rushes to have her revenge. She calls her attendants and has them hoist me up and whip me. And not content with such a drastic punishment she calls round all her wool workers and the lowest types of servant and has them spit at me. I put my hands over my eyes, and without any begging for mercy because I knew what I deserved, whipped and spat on, I was flung through the door. Proselenus is thrown out too, Chrysis is beaten, and the whole household gloomily muttered to each other and wondered who had dashed their mistress's high spirits . . .

*

And so, after weighing things up, I became more cheerful. I concealed the marks of the whips with some doctoring so that my ill-treatment would neither amuse Eumolpus nor sadden Giton. Then I did the only thing I could do to save my face, I feigned weariness; and wrapped up in bed, I directed the whole blaze of my anger on what had been the cause of all my troubles.

Three times I took the murd'rous axe in hand,
 Three times I wavered like a wilting stalk
 And curtsied from the blade, poor instrument
 In trembling hands – I could not what I would.
 From terror colder than the wintry frost,
 It took asylum far within my crotch,
 A thousand wrinkles deep.
 How could I lift its head to punishment?
 Cozened by its whoreson mortal fright
 I fled for aid to words that deeper bite.

And so leaning on my elbow I made quite a speech, abusing it for its disobedience. 'What have you got to say?' I said. 'You insult to mankind, you blot on the face of heaven – it's improper to give you your real name when talking seriously. Did I deserve this from you – that you

should drag me down to hell when I was in heaven? That you should betray me in the prime of life and reduce me to the impotence of the last stages of senility? Go on, give me a serious argument.' As I poured this out angrily:

Turning away, she kept her eyes down-cast,
 Her visage no more moved by this address
 Than supple willow or drooping poppyhead.¹⁶

Once this vile abuse was finished, I too began to feel regret – for talking like this – and I blushed inwardly at forgetting my sense of shame and bandying words with a part of the body that more dignified people do not even think about. Then after rubbing my brow for some time, I said to myself: 'Still, where's the harm in relieving my feelings by some natural abuse? Anyway, how is it we curse such parts of the body as the stomach or the throat and even the head, when we have the occasional headache? In fact, didn't Ulysses argue with his heart, and don't some tragic heroes abuse their eyes as though they could hear them? People with gout curse their feet, people with arthritis their hands, people with ophthalmia their eyes, and when people stub their toes, they often blame the pain on their feet.

Cato¹⁷ frowns and knits his brows,
 The Censor wants to stop us,
 The Censor hates my guileless prose,
 My simple modern opus.
 My cheerful unaffected style
 Is Everyman when in his humour,
 My candid pen narrates his joys,
 Refusing to philosophize.

Find me any man who knows
 Nothing of love and naked pleasure.
 What stern moralist would oppose
 Two bodies warming a bed together?
 Father of Truth, old Epicurus¹⁸
 Spoke of bodies, not of soul,
 And taught, philosophers assure us,
 Love is Life's sovereign goal.

*

There is nothing on earth more misleading than silly prejudice and nothing sillier than hypocritical moralizing.

133. After finishing this speech, I called Giton and said:

'Tell me, my dear, but on your honour. That night Ascylltus stole you away from me, did he stay awake and assault you or was he content with a lonely and honourable night?'

The lad touched his eyes and solemnly swore that Ascylltus had offered him no violence.

Kneeling on the threshold, I offered up a prayer to the hostile deity:¹⁹

'Comrade of Nymphs, comrade of Bacchus,
Deity of the rich forests

whom fair Dione appointed,
Famed Lesbos, green Thasos obey your wishes
And the Lydians spread over the seven rivers

Bow before you –

They built you a temple in your own Hypaepa –
Come to me, guardian of Bacchus, darling of Dryads,
Hear my timid orisons.

I come before you –

unstained by guiltless blood.

I was no enemy of religion

when I robbed the temples.²⁰

Need and the attrition of poverty,

these were the agents –

Not my true self.

The man who sins through poverty
is a venial offender.

My prayer is:

Relieve my mind,

Forgive the venial sin,

And whenever fortune smiles on me,

I shall not let your glory go unhonoured –

A horned goat, O holy one, sire of his herd,

Will come to your altars,

The farrow of a grunting sow, a milky victim,

Will come to your altars.

Wine of the newest vintage will foam in the chalices

And inebriated young men

Will march in triumph

Three times around your shrine.'

While I was doing this and keeping a close eye on the dear departed, the old woman entered the temple. She looked a sight with her torn hair and black clothes. She put a hand on me and led me outside the vestibule.

134. [*The old woman, Proselenus, to Encolpius*] 'Were they witches who enervated you? Did you tread on some shit in the dark at a crossroad? Or a corpse? You haven't even rescued yourself from the boy. Instead, you're soft, weak, and tired, like a cart-horse on a slope; you just wasted all this effort and sweat. And not content to be a sinner on your own, you've set heaven against me too.'

And without any protest from me, she led me through into the priestess's room where she threw me on a bed, and snatching a rod from behind the door, still without a murmur from me, gave me a thrashing. If the rod had not shattered at the first stroke and lessened the force of the blows, she might perhaps have broken my arms and head as well. I howled particularly at the cuts aimed at my groin. With my tears flowing freely I leaned my head on the mattress and covered it with my right hand. She was equally upset and tearful. She sat on the other side of the bed and complained in tremulous tones of living too long, until the priestess came in and found us . . .

'Why have you come to my room like mourners to a funeral?' she said. 'Especially on a holiday, when even miserable people show a smile . . .'

[*Proselenus to Oenothea, priestess of Priapus, talking of Encolpius*] 'Oh, Oenothea,' she said, 'it's this young man you see here. He was born under an evil star. He can't make a sale to boy or girl. You've never seen a man so unlucky – he's got a piece of wet leather, not a prick. In fact, what do you think of someone who could get out of Circe's bed without having had any pleasure?'

Hearing this, Oenothea sat down between us and shook her head for quite a time.

'I'm the only one who can cure that trouble,' she said. 'And don't think I'm doing anything puzzling – I want the young man to sleep the night with me. May I drop dead if I don't make it as stiff as a horn:

'All things on earth obey me. At my wish
 The flowering earth grows arid, the sap dry.
 At my wish its benisons spill forth.
 Rocks and jagged cliffs gush out Nile waters;
 For me the ocean flattens its white tops;
 The zephyrs lay their blasts hushed before my feet.
 The rivers obey me,
 Hyrcanian tigers,²² and dragon sentinels.
 Small things to boast of! –
 The orbbed image of the moon descends
 At the pull of my spells.
 The Sun-god
 Turns round his foaming horses
 And fear-driven retraces his orbit.
 Such power have words.
 The hot breath of bulls is quenched
 By the rites of virgins;
 Sun-child Circe transformed Ulysses' crew
 With magic spells.²³
 Proteus²⁴ turns into whatever shape he likes.
 Expert in magical experience,
 I will root Idaean trees in the sea.
 Plant rivers on the topmost height.'

135. I shuddered: I was terrified by such a fabulous promise and I began scrutinizing the old woman very warily . . .

'Well,' cried Oenothea, 'now do what I tell you.' . . . And carefully washing her hands she lay on the bed and kissed me a couple of times . . .

Oenothea placed an old table in the middle of the altar and heaped red-hot coals on it. She took down a broken old cup and repaired it with some warmed pitch, then she replaced in the smoky wall a wooden nail which had come out with the cup as she pulled it down. Wearing a square cloak, she placed a great kettle on the hearth and drew out from her larder with a fork a cloth bag containing beans and an ancient piece of pig's cheek, very knocked about and with a thousand bruises on it. When she unfastened the string of the bag, she poured part of the beans on the table and ordered me to shell them carefully. I obeyed her instructions and with meticulous fingers separated the beans from their filthy pods. But with some caustic comments on my slowness, she took

them herself, stripped the pods off with her teeth and spat them to the ground like dead flies.

*

I was amazed at the ingenious shifts of poverty and the sort of artistry individual objects displayed:

No gleam of Indian ivory inlaid in gold,
 No radiance of marble underfoot,
 The earth not mocked by the earth's profusion;
 Just a thicket of husked straw on a willow frame,
 New . . . clay pots,
 the hasty products of cheap wheels.
 Here a tank of soft limewood,
 Tough platters of wicker work,
 A wine-stained cup.
 The walls around were a stiffness
 Of dry straw and random mud –
 Held by a scattering of rustic nails,
 And hanging there a slim broom of green rushes.
 The provisions of the humble place
 Hung from its smoky beam:
 Bland sorb-apple,
 Dried savory and raisins in bunches,
 Twined in sweet-smelling wreaths . . .
 In such a hut on Attic ground
 Lived Hecale,²⁵ hostess worthy of worship,
 Whom in the years of eloquence
 The Muse of inspired Callimachus described
 With wond'rous art.

*

136. While she cut off a small piece of the meat too, . . . and as she put back the cheek, which was as old as she was, into the cupboard with the fork, the rotten stool, which had given her short body the necessary height, broke and, because of her weight, sent the old woman sprawling into the hearth. The neck of the kettle was broken and put out the fire, just as it was beginning to blaze up. She burnt her elbow on a glowing piece of wood and blackened the whole of her face with ashes she stirred up. I got to my feet in alarm and set the old woman on her feet, not without some amusement . . . To prevent anything delaying the sacrifice, she immediately rushed off to some place in the neighbourhood to relight the fire . . .

I went to the door of the cottage . . . when all of a sudden three geese – I suppose they generally got their daily rations from the old woman at midday – made a rush at me and to my dismay surrounded me with an obscene and infuriated hissing. One tore my tunic, another undid my shoe-laces and tugged at them, and the ring-leader in this savage assault went so far as to peck at my leg with its serrated beak. Without any messing about, I tore a leg off the tiny table and with this weapon began hammering at the most ferocious of the birds. And not content with a half-hearted stroke, I avenged myself by killing the goose:

They fled like the heavenward flight
Of Stympalian birds²⁶
From Hercules' powerful arts;
Like the Harpies, dripping with filth,
When Phineus' deceptive feasts dribbled poison;
The aether tremulous and afraid,
The heavenly kingdoms confused
At the strange wailing . . .

*

The rest had already snapped up the beans, which had rolled away and spread out over the whole floor; and now, deprived, I suppose, of their leader, they had returned to the temple.

Pleased with both my bag and my revenge, I throw the dead goose behind the bed and bathe the wound in my leg, which was not deep, with vinegar. Then, fearing a row, I made up my mind to leave. Collecting my clothes I began to make my way out of the cottage, but I had not crossed the threshold when I noticed Oenothra on her way with a potful of fire. I naturally retreated, threw off my clothes and stood in the doorway as though waiting for her impatiently.

She placed the fire in the hearth – it was in some dry reeds – and after putting a lot of sticks on top, she started to explain her delay. Her friend had not let her go without her getting through the ritual three drinks.

'Here,' she said, 'what have you done while I was away? Well, where are the beans?'

I thought I'd done something to be proud of, so I gave her the whole battle in detail, and to cheer her up I offered her the goose as compensation for the loss. When the crone saw it she raised such a loud shriek that you'd have thought the geese were back in the place again. Naturally confused, in fact thunderstruck, as though my action was

some strange crime, I asked her why she had flared up and why she was more sorry for the goose than for me.

137. She beat her hands together:

'You criminal,' she said, 'why go on talking? You've no idea of the great offence you've committed. You've killed Priapus' darling, the pet goose of all the ladies. Don't think it's a mere nothing you've done. If the authorities knew of this, you'd be crucified. You've polluted my house with bloodshed – the first time it's ever happened, and you've given any enemy who likes an opportunity to expel me from my post as priestess.'

*

'Please don't shout,' said I, 'I'll give you an ostrich in place of the goose.'

*

While I stood stupefied at all this, and she sat on the bed and wailed over the fate of the goose, Proselenus arrived with the provisions for the sacrifice. Seeing the dead goose, she asked how it happened and then began to cry copiously herself, and said she was deeply sorry for me – as though I'd killed my father, not a communal goose.

So, bored and tired of it all, I said:

'Tell me, can one pay compensation for sacrilege? . . . even if I insulted you, even if I'd committed a murder. Look, I'm putting down two gold pieces – you can buy gods and geese with this.'

When Oenothra saw them, she said:

'I apologize, young man. I'm worried for your sake. It's a sign of affection, not ill-will. We'll do our best to prevent anyone knowing about it. You just pray heaven forgives you for what you've done.'

With money you've a yacht with a following breeze;
With money you've got Lady Luck on her knees;
You could marry Danaë²⁷ with cash on the nail
And make her and her father believe the same tale.
If you're a poet or speaker, the crowd thinks you're great,
If you plead at the bar, Cato²⁸ sounds second-rate.
You can prove and disprove, be a lawyer of note,
Whose cases are vital for textbooks to quote.
Whatever you wish for, if you can disburse,
Will be there – you've a Jupiter locked in your purse.

She put a cup of wine under my hands and after rubbing my outstretched fingers clean with leeks and garlic, she threw some filberts into the wine, murmuring a prayer. She made various deductions from whether they came to the top or settled, but I didn't fail to notice that the empty nuts filled with air naturally stayed on the surface of the liquid, while the heavy, full nuts were carried to the bottom.

*

Cutting open the goose's breast, she extracted a very fat liver and foretold my future from it. And more, to get rid of every trace of the crime, she cut up the whole goose, spitted the pieces and prepared an elegant feast for a man who a little while ago, by her own account, was doomed . . .

Cups of strong wine passed quickly round as this went on.

*

138. Oenothea brought out a leather dildo: this she rubbed with oil and ground pepper and crushed nettle seed, and began inserting it gradually up my anus . . .

The vicious old woman then sprinkled my thighs with this liquid.

*

She mixed the juice of cress with some southern-wood, and after soaking my genitals in it, she took a green nettle-stalk and began whipping me steadily everywhere below the navel.

*

Although staggering with drink and desire, the old crones took the same route and followed in my tracks for several streets, shouting 'Stop thief!' But I got away, every one of my toes bleeding through my headlong rush.

*

'Chrysis, who detested your earlier position, intends to follow you in your present situation even at the risk of her life.'²⁹

*

'What did Ariadne or Leda³⁰ have to compare with her loveliness? What could Helen or Venus do against her? Paris himself, judge in the contest of goddesses, if he'd seen her with his roving eyes when making his comparison, he would have given up Helen *and* the goddesses for her. If I were allowed just to take a kiss, or embrace that divine and heavenly breast, perhaps my body would recover its strength and the parts that I'm positive are drugged by some witches' brew would revive. It's not her insults that make me reluctant. I overlook the whipping. I

was thrown out, but I regard that as a joke. Only let me back into her good graces . . .'

*

139. I tossed and turned in bed, groping continually, after some image of my beloved . . .

*

Others have been hounded by gods
And implacable fate, not I alone.³¹
Hercules hounded from Argos,
And propping heaven on his shoulders.
Impious Laomedon
And those two angry immortals:
He paid the price of his offences.
Pelias felt the weight of Juno.
Then there was Telephus –
He took up arms in his ignorance.
Even Ulysses went in fear of Neptune's power.
Now I too take my stand among these –
Over land and white Nereus' sea, I am hounded
By the mighty rage of Priapus of Hellespont.

*

I started by asking my dear Giton whether anyone had been asking for me.

'No one today,' he said, 'but yesterday quite an elegant lady came to the door and after a long conversation, when she wore me out with irrelevant chatter, she finally said you ought to be punished and you would suffer as a slave should if you took offence and persisted in your ill-feelings.'

*

I had not yet finished when Chrysis arrived and clasped me in a most unrestrained embrace, saying:

'I've got you in my arms just as I'd hoped. You are my only desire, my only pleasure in life. You will never put out the fire I feel unless you quench it in my blood.'

*

One of the new servants hurried up and swore that our master was furious with me because I'd been absent from my duties for over two days. I'd be well advised to prepare some suitable excuse, as it was highly unlikely his rage would calm down without someone getting the whip.

*

140. There was one highly respectable matron, Philomela by name, who had extorted a great many legacies while she had the advantages of her youth. By now she was an old woman and her bloom had gone, so she forced her son and daughter on childless old men and by means of these deputies managed to continue her profession. Naturally she came to Eumolpus and started by handing over her children to his wisdom and upright nature; to him alone could she entrust herself and her prayers. He was the only one on earth who could manage every day to instil sound principles into young people. In fact, she was leaving her children in Eumolpus' house so that they could listen to his talk . . . which was the only legacy that could be given to young people.

She was as good as her word. She left the very pretty daughter with her youthful brother in his room and pretended she was going off to the temple to say the appropriate prayers.

Eumolpus, who was such a sexual miser that he even regarded me as a boy, did not hesitate a moment to invite the girl to the rituals of the buttocks. But he had told everyone that he had gout and a weakness in the loins, and if he did not keep this pretence intact, he would be in danger of ruining the whole show. So to ensure that his deception was not discredited, he begged the girl to sit on top of the upright nature to which she had been entrusted, and ordered Corax to get under the bed he was lying in and, with his hands placed on the floor, to move his master with his own thighs. He carried out the order phlegmatically and the expertise of the girl responded with similar movements. When things were looking forward to the climax, Eumolpus called loudly to Corax to press on with the job. Placed in this way between his servant and his lady friend the old man looked as though he was playing on a swing. Eumolpus repeated this performance a few times amid howls of laughter, including his own.

And so I for my part, not to get out of the habit through lack of practice, approached the brother, as he admired his sister's tricks through the key-hole, and tried to see if he would accept my advances. The well-trained little fellow did not withdraw from my caresses, but divine hostility dogged me there too.

*

'There are mightier gods who have restored me to full health. Mercury, who leads souls away and leads them back,³² by his kindnesses has returned me what was cut off by the hand of vengeance. So you may

take it that I am more favoured than Protesilaus³³ or anyone like him in history.'

With this I lifted my tunic and showed all I had to Eumolpus. At first he was horrified, then to convince himself fully, he held in both hands the gifts of the gods.

*

'Socrates, the wisest of all in the opinion of the gods and men, used to boast that he had never looked inside a tavern and never trusted his eyesight at any assembly with a large crowd. There is nothing more profitable than a continuous dialogue with wisdom' . . .

'All of that is true,' I said, 'and no one should come to grief quicker than those who are after what belongs to others. How would a confidence man or a pickpocket survive, if he didn't drop little boxes or chinking purses into the crowd to hook his victims? Just as dumb animals are snared with food, so men can't be caught unless they are nibbling hopefully at something.'

*

141. 'The ship with your money and servants has not arrived from Africa as you promised. The legacy-hunters are already drained dry and are cutting down on their generosity. So if I'm not mistaken, fortune is beginning to have her regrets again.'

*

'All those who have legacies in my will, except for my freedmen, will receive what I have left them only on this condition – that they cut up my corpse and eat it in front of the people.'

*

'We know that among certain races the custom of the dead being eaten by their relations is still observed. So much so that sick people are often reproached for causing their flesh to deteriorate. I therefore call on my friends not to shrink from my demands, but eat my body in the same spirit as they damned my soul . . .'

The enormous reputation of his money blinded the eyes and hearts of the poor fools.

Gorgias was ready to carry out the terms . . .

*

'I have no worries about your stomach's balking. It will obey your command if you promise it a lot of luxuries as compensation for one hour's disgust. Just close your eyes and pretend you are eating a million sesterces, not human offal. Then for another thing, we'll find some

seasonings to change the taste. After all, no meat is pleasant by itself; it's artfully adulterated in some way and made acceptable to the reluctant stomach. And if you want the idea to be justified by examples too, there are the Saguntines,³⁴ who ate human flesh when they were besieged by Hannibal – and they weren't expecting a legacy. The Petelians did the same in the last stages of a famine and all they were after with this feast was to avoid dying of starvation. When Numantia was captured by Scipio, there were some mothers found carrying around at their breasts the half-eaten bodies of their own children.'

THE FRAGMENTS AND THE POEMS

PETRONIUS
THE SATYRICON
AND
SENECA
THE APOCOLOCYNTOSIS

Revised edition

TRANSLATED
WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES BY
J. P. SULLIVAN



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