

# THE SATYRICON



GAIUS PETRONIUS ARBITER

*A Translation into English by*

**A. S. KLINE**

**POETRY IN TRANSLATION**

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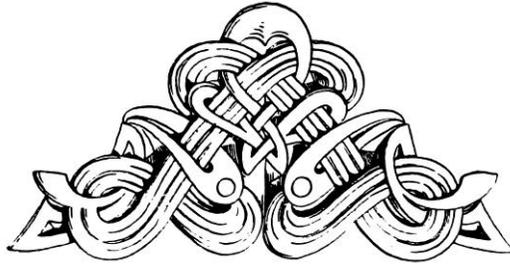
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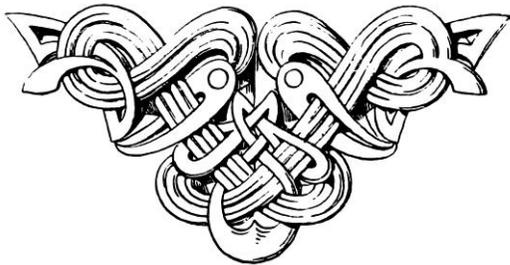
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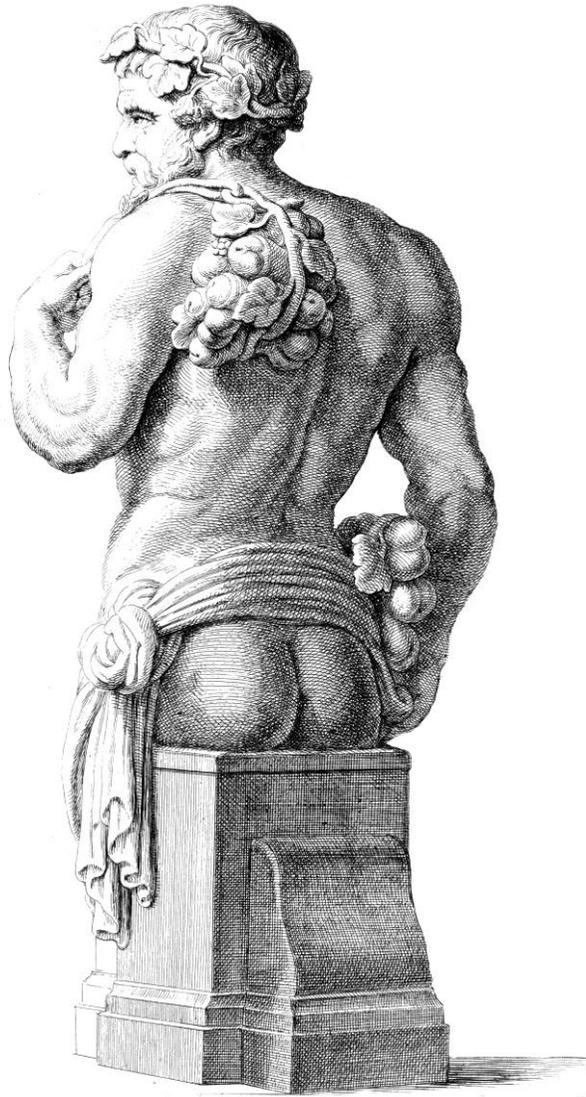
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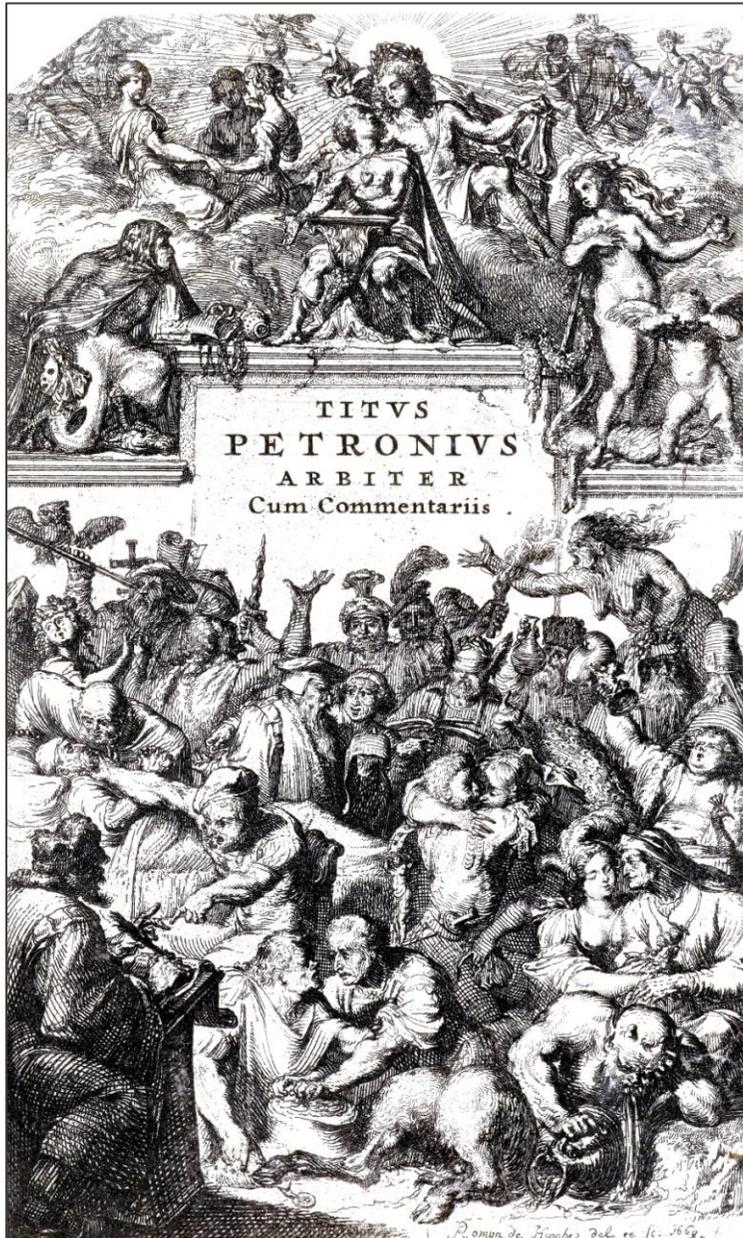


*“There is nothing more erroneous than a man’s foolish convictions,  
nor more foolish than sham severity.”*

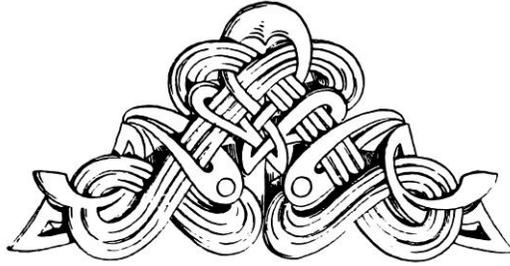
## ABOUT THIS WORK



The Satyricon is neither a Satyr play nor a satiric work, though it has flavours of both, but rather a Saturnalian medley, which pursues the misadventures of Encolpius, a runaway slave, amongst his friends and enemies. It mingles prose and verse, farce and fantasy, life and philosophy, in a delightful and amusing blend, to grant us an insight into Rome at the time of Claudius and Nero. The whole work, of which sadly only part is extant, can be seen as a celebration of the god Priapus, and to that extent has its obscene moments, though they are mild and good-natured in tone. The simplicity of Petronius' approach belies the sophistication of his parodies and the Satyricon would have been read and listened to with pleasure by the educated imperial circles of the nobility, as well as the literate middle-class. Many elements within it are seen again in later literature, and its influence can be felt especially in the picaresque works of later times, for example those of Rabelais, Fielding, Sterne, and in Byron's Don Juan, as well as in theatrical farce, while, in Trimalchio, Petronius creates one of the great comic characters of fiction.

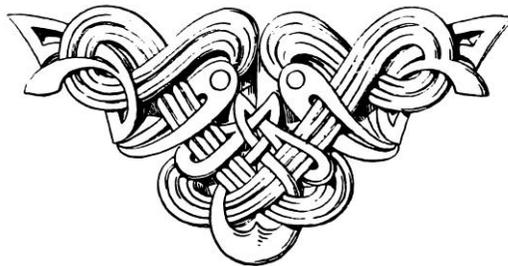


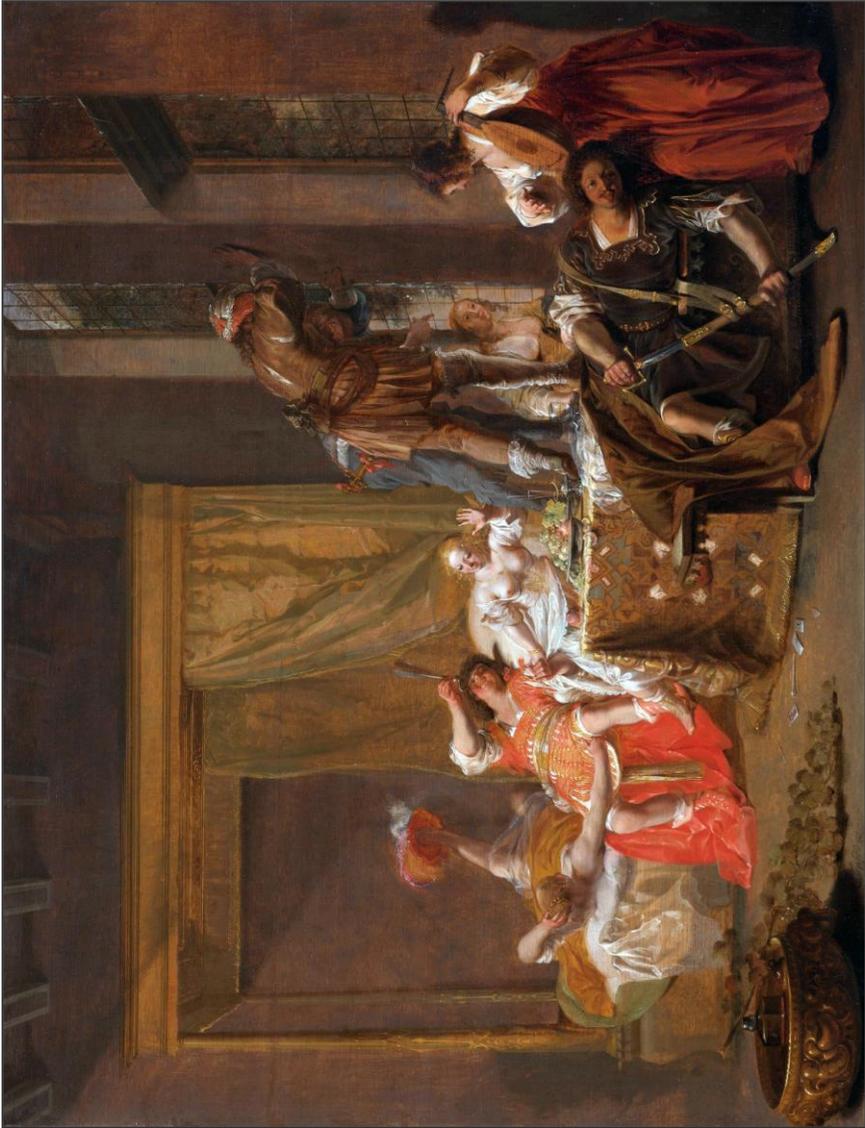
'Title print for the Satyricon'  
Romeyn de Hooghe, 1669 - The Rijksmuseum



## **PART I: ADVENTURES OF ENCOLPIUS AND ASCYLTO**

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*'Scene from the Wedding of Messalina and Gaius Silius'*  
Nicolaes Knüpfer, c. 1645 - c. 1655  
*The Rijksmuseum*

## 1-2: ENCOLPIUS, A GREEK FREEDMAN, RAILS AGAINST RHETORIC

...  These teachers of rhetoric, surely tormented by some other crowd of Furies, declaim: “I earned these scars fighting for people’s rights; I gave this eye for you; where’s an arm to help me to my children, now that my hamstrung legs can’t support me?”

Even this would be tolerable, if it smoothed a path to eloquence. Yet the sole result of this windy blather, these loud empty phrases, is to make their pupils, on reaching court, realise they’ve been transported to another planet. That’s why I think these schools of theirs make utter fools of our youngsters since they see and hear nothing of normal life there; it’s all about pirates chained on beaches, tyrants penning edicts commanding sons to behead their fathers, or oracles in time of plague demanding the blood of three or more virgins; yet in a mass of honeyed language, with every word and gesture scattering poppy-seed and sesame.

Whoever is fed on that, can no more be wise than those who spend their time in the kitchen can smell sweet. By your leave, I must tell you, you have been the ruin of true eloquence. Your empty, lightweight tone only serves to excite derision, and the content of your oratory withers and dies. The young were not confined to set speeches when Sophocles and Euripides found words worthy of their thoughts. No cloistered teacher had addled their wits, as yet, when Pindar and the Nine lyric poets were fearful of singing Homer’s verse.

No need to cite the poets in evidence: neither Plato nor Demosthenes, I find, received any training of this kind. Great, which is to say modest, oratory is never swollen and full of blemishes, but flows with a natural beauty. Your windy, shapeless loquacity is a recent import from Asia to Athens, the breath of which moved the minds of young men aspiring to greatness, like the influence exercised by some baleful star, and once the rule of eloquence was corrupted, it ceased and was dumb.

After that, who could achieve the heights Thucydides reached, or Hyperides' fame? Even poetry lost its healthy glow, but as if all was fed on the same food, failed to reach a ripe old age. Painting also met the same fate, once Egyptian audacity had found a short-cut to the fine arts.'

### **3-5. AGAMEMNON, A TEACHER OF RHETORIC, RESPONDS**

Agamemnon stopped me declaiming longer under the portico than he had sweated inside, by saying: 'Your speech has a rare flavour, young man, and, what is rarer still, you admire good sense, so I'll make no secret of my art. No wonder the teachers are guilty of such exhibitions, having to act as madmen among the mad. Unless they speak as their pupils wish, they'll be 'left to teach alone' as Cicero said. Like false sycophants chasing a dinner with the rich, their first concern is what will please their hearers; nor will they win what they seek unless they set snares for the listener: the master of eloquence, unless, like a fisherman, he baits his hook with such as he knows will bring the little fish swarming, must sit on a rock with no hope of a catch.

Then what? Parents should be criticised, who won't let their children profit from sterner discipline. Firstly, they sacrifice their young hopefuls, as all else, on the altar of ambition. Then if they are in haste for results, they thrust raw youths into the law courts, and eloquence, the highest of callings as they will confess, upon immature children.

If they would allow a slower pace, so studious lads were steeped in serious reading, their minds formed by wise precept, relentlessly digging out the right word with the pen, and listening carefully to what they wished to imitate, convinced that what pleases the young is rarely fine: then the grandeur of oratory would carry its full weight. As it is, these lads play about in college, and are ridiculed in the courts, and, what's worse, they won't confess the errors they learnt in youth when they're older.

But don't think me disapproving of a modest Lucilian effort, I'll say what I think in verse:

Whoever courts success in a serious art,  
applying his mind to seeking greatness,  
let him obey the strict rule of austerity:  
careless of the tyrant's lofty frown, not  
seeking to win dinners of the prodigal,  
nor drowning the flame of his intellect  
by drinking with the foolish, nor sitting  
in the theatre, bribed to clap at grimaces.  
But whether warlike Athena's Acropolis  
smiles on him, or the land of the Spartan  
farmer, or Naples, the home of the Sirens,  
let him give his youthful years to poetry,  
let his happy spirit drink at the Maeonian  
fount. Later, filled with Socratic wisdom,  
let him loose the rein, and brandish high  
the weapons of the mighty Demosthenes.  
Then let the band of Romans flow about

him, and free of the Greek tones, amend  
his previous taste. Meanwhile he should  
refrain from the courts, give his writing  
space, letting his strains sound secretly,  
in swift metre; then let him tell of feasts,  
and chant war in fierce verse, with high  
speech such as indomitable Cicero used.  
Set your mind to noble ends: so inspired,  
let the words pour out, a swelling flood,  
from a heart that the Pierian Muses love.’

## **6-8: SEEKING ASCYLLOS, ENCOLPIUS FINDS HIMSELF IN A BROTHEL**

While listening to him intently, I failed to notice Ascylltos had fled. But while I was pacing about in the heat of conversation, a great crowd of students entered the colonnade, apparently after quitting some teacher whose extemporary declamation had followed Agamemnon’s discourse. So while the youths were ridiculing his maxims, and decrying his whole style of speech, I took the opportunity to slip away and quickly set off to find Ascylltos.

However I couldn’t remember the right way, nor did I know the address of our lodgings. And so wherever I went I kept revisiting the same place, until, weary with walking and dripping with sweat, I asked an old woman selling fresh vegetables: ‘Do you happen to know where I’m staying, mother?’ She was delighted with such polite folly and replied: ‘How could I not?’ and rising, led the way. I thought her some kind of diviner...

When we had reached a dark corner, the charming old lady pushed back a patchwork curtain saying: ‘You must live here.’ While I was denying all knowledge of the place, I glimpsed naked prostitutes with price-tags, pacing around furtively. Slowly, in fact too late, I realised she’d led me to a whore-house. Cursing the old woman, I hid my face, and began running through the brothel to the other side, when at the very entrance Ascylos met me, I being tired-out and half-dead: perhaps the old woman had led him there too. Greeting him with a smile, I asked what he was doing in such a vile place. Wiping the sweat away with his hand, he said: ‘If you only knew what’s happened to me.’ ‘What now?’ I cried. On the verge of collapse, he answered: ‘I was wandering about, without finding wherever it was I’d left our lodgings, when a decent bloke approached, and kindly offered to show me. Then, by the most obscure digressions, he led me here, and began offering money for sex. A whore had relieved me of cash for a room, and he’d already grabbed me, so I’d have paid a price if I hadn’t been the stronger...’

## 9-II: A QUARREL WITH ASCYLLOS

Everyone there seemed high on aphrodisiacs...our united force defied the assailant...then, through a sort of murk, I spied Giton standing by the road in the dark, and launched myself towards the very place....while I was asking the boy if he’d found us a bite to eat, he sat on the bed wiping away a trickle of tears with his thumb. Perturbed by the lad’s appearance, I asked what was wrong. He was slow to talk, and unwilling, but once I’d showered him with threats and entreaties, he answered: ‘That friend or companion of yours raced into our lodgings not long ago, wanting to steal my modesty. While I shouted, he drew his blade and cried: ‘If you’re Lucretia, you’ve found your Tarquin!’

On hearing this I shook my fist in Ascylos’ face, exclaiming: ‘What have you got to say for yourself, playing the woman, you whore, your every breath unclean?’ Ascylos, feigning shock, soon made a braver showing, shouting more loudly still: ‘Silence, vile gladiator, expelled from the ring in

disgrace! Be quiet, midnight assassin, who even in better times, could never take on a proper woman, you to whom I was the same friend in the garden as the boy is in our lodgings!

‘You slipped away from Agamemnon’s speech,’ I said, ‘What should I have done, you idiot,’ he cried, ‘when I was dying of hunger? Go on listening to his chatter, all broken glass and interpretation of dreams? Goodness, you’re worse than me, praising a poet to cadge a meal.’ And our sordid quarrel evaporated in laughter, as we retired to bed for the rest...

His insult though re-entered my mind. ‘Ascyltos’, I said, ‘we’ll never agree. Let’s split what we have and see if we can’t defeat poverty by our own efforts. You have learning and so do I. I promise not to get in your way. If we don’t, we’ll be in conflict every day for a thousand reasons and set rumours going, about us, all over town.’ Ascyltos agreed, saying: ‘Since we’re engaged for supper like students today, let’s not waste the evening. Tomorrow I’ll look for fresh lodgings, as you wish, and a new boyfriend.’ ‘It’s hard work, waiting for what pleases,’ I answered...

This flat-out quarrel was prompted by lust; I’d long wanted to get rid of that irritating watchdog, and reinstate my old arrangement with Giton...afterwards I surveyed the town then returned to the little room, exacting kisses openly, hugging the lad in close embrace, and enjoying my dearest longings to the point of envy. Nor was all yet done, when Ascyltos crept furtively to the door, shot back the bolt by force, and found me at play with my friend. He filled the place with mockery and applause, and dragged away the cloak that covered me, crying: ‘What are you up to, most chaste of lovers? Are you a companion of the camp-bed?’ Not content with words alone, he pulled the strap from his bag and gave me a proper flogging, adding sarcastically: ‘You’ll not want to share this with the lad’...

## 12-15: THE CLOAK AND THE SHIRT

It was already dusk when we reached the market-square, where we saw a host of things for sale, of little value, though the evening shadows readily concealed their lack of merchantable quality. So, for our part, we brought along a cloak snatched in the street, and seized the opportunity to display the bottom hem in a corner of the market on the off-chance that its splendour might attract a purchaser. Soon, a rustic I knew by sight, appeared, with a girl, and began to examine it closely.

Ascyltos, in turn, contemplating the shirt over our rustic shopper's shoulder, was suddenly struck dumb with amazement. Nor could I regard him without some emotion, since it seemed to me he was the very man who had found our shirt in the solitary spot where we'd lost it. Plainly, it was him. But as Ascyltos was afraid to trust his eyes, lest he did something rash, he first closed in as if he were a buyer, took it from the man's shoulder and fingered it carefully. O marvellous stroke of luck! The rustic had as yet not laid curious hands on the seams, and was selling it, in disdain, as a beggar's cast-off.

Ascyltos, realising our little hoard was still intact, and seeing the contemptible nature of the seller, drew me aside from the crowd, saying: 'Do you see, my friend, that treasure I grumbled at losing has returned to us? That's the shirt, so it seems, filled as yet with our untouched gold. What to do then, how to assert our legal right?'

I was delighted, not only because I foresaw a profit, but because fate had relieved me of a most disagreeable suspicion. I opposed any circuitous methods, arguing for a straightforward civil process, such that if they refused to return others' property to the rightful owners, it could be enforced by the court. But Ascyltos feared the law, saying: 'No one here knows us, or would place any trust in what we say. I'd rather buy the shirt openly, even though it's really ours as we know, and recoup our treasure cheaply, rather than descend to the uncertainty of a lawsuit:

What use are laws, where only money rules  
and the plaintiff without it can never win?  
Even those with a Cynic's purse, these days,  
have been known to betray truth for money.  
So a lawsuit's no more than a public auction,  
with the noble jurors approving the purchase.'

But we had nothing in hand but a few coins intended for buying lupine beans. So lest our prize vanish in the meantime, we decided to discount the cloak and incur a small loss for a greater gain. We had just unrolled the goods, when a veiled woman, standing next to the rustic and gazing closely at the stains, grabbed the cloak in both hands, shouting: 'Thieves!' at the top of her voice. Angry with ourselves, lest all come to nothing, we began tugging at the shirt, which was filthy and torn, proclaiming, with equal force, that these folk had what belonged to us. But it proved an unequal argument, and the traders who flocked to the noise naturally mocked our madness, since one side laid claim to a valuable cloak, the other to a patchwork of rags not worth mending.

Ascylos cunningly quenched the laughter, calling for silence, saying: 'You see, everyone loves their own; if they'll give us our shirt they can have the cloak.' The rustic and the woman were pleased with the exchange, but the watch had been summoned and, wanting to profit from the situation, demanded the items be left with them, and the justice would investigate our complaint the next day. Nor was that all, for more was in question, since both parties were suspected of robbery. Now a custodian was needed, and one of the traders, a bald man with a lumpy forehead, who sometimes assisted the law, seized the cloak, saying he'd produce it tomorrow. It was obvious he merely wished to deposit it with a pair of thieves, never to be seen again, and that we, afraid of being charged, would fail to appear at the hearing.

Clearly our wish was the same, and fate came to the aid of both parties. The rustic was indignant at our demand that his rag should be shown in public, threw the shirt in Ascylos' face and, ending the quarrel, demanded the cloak, which had started the whole thing...

Recovering our treasure, as we hoped, we scurried to our lodgings and locked the door, mocking the stupidity of those who'd accused us wrongly, as well as the trader whose impressive cunning had returned us our money.

I never like to grab what I wish at once,  
nor does a ready victory delight me...

## 16-18: QUARTILLA

As we found supper ready, thanks to Giton, we were eating away, when there came an insolent knock at the door. When, turning pale, we asked who it was, a voice replied: 'Open, and you'll soon know.' While we were speaking, the door swung open of itself, and suddenly yielded our visitor an entrance. It was the veiled woman who, a while ago, had been standing beside the rustic. 'Did you think to evade me?' she cried. I am maid to that Quartilla whose devotions, in her secret sanctuary, you disturbed. She is here herself, at your lodgings, seeking a word with you. Don't worry, she won't reproach you or punish your mistake, rather she wonders how heaven brought such urbane youths to her quarter.' We still said nothing, remaining non-committal, Quartilla herself entered, with a little girl, sat on my bed, and cried for a long time.

Even then we said not a word, but sat in amazement awaiting the end of this ready show of grief. Thus, the designing shower of tears ceasing, she drew her cloak from her proud head, and wringing her hands till the joints cracked, asked: 'Where did you bold lads learn to rival the robbers of romance? Heavens, I pity you: none can look on forbidden things with impunity. Indeed our quarter is so full of divine presences you're more likely to meet a deity than a man.

## Part I

Don't imagine I've come here for revenge, being more concerned for your youth than for my injury; since I still believe it was your imprudence that made you commit that unforgiveable sin. I was so tormented that night, myself, shivering with such a dangerous chill, I even feared an attack of the tertian fever. Seeking a remedy in my dreams, I was commanded to find you, and lessen the force of my affliction by the acuteness you'd show.

But I'm not so worried about the remedy as the greater anxiety which burns in my heart, drawing me towards the inevitable end, that prompted to youthful indiscretion you might tell publicly what you saw in the shrine of Priapus, and reveal our god's deliberations to the mob. I therefore raise my uplifted palms towards your knees, and beg and pray you'll refrain from ridicule and mockery of our nocturnal worship, and exhibiting to all the mysteries, so long hidden, known to scarcely three creatures.'

She ended her request in a flood of tears, once more and, sobbing hard, buried her face and breasts in my bedclothes. I was awash with pity and fear combined, telling her to be of good cheer, and not worry about either matter: since no one would broadcast her devotions, and if the gods had shown her a cure for her tertian fever, we'd risk our lives to aid divine providence.

At this the woman grew more cheerful, kissing me over and over, and, having passed from tears to laughter, gently stroking the hair that fell past my ears, with her hand, said: 'I'll make a pact with you, and withdraw the accusation I've made. But if you'd not promised the cure I seek, a whole regiment were ready to right my wrongs tomorrow, and uphold my honour:

To be defied is vile, to make terms splendid;  
I take delight in following the path I choose.  
For even the wise will quarrel when despised,  
while the victor is the one who sheds no blood...'

## 19-21: THE ORDEAL

Suddenly, she clapped her hands and burst out laughing, so hard that we were terrified. On their side the maid, and the little girl who had entered with Quartilla, did the same. The whole room rang with laughter like a farce, while we, not understanding why their mood had changed so quickly, looked at one another and then the women...

‘I forbade any mortal from entering these lodgings today, so I might receive my cure at your hands without interruption.’ When Quartilla spoke these words, Ascylos was dumbfounded for a moment, while I grew colder than an Alpine winter and couldn’t utter a word. Yet the presence of my friends saved me from the worst fears. They were only a trio of mere women, who were surely too weak to attack us, even if they wanted to; on our side, if nothing else, we had the power of our sex. And our clothing was certainly more suited. Indeed I’d already paired us off, if it came to a fight, myself against Quartilla, Ascylos against her maid, and Giton the little girl...

But then our resolution yielded to terror, while certain death began to pass before our eyes. ‘If there’s anything worse in preparation, lady,’ I said, ‘be quick; we’ve done nothing so criminal we deserve to perish by torture.’ The maid, whose name was Psyche, was carefully spreading a blanket on the floor. She stirred my loins, now frozen by a thousand deaths. Ascylos had buried his head in his cloak, no doubt recalling how risky it is to pry into others’ secrets. Now the maid took two ribbons from her dress, tying our feet with one, our hands with the other...

Ascylos, the thread of our invention already failing, cried: ‘What, don’t I get a taste?’ Psyche was betrayed by my laughter, clapped her hands, and said: ‘Indeed, I poured it, young man...did you quaff all the medicine yourself?’ ‘Did he really?’ said Quartilla, ‘did Encolpius really drink all that was mingled there?’ Her sides shook with laughter. And even Giton finally had to laugh, at least when the little girl clasped his neck and showered innumerable kisses on his unresisting lips...

We wanted to shout aloud, in our misery, yet there was no help forthcoming, and when I tried to summon some honest citizen, Psyche stabbed my cheek with a hair-pin, while the girl threatened Ascylos with a sponge she'd soaked in the mixture...

Finally a sodomite arrived, in a myrtle-coloured wool garment tied with a belt...now forcing our buttocks apart, now fouling us with his vile slobbering, until Quartilla holding her whalebone rod in her hand, her dress girded high, ordered us wretches to be granted our discharge...We both took a solemn oath that her dreadful secret would die with us...

Several masseurs from the wrestling club arrived, and refreshed us by rubbing us properly with oil. Thus, one way or the other, our fatigue departed, we dressed again for dinner, and were led to the next-door room, where three places were set, and the rest of a luxurious dinner-service splendidly displayed. We were asked to sit, and after some wonderful tasters, swam in wine, Falernian no less. We followed with more courses, and were about to take a nap, when Quartilla cried: 'Really, you have it in mind to sleep, though you owe the spirit of Priapus a vigil?...

## **22-24: MIDNIGHT REVELS**

When Ascylos, exhausted by his misfortunes, fell into a doze, the maid, who'd been driven away unjustly, rubbed soot all over his face and painted his lips and neck while he was drowsing. I too was tired out, as I'd had only the briefest taste of sleep; all the servants, indoors and out, were also slumbering. Some lay scattered at the guests' feet, others leant on the walls, some rested in the doorway, their heads together: the oil in the lamps was spent, and they gave only a thin dying light.

Suddenly two Syrians arrived, intent on plundering the room, and, while quarrelling greedily over the silver, pulled at a jug and split it. The table, with all its silver plate, collapsed and a cup which chanced to fly high in the air struck the maid, who was drooped over a couch, on the head. She cried out at the blow, waking some of the drunken party, and revealing the thieves. The Syrians, who were there for the spoils, realising they'd been

seen, dropped side by side on a couch, in perfect harmony, and began to snore as if they'd long been slumbering there.

By now the butler had woken: he refilled the lamps, and the serving lads rubbed their eyes for a bit, then returned to their duties, as a girl cymbalist appeared and the clash of brass roused everybody. So the entertainment began again, as Quartilla called for wine, the cymbalist adding to the merriment...

A lewd dancer entered, an utterly shameless fellow, clearly worthy of the house he was in, who, flapping his hands at us, uttered these lines:

‘Quick, gather round me, now, you fat sodomites,  
stretch your legs, run about, let foot-soles meet  
and supple thighs, wanton fingers and agile bums,  
you softies, old men, trimmed by a Delian hand.’

His poetry done, he covered me with the vilest kisses, then climbing onto the bed forcefully smothered my protests. He worked me over for ages in vain. He sweated acacia-juice in streams from his forehead, which trickled down his wrinkled cheeks like rain running down a wall. No longer able to hide my tears, reduced to the last extremity, I cried: ‘What a nightcap you prescribed for me, Lady, and no mistake!’ She clapped her hands softly, saying: ‘O what a smart lad, a fount of native wit!’ What, didn’t you know, a sodomite’s called a ‘nightcap’. Then, so that my companion fared no better than I: ‘By that faith of yours, Lady,’ I cried, ‘does only Ascylytos get a rest on this couch?’ ‘Well,’ she said ‘let Ascylytos be granted a nightcap too!’

With that the rider changed horses, and turning to my companion, pounded at him with lips and buttocks. Giton stood there splitting his sides with laughter, all the while. Spying him, Quartilla, enquired with eager curiosity whose lad he was. When I told her he was my lover, she asked: ‘Why hasn’t he kissed me then?’ And summoning him to her, fell to kissing him. Soon her hand drifted to his lap, and feeling his innocent little offering, she cried: ‘This will do fine duty as a taster for our pleasures tomorrow; today I’ll not take a thing after my daily asses’ milk.’

## 25-26: NUPTIALS

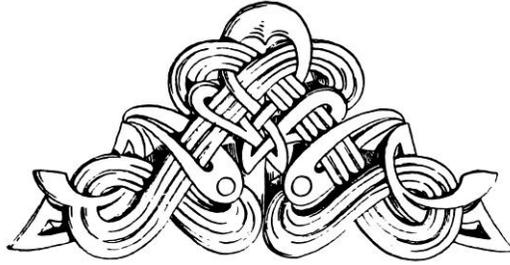
With that, Psyche, smiling, whispered something in her ear: ‘Yes, yes,’ Quartilla said, ‘a good suggestion. Why, since it’s a most fitting occasion, should our little Pannychis not lose her innocence?’ A pretty little lass was immediately produced, not above seven years old, the same child with whom Quartilla first entered our room. Though generally applauding and demanding such nuptials, I was dumbfounded, claiming that Giton, an extremely modest lad, was not up to such things, nor was the child old enough to receive the attentions a woman suffers. ‘Is she younger than I was, then, when I first experienced a man?’ Quartilla asked. ‘Juno curse me, if I can ever recall being a virgin. When I was little I was sullied by boys my age, and as I grew older applied myself to larger ones, till I reached maturity. Indeed I think the proverb comes from that, for, as they say: she can bear the bull that has borne the calf.’ So lest Giton sustained a worse injury in private, I rose for the nuptial celebration. Now Psyche placed a bridal veil over the girl’s face, the ‘nightcap’ led the way with a wedding-torch, and a long train of drunken women, applauding, hung the marriage chamber with sinful tapestries, while Quartilla, also inflamed by the other jesters’ lasciviousness, snatched Giton and drew him into the bedroom.

The lad certainly made no resistance, nor did the girl seem at all frightened by that gloomy word matrimony. When they lay there, the door locked, we sat down before the threshold, and Quartilla, first naughtily opening a crack in the wood, diligently applied a curious eye to watching their childish passions. She slowly dragged me by force to the same

diversion, and since our faces were close together as we looked, whenever we left off gazing, she often chanced to turn her lips towards me, and repeatedly stole a smacking kiss... then we threw ourselves on the bed and spent the rest of the night free of terror...

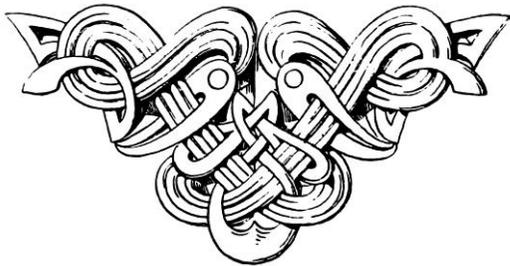
**END OF THE SATYRICON: PART I**





## PART II: TRIMALCHIO'S FEAST

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*'The Pleasures of the Seasons: Autumn'*  
Johann Georg Platzer, c. 1730  
The Minneapolis Institute of Art

## 27-28: TRIMALCHIO IS INTRODUCED



ready day three had arrived, with expectations of a free dinner, that is, but we were so full of holes escape seemed better than rest. We were therefore gloomily making plans to evade the coming storm, when one of Agamemnon's servants appeared, while we hesitated, and said: 'Don't you know whose house it's all happening at today? Trimalchio. Filthy rich, with a large clock and a trumpeter in uniform in the dining-room, to tell him how much of his life's gone by.'

We forgot our troubles, hurried into our clothes, and told Giton, who had been waiting on us very willingly the while, to follow us to the baths. We proceeded to wander around smartly dressed, or rather fool about and circulate, when we suddenly saw a bald old fellow, in a russet tunic playing at handball with some long-haired lads. It was not the boys who caught our attention, though they were worthy of it, but the old gentleman, in his sandals, playing with a green ball. He refused to pick it up if it touched the ground, instead a slave stood near with a bagful, supplying the players.

We noted several novelties. Two eunuchs stood at opposite sides of the circle, one holding a silver chamber-pot, the other counting the balls, not as they flew from hand to hand in the game but as they were dropped. While we were gazing in amazement, Menelaus (Agamemnon's assistant tutor) ran up to us, saying: 'You can rest your elbows at his house, and what you are watching's a prelude to dinner.' And Menelaus had just ceased speaking when Trimalchio snapped his fingers, the signal for the eunuch with the chamber-pot to approach him as he played and hold it out. Trimalchio relieved his bladder, called for a basin to wash his hands, then wiped them on the lad's head...

It would take too long to give the details. We all went to the baths and, sweating with the heat, in a trice went on to the cold bath. Trimalchio, anointed with unguents, was then rubbed down, not with towels but blankets of finest wool. Three masseurs were drinking Falernian wine nearby and, in quarrelling, a good deal was spilt, Trimalchio commenting that they were drinking his health. He was then bundled up in a woollen coat of scarlet hue, and placed in a litter. Four runners with all the trappings went in front, and a hand-cart in which his favourite rode, a poor little wrinkled lad, uglier than his master, Trimalchio. As he was borne away, a musician with a tiny pair of pipes approached and played throughout the trip, as if he were whispering secrets in his ear.

We followed, already lost in wonder, and arrived, with Agamemnon, at the door, on whose lintel was a sign: 'No servant to leave the house, except at his master's bidding, the penalty one hundred lashes'. In the entrance stood a porter dressed in green, with a cherry-coloured belt, shelling peas into a silver dish, while over the doorway hung a gilded cage, in which a magpie perched, welcoming visitors.

## **29-30: TRIMALCHIO'S HOUSE**

While I was marvelling at all this, I almost broke a leg falling backwards, for on the left as you entered, not far from the porter's room, a large dog on a chain was depicted on the wall, and over him in block capitals was written: 'CAVE CANEM'. My friends mocked me, but I plucked up courage and inspected the whole wall.

There was a painting of a slave-market, with the people's names, and Trimalchio was pictured holding the caduceus, Mercury's wand, while Minerva was holding his hand and leading him into Rome. Then the artist had painstakingly rendered his whole career with titles, showing exactly how he had learnt to do the accounts, and become in the end a treasurer. At the point, in fact, where the portico wall gave out, Mercury had him by the chin and was raising him to his seat in the tribunal. Nearby stood Fortune with a horn of plenty, and the three Fates spinning a golden thread.

Next I spotted a group of runners, practising with a trainer. And then, I saw a big cupboard, a shrine, in which were silver statues of the Lares, and a marble figure of Venus, and a golden box, of no small size, in which I was told Trimalchio's first beard was stored...So I asked the house manager what pictures they had in the hall. 'The Iliad, and the Odyssey,' he said, 'and the gladiator show that Laenas gave.' I was unable to take it all in at once...

Now we made our way to the dining room, in which the steward sat, doing the accounts. What astonished me above all was seeing rods and axes fixed to the dining-room doorposts, one of the ends finished with a kind of bronze ship's beak, on which was inscribed: 'Presented to Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, priest of Augustus, by Cinnamus the steward.' Beneath this inscription, a double-lamp hung from the ceiling, and two calendars were fixed on either doorpost, one, if I remember rightly, inscribed as follows: 'Our Gaius dines out on the 30th December, and New Year's Eve' the other depicting the moon's course, and images of the sun and the six planets, with lucky and unlucky days distinguished by different markers.

Sated with these delights, we were about to enter the dining-room, when a slave, entrusted with the duty, cried: 'Right foot first.' We were anxious of course, for a moment, lest any of us broke the rule crossing the threshold. Moreover, just as we were all stepping out with the right foot together, a slave, stripped for a flogging, fell at our feet and begged us to save him from punishment. No great crime had put him so at risk, the steward's clothes had merely been stolen from him at the baths, and they were scarcely worth a few silver coins.

We drew back our right feet, and asked the steward, who sat in the hall counting the gold, to pardon the slave. He raised his head, haughtily, and said: 'It's not the loss I mind so much as the rascal's negligence. He lost the dinner clothes one of my clients gave me on my birthday, Tyrian dye of course, but they had been through the wash once already. What of it? I grant you the request.'

### 31-33: THE FEAST COMMENCES

We felt obliged at his great generosity, and once we were in the dining-room, the slave on whose behalf we had pleaded scurried over to us and to our astonishment rained kisses on us, thanking us for our kindness. 'In a word,' he said, 'you'll soon know who owes you thanks, for the master's wine is in this servant's gift.'...

We sat down at last, and lads from Alexandria poured snow-cooled water over our hands. Others followed, knelt in front of us, and pared our nails with great care. Nor were they silent during this unpleasant task, but sang as they worked. I wanted to discover if the whole household were singers, so I asked for a drink. An eager slave repeated my request in as shrill a singing voice as I my own, as they all did if asked for anything...it was more like a pantomime chorus than a gentleman's dining room.

Still, some very fine appetisers now arrived, since all were seated except Trimalchio, for whom the first place was saved, as is the latest fashion. An ass in Corinthian bronze stood at the centre of the tray of titbits, its panniers filled with olives, white on one side, black on the other. Two dishes flanked the ass, on whose edges Trimalchio's name was inscribed, with their weight in silver. There were even dormice rolled in poppy-seeds and honey, supported on little bridges soldered to the plate. There were hot sausages set on a silver grill, and beneath it plums and pomegranate seeds.

While we enjoyed these luxuries, Trimalchio himself was carried in, to the sound of music, propped on the minutest of pillows, with laughter escaping the unwary. His closely shaven head topped a scarlet cloak, yet round the heavy cloth at his neck he had tied a napkin with wide purple stripes, hung with fringes. On the little finger of his left hand he wore a large gilded ring, but on the top joint of the ring-finger, next to it, a smaller one that seemed to me all gold, but was really iron soldered with little iron stars. And lest his wealth was insufficiently displayed, a golden bracelet adorned his bare right arm, and an ivory bangle with a metal clasp.

Picking his teeth with a silver quill, he spoke. ‘Friends, it was not convenient for me to join the banquet yet, but not wishing to keep you waiting by staying away much longer, I relinquished my own pleasure. Yet permit me to finish the game.’ A lad followed with a terebinth wood table, and crystal dice; and I noticed the most delightful thing of all, instead of black counters and white gold and silver coins were used.

Then, while Trimalchio passed all sorts of remarks, as he played on, we being occupied still by the appetisers, a tray was brought with a basket, in which a wooden hen was spreading its wings as they do when laying. Two servants approached, as loud music played, and hunted about in the straw. from which peahens’ eggs were extracted and handed to the guests. Trimalchio turned his face towards it, saying: ‘Friends, I ordered peahens’ eggs to be placed beneath a common hen, though upon my oath I fear they are addled now; yet we’ll see if they’re still fresh enough to sip at.’

We seized our spoons, not less than half a pound in weight, and cracked the eggs which were made of creamy grain. I was almost about to throw away my portion, thinking a peachick had already formed, when I heard a veteran diner say: ‘This is bound to hold something good,’ and poking my finger through the grain I found a most juicy ortolan rolled up in spiced egg-yolk.

### **34-36: EXOTIC DISHES AND FINE WINE**

Trimalchio, having finished his game, asked for all the same dishes, and in a loud voice was inviting any of us who wished to partake of a second glass of honeyed-wine, when suddenly a change in the music gave the signal for a troop of singing servants to sweep away the starters. A dish happened to fall, in the rush, and a lad picked it up from the floor. Trimalchio noticed this, and ordered the boy to be boxed on the ear, and to throw the dish to the floor again. A servant then arrived who began sweeping the remnants away with a broom, the silver included.

Then a pair of long-haired Ethiopians entered, with little wineskins, like those who scatter sand in the amphitheatre, gave us wine to wash our hands, no one offering water. When we complimented our host on his fastidiousness, he replied: 'Mars loves a level field of action, so I gave orders that all should be assigned their own table. That way, these most sweaty servants will avoid rendering us so very hot in passing.'

Immediately some two-handled glass jars coated with gypsum were brought, labels attached to their necks with this inscription: 'Falernian of Opimius' vintage, one hundred years old'. As we examined the labels, Trimalchio clapped his hands, crying: 'Alas, thus wine lives longer than poor mortals. So let's make merry. Wine is life. I'll answer for it being the true Opimian. Yesterday I produced some not half so fine, for a much finer set of guests.'

As we drank, and admired every luxurious detail, a slave brought in a silver skeleton, so fashioned that its flexible joints and vertebrae could be bent in every direction. He threw it onto the table once or twice so that the moveable sections expressed various attitudes, Trimalchio adding:

'Alas, poor wretches we are; all that is mortal's naught.

Thus are we all, when the world of shadows claims us.

So let's live, while we're yet granted our good health.'

While we applauded, a dish appeared, not as ample as was expected; yet its novelty drew every eye. The platter was round, with the twelve Zodiacal signs set in a circle, and on each the server had set food that was appropriate to the sign: over Aries, ram's-head chickpeas; over Taurus a slice of beef; over Gemini, kidneys and testicles; over the Crab only a chaplet of leaves; over Leo an African fig; over Virgo a young sow's womb; over Libra a pair of scales with a pastry in one pan, a cake in the other; over Scorpio a scorpion-fish, over Sagittarius a sea-bream; over Capricorn a lobster; over Aquarius a goose; over Pisces a pair of mullets. In the centre a piece of cut turf, with its wild herbs, supported a honeycomb. An Egyptian boy took the bread around in a silver baking-pan...

And Trimalchio himself, tortured a tune, in his vile singing voice, from the musical comedy 'Asafoetida'. We approached the disappointing spread even more gloomily, but Trimalchio cried: 'Let's eat: here's the meat of our banquet.' As he spoke, four dancers, in time to the music, waltzed in and removed the whole lid of the dish. Then, in the depths, were revealed, plump chickens and sow's bellies, with a hare, in the midst, adorned with wings to resemble Pegasus. We noted four figures of Marsyas, stationed at the dish's corners, from whose bagpipes a spiced sauce ran over various fish which swam about in a sort of tidal channel. We all joined in the applause, begun by the servants, and laughingly attacked the delicacies.

Trimalchio, no less pleased with the trick he had played on us, cried: 'Carver!' A server appeared and, with flourishes in time to the music, cut and sliced the food, such that he resembled a chariot-fighter wielding his weapon to the sound of an organ. Trimalchio kept up an undiminished cry of: 'Carver, Carver.' I suspected this oft-repeated word appertained to some kind of joke, and was not ashamed to ask my next-door neighbour this very question. He, who had seen this kind of performance often, merely replied: 'You see the fellow carving the meat: well his name is Carver. So whenever Trimalchio says "Carver", he uses the word to summon up both the man and the function.'

### **37-38: ENCOLPIUS ASKS HIS NEIGHBOUR ABOUT TRIMALCHIO**

Unable to eat another thing, and turning to my neighbour to learn the most I could, I began to gather the most far-fetched tales. I enquired who the woman was who was scurrying hither and thither. ‘That’s Trimalchio’s wife,’ he said, ‘named Fortunata, who counts out money by the cart-load. And not so long ago, what was she? Well, pardon me, but you wouldn’t have accepted a piece of bread from her hand. Now, without a why or a wherefore, she’s been raised to the skies and become Trimalchio’s all in all. In short, if she tells him at high noon that it’s night, he believes it so.

He’s so rich, indeed, he’s no idea what he has; but this she-wolf manages everything, more than you might suspect. She’s sober, temperate, prudent, but yet with a nasty tongue, a magpie on the couch. Whom she likes she likes, whom she doesn’t, she doesn’t.

For his part, Trimalchio has land wherever a falcon flies, he’s wealthiest of the wealthy. There’s more silver-plate in his porter’s room than others possess in total. And oh, oh, his servants, goodness me, I don’t believe one in ten even knows who his master is. In short, he could knock any of these yes-men into a cocked hat. And don’t think he purchases anything; everything’s home grown: wool, citrus fruit, pepper, hen’s milk for the asking. In fact, because his wool was not fine enough quality, he bought rams from Taranto, and mated them with his flock. To produce Attic honey on his estate he ordered bees from Athens; incidentally native bees are improved by the Greek ones. And in the last few days, behold, he sends for mushroom spawn from India. He hasn’t a mule not born of a wild ass.

You see all these cushions: there isn’t one whose stuffing isn’t scarlet or purple. Such is the felicity of his mind. Moreover, beware of disparaging his fellow-freedmen. They’re a tasty lot. That one you see reclining at the end of the bottom couch; nowadays he’s worth eight hundred thousand. He rose from nothing. Not long ago he was carrying logs on his back. But, so

they say – I don't know but I've heard – he snatched the freedman's hat from a gnome, and found treasure. I envy none if heaven grants them a gift. He's still showing the slap his master gave him as a mark of his freedom, but thinks none the worse of himself. So he's put up a notice beside his hutch: 'This garret to let from the first of July; the owner, Gaius Pompeius Diogenes, has bought himself a house.'

That fellow too on a freedman's couch, how pleased he is with himself. I don't criticise. He's seen his million, but he's badly shaken, I doubt there's a hair on his head that's mortgage-free, but it's not his fault, by heavens; there's no finer man alive; yet it's wretched freedmen who've taken it all for themselves. Indeed, you know: a fellow's pot goes off the boil, and when things start to slide, his friends desert him. What a fine business he had, and see him now. He ran a chain of funeral parlours. He used to dine like a prince. Stuffed boar's head boiled in a cloth, pastry-work; chefs and confectioners galore. More wine was spilt on the floor than many a man has in his cellar. He was a phenomenon, not a mortal. When his business was failing, fearful his creditors might think he was nearly bankrupt, he advertised a sale under this banner: 'Gaius Julius Proculus will auction a few things superfluous to his needs.'

### **39: TRIMALCHIO EXPLAINS THE ZODIAC**

Trimalchio interrupted these charming tales; for the dishes had now been removed, and the happy company began to address the wine, amid general conversation. Reclining, therefore, on his couch, Trimalchio said: 'You should let the wine flow pleasantly. Fish should swim. I ask you, did you really think I would rest content with the food you saw on the lid of that dish? "Is this what Ulysses is known for?" One must not forget the claims of literature, even at dinner. May the bones of my former patron rest in peace, he who wanted me to be a man amongst men.'

For nothing yields me anything novel, as that last dish showed in practice. The heavens, which the twelve gods inhabit, wheel round through as many signs, and in a trice Aries the Ram appears. Therefore whoever is

born under that sign has many flocks and much wool, a hard head too, an impudent front and sharp horns. Many rhetoricians and head-butters are born under this sign.' We applauded the elegance of his astrology; so he proceeded: 'Then Taurus the Bull fills the heavens. Thus those who lash out with their heels are born, and ploughmen, and those who grow their food themselves. Under Gemini the Twins, pairs of chariot-horses and oxen and testicles are formed, and people who sit on both sides of the fence. Under Cancer the Crab, I was born. So I have many a leg to stand on, and possess much by land and sea, for either one suits the crab. And that was why I placed no food on the sign of the Crab just now, lest it weighed on my birth-sign.

Under Leo the Lion, heavy eaters and powerful men are born; under Virgo the Virgin, women are born, and runaway slaves (whose flight is only halted by a Vestal) and those in fetters; under Libra the Scales, butchers, perfumers, and anyone who weighs things; under Scorpio, the Scorpion, poisoners and assassins; under Sagittarius the Archer, the squinters who eye the greens while hitting on the bacon; under Capricorn the Goat, those poor wretches whose troubles give birth to horns on the brow; under Aquarius the Water-Bearer, innkeepers and those with hydrocephalus; under Pisces the Fishes, the fish-buyers and gaping-mouthed orators. So the world turns like a millstone, and always works some evil, as men die or are born. You saw the piece of turf in the midst of the dish, and on the turf a honeycomb, I do nothing without cause. Mother Earth is in the centre, rounded like an egg, and all goodness within her, like a honeycomb.'

## **40-41: THE BOAR**

'Wisdom!' we all cried, and raising our arms aloft we swore that Hipparchus and Aratus, the astronomers, were not to be compared with him. Then the servants entered and spread coverlets over the couches, on which hunting-nets were depicted, men with spears lying in wait, and all the apparatus of the chase. We were still wondering what to expect when a mighty shout erupted outside the dining-room, and behold, Spartan hounds, that swarmed around the table.

After them followed a huge tray, on which lay a boar of the largest size, wearing a freedman's cap, with two little palm-twig baskets hanging from the tusks, one with nut-shaped dates the other with Theban. Round the tray lay suckling pigs, made of spice cake, as if at the teat, to signify the presence of the sow. And these were gifts for the guests to take away. Carver who had sliced the fowls did not arrive to slice the boar, but rather a large bearded fellow with bands around his legs, and an ornate damask hunting-cloak, who drew a knife and plunged it vehemently into the boar's flank, a number of fieldfares flying out, at the blow. Fowlers were ready with limed reeds, as they fluttered round the room, and caught them in an instant.

Trimalchio now commanded that each of us be served a portion, adding: 'Now see what fine acorns this boar has been living on in the woods.' Immediately the boys came and took down the little baskets, which hung from its tusks, and distributed the nut-shaped dates and the Theban to the guests.

Meanwhile, finding a quiet corner, I was torn by many a speculation as to why the boar had entered wearing a freedman's cap. After exhausting every line of thought, I hardened myself to ask my previous informant about what was troubling me. 'Your humble servant can explain that, too,' he said, 'there's no enigma, the thing is plain. When this boar appeared yesterday, to crown the feast, the guests let him go, so today he returns to the feast as a freedman.' I cursed my stupidity, and questioned him no further, lest I seemed never to have dined with intelligent folk.

While we were speaking, a handsome lad, with vine-leaves and ivy in his hair, brought us grapes in a little basket, revealing Bacchus now as Bromius the Roarer, now as Lyaeus, the Deliverer, now as Euhius, the Ecstatic, and rendering his master's verses in the most shrill of voices. at the sound of which Trimalchio turned round and said: 'Dionysus, be free.' The lad took the freedman's cap from the boar and set it on his own head. Then Trimalchio spoke again: 'I'm sure you won't deny I have Liber for a father.' We praised Trimalchio's saying, kissing the lad for sure, as he circulated.

## **42-43: THE GUESTS CONVERSE: DAMA, SELEUCUS, PHILEROS**

After this course Trimalchio rose to use the chamber pot. Liberated from the tyrant, we began to invite conversation among the guests. Dama began first while calling for the wine-bowl: ‘The day is nothing. Night is here before you’ve turned round. So there’s nothing to beat going straight from bed to dinner. But it was precious cold. The hot bath scarcely warmed me. Still, a hot drink is as good as thick clothing. I’ve quaffed some liquor, and I must surely be drunk. The wine’s gone to my head.’

Seleucus took up the tale, saying: ‘I don’t wash every day; a bather’s a mere launderer, water possesses teeth, and our heart daily liquefies. But once I’ve swallowed some mugs of honey-wine, I tell the cold to go chase its tail. Nor indeed could I wash: I attended a funeral today. A fine fellow, the excellent Chrysanthus, has given up the ghost. Now, but now, I spoke to him. I seem to speak to him yet. Alas, alas how we bags of wind wander about. We are less than flies, yet they have their virtues, we’re no more than bubbles. And what if he’d not fasted? No water touched his lips for five days, not a morsel of bread. Nevertheless he joined the great majority. The doctors did for him. no it was rather his sad fate; a doctor is no more than a means of consoling us. Yet he went out in style, on his bier as in life, with a fine pall. The mourning was excellent – he’d freed a few slaves – though his wife’s tears were scanty. What if he didn’t treat her well! Oh, women taken together are a rapacious tribe. No one should ever do anyone a kindness; it’s the same as throwing it down a well. Yet good old love nips at us like a crab.’

He was a bore, and Phileros proclaimed: ‘Let’s remember the living. He had what he deserved: he lived decently and died decently. What had he to complain about? He came from nothing, and was relentless in picking out every little coin from the dung-heap. So whatever he touched turned to gold. Goodness me, I’d imagine he’s left a clear hundred thousand, and all in cash. Still, I must speak the truth, having eaten hounds-tongue: he ranted,

was mouthy, more discordance than man. His brother was a fine fellow, a real friend to his friends, open-handed, and kept a good table. To begin with he caught a cold, but his first grape crop fixed the problem, he sold that vintage for whatever he asked. And what really picked him up was an inheritance, out of which he squeezed more than he was left.

But the fool has left the family estate to who knows what son of the soil, out of irritation with his brother. He travels far who abandons his own. And he had some long-eared slaves who led him into trouble. A man who's too credulous will never do well, especially a man of business. Still he enjoyed himself as long as he lived... Fortune favours the man who receives the gift, and not the man for whom it was intended. And he was Fortune's child, lead turned to gold in his hands. Life's fine when everything comes easily. And how many years do you think he carried on his shoulders? Seventy and more. But he was tough, bore his age well, hair black as a raven's wing. I've known the man time out of mind, and he was still lusty. By heavens, at home I doubt he even left the dog alone. No, he was still keeping an eye on the sacred chickens, a man of every talent. I don't blame him. That was all he could take with him.'

## **44-46: THE GUESTS CONVERSE: GANYMEDE, ECHION**

So much for Phileros, now Ganymede interrupted: 'You talk about nothing that appertains to heaven or earth, meanwhile none of you cares about the price of corn. By heavens, I couldn't find a mouthful of bread today. How this drought persists. There's been a dearth for a year now. Curse the magistrates, all in league with the bakers, its: 'I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine.' So the little people suffer; while their betters are having a feast. I wish there were still the lion-hearts here I found when I first arrived from Asia. Those were the days. They treated these bandits hiding behind their masks alike, and put the fear of Jove himself into them.

## Part II

I remember Safinius: a peppery fellow, lived by the old arch, when I was a boy. he used to scorch the earth wherever he trod. But straight, sound, a friend to his friends, you wouldn't be afraid to play odds or evens with him in the dark. He'd give every one of them in the Senate grey hairs, never using roundabout phrases, always direct. When he was pleading in court, his voice swelled like a trumpet-note. No sweating and spluttering, I imagine he had a touch of the Asiatic style.

And how pleasantly he'd greet you, calling everyone by name, as if he was one of us. At that time corn was dirt cheap. For a bit of brass you could buy more bread than you and your friend could eat. Now you'd get less than the eye of an ox. Alas, alas, it's worse by the day. This town grows backwards like a calf's tail. Why put up with some magistrate not worth three little figs, who cares more about putting cash in his purse than keeping us alive? He sits happily at home, and pockets more in a day than many a man's whole worth. I know how he came by his thousands in gold. If we had the guts, he wouldn't be so pleased with himself. Now people are lions at home, and foxes outside.

I'm already reduced to eating rags, and if corn stays this price I'll have to sell my hovel. What future have we, if neither gods nor men take pity on this place? As I hope to have joy of my children, these things, I think, must come from above. No one believes in the gods, no one fasts, no one cares a fig for religion, they all shut their eyes and reckon up their worth. In the old days women put on their robes and went barefoot up the hill, their hair hanging loose, and with pure minds prayed to Jove for rain. Then it fell, immediately, by the bucketful: as if all at once or never: and they all came home as wet as drowned rats. As it is the gods come dry-shod to us, since we are so irreligious. Our fields are baked? –

'Pray for better then, cried Echion', the second-hand clothes dealer. "If it isn't one thing, it's another" as the rustic said when he lost his mottled pig. If it doesn't happen today, it will tomorrow: so we plod through life. By goodness, I couldn't name a better country, if only it had men in it. But put up with the times, you're not alone. We mustn't be particular, there's one sky above all.

Anywhere else, and you'd say the streets were paved with gold. Behold, a fine three-day festival is upon us; not the usual gladiators but most of them freedmen. And our Titus is big-hearted, and hot-headed: it will be something worth, in any case. He's a countryman of mine, and knows no half-measures. He'll give you the best blades, no running away, but butchery in the middle, where the audience can see. And he's got the wherewithal; he inherited thirty million when his father sadly departed this life. If he spends four hundred thousand, he'll scarcely feel it, while his name will live forever.

He's gathered some madmen already and a female chariot-fighter and Glycos' steward who was being entertained by Glycos' wife. You'll see the crowd take sides, jealous husbands versus crazed lovers. A worthless fellow like Glycos throws his steward to the wild beasts. He simply gives himself away. What crime does a servant commit, who's forced to it? That whore of a wife of his is more deserving of being tossed by a bull. But the man who can't beat his ass, beats the saddle.

What made Glycos think any daughter of Hermogenes would come to a good end? He was a man who could clip a hawk's talons on the wing; vipers don't breed ropes. Glyco? Glyco has given up one of his own; he'll carry the stigma as long as he lives, and nothing but death will erase it. But every man has his faults.

Nevertheless, I scent what a feast Mammaea will deliver, two bits of silver for me and mine. If he does, he'll leave Norbanus completely in the shade. You know he'll beat him hands down. And then what good has Norbanus ever done us? He produced some worthless decrepit gladiators, who'd have fallen flat if you breathed on them. I've seen better wild-beast fighters. He shed the blood of some horsemen made of wax, you'd have thought them dunghill cocks; one a broken-down old mule, the other bandy-legged, a third, for his part dead or as good as dead, who was hamstrung. There was one fellow, a Thracian, with some wind, but even he fought by rote. In short, they were all flogged afterwards. How that vast crowd treated them: "Lay it on" they cried; plainly the men were mere runaway slaves. "Still I gave you some entertainment," he said. Yes, and I applaud you. Reckon it up, and I give you more than I receive. One hand washes the other.

You look, Agamemnon as though you were trying to say: “Why’s this irritating fellow meandering on?” because you, who can really talk, aren’t saying a word. You’re not one of our lot, and so you scorn our speech. We know you’re a fool for learning. So what? Can’t I tempt you to come to my place sometime and see my little hovel? We’ll find something to eat, a chicken, some eggs: it would be pleasant, though the weather has ruined everything this year we’ll find something to content us.

And my little lad is already becoming a disciple of yours. Already, he can name the four main parts of speech; if he lives you’ll have a little servant at your side. Whenever he has the time, he never raises his head from his writing-slate. He’s clever, and of good fibre, even if he is mad about birdlife. I did away with three of his goldfinches recently, and said a weasel had eaten them. But he’s found some other hobbies, and paints with pleasure. He’s got his teeth into Greek now, and his grasp of Latin is beginning to improve, even though his master is full of himself and won’t stick to one thing consistently. The lad comes to his writing, all the same, but doesn’t want to work at it.

I’ve another lad, who is no scholar but has an enquiring mind, who can teach you more than he knows himself. He usually comes home for the holidays, and is content with whatever you give him. I’ve bought the boy some law books now, because I want him to have a taste of legal things in order to manage household affairs. You can make a living from such matters. He’s been spoiled enough by literature. But if he’ll give it up, I’m set on him learning a profession, as a barber, or an auctioneer, or at least a lawyer, something only death can deprive him of. So I tell him every day: ‘Believe me, Primigenus, whatever you learn is for your own good. Look at Philero, the advocate: if he hadn’t acquired knowledge, he wouldn’t be keeping famine from the door today. Not long ago he was carrying goods around on his back to sell, and now he even competes with Norbanus. Learning is a treasure, and professional knowledge is never wasted.’

## **47-48: THE DINNER CONTINUES: TRIMALCHIO AND AGAMEMNON**

This was the sparkling conversation when Trimalchio entered, mopping his brow and wiping his hands with perfumed water, and after the briefest of pauses interrupted with: ‘Pardon me, friends, my stomach’s not agreed with me for many a day now. The doctors can’t find out why. Yet pomegranate-rind benefits me, and pine-bark in vinegar. Still, I hope it will behave itself now with its former restraint, else you’d think from the rumblings my stomach makes, there was a bull inside. So if any of you wish to go about your business, there’s no need to be shy about it. None of us was born quite solid. I can’t imagine any torment so great as holding oneself in. It’s the one thing Jove can’t forbid. You’re laughing, Fortunata, you who are always keeping me awake at night? Yet I don’t forbid anyone from doing what pleases him in the dining-room, and the doctors forbid retention. Or if it’s more serious, everything is ready outside: water, chamber-pots, and the other little trifles. Believe me, vapours rise to the brain, and flood the whole body. I know many who perished thus, while refusing to admit the truth to themselves.’

We thanked him for his kindness and generosity, and then suppressed our laughter by drinking steadily. We had not yet realised we were only halfway through, and still had an uphill task, as they say. For the tables were cleared to the accompaniment of music, and three white pigs, adorned with bells and muzzles were driven into the dining room. One was announced as a two-year old, the second three, and the third as much as six. I thought the acrobats had arrived and the pigs would perform some marvellous tricks, as they do in the ring; but Trimalchio ended the suspense by saying: ‘Which of them would you like on your plate in an instant? Any rustic can cook a fowl, or produce a Pentheian mince, or some such trifle: my cooks are capable of turning out whole calves cooked in a cauldron.’

## Part II

He continued by ordering a cook to be summoned, and without waiting for us to choose ordered the oldest pig to be killed and asked in a loud voice: 'Which section of my staff are you from?'. When the man replied that he was from the fortieth, he asked: 'Were you purchased or born on the estate?' 'Neither,' the cook replied, 'I was left to you under Pansa's will' 'Well then,' said Trimalchio, 'Make sure to serve this with due care, or you'll end up carrying messages.' And the cook, having been reminded of his master's power, led our dinner off to the kitchen.

Trimalchio, turned to us with a mild expression on his face, saying: 'If the wine doesn't please you, I'll change it; you ought to do fine with it. I don't purchase it, thank heavens, for anything here that makes your mouths water is grown on a country estate of mine, that as yet I know nothing of. I'm told it lies between Terracina and Taranto. Now I'd like to accumulate land in Sicily, so that if I choose to visit Africa, I can sail from my own confines.

But tell me, Agamemnon, what controversial matter did you speak on today, in school? Of course I don't practise in court myself, I studied literature for domestic reasons. And don't think I dislike learning, I have two libraries, one for Greek works, the other Latin. So, if you love me, tell me the outline of your speech.' When he had finished, Agamemnon said: 'A poor man and a rich man were enemies.' 'What is a poor man,' Trimalchio asked. 'Very witty,' said Agamemnon, and went on expounding some obscure controversy. Trimalchio responded immediately: 'If this really happened there's no controversy; if it never happened it's nonsense.' We showed our extravagant appreciation for this and other displays of wisdom.

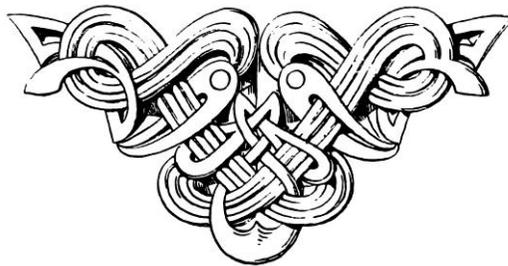
'Tell me, my dear Agamemnon,' Trimalchio asked, 'do you know anything of Hercules' Twelve Labours, or the tale of Ulysses, and how the Cyclops tore off his thumb with the tongs. I used to read these things in Homer when I was a lad. Indeed I myself, with my own eyes, have seen the Sibyl, at Cumae, hanging in a two-handed flask, and when the boys asked her: Sibyl, what do you wish?' she answered: 'I wish to die.'

## END OF THE SATYRICON: PART II



### PART III: TRIMALCHIO'S FEAST CONTINUED

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*'The Induction of a New Member into the  
Band of Northern Painters in Rome'*

Anonymous, c. 1660

*The Rijksmuseum*

## 49-52: THE PIG, THE CORINTHIAN PLATE, FOOLERY



Trimalchio had not yet said all he wished to say, when a dish holding the large pig came to occupy the table. We began expressing our wonder at such speed, and swore that there had not been time enough to cook a fowl, especially as the pig appeared so much bigger than the boar had appeared a little while previously. Then Trimalchio, looking more and more closely at it, said: ‘What, what has this pig not been gutted. By heavens, it has not. Call him, call the cook here to us.’

When the poor cook was standing beside the table, and confessed he’d forgotten, Trimalchio exclaimed: ‘What? Forgotten?’ ‘You’d think he’d merely failed to season it with pepper and cumin. Off with his tunic!’ The cook was stripped, without delay, and stood sorrowfully between two tormentors. But we all began to intercede for him, saying: ‘These things happen; pray, let him go; we promise not to interfere should he do it again. I, most cruel in my severity, could not contain myself, but leaning over said in Agamemnon’s ear: ‘Clearly this must be a useless servant; one who could forget to gut a pig? By heavens, I wouldn’t forgive him, even if he’d only forgotten to bone the fish!’ But not Trimalchio, whose face softened into a smile. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘if your memory is so bad, gut him here in front of us.’ The cook donned his tunic, seized a knife, and with a cautious hand sliced the belly in various places. At once, as the slits widened from the pressure, out poured sausages and black puddings! At this the servants burst into spontaneous applause, and shouted: ‘Blessings on Gaius!’ The cook two was rewarded with a silver crown and a drink, being handed the cup on a Corinthian plate.

When Agamemnon peered at it closely, Trimalchio said: 'I alone possess the true Corinthian.' I expected him to claim as a further novelty that his plate had been imported from Corinth. But he went one better: 'You may ask,' he said, 'how I alone come to possess the true Corinthian: why because the dealer in bronze I buy it from is named Corinthus. What is Corinthian, other than something some Corinthus keeps? And don't think I'm a fool, I know perfectly well how Corinthian bronze was first created. When Troy fell, Hannibal, a crafty man and a great rascal, heaped together all the statues; bronze, gold and silver, and set the heap ablaze; they all melted into one sea of bronze. The workmen took pieces from this mass, and made dishes and little plates and statuettes. Thus Corinthian bronzes were created, from merging all together into one, neither this nor that.

Forgive me, if I say I prefer glass, which at least has no smell. If it were not so fragile I'd prefer it to gold: it's inexpensive now, if nothing else. There was an artisan once who made an unbreakable glass dish. Accordingly, he was granted an audience with the emperor, to whom he gave it as a gift, then asked the emperor to return it to him, and hurled it to the floor. The emperor was nothing if not appalled, but the fellow retrieved the dish from the floor; it was dented like a bronze bowl; then he took a little hammer from his pocket, and casually straightened out the flaws.

After that, he thought himself possessed of Jove's powers, especially when the emperor asked him: 'Does anyone else know how to create glass like this?' Only conceive what happened: he said no, and the emperor had him beheaded: for if, in fact, such knowledge was widespread, we'd treat gold like dirt. I'm quite partial to silver. I've silver wine-cups more or less the size of urns, showing Cassandra killing her sons, and the boys lying there dead, all utterly life-like. I have one-handed bowls left me by my patron, depicting Daedalus shutting Niobe in the Trojan Horse. And I've the gladiator bouts between Hermeros and Petraites on drinking cups, every one of them a weighty one; indeed I wouldn't sell my knowledge of such things for any amount of money.'

As he was speaking, a boy dropped a chalice. Trimalchio glancing at him, cried: 'Quick now, best do away with yourself, since you're so careless.' The boy's face fell and he began to plead. But Trimalchio only answered: 'Why petition me? As if I would do anything to you. I suggest rather that

you petition yourself to take more care.’ We finally persuaded him to forgive the lad, who, once forgiven, scurried from the table...

Trimalchio shouted: ‘Away with water, bring on the wine!’ We took to jokes and witticisms, especially Agamemnon, who knew what would garner further invitations to dinner. Trimalchio, warmed by our praise, took to drinking, and almost intoxicated cried: ‘None of you have asked my Fortunata to dance? Believe me, no one is better at belly-dancing.’ And he lifted his hands above his head and gave us the actor Syrus, while all the servants sang in chorus: ‘Medes! Medes all around!’ And Trimalchio would have taken a stand in the middle of the room, if Fortunata had not whispered in his ear; I suppose she told him such base fooling was beneath his dignity. No one however was so unpredictable; for one moment he obeyed Fortunata, the next he reverted to his natural self.

### **53-54: THE GAZETTE, THE ACROBATS, THE CLUMSY BOY**

A clerk quite interrupted his passion for the dance by reading, as if from the city gazette: ‘July the 26th – On the estate at Cumae, which is Trimalchio’s, thirty boys and forty girls were born. Five hundred thousand pecks of wheat were taken from the threshing-floor to the barn. On the same day: Mithridates, a slave, was led to crucifixion for having spoken ill of our master Gaius. On the same day: one hundred thousand gold pieces which could not be employed were returned to the strong-box. On the same day: there was a fire in our gardens at Pompeii, which began in the house of Nasta, the bailiff.’ ‘What?’ cried Trimalchio. ‘When did I purchase gardens at Pompeii?’ ‘Last year’ the clerk replied ‘but they are not yet entered in the accounts.’ Trimalchio fumed and said: ‘I forbid any property bought in my name to be entered in the accounts unless I know of it within six months.’

We now had a further recitation of the public notices, some bailiffs’ wills, from which Trimalchio was excluded by codicil; then the names of stewards, and of a freedwoman divorced by her husband an overseer, having been caught at the house of a baths superintendent; and a major-

domo banished to Baiae; and a treasurer who was being prosecuted; and a case being pursued between some valets.

But at last the acrobats arrived. The most absurd of clowns stood there with a ladder, and commanded a lad to hop from rung to rung to the very top, to the accompaniment of a popular tune, then jump through fiery hoops holding a wine-jar in his teeth. Only Trimalchio was impressed by this, saying it was a thankless profession. He said there were only two mortal things he could witness with complete delight, acrobats and horn-blowers; other entertainments were pure nonsense. 'Why, I once bought a Greek comedy troupe, but preferred them to act Atellan farces and told my flute-player to play Latin tunes.'

When he was at the height of his oratory, a lad stumbled against Trimalchio. The servants cried out in unison, the guests no less, but not on account of that vile creature, being perfectly happy if he'd broken his neck, but because it would have meant a gloomy end to the banquet, having to shed tears over a complete stranger. Trimalchio, for his part, groaned aloud, and nursed his arm as if he'd been hurt. The doctors rushed in en masse, with Fortunata at their head, her hair hanging loose, and a cup in her hand, proclaiming how wretched and unhappy she was.

The lad who had slipped, was now crawling about at our feet, begging forgiveness. I was very suspicious lest his pleading was leading up to some ridiculous turnabout. The cook who had forgotten to gut the pig had indeed not yet faded from memory. So I began glancing all around the room, lest some automaton emerge from the wall, especially after they began to beat the servant for dressing the bruise on his master's arm with white wool rather than purple. My suspicions were not far wrong; instead of a punishment Trimalchio decreed that the servant be made a free man, lest anyone was able to say that so great a hero had been wounded by a slave.

## **55-56: POETRY, OTHER PROFESSIONS, AND GIFTS**

We approved of his action, and babbled sundry speeches regarding the uncertainty of human affairs. ‘Then, ‘said Trimalchio, ‘we should not let the opportunity pass without recording it’, and immediately called for paper, and with no great effort of thought recited these lines:

‘What we little anticipate, happens unexpectedly,  
while, high over us, Fortune governs the matter.  
Therefore, my boy, bring on the Falernian wine.’

From this epigram arose a discussion concerning the poets, and for a while it was claimed that the summit of poetry was held by Mopsus of Thrace, until Trimalchio said: ‘I ask you, master, how you would differentiate between Cicero and Publilius? I think the former more eloquent, the latter nobler. What could be written that is finer than this?’

“The walls of Rome melt in luxury’s jaws.  
For your palate, the peacock, dressed all in  
Babylonian splendour, the guinea-fowl and  
the capon are nurtured: and even the stork,  
our dear migrant guest, emblem of parental  
affection, a slender-legged castanet dancer,  
exiled by winter, and harbinger of warmth,  
builds its nest in your cauldron of iniquity.

### Part III

Why are pearls, those fruits of India, dear to you? So your wife, adorned with these spoils of the sea, might thrash wild limbs in a stranger's bed? To what end the green emeralds, precious crystals? Why wish for the fire of your Carthaginian gems, if no honesty gleams among those red garnets? Is it right a bride dresses in garments of air, stands naked in public, clothed only in mist?"

Yet what,' he asked, 'do we consider the most difficult profession after literature? I think a doctor's or a money-changer's: the doctor because he knows what poor mortals have in their hearts and when the fever will strike, though I hate doctors worst of all, since for me they often prescribe an extract of dill seed: the money-changer because he sees the brass beneath the silver.

Now among the beasts, oxen and sheep are the most industrious: the oxen thanks to whom we have bread to eat; the sheep whose wool clothes us so splendidly. It's a shameful crime for anyone to eat a sheep yet possess a woollen tunic. And I think bees the most divine of insects, they produce honey, though people say they bring it from Jove; yet they sting, for wherever there's sweetness, there you'll find something disagreeable too.'

He was about to put the philosophers out of work, when a wine-cup was carried round, and a boy entrusted with the duty began reading aloud the tickets that named gifts destined for the guests.

'Tarnished silver': a ham was brought in, over which bowls of vinegar were positioned. 'A neck-rest': a scrag-end of neck appeared. 'Wise too late' and 'Insult to injury': dry salted food was the gift, and a crab-apple along with a stick. 'Leek and peaches': a lash and a trimming-knife: 'Sparrows and a fly-trap': brown raisins and Attic honey. 'Dinner-things, business-things':

scraps of meat and writing tablets: ‘Furrow and foot’: hare and a slipper: ‘A moray-eel (*muraena*) and a letter’: a mouse (*mus*) with a frog (*rana*) fastened to it, and a bundle of beet. We laughed long and loud: there were any amount of these witticisms that now escape my memory.

## 57-58: HERMEROS’ TIRADE

But Ascyltos, with extravagant licence, threw up his hands and ridiculed everything, laughing till he cried. which incensed Hermeros, one of Trimalchio’s freedmen friends, who was sitting next to me. ‘What’s so funny, you mutton-head?’ he cried, ‘Don’t our host’s delicacies suit you? I suppose you’re rich, and used to finer living? As I hope for the favour of this household’s gods, I’d have shut his bleating by now, if I’d been sitting next to him. A fine pipsqueak to mock at others! Some little fly-by-night not worth his own piss. Indeed, if I pissed on him, he wouldn’t know where to fly. By heavens, I’m not usually quick to rouse, but worms breed in rotten meat. He’s amused. What’s he got to be amused about? Did his father pay gold for him as a baby. You’re a Roman knight: then I’m a king’s son! “Why were you a slave then?” Because I became one myself, and preferred to become a citizen of Rome than a provincial tribute-payer. And now I live a life where I expect no one to mock at me. I walk about bare-headed, a man among men. I owe no-one brass; I’ve never been in court; no one has ever said ‘Pay what you owe’ to me, in the market-place.

I’ve bought a few acres, gathered some silver-plate; I feed twenty bellies and a dog beside; I ransomed my companion, lest anyone wipe his hands on her front; I paid a thousand in silver for my own freedom; I was made a priest of Augustus for nothing; I hope, when I die, to go to my grave without a blush. Are you so industrious then, you’ve no time to look behind you? You can see the fleas on other, but not the lice on yourself. No one finds us ridiculous but you; behold your teacher, older and wiser than you; he finds us pleasing. You’re a babe just weaned, who can’t babble ‘ma’ or ‘da’; an empty pitcher; or rather a wash-leather in water, squishier not better.

If you're richer, well breakfast and dine twice a day. I prefer my reputation to riches. In sum, whoever had to petition me twice? I was a slave for forty years; no one was sure if I was a slave or free. I was a lad with long curls when I arrived here; the town-hall wasn't yet built. Yet I still worked hard to please my master, a fine and noble gentleman, whose fingernail was worth more than you. And there were those in the household who stuck out a foot to trip me here and there; yet – thanks to that fine soul – I fought my way through. Those are the true challenges; for being born free is as easy as saying, "Come here." What, are you dumbfounded, now, like a goat in a field of vetch?

At this, Giton, who was standing beside me, burst out in indecent laughter, which he'd long been restraining. Ascylos' adversary, noticing him, turned his abuse on the lad: 'Are you laughing too, you curly-topped onion-head? Is it December's feast, indeed, then "To Saturnalia!" When was your five percent freedom tax paid? He's not a word to say, this food for the gallows, this crow's meat. I'll deal with you, now Jove's had enough of you, and that fellow too, who can't keep you in order. As sure as I earn my bread, I'd have given you what you deserve right now, but for respect for my fellow freedman. We'd get on fine if it weren't for these numbskulls who can't keep you in hand. Indeed, like master, like man. I can barely contain myself, and I'm not hot-tempered by nature, but once I start I don't give a fig for my own mother. Sure, I'll see you outside, you mouse, you lump of earth. I'll not grow or shrink a fraction, till I've thrown your master into a bed of rue, and no mercy for you, by heaven, however much you call to Olympian Jove. I'll see that your long curls, and that worthless master of yours, are no use to you. Sure, you'll go under the harrow. You'll not be laughing, or I don't know myself, despite your golden beard. Athena's anger be on you, I'll make sure of that, and on this man who first made you a fancy-boy.

No, I never learned your geometry, your critical nonsense, your "Anger of Achilles", but I know my block capitals, I can tell any amount in gold, silver and brass. In short, if you wish, you and I can have a little bet: come on, put down the metal. You'll soon see your father wasted the fees, though you were trained in rhetoric. Look here: "What part of us wanders far and wide? Solve me!" And what part runs without leaving its place, I say,

and what grows out of us and grows less? (*The eye, the foot, the hair*) You scurry about, you scramble, take fright, like a mouse in a jar. So be silent, or stay away from your betters, who are unaware of your existence; unless you think I respect those rings of boxwood, you stole from your “girl-friend”.

Let’s go to the exchange and borrow money: you’ll see my ring of iron commands credit. Ah, a bedraggled fox is a fine thing. May I never be rich, nor make so good an end people swear by my death, if I don’t don the black cap and hunt you down everywhere. He’s a fine fellow who taught you all this, a charlatan not a master. We had real schooling; the master would say: “Are all your things safe? Go straight home; take care not to stop and gaze around; take care not to speak ill of your betters.” But now it’s mere rubbish, no one’s worth a fig. I, whom you see before you thus, thank the gods for my profession.’

## 59: A RECITATION FROM HOMER

Ascylos was about to reply to this invective, but Trimalchio was delighted with his fellow freedman’s eloquence, saying: ‘Come now, no quarrelling. It’s better to be pleasant, and you, Hermeros, spare the lad. Young blood flows hot, be calmer yourself. In this sort of matter, he who yields conquers. You too, when you were a young cockerel, cried cock-a-doodle-do, and had little sense. Let’s do better by watching the first fruits of comedy and these reciters of Homer.’

The troupe entered at once, and spear clashed on shield. Trimalchio himself perched on a cushion and, while the reciters conversed, in their usual conceited fashion, in Greek verse, he intoned Latin from a book. Soon silence fell and he said: ‘You know the tale they’re reciting? Diomedes and Ganymede were brothers. Their sister was Helen. Agamemnon carried her off, and substituted Diana’s deer for her. So Homer is now telling how Troy and Taranto fought each other. Of course Agamemnon won, and married his daughter, Iphigenia, to Achilles. That drove Ajax mad, and the theme will now unfold.’ As Trimalchio concluded, the reciters raised a clamour, the servants ran about and a boiled calf on a ceremonial dish was

brought in, a helmet on its head. Ajax followed with drawn sword, and attacked it as if in madness, and after hacking away with the flat of the blade and the edge, collected slices on the point, and divided the calf among the astonished guests.

## **60-61: GIFTS, FRUIT, AND NICEROS IS ASKED FOR A STORY**

We were not given long to admire this elegant performance, for suddenly there came a noise from the ceiling and the whole dining-room shook. I rose in panic, afraid lest some acrobat was descending from above. The other guests, no less amazed, raised their eyes, wondering what new arrival from the skies it portended. And behold, the whole ceiling suddenly parted, and a giant hoop, apparently knocked from a huge cask, was lowered, which was hung about with golden crowns and alabaster perfume-boxes.

As we were being asked to receive these gifts, I looked back at the table and saw that a dish with some cakes had now been placed there, in the midst of which stood a figure of Priapus created by the confectioner, holding up all kinds of apples and grapes, in conventional style, in the wide fold of his tunic. We stretched out our hands greedily towards his treasures, and this sudden new playful offering rekindled our merriment. All the cakes and fruit, in fact, however lightly they were touched, began to spurt saffron, and the unpleasant mixture even flew into our faces. We thought it must be some sacred dish which was filled with such religious contents, and we all stood to attention crying: 'Blessings on Augustus, the father of his country.'

Yet as some guests snatched at the fruit even after this solemnity, we filled our napkins with them too, especially myself, who thought I could never fill Giton's lap with sufficiently large a gift. Meanwhile three lads entered, with their white tunics tucked up, two of whom placed statues of the Lares with charms about their neck, on the table, while the other circulated with a bowl of wine, crying: 'May the gods favour us.' Trimalchio said that one was called Cerdo (Trade), another Felicio (Luck), and the third Lucio (Profit). And as everyone else kissed Trimalchio's statue in gold, we too were ashamed to pass it by.

Well now, after all had wished themselves health and good sense, Trimalchio glanced at Niceros, saying: ‘You used to be better company at dinner: I wonder why there’s not a murmur from you, not a sound. I beg you, think of my happiness, tell us something that happened to you.’ Niceros, delighted by his friend’s amiability, said: ‘Let all profit pass me by, if I’m not ready to burst with joy, at seeing you in such good humour. Well, let it be purely in fun then, though I fear lest your learned friends laugh at me. Let them laugh, I’ll still say on: what harm does it do me, whoever may laugh? Better to be laughed at than scorned.’

‘Once he had spoken these words...’ he began the following tale:

## **62: NICEROS’ TALE: THE WEREWOLF**

While I was yet a slave, we lived in a narrow alley; the house is now Gavilla’s. There, the gods willed that I fell in love with the wife of Terentius the innkeeper: you remember her, Melissa from Taranto, a lovely plump little woman. But, by heavens, it wasn’t a physical thing, a sexual passion, but rather because she was kindly by nature. If I asked her for anything, she never refused me; if she earned any money I had half; whatever I had I put in her purse, and was never cheated.

Now one day her husband died at the country house. So I decided to find a way to come at her, by hook or by crook: furthermore, in dire straits your friends become apparent. By chance, my master had gone to Capua, to discharge some business. Seizing the opportunity, I persuaded a guest of ours to come with me as far as the fifth milestone. He was a soldier too, and brave as anything. So we took ourselves off about cockcrow, the moonlight bright as noon.

We arrived among the wayside tombs: my companion began to do his business behind the gravestones; I sat down, my heart singing, and counted the same. Glancing round at my friend, I saw he had stripped off his clothes and placed them by the roadside. Heart in mouth, I stood there like a dead man, as he pissed all round his clothes, then suddenly turned into a wolf. Don’t think I’m joking; No amount of money would make me lie about this.

Well, as I started to tell you, after he'd turned into a wolf, he began to howl, and fled into the woods. I hardly knew where I was, at first, then I went to gather his clothes: but they'd all turned to stone. Who could be more terrified than I was? But I drew my sword and went along slaying shadows, all the way to my love's house. A mere ghost, I entered, boasting barely a breath of life, sweat pouring down my legs, eyes like the dead, scarce able to be revived.

Dear Melissa began expressing surprise at my arriving so late, and said: 'If you'd come earlier you could have helped us, at least; a wolf got into the yard, worried all the sheep, and shed their blood like a butcher. However he won't be laughing, even though he fled, since our man pierced his neck with a spear.' On hearing this, I could open my eyes no wider, but rushed back to my master's house, in broad daylight, as if I'd been robbed and, when I reached the spot where the clothes were turned to stone, found nothing but a pool of blood.

Yet when I arrived home, my soldier was lying in bed like an ox, with a doctor dressing his neck. I realised he was a werewolf and could never sit down to eat with him thereafter, not if you'd threatened me with death. Others can decide on an explanation; but your guardian spirits may torment me if I lie.'

## **63-64: TRIMALCHIO'S TALE, AND THE DOG SCYLAX**

We were all struck dumb with wonder. 'Bless your tale, if it's true,' cried Trimalchio, 'how my hair stood on end, since I know Niceros never talks nonsense: he's solid and not garrulous. Now I want to tell you a horror story myself, as a hostage to fortune. While I still had hair down my back, for I lived the wild Chian life when I was young, my master's favourite died, a pearl, by heavens, an excellent lad, one in a thousand.

While his poor mother was bewailing him, and several of us were sharing her grief, a sudden screeching began; you'd have thought it a hare being chased by a dog. We had a Cappadocian lad in the household at the time, a big fellow, quite brave, and strong enough to lift an angry bull from the ground. He ran outside with a naked sword, wrapped carefully in his left hand, and ran a woman through, about here – may what I touch, be safe – right in the middle. We heard a groan, though – truth to tell – we didn't see her.

But our great blockhead, once inside again, threw himself on the bed, his body livid all over as if he'd been flogged, because of course an evil hand had touched him. We shut the door and returned to our mourning, but when the mother embraced her son's body, she felt it and realised it was a mere bundle of straw. It had no heart within, no intestines, nothing: of course the witches had carried off the lad, and put a straw mannequin in his place.

I beg you, and you should believe, there are indeed women who have secret knowledge, creatures of the night, who can turn all the world upside down. Well, our great lad never regained his own colour after that, but died, raving mad, in a few days.' We wondered and believed, in equal measure, and kissed the table and prayed the night-creatures would stay away when we returned home from dinner.

By now, indeed, the lamps were multiplying before my eyes, and the whole dining-room was altering shape, as Trimalchio asked: 'Plocamus, have you nothing to narrate? Will you not entertain us? Why, you used to be better company, and recite lines from the plays beautifully, and with music thrown in. Alas, alas, how the Carian figs are fallen!' 'Well, my course is run,' Plocamus answered: 'ever since I was afflicted with the gout. Though when I was a youngster I almost wasted away with all that singing. How I could leap about, and recite, and talk like a barber's shop! Was there anyone equal to me, except that actor, Apelles?' And he put his hand up to the side of his mouth, and whistled something vile, which he claimed afterwards was Greek.

Trimalchio himself, after imitating a trumpeter also, looked round for his favourite, whom he called Croesus. The boy had bleary eyes and appalling teeth, and after enveloping an indecently overweight black puppy in a green cloth, was breaking pieces of bread onto the couch and cramming them into the unwilling animal, ad nauseam. This reminded Trimalchio of his duties, and he ordered Scylax ‘guardian of the house and servants’ to be brought. Without delay, a dog of enormous size, was led in on a chain and, after a kick from the porter as a hint to lie down, positioned himself beside the table.

Then Trimalchio threw him some white bread, saying: ‘None of the household loves me more.’ The favourite, indignant at this lavish praise of Scylax, deposited the puppy on the floor, urging her to attack. Scylax, of course, filled the room with the most dreadful barking, in the manner of dogs, and nearly tore Croesus’ little Pearl to pieces. Nor was the uproar simply a dogfight, for a lamp on the table was overturned and, the whole of its glass container breaking, sprinkled some of the guests with hot oil. Trimalchio seemingly unmoved by the accident, kissed the boy and commanded him to jump on his back. Croesus, mounting his ‘horse’ at once and striking Trimalchio’s shoulders repeatedly (*as a slave is flogged with an ox-hide whip*) using his open palm, proclaimed amid laughter: ‘Whip, whip, how many now?’ Trimalchio, having shown restraint, consequently ordered a large bowl of wine to be mixed, and drinks to be distributed to all the servants, sitting at our feet, adding this provision: ‘If anyone refuses to accept it, pour it over his head. Serious by day, be merry now.’

## 65-67: HABINNAS AND SCINTILLA

This display of kindness, was followed by the entry of savoury dishes, the memory of which, I tell you faithfully, makes me shudder. For a fat chicken, instead of fieldfares, was carried round and goose eggs wearing freedmen’s felt caps, which Trimalchio urged us to eat most insistently, saying these were chickens without the bones.

Meanwhile a lictor, attendant on some priest of Augustus, knocked on the dining room door, and a reveller, dressed in white, entered with a host of others. I, frightened by his majestic presence, thought the chief magistrate had arrived. So I attempted to rise, and set my bare feet on the floor. Agamemnon laughed at my trepidation, saying: ‘Contain yourself, you fool. It’s Habinnas, he’s a priest of Augustus too, a monumental mason known for his fine tombstones.’

Relieved at this, I reclined on my couch again, and watched Habinnas’ entrance with great amazement. Already drunk, his hand clutching his wife’s arm, and burdened by several garlands, with perfumed unguent running down his forehead and into his eyes, he sat down in the chief magistrate’s seat, and at once called for wine and hot water. Trimalchio was delighted by his gaiety, and demanding a larger cup for himself, asked how his day had gone.

‘We had everything we wished, except you; indeed my thoughts were here. But, by heavens, it was splendid. Scissa was holding an elegant funeral feast for a wretched slave whom she’d freed on his deathbed. And she’ll have a biggish five percent payment to make to the tax-collector, I think, for the dead man was valued at fifty thousand. Yet it was still pleasant, even if we were forced to pour half our drinks over his ashes.’ ‘But,’ cried Trimalchio, ‘what did you have for dinner?’

‘I’ll tell you, if I can,’ Habinnas replied, ‘but my memory is such that I often forget my own name. Still, we had a pig first, crowned with sausages, garnished with honeyed cakes, and giblets, very well done, and the brains of course, and pure wholemeal bread, which I prefer to white; it strengthens me, and when I do my business I’ve no complaint. The next dish was a cold pie, and an excellent Spanish wine poured over warm honey. Indeed, I ate no small part of the pie, with a regular sprinkling of honey. Chickpeas and lupine seeds circulated, a choice of nuts, and apples all round. I took two, and see, I have them here in a napkin; since if I didn’t bring some gift home for my little slave-boy I’d hear about it. My wife always reminds me.

We had sight of some bear-meat fillets, which Scintilla was rash enough to try, and nearly vomited up her insides; I on the other hand ate more than a pound, for the meat tasted like wild boar. And if, as I contend,

a bear can eat wretched man, how much more fitting that wretched man should eat bear. To end with, there was cheese mellowed in new wine, snails all round, and bits of liver and tripe in little dishes, and eggs with caps on, and turnip and mustard, and a dish of mince: enough, Palamedes! Pickled olives, too, were brought round in a bowl, of which some greedy creatures took three fistfuls. For we'd given the ham a miss. But tell me, Gaius, why is Fortunata not dining?'

'You know her better than that,' Trimalchio replied, 'until the silver plate has been collected, and she's divided the leftovers among the lads, she won't let even a drop of water touch her lips.' 'Well then, if she's not dining,' said Habinnas, 'I'll be off,' and he was starting to rise when, at a signal, all the servants cried out 'Fortunata' four times and more. She appeared, in consequence, girded up by a greenish-yellow belt with a cherry-coloured dress showing beneath it, twisted anklets, and white shoes embroidered with gold. She wiped her hands on the kerchief she had tied round her neck, and took her place on the couch on which Scintilla, Habinnas' wife, was reclining, and kissed her, clapping her hands and crying: 'Is this really you, I'm seeing?'

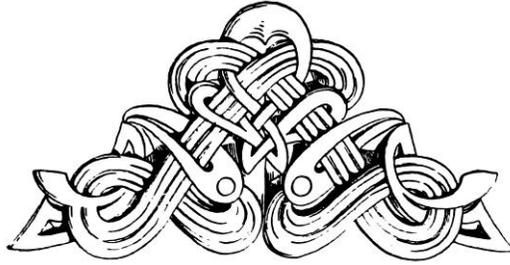
Fortunata went so far as to remove the bracelets from her very plump arms, to exhibit them to Scintilla's admiring gaze. She even took off her anklets, and her golden hair-net which she claimed was eighteen carat. Trimalchio noted this, and ordered them all to be brought to him. 'Here, you see woman's fetters,' he said, 'and thus we poor fools are plundered. She must have six and a half pounds of gold on her. I have a bracelet myself, made of that thousandth part I owe to Mercury, god of trade, and no less than ten pounds in weight.'

At last, lest we thought he was lying, he commanded the scales be brought, and had the weight confirmed all round. Scintilla was no better, taking a little gold locket from her neck, which she called her lucky charm. Then she offered her earrings for inspection, and gave them to Fortunata to examine in turn, saying: 'Thanks to my husband's generosity, no one possesses finer.' 'What?' cried Habinnas, 'You'd bankrupt me, to buy your glass beads, I declare! If I had a daughter, I'd cut off her ears. If it were not for women, we'd think it all so much dross; as it is, it's pissing warm water and drinking cold.'

Meanwhile the wives, offended, laughed together; giving each other drunken kisses, while the one boasted of her attentiveness as a mother, and the other of her husband's favourites and his lack of attentiveness. While they were chattering together, Habinnas rose furtively, took Fortunata by the legs and threw them onto the couch. 'Oh! Oh!' she exclaimed as her dress flew up above her knees. She took refuge in Scintilla's arms, burying her blushing face, burning hot, in her kerchief.

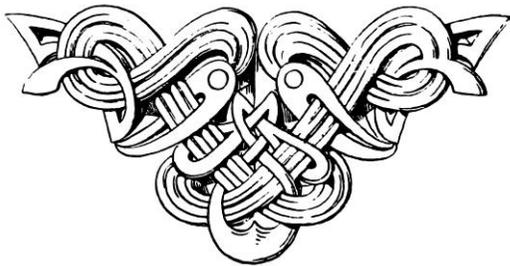
### **END OF THE SATYRICON: PART III**

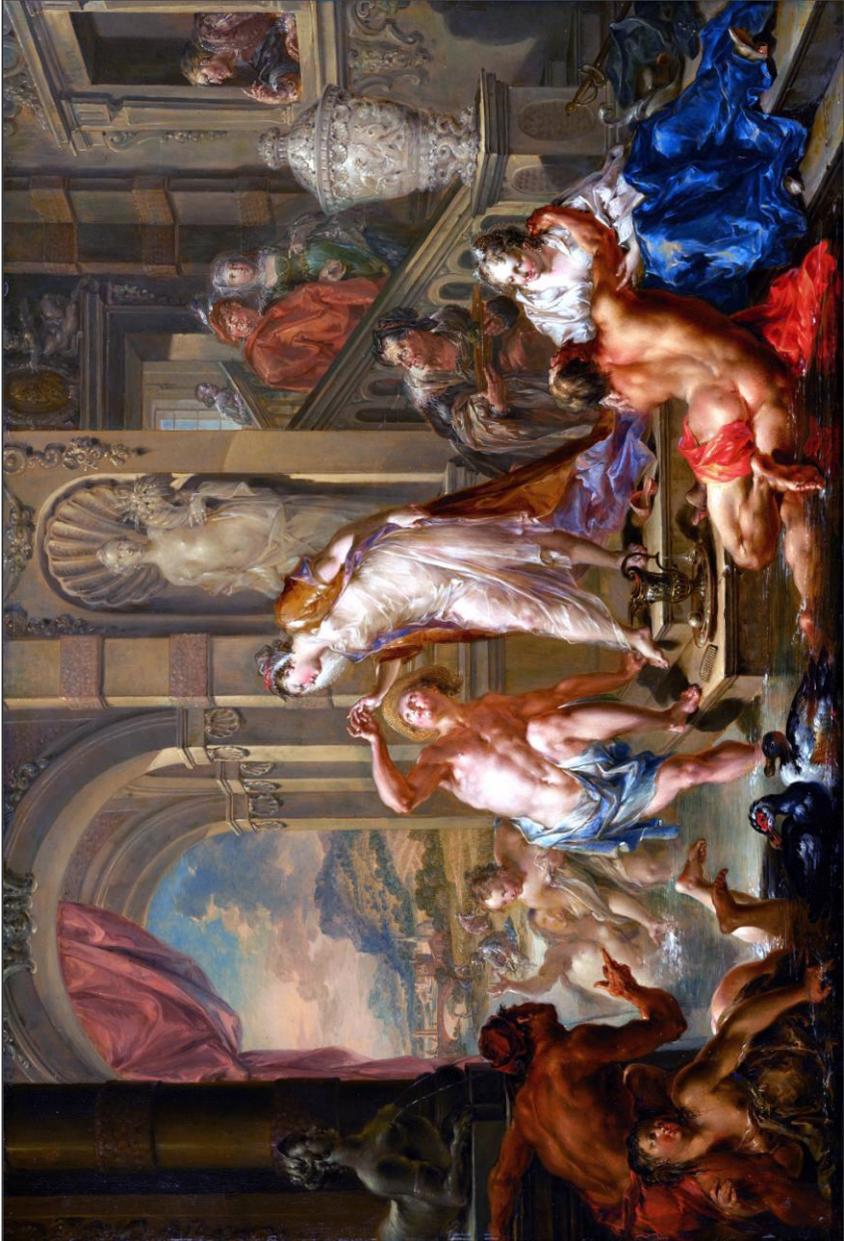




## PART IV: ESCAPE FROM TRIMALCHIO'S HOUSE

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*'The Pleasures of the Seasons: Summer'*  
Johann Georg Platzer, c. 1730  
The Minneapolis Institute of Art

## 68-70: SLAVES' ANTICS



In an interval ensuing, during which Trimalchio ordered a further course of desserts, the servants removing the tables, bringing in others, while scattering sawdust tinted with saffron and vermilion and, something I had never seen before, mica ground to a powder. Trimalchio commented immediately: 'I might indeed rest content with this; for you have your second courses. Yet whatever there is that's pleasant, lad, bring it on.'

Upon which, a boy from Alexandria, who was carrying round the hot water, began imitating a nightingale, until Trimalchio shouted: 'Leave off!' And behold, another jest: a slave who was seated at Habinnas' feet, suddenly began to declaim, at his master's bidding I believe, in a sing-song voice:

'Meanwhile Aeneas, with the fleet, was holding  
a fixed course in the midst of the sea.....'

No shriller sound ever struck my ear, for besides barbarous errors of emphasis in raising or lowing his voice, he mixed in lines from Atellan farce, so that even Virgil jarred on me for the very first time. Yet when he tired and, at last, desisted, Habinnas explained: 'He was never schooled, but I educated him by sending him round the market-peddlars. As a consequence, he has no equal whenever he seeks to imitate peddlars or muleteers. He's very clever, to the point of desperation: he's a cobbler, a cook, a confectioner, a slave of all the talents. Still, he has two faults: he's

circumcised, and he snores. However I don't mind that he squints, in the very manner that Venus gazes. This is why he can't be silent, and hardly ever shuts his eyes. I bought him for twelve gold pieces.'

Scintilla cut short his eloquence by saying: 'You've not quite mentioned all the slave's skills. He's a catamite; and I'll see him branded yet.' Trimalchio laughed, saying: 'I know a Cappadocian: he denies himself nothing, but by heavens I admire him: no one relinquishes 'that' to honour the dead. But, don't be jealous, Scintilla. Believe me, we know you women too. By my hopes of salvation, I too used to commit adultery with my mistress, until even the master became suspicious and, in consequence, banished me to a country stewardship. But, be silent tongue, and I'll feed you!'

As if he had been praised, the naughty slave took a clay lamp from his pocket, and imitated a trumpet-player for more than a half-hour, Habinnas humming an accompaniment by tugging at his lower lip. Finally, he moved to the centre of the room, and now made a bunch of reeds quiver in imitation of a flute-player, now gave us the muleteer's life, with cloak and whip, until Habinnas summoned him for a kiss, and offered him a drink, saying: 'Much improved, Massa, I'll make you a present of a pair of boots.'

There would have been no end to our troubles, if the last course had not arrived, fieldfares stuffed with nuts and raisins. Quinces followed too, stuck with thorns to look like sea-urchins. We could have endured it all, if a far more fantastic dish had not driven us to prefer death by starvation. What was placed on the table was a plump goose, we supposed, surrounded by fish and all kinds of birds, but: 'My friends,' cried Trimalchio, 'whatever you see here, is made from a single substance.'

I, with my usual perceptiveness, guessed immediately what that might be, and glancing at Agamemnon, commented: 'I'd be surprised if the whole thing isn't made of wax or even clay. I've seen dinners of this kind served in Rome in imitation of those at the Saturnalia.' I'd barely finished speaking when Trimalchio said: 'As I hope to gain wealth not weight, my cook made the whole thing out of a pig. There's no more valuable a fellow. If you wish, he'll fashion a fish from a sow's womb, a wood pigeon from lard, a turtledove from ham, or a fowl from a knuckle of pork. That's what gave

me the idea of bestowing the finest of names upon him; he's called Daedalus. And because he's so intelligent, I brought him some knives of Norican steel from Rome, as a gift.' Trimalchio had these knives fetched immediately, and gazed at them with admiration. He even allowed us to try the edge against our cheeks.

Two slaves suddenly entered, who it seems had quarrelled over a water-butt; at least they had water jars on their shoulders. Trimalchio therefore gave a ruling between the litigants, neither accepted his decision, and they struck out at each other's jars. Amazed at their drunken folly, we gazed at the fight, watching scallops and oysters tip from the jars, which a lad collected in a dish and brought round to us. The ingenious cook matched their exhibition, offering snails on a silver grill, while singing in a hideous quavering voice.

I'm ashamed to repeat what followed: defying all the rules, some long-haired boys brought perfumed oil in a silver basin, and anointed our feet as we reclined, while winding little garlands round our legs and ankles. A quantity of the same oil was poured into a mixing bowl, and the lamp.

Now Fortunata showed a desire to dance; and Scintilla was already applauding more often than speaking, when Trimalchio said: 'Philargyrus, though you famously support the Green, sit here, and tell your good woman Menophila to do the same.' I hardly need say that we were almost pushed from the couches by all these slaves finding seats. Indeed I saw that the cook who had made a goose out of the pig, sat just above me, smelling of pickling-brine and seasoning. Not content with obtaining a seat, he at once began imitating Ephesus the tragedian, and urging his own master to bet on Green winning first prize in the upcoming games.

## **71: TRIMALCHIO'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT**

Becoming expansive, after the dispute: 'My friends,' said Trimalchio, 'a slave is human, and drank his mother's milk as we did, even if ill fortune has oppressed him. If I live, they shall taste the waters of freedom. In short, I am setting them all free in my will. I am bequeathing a property, and his

good lady, to Philargyrus; an apartment block to Cario, and the fee for his manumission, and a bed and bedding.

I make Fortunata my heir, and commend her to all my friends. And I make all this known publicly, so that my slaves may love me now just as much as if I were dead.' The slaves all began thanking their master for his generosity, at which point he, forgetting the details, ordered a copy of the will to be brought, and to the groans of the household, read the whole thing aloud from beginning to end.

Then glancing at Habinnas, he said: 'Tell me, my dear friend; you will erect a monument for me, as I've asked? I request you, most fervently, to carve my little dog at the foot of my statue, and some garlands and perfume boxes, and all Petraitēs' gladiatorial bouts, so that through your kindness I might acquire a life after death; and let my monument be a hundred feet long, moreover, and two hundred feet in depth. I would like all varieties of fruit-tree to grow about my ashes, and a wealth of vines.

It is quite wrong for a man to adorn his house when alive, while neglecting that in which he must dwell far longer. So above all things, therefore, I want inscribed upon it 'this monument shall not descend to my heirs.' And I shall take care also that my will warn against injury being done me after my death. I am appointing one of my freedmen to care for my tomb, lest the common people hasten to defile it. I ask you to depict ships in full sail on my monument, and myself seated on the platform in my official robes, wearing five gold rings, distributing coins publicly from a bag; for you know that I have given a free dinner worth two pieces of silver a head.

And, if you can arrange it, represent a dining room, and all the people there enjoying themselves. At my right hand, place a statue of my Fortunata, holding a dove, and leading a little dog held by a lead: and my darling lads, and large wine-jars sealed with gypsum. And have a broken urn carved, with a boy weeping over it. And a sundial in the middle, so that anyone who checks the time will, like it or not, read my name. Also consider carefully whether this inscription seems to you quite suitable: 'Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, freedman of Maecenas, rests here. A priesthood of Augustus was conferred on him, in absentia. Though he

might have been a member of any guild in Rome, yet he refused. Pious, brave, loyal, he grew from little, left thirty million, and never paid heed to philosophy. Farewell: and you too, passer-by.'

## **72-73: TRIMALCHIO'S BATH**

Having spoken these words, Trimalchio began to weep copious tears. Fortunata wept too, and Habinnas wept, and then the whole household, as if summoned to the funeral, filling the room with their lament. I had even begun to mourn, myself, when Trimalchio broke in with: 'Yet, since we know we must die, why not live? As I think only of your happiness, let's jump in the bath, and my life on it, you'll not regret it. It's as hot as a furnace.' 'Truly, truly', cried Habinnas, 'I love nothing more than making two days from one.' And he rose, bare-footed, to follow Trimalchio, who had recovered his cheerfulness.

I looked at Ascyrtos, saying: 'What do you think? If I clap eyes on a bath I'll perish on the spot.' 'Say, yes,' he replied, 'then while they head for the bath, we'll slip away in the crowd.' Once this was agreed, Giton led us through a doorway to the portico, where the dog on his chain welcomed us so vociferously that Ascyrtos fell right into the fishpond. As I while terrified of even a dog painted on the wall was also drunk, in helping him in his efforts to swim, I ended up in the same deep water.

The porter saved us by his intervention, pacifying the dog and dragging us shivering to dry land. And indeed Giton had already rescued himself from the dog by a piece of cunning. He scattered in front of the creature, which was barking madly, all the scraps we had given him during dinner, and with that inducement of food quenched the animal's fury. Cold and wet, we begged the porter to let us out by the door, but he replied: 'You're wrong if you think you can exit through the door you entered by. No guest is ever allowed out by the same door; one way in, another to leave.'

What could we wretched folk do, trapped in some new manner of labyrinth, to whom even bathing now began to seem attractive? So we asked him to lead us to the bath, instead, and after throwing off our wet clothes, which Giton dried in the hallway, we entered a narrow room, like a reservoir for cold water, in which Trimalchio was standing. And, even there, we were not allowed to escape his outrageous boasting; for he claimed there was nothing better than bathing free of the usual crowd, and that there had once been a water-mill on the spot.

Then, tired, he seated himself, the echoing vault of the bathroom inviting him to open his mouth, and drunkenly go on to murder Menacretes' ballads, or so I was told by those who could interpret his singing. Others of the guests linked hands and ran around the bath, laughing noisily and making a great clamour. Some, with their hands tied behind their backs, tried to pick up rings from the floor, or knelt down and, arching backwards, tried to touch the tips of their big toes. While the rest were amusing themselves, we descended into the warm bath that was being heated for Trimalchio.

## **74: FORTUNATA AND TRIMALCHIO QUARREL**

Having thus rid ourselves of our inebriation, we were led into another dining room, where Fortunata had arrayed her treasures, so that, by the light of the lamps above, we saw little bronze fishermen and solid silver tables and pottery cups set with gold, and wine being filtered through a strainer before our very eyes. Then Trimalchio called out: 'Friends, a slave of mine today celebrates the shaving off of his first beard, an honest lad, harmless and economical. So let's drink deep and dine till dawn.'

As he was speaking, a cock crew. The sound troubled Trimalchio, and he had wine poured under the table, and even had the lamp sprinkled with pure wine. Furthermore, he transferred a ring to his right hand and said: 'That herald didn't signal for no reason; either there must be a fire, or someone nearby is about to die. Heavens preserve us! Anyone who catches that informer, shall have a reward.' As he spoke, the cock was swiftly

brought from somewhere in the vicinity, and Trimalchio ordered it killed, and cooked in a pan. It was therefore slaughtered by that same expert cook who had fashioned birds and fish from the little pig a while ago, and he threw it into the cooking pot, while Daedalus swallowed a very hot drink, and Fortunata ground pepper in a boxwood mill.

When the delicacies had been consumed, Trimalchio glanced at the slaves and asked: ‘Why have you not eaten yet? Off with you, and let others serve us. So another squadron arrived, the first crowd calling out: ‘Farewell, Gaius,’ as the fresh troops shouted: ‘Hail, Gaius. After this our hilarity was quelled for the first time; for a handsome lad appeared amongst these new waiters, whom Trimalchio embraced and began to kiss lingeringly. Fortunata, therefore, asserting her conjugal rights, began to abuse Trimalchio, calling him a vile disgrace for being unable to contain his desires; even, finally, adding: ‘You hound!’ Trimalchio, offended by this attack, hurled his drinking cup at Fortunata’s face. She shrieked, as if she had lost an eye, and raised her trembling hands to her face. Scintilla was frightened too, and clasped her in her arms. As an attentive slave held a cool jug to her cheek, Fortunata hunching over it, began to cry.

But Trimalchio opposed her, saying: ‘What’s all this? Doesn’t this flute-girl remember she’s off the auction-platform. That’s where I took her from, and made her one of ourselves. But she puffs herself up like a frog, instead of counting herself lucky; a block of wood not a woman. A household such as this is scarcely dreamed of by one born in a brothel. Bless my soul, I’ll take care this Cassandra in army boots is properly tamed. And I, a nobody then, could have married millions. You know I tell no lie.

Agatho, perfumer to the rich woman next door, took me aside recently saying: ‘I entreat you not to let your line perish.’ But I, being a good fellow, and with no wish to seem fickle, have driven the axe into my own leg. Well, I’ll take care you’re not after me with your finger-nails. But so you know what you achieved, just now: Habinnas, I’d rather you didn’t carve a statue of her on my tomb, lest I’m still troubled by her when I’m dead. Yes, to show I can be nasty too, I’ll not have her kissing me when I’m gone.’

## 75-77: TRIMALCHIO TELLS OF HIS PERSONAL HISTORY

After these fulminations, Habinnas began imploring him to moderate his anger. ‘We all have our faults,’ he said. ‘We are human beings not gods. Scintilla, weeping, said the same and, calling him Gaius, begged him to be gentler. Trimalchio no longer contained his tears but cried: ‘Habinnas, as you hope to enjoy your profits: if I’ve done anything wrong, then spit in my face. I kissed that worthy lad, not because he is handsome, but because he is worthy: he can recite the ten parts of speech, read books at sight, he’s bought a Thracian gladiator’s equipment out of his daily wages, and purchased a round-backed chair and two ladles out of his own money. Is he not deserving of being treated fondly? Yet Fortunata forbids it. Is that to your liking, you, up on your high-heels? I advise you, my she-kite, to think on what you have; don’t make me furious, my little one, otherwise you’ll feel my temper. Mark me: when once I decide on something, it’s nailed down.

Still, let us consider the living. I beg you, be comfortable, friends. For I too was once as you are now, yet have arrived here by my own merit. A little common sense makes men, the rest is all nonsense: ‘I buy well, I sell well’; though others may tell you otherwise. I’m bursting with happiness. But you, my little snorer, are you still wailing? I’ll take care you bewail your fate. However, as I was saying, my own worth has brought me this fortune of mine.

When I came from Asia, I was only as tall as this candlestick. In short, I used to measure myself against it each day, and grease my lips from the lamp to grow a beard quicker. Even so, at fourteen I was my master’s darling. There’s no shame in doing what your master orders. I gave my mistress satisfaction too. You know what I’m saying: I’ll say no more, not being conceited.

Then, as the gods willed, I became the real master of the house, and see, I picked his brains. What more? He made me a co-heir, along with the emperor, and I inherited a fortune fit for a senator. But no one's ever content. I conceived a passion for trade. I'll not keep you a moment but, well, I built five ships, wine was their cargo, which was then worth its weight in gold, and I sent them to Rome. You might have thought I'd asked for it: but every ship was wrecked, fact, not fiction. Neptune devoured thirty million in a day. Do you think I lost heart? No, by heavens, I felt that loss no more than if it had never happened. I built more ships, bigger, better, and luckier, so that no one could say I was not a determined character. You know a big ship has a big heart.

I loaded fresh cargo; wine, bacon, beans, perfume, slaves. Fortunata did a fine thing, at that time; she sold all her jewellery, all her clothes, and placed a hundred gold pieces in my hand. They were the seeds of my fortune. What the gods wish, soon arrives. I cleared ten million in a single voyage. I, at once, purchased all the estates that belonged to my patron. I built a house, bought slaves and cattle; whatever I touched waxed greater, like honey in a honeycomb. When I'd amassed more wealth than my whole country, I gave up the game. I retired from business, and started financing freedmen.

An astrologer, a little Greek, named Serapa, who consults the heavens, encouraged me to take up business again, though I was quite unwilling. He chanced to visit our town and told me things even I had forgotten; explained everything to me, needle and thread, knew me inside-out, the only thing he couldn't say was what I'd had for dinner the day before. You'd have thought he'd known me all my life. Habinnas, remember – I think you were there – Serapa said to me: “You acquired a wife from the profits. You are somewhat unfortunate in your friends. No one is ever as grateful to you as you deserve. You possess a large estate. You are nourishing a viper in your bosom,” and, something I should not repeat to you, I now have exactly thirty years, four months, and two days left to live. Moreover I shall soon come into an inheritance. My oracle tells me so.

If I could only extend my estate to the borders of Apulia, I'd have done well enough in a lifetime. Meanwhile, with Mercury, god of trade, watching over me, I rebuilt this place. As you know it was a mere cottage;

now it's a temple. It has four dining-rooms, twenty bedrooms, two marble colonnades, an upper dining area, a bedroom where I myself sleep, a chamber for this viper here, an excellent room for the porter, and rooms for a host of guests. In fact when Scaurus visited, there's nowhere he'd rather have stayed, and he has a family house by the sea.

And there are other things I'll reveal to you in a moment. Believe me: if you only have a bit of brass that's what you're worth; you're judged by what you own. Thus your friend, who was a frog, is a now a king. Meanwhile Stichus, bring me the funeral garments in which I wish to be carried out. Bring me some perfumed unguent, and a taste from that jar which I've ordered to be poured over my bones.'

## **78-79: ENCOLPIUS AND ASCYLTO'S ESCAPE**

Without delay, Stichus brought a white shroud and a purple-bordered toga into the dining-room, and Trimalchio asked us to feel the quality of the wool. Then, giving a little laugh, he said: 'Stichus, make sure no mouse or moth gets at them: or I'll have you burnt alive. I wish to be carried out in splendour, so that the whole crowd appreciate me.' He immediately opened a flask of nard, and anointed us all, saying: 'I hope I delight in this as much when I'm dead.' Moreover he ordered wine to be poured into a bowl, and said: 'Now, pretend you've been invited to a feast in honour of my ancestors.'

The whole thing had reached the heights of nausea, when Trimalchio, most unpleasantly inebriated, ordered a fresh set of performers, trumpeters, to be admitted to the dining room, propped himself on a host of cushions, and stretched himself out as if on his deathbed, saying: 'Now imagine I'm dead. Deliver something fine. The trumpeters broke into a loud funeral march. One slave in particular, belonging to the undertaker, who was the most respectable man among us, blew so hard he roused the whole neighbourhood. Thus, the watch, who were patrolling the streets nearby, though Trimalchio's house was on fire, and suddenly burst through the doorway, and began to create a rumpus on their own account, to the

accompaniment of water and axes. We seized the opportunity, delivered a few words of apology to Agamemnon, and fled as quickly as if there were a real fire....

There was no torch-bearer in attendance to show us the way as we wandered, nor did the midnight silence hold promise of meeting anyone with a lamp. Besides, we were drunk, and our ignorance of that quarter would have bemused us even during the daytime. So after nearly an hour dragging our bleeding feet over the sharp stones and the broken bits of pottery projecting from the roadway, we were at last rescued by Giton's cleverness. The cautious lad, afraid of losing his way even in broad sunlight, had marked all the posts and columns with a stick of chalk, whose traces gleamed from the darkest shadows, its brilliant whiteness showing us wanderers the way.

Yet even when we reached our lodgings, we were no less anxious, for the old woman had spent the night carousing with her lodgers, and wouldn't have noticed if you'd set her alight. We might have had to spend the night on the doorstep if Trimalchio's wealthy courier had not arrived with his transport-wagons. After making a noise for a while he broke down the house-door and gave us entrance...

What a night that was, gods and goddesses,  
how soft the bed. We clung in warm embrace,  
and, with kisses everywhere, our wandering  
souls communed. Farewell, earthly troubles.  
Thus, my downfall began.

## 80: ASCYLLOS DEPARTS

For, I congratulated myself prematurely. Now while I was overcome, drunk on the wine, my hands shaking, Ascylos, that source of all wickedness, stole my lad away in the night, took him to his own bed, and taking liberties with one who was no comrade of his, who considered it no injury or hid his feelings, fell asleep clutching another man's lover, forgetting all human justice. When I woke and felt around in the bed despoiled of its joy, doubting if there was any loyalty in love, I debated whether to run a sword through them both, and unite sleep with death.

But I came to a wiser resolution, and rousing Giton with my blows, gazed angrily at Ascylos. 'Since you've wickedly broken an agreement forged in friendship, I said, 'gather your things together quickly, find some other place to corrupt.' He made no resistance but, after we'd divided the spoils in all good faith, he said: 'Now then, we'll divide the boy.' I thought this a parting jest, but he drew his sword murderously, and cried: 'You'll not enjoy this treasure, you brood over, alone. Slighted, I meant to carve out my share with this sword.'

So, for my part, I did the same, wrapping my cloak round my arm, and adopting a fighting stance. In the midst of this mad foolishness, the poor lad clasped our knees, and besought us, humbly, in tears, not to let this lowly tavern witness a Theban duel, or stain the sacredness of a beautiful friendship with each other's blood. 'If you must commit your crime,' he cried, 'behold my bare throat, turn your hands on me and wet your blades. I deserve to die, for breaking the oath of friendship.'

At this prayer, we sheathed our swords, and Ascylos spoke first: 'I'll put an end to our quarrel. Let the lad himself follow whom he wishes, and be free at least to choose his comrade.' I, thinking that long-standing familiarity had become a kind of blood-tie, had no fear, on the contrary I accepted the suggestion post haste, and referred the decision to our judge, who not even deliberating, without pretence of delay, immediately rose as I finished speaking, and chose Ascylos as his comrade. I was struck, by his

decision, as if by lightning, and fell on the bed just as I was forgetting my sword, and would have committed suicide, if I had not grudged my enemy that triumph.

Ascyrtos exited proudly with his prize, leaving his companion, whom he'd loved dearly a little while ago, and whose fortunes were so similar to his own, cast down in a strange place.

Friendship's a thing endures while it serves;  
the counter on the board leads a fickle life.  
While luck holds, you dote on me, my friends;  
when it fails, you shamefully turn in flight.

The company acts the farce on stage: one plays  
the father, one the son, and the rich man's here.  
Soon the comic roles are shut away in the book,  
true faces show, while the sham ones disappear.

## **81-82: ENCOLPIUS ALONE**

However I spent little time weeping, afraid lest, among my other ills, Menelaus, the assistant tutor, might find me alone in the lodgings, so I collected my various parcels, and gloomily rented a secluded room near the beach. I shut myself up there for three days, with the perpetual thought of being lonely and despised, beating my breast, already bruised by blows, and, amidst groans of the deepest kind, even repeatedly crying aloud: 'Why has the earth not opened and swallowed me up? Or the waves that rage against even the innocent? I fled from justice, cheated death in the arena, killed my host, only to end up, despite all these titles to courage, a beggar, an exile, in solitary lodgings in a wretched Greek town. And who has condemned me

to this solitude? A youngster, tainted by every excess and, by his own admission too, deserving of exile, free in his lewdness, innately lewd, whose youth was available at the toss of a dice, and whom even those who thought him a boy made use of like a girl.

And what of that other? A lad who on the day when he was to assume the manly toga, put on a dress, persuaded by his mother never to grow up, who played the woman in a slave prison, who embarrassed for money and merely adding to his vices, relinquished old ties of friendship, and shamelessly sold his all, in a single night's transaction, like a street-walker. Now these lovers are tied together all night and, worn out by mutual passion, perhaps mocking my loneliness. But not with impunity. If I don't avenge my injuries with their vile blood, I am no man and no free citizen.'

So saying, I girded on my sword and, so as not to lose the fight through weakness, roused my strength with a decent meal. Next I rushed outside, and ran about the colonnades like a madman. But while I raged with a face like fury, dreaming of nothing but blood and slaughter, repeatedly toying with the hilt of the sword I'd devoted to the task, a soldier saw me, he being either a swindler or a night-prowler, and cried: 'Why now, comrade, of what regiment and company are you?' As I was lying steadfastly about my company and regiment, he said: 'So, do the men in your troop march about in white leather boots?' When my face, with its look of alarm, revealed that I was lying, he ordered me to hand over my weapon, and beware misfortune.

Thus, despoiled, or rather thwarted in my vengeance, I returned to my lodgings, where my rashness gradually faded, and I began to bless the prowler's audacity...

Unhappy Tantalus, by the water, can never drink,  
or grasp the fruit above him, tormented by desire.  
So the rich and great man, seeing all before him,  
who fears starvation, and suffers it dry-mouthed.

Don't put your faith in planning, since Fate has her own way of working...

## 83-84: THE ART GALLERY, EUMOLPUS

Entering an art gallery, later, with a varied collection of wonderful paintings, I saw works by Zeuxis, not yet conquered by the ravages of time, and studied, not without a degree of awe, sketches by Protogenes rivalling nature's reality. But I truly adored that piece by Apelles, the one the Greeks term 'showing one lower leg', for the extremities of the figure were defined so subtly and accurately you might believe he had depicted the soul too.

Here, the eagle was aloft carrying Ganymede, the shepherd-boy of Ida, into the sky; there, handsome Hylas resisted the persistent Naiad. Apollo adorned his unstrung lyre with the newly-created hyacinth flower, condemning his own misthrow of the discus. Amongst these portraits of lovers, even though they were mere paint, I yet cried out, as if in despair: 'So love afflicts even the gods!' Jupiter in his heavens could not find what he desired, so adventured on earth, though he harmed no one. The Nymph who ravished Hylas, would have restrained her passion, if she had believed Hercules might come to dispute her claim. Apollo summoned again the ghost of a boy in a flower, and all enjoyed love's embrace without a rival. But I accepted as a lover a friend harsher than Lycurgus!

Yet behold, as I fought with the empty air, an elderly white-haired man entered the gallery. His face was troubled but seemed to hold the promise of I know not what greatness, though he was not in consequence well turned-out, so that it was readily apparent he was a man of letters, whom rich men customarily despise. He therefore came and stood by me.

'I' he said, 'am a poet, Eumolpus, and one I hope of no mean inspiration if laurel-crowns are to be reckoned, with which regard is accustomed to honour even the unworthy. Why then, you may ask, am I so badly dressed? For that very reason. Admiration for genius never made anyone rich.

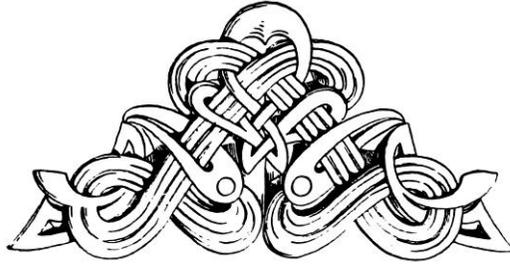
## Part IV

He who trusts the sea, carries off great riches;  
he who follows war is girded about with gold;  
the vile flatterer lies, tipsy, on a purple couch,  
while seducers of wives, gain a reward for sin.  
but eloquence alone, shivers in rags in the cold,  
invoking neglected arts with profitless tongue.

Yes, that is indeed true: those who are hostile to every vice, who go on to tread the straight path in life, are hated, chiefly because of their stricter morals; for who approves of what differs from themselves? And besides, whoever cares only for acquiring wealth never wishes anything mortal to be thought superior to what they possess. So they seduce lovers of literature, whenever they reasonably can, into also regarding it as inferior to cash. Somehow or other poverty is a sister to fine intellect.’

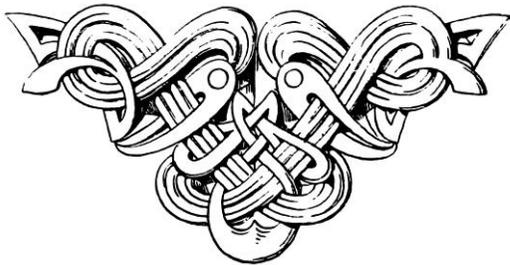
‘I wish,’ I replied, ‘that the enemy to my frugality was so unselfish as to be capable of being seduced. As it is he’s a veteran thief, and more cunning than many a pimp.’

## END OF THE SATYRICON: PART IV



## PART V: EUMOLPUS, ENCOLPIUS, AND GITON

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*'Aeneas at the Court of Latinus'*  
Ferdinand Bol, c. 1661 - c. 1664  
*The Rijksmuseum*

## 85-87: EUMOLPUS AND HIS HOST'S SON



Eumolpus told me: ‘When I was carried off to Asia Minor by a quaestor, on a salary, I was lodged as a guest in Pergamum, where I resided willingly, not only because of that household’s refinement, but because of my host’s son, a most handsome lad. I contrived a plan, unsuspected by the father. Whenever, at table, the seduction of the young and handsome was mentioned, I waxed so vehement, was so unwilling to have my ears profaned by such obscene talk, that the lad’s mother, in particular, considered me a jewel among philosophers. I soon began escorting the boy to the gymnasium, arranged his studies and tutored him, while warning his parents to let no one in the house who might covet his body.

It so happened that we were reclining in the dining-room, because a solemn festival constrained our play while prolonged hilarity had made us too idle to retire. About midnight, I noticed the lad was still awake, so in a cautious whisper I made a vow: “Milady Venus, If I might kiss this boy without his knowing, I’ll give him a pair of doves, tomorrow.” Hearing of this reward for indulgence, the boy proceeded to snore. So I approached the little pretender, and gave him several kisses. Content with this beginning, I rose early the next morning and fulfilled the vow, choosing a pair of doves for the eager lad.

Next night, the like being permitted, I altered my vow, saying: “If I can handle him sinfully without his knowledge, I’ll give him two of the fiercest fighting-cocks.” The lad readily accommodated himself to my wishes and began to fear, I think, lest it was I who might fall asleep, so I humoured him in his anxiety, and indulged my whole body short of the ultimate pleasure. And when daylight came, I brought the gift I had promised, to his delight.

When the third night gave me licence, I stood and whispered in the ear of the restless sleeper: “Immortal gods, If I can but win my way to the complete consummation I wish, in return for such happiness I’ll give the boy the finest Macedonian thoroughbred, on condition he feels nothing.” The lad never slept more soundly. So first I sucked at his juicy nipples, then clung fast in a kiss, then combined all my desires in one. Next morning he was sitting in his room, expecting me to join him. You know how much easier it is to buy doves and cockerels than a fine stallion, and I was somewhat fearful anyway lest so splendid a gift might arouse suspicion concerning my generosity. So I strolled about for a few hours, and on returning to the house gave the lad no more than a kiss. But with his arms about my neck, he gazed about him saying: “Please, master, where’s the horse...?”

This failure to fulfil my promise temporarily denied me the access I’d achieved, but I returned to the assault. For, not many days afterwards, a like feast brought about a similar situation. While the father was snoring, I began begging the boy to be friends once more, that is to allow himself to be rendered happy, and all the other things that swelling passion dictates. But he was plainly angered and would say only: “Go to sleep, or I’ll tell father right away.” But nothing is too hard for the persistent to extort, and I still insinuated myself, and took my scarcely-resisted pleasure, he saying: “I’ll wake father!” all the while. Though not displeased by my dubious attentions, he afterwards complained for some time that he was being deceived, and was mocked at and abused by his fellow-pupils, to whom he had boasted of my wealth: “Yet,” he said, “you’ll see I’ll not behave like you. If you wish, do it again.”

So with all resentment truly laid aside, I returned to favour with the lad, and having enjoyed his kindness, slipped off to sleep. But the boy was not content with a single repetition, being fully mature and his youth eager for submission. So he roused me from slumber and enquired: “Do you want to?” And it was certainly no unpleasant duty. At any rate, with us breathing hard and slippery with sweat, he got what he wanted, and I fell asleep again, pleasantly wearied. Yet in under an hour he was nudging me with his hand, and crying: “Why don’t we do it?” Then I exploded vehemently at being disturbed so often, and threw his own back words back at him: “Go to sleep, or I’ll tell your father, right away!”...

## 88: EUMOLPUS, ON THE DESIRE FOR RICHES

Encouraged by Eumolpus' discourse, I proceeded to consult his knowledge regarding the antiquity of the paintings and some of the narrative elements which were unknown to me, and at the same time to discuss the decadence of the present age, in which the fine arts had so deteriorated, painting being one, of which barely a vestige remained.

'The desire for riches began this decline,' he said. 'In former times, when naked excellence pleased, the noble arts flourished, and mankind made great efforts to prevent anything remaining hidden that might benefit posterity. So Democritus extracted the juice from every plant, and spent his life experimenting to reveal the virtues of sticks and stones. Eudoxus grew old on the heights of the tallest of mountains, to comprehend the motion of the stars and the heavens, while Chrysippus would clear his mind with a triple dose of hellebore to improve his powers of invention. If you turn to sculpture, Lysippus died of starvation brooding over the lines of a single statue, and Myron who almost captured the spirits of human beings and wild creatures in bronze, left no heir behind. Yet we, immersed in drinking and whoring, cannot venture to understand even the arts that have been developed, but slander the past, and teach and learn nothing but vice.

Where now is the dialectic? Or astronomy? Where is the civilised path of wisdom? Who visits a temple and vows to achieve eloquence, or attain the fount of philosophy? No one asks even for common sense or decent health, and before they even touch the Capitol's threshold one is promising an offering if he can only bury some rich kinsman, another if he can uncover buried treasure, another if he can safely come upon thirty millions.

Even the senators, our standard-bearers for the right and good, only vow the Capitol a thousand pounds weight in gold, and adorn Jupiter with gifts, so no one need feel ashamed of lusting after wealth. Thus, it is no wonder the art of painting has declined, when gods and men think a gold ingot finer than anything those crazed Greeks, Apelles and Phidias, ever created.

## **89-90: EUMOLPUS VERSIFIES ON THE FALL OF TROY**

But I see your whole attention is drawn to that painting depicting the fall of Troy. I'll try and explain the work in verse:

It was already the tenth summer of anxious fear,  
for those gloomy Phrygians, under siege, while  
faith in Calchas the seer hung by a dusky thread,  
when, at Delphi's command, the wooded peaks  
of Ida were ravaged, the trees felled, for planks  
to shape the menacing figure of the great Horse.  
Within it, space was left to create an enormous  
cavern to hold an army. Here warriors hid who  
resented the ten-year battle; the baleful Greeks,  
filling every corner, lay concealed in their gift.  
O, my country, we thought the thousand ships  
repelled, the land freed from war: yet the words  
incised there, were composed by Sinon, a mind  
ever powerful for evil, to strengthen his deceit!

Now the crowd, freely, as if released from war,  
hastens from the gates to worship, cheeks wet  
with weeping; joy brings tears to fearful minds,  
which terror had denied. Now Laocoon, priest  
of Neptune, his hair unbound, rouses all to cry  
aloud. Now, drawing back his spear, he scored  
the Horse's belly, but fate restrained his hand,  
the spear rebounded, giving credence to fraud.  
Yet again he nerved his feeble hand, sounding  
the hollow flanks with an axe. Those warriors,  
within, grimaced and, whilst the wooden mass  
reverberated it breathed with a fear not its own.  
The captive warriors who would capture Troy  
waged total war by means of a new stratagem.

Behold fresh portents: where the high ridge of  
Tenedos fills the waves, swollen billows rise,  
and the broken water echoes, far less tranquilly  
than oars sound deep in the silences of night,  
when vessels plough the sea, and the marbled  
surface stirs and swishes loud under the keels.  
Looking back, we see the flood, bearing two  
writhing serpents on towards the rocky shore,  
their tumid fronts like tall ships hurling foam  
from their sides. Their tails lash, their crests

free of the water blaze like their eyes, bright  
light kindles the waves, echoing to their hiss.  
Our minds were stupefied; the priests stood  
wreathed for sacrifice, with Laocoon's two  
sons in Phrygian garb. At once, the gleaming  
serpents entwined them. The lads cast their  
little hands to their faces yet neither selfishly,  
each aiding his brother: in such mutual love,  
death took them only fearing for each other.  
Behold, the father, powerless to help, added  
one more body to those of his sons, for those  
snakes, gorging on death, attacked the priest  
and dragged him to the ground. So, the seer  
lies, a sacrifice, before his altars, thrashing  
at the earth. So, doomed Troy first lost her  
gods, through profanation of their worship.

Now the moon, at full, raised her white glow  
and with flaring torch led on the lesser stars,  
while the Greeks unbarred the Horse, pouring  
forth on Priam's sons, drowned in darkness  
and in wine. Their generals tried their steel,  
as a steed loosed from a Thessalian chariot  
tosses his head, and shakes his mane abroad.  
Weapons drawn, brandishing shields, so they

commence the fight. One slaughters Trojans  
heavy with drink, merging sleep with death;  
another lights torches from their altar-fires,  
invoking the flames of Troy against herself...?

Some people who were walking among the colonnades threw stones at Eumolpus as he recited. But he, who took this as a tribute to his genius, covered his head and fled the temple. I feared lest he called out to me, as if to a poet, and so I, following his flight, reached the shore, where as soon as we were out of range: ‘Tell me,’ I cried, ‘what power does this disease hold over you? You have been loitering with me less than two hours and your speech has been more poetry than human converse. No wonder people pursue you with stones. I’ll load my pockets with stones too, and whenever you start to depart from your senses I’ll let some blood from your skull.’

His expression changed, as he replied: ‘My young friend, it’s not the first time I’ve been so fortunate. Indeed, whenever I go to the theatre to recite something I frequently receive such unearned praise. But I’ve no wish to quarrel with you also, so I’ll abstain from such nourishment for the rest of the day.’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘if you can renounce your madness for a day, we’ll dine together...’ So I entrusted a porter with instructions regarding our supper....

## **91: RECONCILIATION WITH GITON**

Near the baths, I came upon Giton, with towels and back-scrappers, hugging the wall, sad and embarrassed. You could see he was no willing slave. Enabling me to catch his eye, he turned, his face melting with pleasure, and said: ‘Forgive me, brother. Where there are no weapons, I can speak freely. Take me from that blood-stained bandit, and punish me, your penitent judge, as cruelly as you wish. It would be consolation enough, in my wretchedness, to die at your command.’

I told him to suppress his lamentations, lest someone overhear our conversation, and leaving Eumolpus behind – still reciting a poem in the bath – I extracted Giton via a dark squalid exit, and flew with him to my lodgings. There, shutting the door tight, I embraced him warmly, rubbing my face against his cheek which was wet with tears. Neither could find voice, for a while; for the dear lad's breast shook with endless sobbing.

'O, how shameful it is, that I love you though you left me, and that no scar appears on my breast, when the wound was so deep. What excuse have you for granting your love to a stranger? Did I deserve such injury?' Realising I loved him, he began to raise his head a little. 'I laid the decision regarding our love before no other judge,' I said, 'But I make no complaint, I'll forget all about it, now, if you add loyalty to penitence.' While I poured out all this, amidst groans and tears, Giton wiped his face on his cloak, and said: 'I ask you, Encolpius, I appeal to the faithfulness of your memory: did I leave you, or did you give me up? For, indeed I confess, I declare openly: on seeing two men armed, I sided with the stronger.' I pressed my lips to that breast filled with wisdom, put my arms round his neck, and hugged him close, to show plainly that he had returned to my good graces, and that our friendship was now renewed in perfect trust.

## **92-94: DINNER WITH EUMOLPUS**

It was already quite dark, and the woman had seen to our orders for dinner, when Eumolpus knocked at the door. I asked: 'How many are you?' and proceeded, as I spoke, to look cautiously through a crack in the door, lest Ascyrtos had arrived, and alone. On seeing that Eumolpus was the sole visitor, I let him in at once.

He threw himself on the couch and seeing Giton before his eyes, waiting at table, he wagged his head, saying: 'Praised be Ganymede. Tonight should be good.' I was not impressed with so proprietary an opening, fearful lest I'd welcomed another Ascyrtos as our companion. Eumolpus continued in the same vein, saying, when the lad brought him a drink: 'I'd rather have you than all those bathers,' and greedily drinking the cup dry,

claimed he had never drunk anything sourer. ‘For I was nearly set upon while bathing, merely because I tried to go about the baths reciting verse to those in the water, and after I’d been ejected from the baths, just as I was from the theatre, I proceeded to search round every corner shouting for you, Encolpius, in a loud voice. And from another direction a naked youth who’d lost his clothes was clamouring indignantly and no less noisily for Giton!

The boys mocked me, most impudently, as if I were mad, while round him a large crowd gathered, applauding and admiring him most reverently. For he had such a prick at his groin you’d have thought the man an appendage to his phallus. O youth, designed for work: I believe he could start one day, and not finish till next! Of course he immediately found a friend, some Roman knight or other, a base fellow they said, who dressed the errant in his own clothes and took him home, no doubt to enjoy his great good fortune alone; while I would never even have regained my own clothes from the cunning attendant, if I had not found someone to vouch for me. So much greater the benefit in stirring groins than wits! As Eumolpus was speaking, my expression kept changing, finding the state of that enemy, Ascylos, hilarious, while frowning at his good fortune. Anyway, I still remained silent, as if ignorant of who he was, and laid out the menu for dinner...

Eumolpus expounded: ‘What is good for us, we consider worthless, while our minds are intent on what is not, delighting in things that are harmful.

Pheasants sought from Colchis,  
so hard to procure, and African  
guinea-fowl, tickle the palate,  
but white geese and mallards  
taste simply plebeian. Parrotfish,  
from far, are highly-considered,  
as are the sandy Syrtes’ spoils,

if garnered from a shipwreck;  
yet mullet now is wearisome.  
So the mistress eclipses the wife,  
so rose-petals yield to cinnamon;  
what we chase after's most prized.'

I said: 'Where's your promise, not to make verse today? At least, on your honour, spare us that; we who have never stoned you. If a single person drinking in this same building with us, even scents the name of poet, they'll rouse the neighbourhood, and slaughter us for that very reason. Be merciful, reflect on the gallery and the baths.'

Giton, the gentlest of lads, rebuked my speaking thus, insulting my elders by so forgetting my duty as to spoil the dinner, I had given out of kindness, with invective; and Giton offered other advice, most tolerant and modest, and worthy of his lovely self. 'Happy the mother who gave birth to such a son,' cried Eumolpus, 'blessed be virtue. Beauty and wisdom have formed a rare conjunction. And don't think your words have been wasted, for in me you've found a lover. I'll sing your praises in verse. I'll be your tutor and guardian, and follow you, even where you don't wish it. Encolpius will feel no injury, he loves another.'

That wretched soldier who took my sword had even done Eumolpus a good turn; otherwise I'd now have quenched my anger against Ascylos in Eumolpus' blood. Giton realised this, and left the room on the pretext of fetching water, cooling my wrath by a tactful departure. As I grew a little less warm, I said: 'Eumolpus, rather than harbour such hopes I'd even suffer you to speak in verse. I'm easily angered and you're lustful: understand, such characters don't suit each other. Consider me a madman then, yield to my insanity; that is, be out the door, and quick!'

Dumbfounded by my attack, without seeking to know why I was angry, Eumolpus left the room in a trice, and banged the door, locking me in, much to my surprise, and running off with the key to find Giton. Shut in there, I had just decided to kill myself by hanging, and had tied my belt to

the frame of the bed that stood by the door, and was slipping the noose round my neck, when the door was unlocked again, and Eumolpus and Giton entered, summoning me to life from the very gates of death. Giton indeed, raised from grief to raving madness, shouted aloud, and pushing me with both hands threw me on the bed.

‘Encolpius,’ he cried, ‘you’re wrong if you think you could ever find death before me. I thought of it first; I looked for a sword in Ascyrtos’ lodgings. If I’d not found you again, I’d have thrown myself from a cliff. And to show you that death is not far from those that seek him, behold in turn what you wished me to behold.’ Saying this, he snatched a razor from Eumolpus’ hired man, and drawing it twice across his throat fell at our feet. Exclaiming in horror, I rushed to him as he fell, seeking the path to death with the same blade. But Giton was not marked by the least trace of a wound, nor did I feel any pain. The razor was blunt, and provided with a sheath, and deliberately so, to grant Eumolpus’ pupils a barber’s courage. Which is why the hired man had not been alarmed when the blade was snatched, nor had Eumolpus intervened in our death scene.

## **95-96: A QUARREL WITH THE OTHER LODGERS**

While this lovers’ tale was being performed, one of the lodgers entered with part of our little dinner, and contemplating us, lying there wallowing in the dirt, asked: ‘Are you drunk, fugitives, or both? Who set that bed up there, what do all these furtive struggles mean? By heavens, you intend to flit by night altogether, rather than pay for your room. But not unpunished. I’ll have you know these apartments are not some widow woman’s, they belong to Marcus Mannicius.’

‘Threats indeed?’ cried Eumolpus, at the same time striking the man in the face with the all the force of his hand. He in turn, with a cry, hurled a little earthenware jar, empty since all the guests had drunk from it, at Eumolpus’ head, breaking the skin of his forehead, and flung himself from the room. Eumolpus, not one to suffer insult, snatched up a wooden candlestick, followed the lodger out, and took revenge for his bruised brow

with a hail of blows. All the household appeared with a crowd of drunken lodgers. I seized the chance to punish Eumolpus, by shutting him out and, lacking a quarrelsome rival of course, had both room and night to myself.

Meanwhile Eumolpus, excluded, was thumped by the lodgers and the cooks, and one thrust a spit of sizzling meat at his eyes, another snatched a fork from the meat and took up a fighting stance. A bleary-eyed hag was foremost, wrapped in the dirtiest shawl, tottering on an uneven pair of clogs, dragging a dog of enormous size by a chain, which she set on Eumolpus. But the candlestick defended him from every danger.

We watched it all through a hole in the folding doors, made when the door-handle was broken a short time before, and I longed to see him thrashed. But Giton, exercising his compassion, voted to open the door and help him in his peril. I, hardened as yet by indignation, unable to contain myself, rapped that compassionate head hard with my clenched fist. He collapsed on the bed in tears, while I put each eye to the hole in turn, and was savouring Eumolpus' injuries as one does a tasty dish, commending their prolongation, when the manager of the apartment-block, Bargates, his dinner having been disturbed, was carried into the midst of the quarrel by two litter-bearers; for he had gouty feet. But as he was uttering a long peroration on the subject of drunkards and fugitives, in furious and vulgar language, he recognised Eumolpus, crying: 'O most learned of poets, is that you? You, you worthless servants, away with you swiftly, and keep your hands from quarrelling, but, Eumolpus, my mistress disdains me. So, if you love me, curse her in verse, and make her ashamed.'

## 97-98: ASCYLtos ARRIVES IN PURSUIT OF GITON

While Eumolpus was speaking privately to Bargates, a public crier accompanied by a municipal servant entered the house with no small crowd of people, shook a torch that yielded more smoke than light, and proclaimed: ‘Lost recently in the public baths, a boy of about sixteen years of age, with curly hair, meek and attractive in appearance, answers to the name of Giton. A reward of ten gold pieces will be paid to anyone willing to return him, or indicate his whereabouts.’

Not far from the crier, stood Ascylos, dressed in motley colours, holding out the reward on a silver dish to demonstrate his honesty. I ordered Giton to slide under the bed at once, and hook his hands and feet round the straps that held the mattress to the frame and then while stretched out under the bed, as Ulysses once clung to the ram, evade the searchers grasp. Giton obeyed without hesitation, and in a moment had slipped his hands into the webbing, surpassing even Ulysses at his own tricks. Not wishing to incur suspicion, I stuffed clothes under the bedding, arranging them in the shape of a lone man, about my height.

Meanwhile Ascylos, as he made the round of all the rooms with the law-officer, came to mine, and his hopes began to rise on finding the door tightly bolted. The municipal servant took an axe to the fittings and loosened the bolts from their catches. I fell at Ascylos’ feet, and begged him, by the memory of our alliance, and the troubles we had shared, to at least extend his friendship. And to gain further belief in my sham prayer, I said: ‘Ascylos, I know you’re here to kill me, or why bring an axe? Well slake your anger: see, I offer you my neck, shed my blood, the blood you seek with this pretence of a search.’

Ascylos contained his resentment, and declared that he wanted nothing but his own fugitive slave, that he possessed no wish for any man to die, least of all a suppliant whom he loved most fondly now their deadly quarrel was past. But the municipal servant was more resolute, and taking a

cane from the innkeeper swished it about under the bed and poked at everything, even the cracks in the walls. Giton, twisting about to avoid the stick, held his breath fearfully, his face among the very bedbugs.

Though the intruders departed, the shattered bolts left the door open to anyone, and Eumolpus now burst in, much perturbed, crying: 'The reward is mine! I mean to pursue the crier as he goes on his way, betray you, as you richly merit, and reveal that Giton's in your hands.' He persisted, so I fell to my knees, begging him not to slay a dying man: 'You might do well to be excited if you had indeed found the lost one, as it is the lad has vanished in the crowd, and I've no idea where he is. On my honour, Eumolpus, retrieve the lad and you can give him to Ascylos, if you like.'

I had barely persuaded him to believe me, when Giton, unable to hold his breath longer, suddenly sneezed thrice till the bed shook. At this commotion, Eumolpus, turning, wished the hidden Giton good health. Pulling away the mattress, he saw such a Ulysses as even a hungry Cyclops might have spared. He quickly turned on me: 'What's this, you thief? You daren't tell the truth even though I'd caught you. If the god who rules human affairs had not wrung evidence from the lad clinging there, I'd still be searching the taverns, a man deceived.'

Giton was far more relaxed than I. He first treated the cut on Eumolpus' brow, with spiders' webs soaked in oil. He then exchanged Eumolpus' torn clothes for a short cloak of his own, embraced him and, seeing his anger softening, relieved his pain with kisses, saying: 'In your hands, dearest father; we are entirely in your hands. If you love your Giton, you surely wish to save him. O that the cruel fire might swallow me alone, or the wintry sea engulf me! I am the object of all evil, I am the cause. If I perished, you might, though enemies, be reconciled. 'Ah,' replied Eumolpus:

'Always, everywhere, I've existed thus,  
consuming each passing day as though  
the light would never again return....'

## 99-100: ENCOLPIUS AND EUMOLPUS, RECONCILED, TAKE SHIP

Weeping profusely, I begged and prayed Eumolpus to be friends with me again, too: for a true lover should never be possessed by insane jealousy. At the same time, I said, I would do nothing further, by way of word or deed, that might offend him. Only he, as a master of true culture, must erase all irritation from his mind, leaving no trace. I recited: ‘In wild, harsh places, the snow lies long, but when the earth gleams tamed by the plough, the light frost melts while we speak. So anger lays siege to savage minds, but passes the man of learning by.’

‘So you can see that what you say is true,’ cried Eumolpus, ‘behold, I banish anger with a kiss. Therefore, good luck be with us, hurry with your packs, and follow me, or lead on, if you’d rather.’ He was still speaking, when there was a knock at the door, and a sailor with a shaggy beard stood on the threshold. ‘Eumolpus,’ he said, ‘you’re lingering here, as if you didn’t know the time of day.’ We all rose, without delay, and Eumolpus ordered his paid servant, who had already been asleep for some time, to exit with the baggage. Giton and I went aboard, and stowed away all we had brought for the voyage, while asking a blessing of the heavens.

Later, I reflected: ‘I’m troubled because the lad pleases a stranger. Why should he not? Are not the finest things Nature creates common to all? The sun lights everything. The moon, with the innumerable stars her companions, leads even wild creatures to dine. What can we pronounce finer than water? Yet it flows for all the world. Is love alone then to be stolen rather than enjoyed? Yet, against that, in truth, I only care to possess what people are jealous of. One rival, and an old man, is no problem; even if he wants to try something, his heavy breathing will give him away.’

Having made these points, without much confidence, and hiding from conflicting thoughts, I proceeded to bury my head in my cloak, feigning sleep.

## 101-102: ENCOLPIUS AND GITON SEEK TO ESCAPE LICHAS AND TRYPHAENA

Yet, as if fate were out to thwart my intention, a voice on deck suddenly groaned out: ‘So he tricked me?’ in a man’s tones, curiously familiar to my ears, which gave my heart palpitations. And then a woman’s voice, roused by similar indignation, cried even more vehemently: ‘If only the gods would deliver Giton into my hands, what a fine welcome I’d give that fugitive.’

The shock of hearing these unexpected sounds drove all the blood from us. I, in particular, feeling like a man hunted down in some nightmare, was a long time finding my voice, then tugged at Eumolpus’s robe with trembling hand, just as he was falling asleep, and whispered: ‘On your honour, father, do you know who owns this ship and who the passengers are?’ Irritated by being disturbed, he replied: ‘Was this why you chose the quietest corner on deck, to stop us getting any rest? And anyhow, what does it matter to you, if I say that Lichas of Taranto is the master of this ship, which is also carrying Tryphaena who’s bound for Taranto?’

I shuddered, struck by this lightning bolt, and bared my throat, crying: ‘You’ve done for me, Fate, once and for all!’ Indeed, Giton, who was sprawling over me, had already fainted. Then the sweat broke out on us, and recalled us to life. I clasped Eumolpus by the knees, saying: ‘Have mercy on the dying, and by our bond of shared learning, help us; death awaits, and if you don’t prevent it, may well prove welcome.’

Overwhelmed by this appeal, Eumolpus swore, by all the gods and goddesses, he had no idea what was happening, and had no malicious intent in sharing this voyage with us, which he had done with perfect honesty and in absolute good faith, a voyage he had planned some time before. ‘Is there some deceit here?’ he said ‘What treacherous Hannibal then, is sailing with us. Lichas of Taranto is a most decent man, not only owner and master of this vessel, but trades in property and slaves also. He’s carrying a cargo consigned to market. This then is the cruel Cyclops, the arch-pirate, to whom we owe our passage; and, in addition, there’s Tryphaena, the loveliest of women, who sails here and there for the sake of pleasure.’

‘It’s them we’re fleeing,’ cried Giton, and immediately went on to explain the source of their hatred for us, and our imminent danger, till Eumolpus began to tremble. Troubled, and short of advice, Eumolpus commanded us to offer our thoughts. ‘Imagine we’ve entered Cyclops’ cave,’ he said, ‘we must seek an exit, unless we leap overboard and free ourselves from every danger.’ ‘No,’ Giton replied, ‘we must urge the helmsman to sail the boat to some harbour, promising a reward of course, and telling him your friend can’t endure the sea, and is at his last gasp. You can hide your deceit behind a troubled look and a tearful face, so the helmsman’s heart will be moved and he’ll indulge you.’

Eumolpus cried that this was impossible: ‘Large vessels can’t enter landlocked coves, and it lacks credibility that our friend should collapse so quickly. Add to this, that Lichas may well desire to visit the sick man out of kindness. You can see what a fine turn we’d do ourselves, by leading the master to his own fugitives. And suppose the ship could be diverted during a long voyage, and Lichas, after all, shuns the patient’s bed, how could we leave the ship without anyone noticing? Cover our heads, or leave them free? Cover them, and everyone will want to lend the poor devil a hand. Leave them free and it’s nothing less than advertising our ruse.’

‘True,’ I said, ‘and anyway I’d rather take refuge in boldness, slide down the rope into the gig, cut the painter and leave the rest to fortune. I won’t drag Eumolpus into danger. It’s not fair to load an innocent person with another’s troubles. I’m happy to rely on chance.’ That’s not a bad plan,’ cried Eumolpus, ‘if you could set off without anyone noticing your departure, especially the helmsman, who’s on watch all night long, noting the passage of the constellations too. Of course you might cheat his unsleeping eye, if you seek to escape via another part of the ship, but you’d have to let yourselves down from the stern, by the helm itself. Moreover, Encolpius, I’m amazed it hasn’t occurred to you that there’s a sailor posted on the gig, forever on duty, night and day, and you can’t get rid of him except by killing him, or ejecting him by force. Ask of your own boldness whether that can be done.’

As for my accompanying you, I don’t shirk any danger that offers hope of survival. But I suppose even you wouldn’t want to imperil your lives, idly, for no reason. Consider then, whether you approve of this. I’ll

roll you up in two bales, rope them, and put them among my clothes as luggage, leaving the ends open a little of course, so you can breathe and eat. Then I'll raise the cry that my slaves have jumped overboard in the night, for fear of worse punishment. Then, once we've arrived in harbour, I'll carry you out like baggage, without arousing suspicion.

'What,' I cried, 'tie us up as if we were solid lumps, without bowels to trouble us. Like things that never sneeze or snore? Or because Cleopatra's trick once succeeded? But suppose we could endure a single day tied up like that: what if we had to stay there longer, because of a calm or bad weather? What would we do? Clothes tied up too long get creased as well, and papers bundled up lose their shape. Are young fellows who never worked in their lives to suffer rags and ropes like statues? Still we have to find some path to salvation. Reflect on this idea. Eumolpus, being a literary man, is sure to have some ink. Let's use this means to change our appearance, dyeing ourselves, hair, nails and all. Then we'll stand ready to serve you, with pleasure, like Ethiopian slaves, without being unreasonably tormented, and our altered hue will deceive our enemies.'

'Why not?' said Giton, 'Circumcise us too so we resemble Jews, pierce our ears to imitate Arabs, and chalk our faces till Gaul thinks us sons of her own: as if colour alone could change our shapes, as if a multitude of things must not harmonise, in every respect, to establish such a deception! Even supposing the stain on our faces survives for some time; and never a drop of water spots our skins, and no ink clings to our clothes, though it frequently sticks to us like glue; tell me, can we make our lips swell, revoltingly, as well? Or frizz our hair with curling-tongs? Or slash our foreheads, leaving them scarred? Or walk bow-legged? Or fold our ankles towards the ground? Or grow our beards in a foreign fashion? Using false colours stains the body without altering its form. Listen, here's the madness that occurs to me; let's tie our heads in our clothes, and drown ourselves in the deep.'

## **104: EUMOLPUS DEVISES A RUSE**

‘The gods and mankind forbid you to end your lives in such vile fashion,’ cried Eumolpus, ‘better to take the advice I now offer. My hired slave, as you know from seeing his razor, is a barber. Let him shave both your heads right now, and not only those but your eyebrows as well. I’ll then mark some expert lettering on your brows, so you look like branded slaves. The markings will divert suspicion amongst the inquisitive, and distort your appearance with those shadows of punishment.’ We were not slow to adopt the ruse, and walked cautiously to the bulwarks where we offered our heads to the barber to be shorn.

Eumolpus now covered both our foreheads with large lettering, smearing the usual signs of a fugitive slave over our whole faces, with a generous hand. By ill-luck, however, one of the passengers, who was heavily seasick, chanced to lean over the side to relieve his nausea, and saw the barber, in the moonlight, about his untimely work. He cursed it for an evil omen, as it looked like the sailors’ last offering to ward off shipwreck, and hurtled back to his cabin. We, pretending not to heed the sick man’s curse, returned gloomily to our places, lay down in silence, and passed the remaining hours of night in restless sleep.

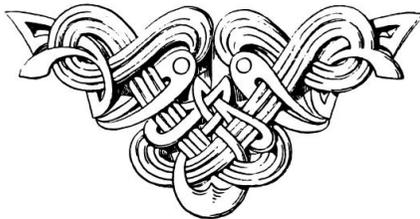
## **END OF THE SATYRICON: PART V**





## **PART VI: ABOARD LICHAS' SHIP; THE SHIPWRECK**

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*'Shipwreck off a Rocky Coast'*  
Wijnand Nuijen, c. 1837  
*The Rijksmuseum*

## 104-105: ENCOLPIUS AND GITON ARE REVEALED



Lichas, waking, cried: ‘I thought I heard Priapus in my dream, saying: “Encolpius, whom you seek, as I know, has been brought aboard your ship.”’ Tryphaena, beside him, shuddered and replied: ‘You’d think we’d shared our sleep, for I also dreamed that a statue of Neptune, one I saw in a gallery at Baiae, told me: “You’ll find Giton on Lichas’ vessel.”’ But Eumolpus, who was there, broke in: ‘Well that shows you Epicurus was a man divine, since he condemns such laughable illusions in a most witty manner...’

However, Lichas, after praying Tryphaena’s dream might prove harmless, said: ‘What prevents us searching the vessel now, lest we seem to be scorning the gods’ purposes?’ Suddenly, the man who’d caught us at our furtive tricks the night before, whose name was Hesus, proclaimed: ‘So who were those fellows being shaved by moonlight, a bad precedent by heavens! I’ve heard indeed that no man alive should shed hair or fingernail on board ship, unless the wind and waves are troubled.’ Alarmed at this speech, Lichas flared: ‘So, has someone been trimming their hair aboard ship, and in the dead of night too? Drag the wretches out here, and quickly, so I may know who should expiate this crime and save the voyage.’

‘Ah,’ said Eumolpus, ‘I commanded it. Not in order to perpetrate anything ill-omened myself, who am making the very same passage, but because those rascals had long and filthy hair; indeed, not wanting to make a prison of the ship or the signs of their branding to be covered by hair, so preventing them being visible to all eyes, I ordered these convicts freed from squalor. Amongst other things, after they’d squandered my money on a certain lady friend of ours, I hauled them from her the other night, drenched in wine and scent. In fact, they still stink of the remains of my inheritance.’

Nevertheless, to appease the guardian spirit of the vessel, it was decided that we each receive forty lashes. So, without delay, the furious sailors advanced on us with rope-ends, ready to placate said guardian with our vile blood. And indeed I withstood three full blows with Spartan nobility. But Giton shrieked so loudly the moment he was touched, that Tryphaena's ears were filled with his familiar cry. Not only was the mistress alarmed, but all her maids were drawn to the well-known voice, and ran to this victim of a flogging. Already the sailors were disarmed by Giton's wondrous beauty and, even without speaking, he'd appealed to his tormentors, when the maids screamed as one: 'It's Giton, Giton, stay your hands, you monsters; help, lady, it's Giton!'

Tryphaena had already given ear, convinced on her own account, and flew immediately to the lad. Lichas, meanwhile, who knew me very well, rushed forwards, as if he had heard my voice too and, without looking at my hands and face, but, gazing down, promptly applied a hand to my obliging groin, saying: 'Hello, Encolpius.' It's no wonder that Ulysses' old nurse, Euryclea, found the scar that revealed his identity after twenty years, when Lichas, the shrewdest of men, so cleverly hit upon the one means of discovering a fugitive whose every feature of face and body was obscured.

Tryphaena poured out her tears over our supposed branding, believing the marks on our foreheads were real tokens of punishment, and began to enquire, ever so gently, as to which prison might have interrupted our wandering, and who might have laid so savage a hand on us in punishment, though, she said, slaves who ran away, having come to loathe their own happiness, might well deserve a measure of ill-treatment.

## **106-107: EUMOLPUS TRIES TO MEDIATE**

But Lichas leaped forward, transported by anger, crying: 'O woman, you simpleton; as if those marks could ever be the scars raised by a branding-iron! I only wish their foreheads had been inscribed with such a signature; some consolation would be left to us. As it is we're assailed by skilful actors playing a farce, and mocked by hand-drawn lettering.'

Tryphaena wished him to be merciful, not having lost all her passion for Giton, but Lichas still remembered how his wife had been seduced, and the insults he'd received in Hercules' colonnade, and with a troubled look he proclaimed vehemently: 'O Tryphaena, you'll admit, I think, that the immortal gods control human affairs, for they led these evil-doers unaware on board my ship, and equally they warned us of what they'd done in a confirmatory dream. So, look, how can we possibly pardon those whom heaven itself has delivered up to us for punishment? As for myself, I'm not bloodthirsty, but I fear, if I'm merciful, I'll suffer.'

Tryphaena changed her mind after such an appeal to religion and declined to interfere in the punishment, on the contrary even agreeing with this most justified act of revenge. She had been as gravely vexed by insult as Lichas, since her badge of shame had been revealed in public.

Eumolpus now stepped in: 'I am, I believe, a man of some standing, and these lads previously chose me for a purpose, begging me to effect a reconciliation for them with their old friends, at some moment or other. Unless you imagine the young men fell into this situation inadvertently, even though every traveller seeks as a first priority someone dependable, like myself, in whom they can trust? So unbend minds softened by their desire to make amends, and let them travel freely without harm to their destination. Even a harsh and unforgiving master will forgo his severity if penitence returns his fugitive slaves to him; as men spare an enemy who surrenders. What more can you seek or desire? These frank and honest young men lie prostrate here, in your sight, as suppliants and, what is more important on both sides, they were once bound to you in close friendship. By heavens, if they'd embezzled your money, or hurt you by betraying a confidence, you might well rest content with the punishment you've seen inflicted. Behold, servitude written on their foreheads, and their honest faces advertising the voluntary nature of their sentence.'

Lichas interrupted this plea for mercy: 'Don't confuse the issue, let's consider each thing in its place. And first of all, if they're here by choice, why shave the hair from their heads? Whoever disguises himself, is planning some ruse, not making amends. Then, if they were devising some act of grace with you as mediator, why did you do everything you could to hide them? It's apparent from this that the rascals fell into the situation by

chance, and you sought some means of deflecting the force of our displeasure. When you make yourself unpopular by claiming they're frank and honest, mind you don't weaken your case by being too presumptuous. What should injured parties do, if the guilty hasten to their punishment? They were indeed once our friends: therefore they merit harsher treatment; for we call someone who injures a stranger a brigand, but one who injures their friends is little less than a parricide.'

Eumolpus halted this unjust speech, saying: 'I gather there's nothing more against these young men than their cutting their hair at night: by that reasoning it might seem they chanced upon the ship, rather than arriving on purpose. But I want what happened to reach your ears simply as it occurred. They wanted to relieve their heads of that useless and irritating weight of hair before they embarked, but a rising wind postponed the planned solution. They had no idea it even mattered where they carried out what they'd intended, being ignorant of the laws and superstitions of the sea.'

'Why shave their heads,' said Lichas, 'to make amends? Unless, of course, it's that bald heads excite greater compassion? Though why must we seek the truth through a third party? What have you to say for yourself, you rascal? What fiery salamander singed your eyebrows? Which god did you vow your hair to? Answer me, you little poisoner!'

## 108: WARRING FACTIONS

Terrified of being punished, I was struck dumb with fear, too disturbed to find words to say in such an open and shut case, and we were not in a position to say or do anything, both on account of our heads being shamefully ugly, devoid of hair, and our eyebrows as bald as our foreheads. And when a wet sponge was wiped over our tearful faces, smearing every feature with black ink of course, and covering our faces with a sooty cloud, their anger was turned to loathing. Eumolpus cried out that he could not allow anyone to disfigure honest young men, in a manner so against law and natural justice, cutting short the angry sailors' threats not only with

argument but by force. His paid servant and one or two of the most ineffectual passengers stood by him in his protest, though offering him moral support rather than any power to assist.

I, for my part, shirked nothing in my defence, shaking my fist in Tryphaena's face, proclaiming loudly in a clear voice that I'd take my hands to her unless she avoided harming Giton, she being a wicked woman and the one person aboard who deserved a flogging. Lichas' anger blazed more fiercely at my boldness, annoyed that I had relinquished my own cause to support another's. Tryphaena raged no less hotly and abusively, causing the whole company aboard to split into separate factions. On our side, the hired slave of a barber distributed his blades and armed himself, on the other, Tryphaena's slaves were ready with bare fists, nor was the clamour of her army of maidservants lacking, the helmsman alone swearing that he would cease steering the ship, if the madness, stirred up at the whim of a pack of scoundrels, did not end. Nonetheless, the fury of the fight still refused to diminish, our enemies seeking revenge, we to save our lives. Many collapsed on both sides without fatal result, still more, incurring bloody wounds, retired on foot as if from a real battle, and yet neither side's anger abated.

Then Giton, most courageously, placing his razor dangerously near his private parts, threatened to mutilate himself, being the cause of our many misfortunes, Tryphaena only averting the dreadful deed by her heartfelt efforts. I raised a barber's knife to my throat several times, no more meaning to kill myself than Giton intended to do what he'd threatened. Though he filled the tragic role more recklessly, since he knew he was holding that blunt razor with which he had once feigned to cut his throat.

Both sides were drawn up in battle array, and it was apparent the fight which followed would be an uncommon one, when the helmsman, with some difficulty, exhorted Tryphaena to call a truce by acting as herald, with a staff. Promises were given and accepted in the usual manner, as she waved an olive-branch taken from the ship's tutelary figurehead, and ventured to come over and declaim to us:

‘What madness then has turned peace to war?  
What have we done to merit this? No Paris  
carries wronged Menelaus’ bride aboard ship,  
no frenzied Medea, in arms, slays her brother.  
Yet love scorned possesses power. Oh, who,  
seizing blades, tempts fate among the waves?  
Is it not enough death awaits all? Don’t outdo  
the sea, piling fresh waters on the cruel deep.’

## 109: A PEACE TREATY

As the woman’s voice poured out this loud and dramatic speech, the fighting died away for a while and, recalled to the ways of peace, our hands relinquished their weapons. Our leader, Eumolpus, seized this occasion for penitence and, after reproving Lichas most vehemently, signed the treaty, which ran as follows: ‘Agreed on your part, that you, Tryphaena, will not complain of any injury done you by Giton, and if any has been done to you before today, you will not raise it against him, or punish him, or endeavour to pursue him in any other manner; that you will not give the boy any orders distasteful to him, not restricted to embraces, kisses, or sexual encounters, without laying out a hundred in silver, in ready money. Likewise, it is agreed on your part, Lichas, that you will not pursue Encolpius with insulting words or looks, nor ask where he sleeps at night, or if you do ask you’ll lay out two hundred in silver in ready money.’

Peace was made on these terms, and we laid down our weapons, and lest any vestige of anger remain in our thoughts, even after signing this pledge, we decided to erase the past with a kiss. Amid universal applause, all hatred shrank away, and dinner, a more extensive one due to the quarrel, united us in conviviality. Then the whole ship rang with song and, a sudden calm having delayed our course, one man pursued flying fish with a spear,

another pulled out his reluctant prey on baited hooks. Behold, also, sea-birds perched on the yard-arm, and were skilfully captured with rods made of woven reeds; snared by these limed rods, they were brought down into our hands. The breeze ruffled their feathers as they flew, and blew them about amidst the light sea-foam.

Lichas was already starting to show me his friendship again, and Tryphaena was already scattering some of her drink over Giton, when Eumolpus, who was a little tipsy with wine himself, decided to aim his wit at bald and branded persons until, exhausting his icy powers of satire, he returned to his versifying, and began reciting a little elegy concerning hair:

‘Hair, the whole glory of the flesh, is fallen;  
sad winter carries off spring’s bright tresses.  
Already bared temples mourn, free of shade,  
and a bald spot shines where the hair is lost.  
O, the deceitful nature of you gods, who rob  
us first of the joys you gave us first in youth.

Wretch, once bright with hair, and lovelier  
even than Apollo, or Diana, Apollo’s sister,  
now smoother than bronze, or some swollen  
garden truffle that the rain creates; you who  
flee now in fear from the mockery of girls;  
that you may see how swiftly death comes,  
know, part of you above has already died.’

## **110: THE FUGITIVES' LOOKS ARE RESTORED**

I believe he wished to offer us more lines, even more tactless than the ones before, but one of Tryphaena's maids led Giton below decks, and adorned the lad's head with one of her mistress' curly wigs. Moreover she took some false eyebrows from a box and, by cleverly following the outlines of those he had sacrificed, she restored all his proper beauty. Tryphaena recognised the true Giton with a deluge of tears, and then for the first time kissed the lad with real affection.

Certainly I was pleased to see his former loveliness renewed, yet continually hid my own head realising that I was marked by no common deformity, since even Lichas considered me unfit to converse with. But that same maid-servant rescued me from melancholy, summoned me aside, and decked me with no less attractive curls; why, my face shone more splendidly, since my curls were golden!

Then Eumolpus, advocate in our peril, and author of the present concord, lest our conviviality fall silent for lack of a good story, began to comment on the fickleness of women: how easily they fell in love, how quickly they forgot even their children, that no woman was so chaste as not to be distracted to madness by her passion for some stranger. Nor was he thinking of ancient tragedy or names notorious in history, but of an affair that occurred in his own time, which he'd relate if we wished to hear it. So all eyes and ears were directed towards him, and he began thus:

## **111-112: THE STORY OF THE WIDOW OF EPHEBUS**

‘There was a married woman in Ephesus so noted for being chaste that she even drew women from the neighbouring regions to gaze upon her. When she buried her husband therefore she was not content with following his funeral procession in commonplace fashion, hair loose and beating her

naked breast before the crowd; she followed the dead man to his resting place, in order to keep vigil over his corpse laid in a vault in the Greek manner, and weep night and day. Neither her parents nor her relatives could persuade her from tormenting herself thus, or courting death by starvation; finally the magistrates, having been rebuffed, abandoned her to her fate and, mourned by all as a unique specimen of womanhood, she had now spent a fifth day without nourishment. A devoted maid-servant sat beside the sorrowful woman, and shed tears in sympathy with her grief, at the same time renewing the lamp placed in the tomb. A single opinion was held by the whole city, every class of person admitting that this was the one true and shining example of loyalty and love.

Meanwhile the provincial governor had demanded the crucifixion of some brigands near the building where the widow was weeping for her recent loss. The next night, a soldier, guarding the crosses to ensure that none of the bodies were taken down for burial, noticed a bright light shining among the tombs, and on hearing the mourner's groans was curious to know who was there and what they were about. He therefore descended into the vault and, on seeing a most beautiful woman, first halted in confusion, as if what he saw were some portent or spirit from the underworld. Then, noting the corpse lying there, and reflecting on the woman's tears and her face marked by her nails, he obviously realised what the situation was, and that she was unable to endure her loss. He therefore carried his supper into the tomb, and began to exhort the mourner not to persist in idle grief, or break her heart with unprofitable lament: since all met the same fate and found the same house of rest; adding the further solace that restores health to wounded spirits.

But she, at this consolation from a stranger, only beat her breast more violently, tearing out strands of hair and placing them on the corpse. Still the soldier did not withdraw, but with like exhortation attempted to offer the widow a bite to eat, till the maid, seduced by the aroma of the wine as I believe, first gave way herself, stretching out her hand at his kind invitation, and then, refreshed by food and drink, proceeded to attack her mistress' obstinacy, saying: "What good will it do you to faint from hunger, bury yourself alive, breathe out your innocent soul before fate demands it?"

‘Do you think that ashes or sepulchral spirits care?’

Will you not begin to live once more? Will you not shake off a woman’s weakness, and enjoy the blessings of the light as long as you are allowed? Your dear husband’s body lying here should convince you to live.”

No one refuses to listen when they’re urged to eat and stay alive, so the widow, parched from her days of abstinence, allowed her resolution to waver, and took drink and food no less avidly than the maid who had been the first to yield. Well, you know the temptation that generally consumes a man on a full stomach. The soldier used the same blandishments which had persuaded the widow to eat to mount an attack on her virtue. Her chaste eye saw a youth neither ugly nor tongue-tied, while the maid-servant was in favour of her showing gratitude, saying: “Will you resist even a love that pleases you?”

Why should I linger over the issue? The widow did not deny this request either, and the conquering hero won her acceptance in both respects. They did not simply spend the night together, the night of their nuptials, but also the next, and a third, shutting the door of the vault of course so that any friend or stranger who visited the tomb would think that most virtuous of widows had breathed her last over her husband’s body. Moreover, the soldier, delighted with the woman’s comeliness, secretly bought up all the fine things his means allowed, and carried them to the vault as soon as darkness fell.

Now, the parents of one of the crucified men, seeing how lax the guard proved, lifted their son’s corpse down, by night, and administered the last rites. But the soldier, circumvented while he was inside the vault, seeing a cross without its corpse next day, was fearful of punishment, and told the woman what had happened, declaring he would not wait for the inevitable court-martial, but would execute sentence for his neglect with his sword. She should therefore prepare a place for a man about to die, and prepare the one fateful vault to receive both her husband and her lover. The woman’s heart was no less tender than pure. ‘The gods forbid,’ she cried, ‘that I should gaze at the same time on the corpses of the two men dearest to me. I’d rather sacrifice the dead than slay the living.’ And with this, she

told him to drag her husband's body from its coffin, and suspend it from the vacant cross. The soldier carried out the idea of this cleverest of women, leaving people to wonder, next day, how on earth the dead husband had got there.'

### **113: ENCOLPIUS IS UNHAPPY**

The sailors received this tale with laughter, while Tryphaena, blushing not a little, pressed her face lovingly against Giton's neck. But Lichas scorned to laugh and, shaking his head angrily, cried: 'If the governor of that province had owned to any sense of justice, he'd have placed the husband's body in the tomb again, and hung the woman on the cross.'

No doubt he was thinking once more of Hedyle, and the plundering of his ship at her passionate departure. But the terms of our treaty permitted no harbouring of the past, and the conviviality that filled our minds granted no room for resentment. Tryphaena was now lying in Giton's lap, covering his breast with kisses instantly, while arranging the wig on his shaven head. I was gloomy and uneasy concerning our new treaty, touching neither food nor drink, and glancing truculently at them both. Every kiss wounded me, every caress this wanton woman invented. I was unsure as yet whether I was angrier with the boy for appropriating my mistress, or my mistress for seducing the boy: both of them were loathsome in my eyes, and depressed me more than the bondage I'd escaped. Added to which was the fact that Tryphaena no longer addressed me as a friend whom she was once grateful to have for a lover, nor did Giton see fit to drink my health, or even so much as include me in the general conversation. I suppose he was afraid lest he reopen a recent scar just as a show of friendliness had begun to heal it. Tears readily flooded my heart in pain, and a groan hidden by a sigh almost robbed me of breath...

‘He tried to gain a share in their joy,  
not with the arrogance of a master,  
but seeking indulgence as a friend...’

‘Oh,’ said the handmaid, ‘if you’ve a drop of decent blood in you, you’ll treat her as little more than a whore. If you’d be a man, you’ll not go with a catamite.’ Nothing shamed me more than the thought that Eumolpus might have perceived what he had been up to, and the satirical fellow might punish him in verse...but Eumolpus swore a formal oath...

## **114: THE STORM**

As we were discussing this and other matters, the waves rose, and clouds gathered from all directions, burying the day in darkness. The sailors ran anxiously to their posts, and furled the sails before the storm. But the wind drove the waves at random and the helmsman was at a loss what course to steer. One moment the wind blew towards Sicily, more often a northerly gripped the vessel and drove her, at its mercy, towards the coast of Italy; and, more dangerous than the squalls, so dense a darkness had quenched all light the prow was totally hidden from the helmsman. Then, by Hercules, as the violent fury of the sea increased, Lichas trembled and stretched his arms out to me imploringly, crying: ‘You, Encolpius, aid us in our peril; hand Isis’ sacred robe and sistrum back to the vessel. In faith, be as merciful as you used to be.’ Yet even as he shouted, a gust blew him overboard, and the gale whirled him round and round in a vicious whirlpool, before swallowing him. Tryphaena, on the other hand, had been almost dragged away by her servants, placed in a ship’s boat with most of her luggage, and rescued by them from certain death.

I clasped Giton to me, and weeping cried: 'Did we deserve this of the gods, that they should unite us only in death? But cruel Fortune denies us even this. See, even now the waves will overturn the boat, even now the raging sea will tear asunder a lover's embrace. So if you ever truly loved Encolpius, kiss him while you may, snatch this last joy from the jaws of fate.' As I spoke, Giton stripped of his clothing, and hidden by my shirt, raised his face to be kissed. And so no even more malign wave might pull us apart, as we clung together, he tied his belt round us both, saying: 'If nothing else, death will bear us along together, for a while at least, or if the sea proves merciful and cast us both on the sand, either someone will pile stones over us out of common humanity, or the angry waves in a last effort will cover us with the indifferent sand.' I suffered this last bondage and, like a man fit for his funeral bier, waited for a death already seeming less cruel.

Meanwhile, by some decree of fate, the storm had peaked, conquering all that remained of the vessel. Neither mast nor rudder, rope nor oar, were left, and she drifted in the waves like a raw unfinished mass. Now fishermen in their little boats promptly raced out to seize their plunder, then, on finding survivors minded to defend their possessions, substituted aid for savagery...

## **115: LICHAS' CORPSE DRIFTS ASHORE**

Hearing a strange noise, a groan from the master's cabin like a wild beast longing to escape, we followed the sound, only to find Eumolpus sitting there penning lines of verse on a large piece of parchment. Amazed at his thus finding time to compose poetry with death close at hand, we dragged him, protesting loudly, from the cabin and told him to be sensible. He, furious at the interruption cried: 'Allow me to finish the line; the verse ends lamely.' But I laid hands on the madman and ordered Giton to come and help me drag the bellowing poet ashore. When this was, at last, achieved, we found our way gloomily to a fisherman's hut, refreshed ourselves somewhat with food from the wreck, and passed a miserable night.

Next morning, which we devoted to debating where on earth we were, I suddenly saw a human body, caught in a gentle eddy, carried ashore. I halted, saddened, and began to reflect, moist-eyed, on the sea's treachery: 'Perhaps there's a wife waiting safely at home for him somewhere, perhaps a father or son unaware of the storm: he's sure to have left someone behind whom he kissed on leaving. Such is the end of mortal hopes, such the end of all great schemes. How the man floats!'

I was still weeping over this stranger, when a wave turned his unmarked visage towards the shore, and I recognised, thrown almost at my feet, Lichas, so fierce and implacable but a little while ago. For a long time, I failed to contain my tears, beating my breast again and again, saying; 'Where now is your quick temper, your violence? You're a prey for fish and wild beasts now, for sure; you who boasted not long past of the powerful ship you commanded, have not one plank left of that great vessel to save you. Go now, mortal men, and fill your minds with mighty plans. Go, you misers, and hide your fraudulent gains for a thousand years hence. Did not this man, yesterday, inspect the family accounts, did he not even fix, in his own mind, the day of his return to his native land? You gods, you goddesses, how far he lies from his destination!

Yet it's not the sea alone that proves faithless to mortal men. His weapons fail the soldier, another man, while paying his vows to the gods, is buried by the fall of his own roof. Another slips from his carriage, and dashes out his brains; his food chokes the glutton, his own frugality the abstinent. Reckon it all up, fairly, and shipwreck is everywhere. And what though there's no grave for those drowned deep in the waves? As if it matters in what way our perishable flesh is consumed, by fire, or water, or the lapse of time! Whatever we do, all things must arrive at the one end. Wild beasts will rip at the corpse? As if fire would treat it better! On the contrary, we think it the most potent of punishments, when we've been angered by our slaves. What madness, then, is all that we do lest the grave leave something of us behind? Yet Lichas was burnt on a pyre built by the hands of his enemies, while Eumolpus moreover, composing an epitaph for the dead, searched for some far-fetched ideas.

## **116: APPROACHING THE CITY OF CROTON (CROTONE)**

We willingly performed this last service, then followed our chosen path, and in a short while, sweating hard, ascended a height, from which we saw, not far away, a city on a high hill. Lost, we had no idea what place it was, until we learned from the manager of an estate that this was Croton, an ancient foundation, and once the finest city in Italy. When we enquired more closely who dwelt on such hallowed soil, and what manner of trade they most approved of, now their wealth had been reduced by frequent wars, he replied: ‘O, my friends, if you are traders, revise your plans, and seek another, more secure, means of livelihood. If, on the other hand, you are men who support themselves by the marked exercise of their superior wits, and are ever given to deceit, you are on the right road to wealth.

For in this city the pursuit of learning goes un-regarded, eloquence has no place, frugality and purity of morals win no reward by being praised, rather all the men you observe in that city are divided into two parties. They are either hunters of legacies or the hunted. For in this city no one raises children, since anyone with direct heirs is never admitted to dinner or the theatre but, deprived of all advantage, lives in obscurity among the disgraced; while those who have never taken a wife, and possess no close relations, achieve the highest honours. They alone are considered manly and even virtuous. You will enter a city which is like a plague-ridden field, in which there are only carcasses to be torn to shreds, and crows to do the tearing’

## **117: EUMOLPUS PROPOSES THEY ACT OUT A PRETENCE**

Eumolpus, all the more cautious, applied his mental powers to the novelty of the situation, confessing that the kind of hunting described did not displease him. I thought the old fellow was jesting, with poetic levity, but then he added: 'I only wish I could display a finer outward appearance, I mean more refined apparel and more elegant accoutrements, to lend credibility to our deceit: by heavens, I'd not defer the business, but lead you on to great riches in an instant. In any event, I promise to do whatever my companion in extortion demands, as long as my clothes prove satisfactory, along with whatever Lycurgus' villa might have offered the prowler. For the mother of the gods will surely deliver some coins for present needs. Why delay?' Eumolpus asked, 'in adopting a pretence? Imagine me your master, if the idea pleases you.'

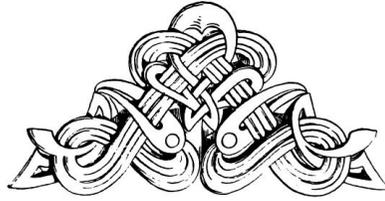
No one dared object to this stratagem, which cost us nothing. So we swore an oath to Eumolpus to keep the deception safe amongst ourselves: to suffer branding, chains, death by the sword, or whatever else Eumolpus demanded. Like true gladiators we solemnly pledged our bodies and souls to our master. After we'd sworn the oath, we saluted our fictitious master slavishly, and all learnt his tale by heart: that Eumolpus had lost a son, a youth of great eloquence and promise; that the poor old fellow had left his own country on account of it, to escape seeing his son's followers and friends, and his grave, a source of tears each day; that his grief was augmented by the loss of more than twenty thousand gold pieces in a shipwreck not long ago, not that the loss troubled him, but abandoned by his attendant his rank went unrecognised; and that furthermore he had three hundred thousand in gold vested in Africa in land and loans, for he'd such a host of slaves scattered throughout Numidia, he might as well have taken Carthage.

In support of his scheme, we told Eumolpus that he should cough frequently, complain of a weak stomach, and openly find fault with all his meals; that he should wax eloquent regarding gold, silver, the deficiencies of his estates, and the endless barrenness of the soil; moreover that he should pore over his accounts each day, and revise the provisions of his will each month. And to complete the pretence he must call us by the wrong names when he attempted to summon any of us, so that it would be readily apparent that our master had in mind other servants who were not present.

All this being agreed, we offered a prayer to the gods ‘for a prosperous and happy outcome’ and set off. But Giton could not carry anything being unused to it, and the hired man Corax, who shirked his duties, kept depositing the luggage on the ground, and cursing our haste, protesting that he would either throw the luggage away or flee with his burden. ‘What makes you think I’m a packhorse, or a ship full of stones?’ he cried, ‘You paid for a man not an ass. I’m no less free than you are, even if father did leave me a pauper.’ Not content with curses only, he lifted his leg repeatedly and filled the whole road with an obscene noise and odour. Giton mocked his insolence and accompanied every blast with a like sound.

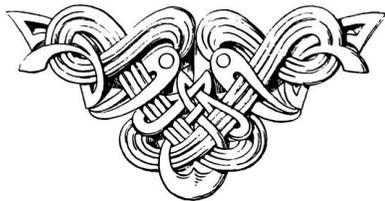
## **END OF THE SATYRICON: PART VI**





## **PART VII: EUMOLPUS' EPIC; AND ENCOUNTERS WITH CIRCE**

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*'Ulysses at the Palace of Circe'*  
Wilhelm Schubert van Ehrenberg, 1630 - c. 1676  
*The Getty Open Content Program*

## 118: EUMOLPUS ON POETIC STYLE



, my young friends,' Eumolpus said, 'poetry has led many astray. For as soon as the writer has framed their verse in metre, and woven a more delicate meaning with roundabout expressions, they think they've immediately scaled Helicon. Thus people wearied by public oratory often take refuge in the tranquility of verse, as if in some happier harbour, believing a poem easier to construct than a speech adorned with quivering epigrams. But nobler spirits love correctness of style, and the mind cannot conceive and give birth if it is not steeped in the great stream of literature.

One must flee from all diction that is, one might say, base, and choose words remote from common speech, putting into practice Horace's 'I hate the vulgar crowd and keep them away.' Moreover, one must take care that one's thoughts do not stand out from the form in which they are expressed, but shine with a beauty woven into the material. Homer's work is witness to this, and the lyric poets, and Rome's Virgil, and Horace's studied charm. The rest either did not find the path that leads to poetry, or found it but were afraid to walk it. Behold, anyone who attempts the mighty theme of civil war, will sink beneath the burden unless they are full of literature.

It is not simply a matter of recording events in verse, historians can do that far better, but genius must plunge headlong, freely, into allusion, and the role of the gods, and mythical conflicts of will, so that thoughts of an inspired seer emerge rather than statements made on oath before witnesses, as the following outpouring will demonstrate, if you wish, though it has not received the final touches:

## 119: EUMOLPUS' EPIC: ROME AT THE CLOSE OF THE REPUBLIC

“Already the all-conquering Romans possessed  
a whole world, wherever sea and land extend.  
Yet were not content. Their laden ships stirred  
and troubled the waters; if any unknown bay  
lay beyond, or any land yielding yellow gold,  
there was Rome’s enemy, fate readied sad war,  
wealth was sought. No common joys pleased,  
not one of our delights dulled by plebeian use.  
The soldier at sea praised Corinthian bronzes;  
bright pigments from the earth rivalled Tyrian  
purple; here Africa, there China of wondrous  
silks, and Arabia stripping its own fields bare.  
Behold more destruction; peace wounded, hurt;  
creatures hunted in the woods for gold; Ammon  
in far Africa troubled lest there be lack of ivory,  
precious to the dead; as greed for foreign things  
freights the ships, the tiger’s brought to gilded  
palaces to drink men’s blood while all applaud.  
Alas, I hesitate to speak of those fate has wasted,  
lads scarcely pubescent taken secretly, castrated  
with a knife in the Persian manner, made slaves

for lust, all so the finest years might be marked  
by delay, by holding back fleeting time Nature  
seeks but cannot find herself. So all delight in  
prostitution, in the feeble steps of a weak body,  
flowing hair, all the clothes with strange names,  
whatever lacks manliness. Citrus-wood tables,  
see, out of African trees, mirroring the hordes  
of slaves, the purple robes; their grain imitating  
gold, yet worth more, set to lure the senses, as  
a drunken crowd surrounds base barren wood,  
with the mercenary hungering for every prize.  
Gluttony is a fine art. Mullet brought living  
to the table in Sicilian brine, and oysters torn  
from the shores of the Lucrine, exalt a meal,  
that whets the appetite by extravagance. Now  
Phasis' silent banks are devoid of pheasants,  
the empty breeze blows on deserted grasses.  
The same madness in affairs; the true Roman,  
bought, votes for gain, to the clink of coins.  
With a venal populace, and a venal senate,  
allegiance bore a price. Vanished the virtue  
and freedom of old, power swayed by bribes,  
grandeur itself lay dead, corrupted by gold.  
Cato, defeated, expelled by the mob, Caesar  
is sadder still, ashamed to have ousted Cato,

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for the nation's dishonour and virtue's ruin  
lay not in his defeat, but in Rome's power  
and glory being humbled by one man. Rome  
lost was herself her own price and purchase.  
And usury's maw and the need for money  
consumed men caught in the twofold abyss.  
No house was secure, but all men mortgaged;  
like some disease born silently in the bones  
the madness spread through a body in pain.  
Violence suits the poor, bloodshed restores  
wealth lost to luxury. Poverty dares risk all.  
This Rome, drowned in filth, lost in sleep,  
what art could lead her to sense and reason  
not fury, civil war, the sword's blood-lust?

### **120: EUMOLPUS' EPIC: DIS INITIATES THE CIVIL WAR**

Fate prompted the emergence of three leaders,  
fatal Enyo buried each under piles of weapons.  
Parthia holds Crassus, Libya's shore Pompey,  
Caesar stained ungrateful Rome with his blood;  
Earth as if unable to endure the burden divorced  
their ashes. Such the reward that ambition grants.  
There's a place deep in a chasm, between Naples

and Pozzuolo's fields, wet with Cocytus' waters,  
for the dark air rushes out bearing the fatal spray.  
The ground's never green in summer, the land  
is bare of grass, no soft thickets ring with song  
in spring full of the sound of competing birds,  
but all is chaos; raw stretches of black pumice  
enjoy the gloom of cypresses that stand around.  
From these abodes, father Dis lifted up his head  
lit by funereal flames, flecked with white ashes,  
then roused winged Fortune, with this speech:  
'Fortune, you ruler of things human and divine,  
never pleased with power too securely ensconced,  
who always love the new, abandoning what's won,  
do you not feel yourself weighed down by Rome,  
unable to raise further that mass doomed to fall?  
Rome's youth detests its own powers, cannot  
bear the wealth it has amassed. See, everywhere,  
spoils squandered, riches run wild bringing loss.  
They build golden houses, raise them to the stars,  
dam the waters with stone, fields born from the sea;  
rebellious men, who go altering the order of things.  
They even seek my realm. The earth gapes wide  
for their wild excavations, caverns groan as they  
hollow out the hills, and as living men turn stone  
to vain use, the shades below hope to see the sky.

So, Fortune, go alter your face of peace for war,  
hound the Romans, and grant my realm the dead.  
No blood has wet my lips for many a year, nor  
has my dear Tisiphone bathed her parched skin  
since Sulla's sword drank deep, and fertile earth  
thrust wheat nourished on blood into the light.'

## **121: EUMOLPUS' EPIC: FORTUNE SETS THE SCENE**

He finished speaking and, seeking to take her  
hand in his, split the earth in a gaping chasm.  
Then Fortune spilt words from a fickle heart:  
'O father, whom the depths of Cocytus obey,  
if it is right that I reveal the truth fearlessly,  
your prayer will be fulfilled, no less an anger  
stirs my heart, or the flame deep in my bones.  
I now resent all I have granted towering Rome,  
angered by my gifts. The power that has raised  
those palaces shall destroy them. To burn their  
corpses will delight me, feeding my blood-lust.  
Already the crash of arms rings loud in my ears,  
I see Philippi's field strewn now with the dead  
of twin battles, Thessaly's pyres, Spain's losses.  
And I see your Egyptian barriers groan, Nile,  
and Actium's bay, and men blessed by Apollo.

So, open the parched realms of the underworld,  
and summon fresh souls. Charon the ferryman  
will lack the strength to take the shades across,  
a whole fleet is needed. And you, pale Tisiphone,  
glut yourself on vast slaughter, rip the wounds,  
a ruined world drawn down to Stygian shades.’

## **122: EUMOLPUS’ EPIC: CAESAR ENTERS ITALY**

She had barely finished, when the sky shook,  
split by a blaze of lightning, a burst of flame.  
The father of shades sank, sealing the chasm,  
pale with terror at his brother Jove’s stroke.  
At once the slaughter, the dire ruin to come,  
was revealed by divine omens. For the sun  
was dark with blood, face veiled in shadow:  
seeming even then to gaze on civil conflict.  
For her part, the moon’s full face darkened,  
denying the crime her light. The shattered  
mountain ridges thundered, winding rivers,  
dying, no longer kept their familiar course.  
The sky rings with the clash of arms, bugles  
blaring to heaven rouse the war-god Mars,  
and Etna erupting sends its fire into the air.  
Behold dead faces among the tombs, bones

Part VII

that lack burial are gibbering dire warnings.  
A blazing light, accompanied by unknown  
stars, portends ruin, and the sky rains blood.  
The heavens soon made all plain, for Caesar  
ending all delay, driven by desire for revenge,  
abandoning Gaul, made civil war on Rome.  
In the high Alps, where the pass descends  
that Hercules trod allowing men a passage,  
there's a place, sacred to his altars, that winter  
seals with snow, lifting white peaks to the sky.  
You'd think the sky had fallen. The sun's rays  
scarcely warm the air, nor do the spring breezes;  
but all is stiff with ice, and winter's heavy frost;  
its looming mountains fit to support the globe.  
Caesar, treading these heights with his exultant  
army, choosing a viewpoint looked far and wide  
over Italy, from the summit, and stretching his  
arms and lifting his voice to the heavens, cried:  
"Omnipotent Jove, and you Italy, Saturn's land,  
once pleased with my conquests, my triumphs,  
bear witness, I summon the war god unwillingly,  
reluctant to wield the sword, urged on by injury,  
banished from my city while I was dyeing Rhine  
red with blood, thwarting the Gauls who sought  
the Alpine passes for a second assault on Rome,

success ensuring exile. Success in Germany, my  
sixty victories, proved an offence. Who fears my  
glory, forbids me war? Base, bought, hirelings,  
to whom my native Rome plays the stepmother.  
Yet know, that no coward will tie my hands with  
impunity. On, men, to victory while anger rages,  
onwards my comrades, plead our cause with steel!  
For we are charged as one, and the same fate hangs  
above us all. Thanks are due to you, since victory is  
not mine alone. As glory only leads to punishment  
and our victories simply earn us disgrace, Fortune  
must decide how the dice fall. Raise our standard,  
prove your strength. My cause will surely triumph,  
amid so many brave soldiers, I cannot meet defeat.”  
As he spoke, a raven, Apollo’s bird, sounded an  
omen from the heavens, beating the air in flight.  
On the left, strange voices cried, from the angle  
of an icy grove, and the sound of flames followed.  
Even the sun shone, its light brighter than before,  
while a golden halo glowed about its shining face.

## 123: EUMOLPUS' EPIC: POMPEY TAKES FLIGHT

Encouraged by this, Caesar advanced the standard,  
and marched first with an unprecedented boldness.  
At first the icy ground, though bound in white frost,  
did not thwart them, truly cold but mercifully quiet,  
and then the squadrons emerged among the clouds,  
the horses, anxious, shattered the frozen surfaces,  
the snows melted. Soon new-born streams flowed  
from the mountain heights, yet they halted, as if  
by command, the numbed flow's force in chains;  
what before ran free was now hard enough to cut.  
Traacherous before, the ground now mocked their  
steps, failed their footing. Horses and men, both,  
fell together in one despairing accumulating pile.  
Behold, the clouds are stirred by a freezing wind,  
disencumbering themselves; gusts of air whirled,  
and the sky was broken by swollen bursts of hail.  
Now the very clouds themselves fell on the men,  
an icy mass striking them, like a wave of the sea.  
Earth in deep snow was veiled, as the stars above,  
and even the rivers yielded, frozen to their banks.  
But not Caesar, who, leaning on his mighty spear,  
trode the broken ground securely, like that son of

Amphitryon, Hercules, racing down from some lofty summit of the Caucasus, or rather Jupiter, fierce of visage, descending from the heights of high Olympus to put the doomed Giants to rout. While Caesar treads the swelling peaks in anger, Rumour, bringing fear, flies swiftly with beating wings, seeking the high summit of the Palatine. carrying all the thunderous news to the Romans: that a fleet is filling the waves as, over the Alps, horsemen pour, red with the blood of Germans. Blood and battle, fire and slaughter, the images of war flit before their eyes. So their hearts beat tumultuously, divided in fear between two paths. One man escapes by land, another trusts instead to the water, the sea now safer than his country: each man flying as far as the depth of his fears. Others prefer to fight, and utilise fate's decree. Amid this turmoil, the people, a wretched sight, fleeing the empty city, go where the heart leads. Rome delights in flight, her sons, cowed by war, leaving houses mourning at a breath of rumour. One holds his trembling child's hand, another clasp his household gods, praying for the deaths of the unseen enemy. Some embrace their wives mournfully, youths carry aged fathers, bringing

only what they fear to lose, unused to burdens.  
The incautious drag all their goods behind, and  
march laden to the battle. All as if a southerly  
wind at its height, strikes the sea, when neither  
helm nor rigging assist the captains; one ropes  
heavy planks of pine, another sets sail and runs  
for a safe bay and tranquil shore, trusting all to  
Fortune. Yet why bemoan such trivia? Pompey  
the Great, scourge of pirates, who made all of  
Pontus tremble, explored the savage Hydaspes,  
amazed Jupiter with three triumphs; to whom  
tamed Bosphorus, and the troubled Black Sea  
waters bowed; flees from Rome, shamefully,  
abandons his title to empire, so that Fortune  
might see a great man's back turned in flight.

## **124-125: EUMOLPUS' EPIC: THE GODS TAKE SIDES**

So mighty a disaster overwhelmed the gods,  
and fear in heaven drove their flight; behold,  
a crowd of gentle deities abandoned frenzied  
earth in loathing, shunning humanity at war.  
First Peace, her white arms bruised, hides  
a conquered head beneath her helm, leaving  
this world, seeking Dis' implacable realm.

With her go Faith and Justice with loosened  
hair, and Concord with torn cloak, weeping.  
Yet, where the gates of Erebus yawn wide,  
Dis' dread company emerges, grim Erinys,  
menacing Bellona, Megaera whirling her  
torches, Destruction, Treachery, pale Death.  
With them Madness, as if freed from broken  
reins, lifting her blood-stained head, conceals  
her face, scarred by a thousand wounds, with  
her bloody helm; grips a worn shield, studded  
with spear-points in her left hand, in her right  
waves a hot brand, bearing fire to the world.  
Earth felt the gods stir, and the stars shaken  
sought their place again; for all the heavenly  
realm hastened to take sides. Dione was first  
to champion Caesar, Pallas rushed to her side,  
and Quirinus too, shaking his mighty spear.  
Pompey received Apollo, his sister Diana,  
Mercury and Hercules, like him in his deeds.  
The trumpets blared, and Discord, with torn  
hair, raised her Stygian head into the upper  
world. Dried blood caked her face, tears ran  
from her bruised eyes, her teeth all scabrous  
with green mould, tongue dripping disease,  
face wreathed in snakes, her clothes all torn

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over her tormented breast, she brandished  
her quivering torch that flared blood-red.  
Leaving the dark of Cocytus and Tartarus,  
she sought the high ridge of the Apennines,  
from which she could gaze on earth and all  
its shores, and the armies filling the globe,  
and words sprang from her wrathful breast:  
“Take arms, you nations, minds inflamed,  
take arms and set alight the hearts of cities.  
Who hides is lost. Let no women be idle,  
no child, nor the old wasted by the years;  
let earth herself tremble, and the shattered  
houses rebel. You Marcellus, hold Caesar  
to the law, Curio rouse the rabble, Lentulus  
set free brave Mars. And you, divine Julius,  
why wait to shatter the gates, strip towns  
of their defences, take their gold? Shall  
you fail, Pompey to hold Rome’s citadel?  
Then seize the walls of Dyrrachium, dye  
the bays of Thessaly with soldiers’ blood.”  
What Discord decreed on earth was done.’

After Eumolpus had poured out these lines with immense fluency, we finally entered Croton. Where indeed we were welcomed at a little inn but, seeking next day a house of more obvious wealth, we encountered a crowd of fortune-hunters who enquired what manner of men we were and where we came from. Then, as demanded by our joint plan of action, we poured out a fluent stream of doubtless highly credible words, regarding ourselves, and our origins. The fortune-hunters immediately competed fiercely in heaping their own riches on Eumolpus, all striving to win his favour with gifts, and this continued in Croton for many a day.

Eumolpus was flushed with success, and forgot the former state of his fortunes insofar as to boast, in a highly arrogant manner, that no one there might resist his influence and that, thanks to his friends' favour, his people would escape punishment if they committed a crime in that city. But I, though I had filled my stomach every day with an overflowing supply of good things, and considered that ill-fortune had turned its restrictive gaze from me, frequently thought about my previous habits and their origin, and kept repeating to myself: 'What if some clever legacy-hunter sends an investigator to North Africa and discovers our deceit? What if Eumolpus' paid servant, wearying of his present good-fortune, hints of it to his friends and, betraying us out of spite, exposes the whole ruse? We'd naturally be forced to flee once more, and summon again the state of poverty we've at last abolished. You gods and goddesses, how miserable it is for a man who lives outside the law: always expecting to suffer his just deserts.'

## **126: CIRCE AND CHRYSIS**

Chrysis, who was Circe's maid, said to me: 'Because you've always known you were desirable, you hunt after profit and sell your embraces rather than simply granting them. Why the well-combed flowing hair, the face plastered with cosmetics, the lascivious melting glance too, and why the artful walk with never a footstep out of place, if you're not putting your body on show for sale?

Consider me: I know nothing of omens, take no notice of astrologers' charts, yet I can read a man's character in his face, and when I see him walk I know his thoughts. So if you'd like to sell what we desire, the buyer's ready; if you'll grant us it freely, which would be kinder, you'll ensure I owe you a favour. You see, when you confess to being a humble slave it kindles desire in one who burns for you. Some women are on heat for lowly fellows, unable to rouse their passions except for a slave, or an attendant in a short tunic. Others are on fire for a gladiator, or a muleteer covered in dust, or an actor parading about ostentatiously on stage. My mistress is one of these: she ignores the fourteen rows for the knights, and seeks what delights her among the crowd at the back.'

Flattered by her winning words, I said: 'It's not you, who loves me, is it?' Chrysis laughed aloud at such a feeble turn of phrase, and said: 'Don't be so full of yourself! I've never succumbed to a slave yet, and the gods forbid I should embrace such torment. Leave it to married women to kiss the scars from some flogging: even if I'm only a lady's maid, I never sit in any seat but a knight's.' I, for my part, was amazed at their contrasting inclinations, and counted them amongst the extraordinary phenomena, the maid possessing a married woman's pride, the married woman the low tastes of a maid.

Our teasing then proceeding further, I asked Chrysis to lead her mistress to a grove of plane-trees. The plan pleased the girl, so she gathered her skirts and turned into the laurel bushes that grew close to the path we were walking. It was not long before she led the lady from her hiding-place and brought her to me, a woman more perfect than any artist's dream. There are no words to describe her beauty, whatever I might say would fall short. Her hair, by its very nature, flowed over her shoulders, her brow was small, and the roots of her hair curved back from it, her eyebrows extended to the line of her cheekbones, and almost met again above her eyes, eyes brighter than stars shining with no moon present, her nose had a little curve, and her little mouth was such as Praxiteles thought Diana might possess. And her chin now, her hands, and the whiteness of her foot, below a slender golden anklet, eclipsing Parian marble! For the very first time I thought light of my old passion for Dorida...

‘What made you cast your armour aside, Jove,  
leaving it there, a silent tale, among the gods?  
Once then, to sprout horns on a savage brow,  
again, turning white hairs to swan’s feathers.  
Here’s the true Danae. Try but to touch her form,  
and already your limbs melt with the fiery heat...’

### **127-128: POLYAENUS (ENCOLPIUS’ PSEUDONYM) DALLIES WITH CIRCE**

She smiled so sweetly with delight, I thought the unclouded moon was showing me her full face. then, her fingers governing her tone, she said: ‘Young man, if you do not scorn to love a well-endowed lady, who this very year had her first experience of a man, I bring you a new friend. True you have a ‘brother’ to love, not that I regret inquiring indeed, but what prevents you taking on a ‘sister’ too? I’ll adopt the same role. Deign only to acknowledge my kiss, at your pleasure.’

‘I should rather implore you by your beauty,’ I replied, ‘not to disdain the admittance of a stranger to your worshippers. You’ll find me a true votary, if you let me adore you. And don’t think I’d enter this shrine to Love, without an offering, I’ll give you my ‘brother’. ‘What’ she answered, ‘you’d offer me him without whom you cannot live, on whose lips you hang, whom you love as I’d have you love me?’

As she spoke, so much grace attended her words, so sweetly did that gentle sound fill the air, that it seemed a Siren sang harmoniously in the breeze. And as I marvelled, while somehow the whole light of the heavens shone more brightly upon me, I was pleased to ask this goddess her name. ‘So my maid did not tell you, I am called Circe?’ she answered? ‘Not indeed a daughter of the Sun, nor can my mother stop the world in its course, when she pleases. Nevertheless it will be to heaven’s credit if we are united.

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Surely some god, in silent thought, is now preparing something? Not without cause does Circe love Polyaeus: a great fire always blazes between these names. Take me in your arms, if you so wish. You've no need to fear that anyone might spy on us. Your 'brother' is far away.'

So saying, Circe clasped me in two arms softer than a bird's plumage and drew me to the ground carpeted with grass and herbs.

'Such flowers as Earth, our mother, poured out  
on Mount Ida's summit, when Jove took Juno  
in lawful love, his whole heart nurturing flame:  
for roses gleamed there, violets, tender sedge,  
there white lilies smiled in the green meadow:  
such ground summoned Venus to the soft grass,  
and the day, brightening, blessed their secret love.'

We lay there together on the grass, exchanging a thousand little kisses, but seeking more serious pleasures. 'What's wrong?' she asked, 'do my kisses offend you? Is my breath sour with fasting? Do I neglect my underarms? If it's not that, are you frightened of Giton?' I blushed crimson, and evidently lost whatever manhood I'd been exhibiting, as if my whole body was incapacitated. 'I beg you, my lady,' I cried, 'please don't mock the afflicted. I'm affected by sorcery.'

'Chrysis,' she said, 'Tell me honestly, am I ugly or unkempt? Is there some natural blemish makes him blind to my beauty? Don't deceive your mistress. I don't know in what way I've sinned.' Next she snatched a mirror from the silent girl, and after trying every expression that usually conjures a smile between lovers, shook out the cloak the earth had stained and hurried into the temple of Venus. I, on the contrary, as wretched and terrified as if I'd been seduced by some succubus, began to question my pride as to whether I'd been cheated of true delight.

‘As if, in drowsy night, when dreams deceive  
our errant eyes, the earth yields wealth to light,  
beneath the spade: our eager hands turn to theft  
and snatch at treasure, while sweat runs down  
our face, as terror grips our heart, lest someone  
strike our laden breast, aware of hidden gold:  
then when joy flees from the brain it cheated,  
and reality returns, the mind, longs for what  
it lost, preoccupied with that transient vision...’

‘Well, in Socrates’ name,’ cried Giton, ‘I give thanks that you love me with his kind of faithfulness. For Alcibiades never lay untouched so, in his teacher’s bed.’ ‘Believe me, dear,’ I replied, ‘I doubt I’m a man any longer, I certainly don’t feel like one. That part of my flesh that was once a veritable Achilles is dead and gone.’ The lad, lest he be caught in private with me and give rise to rumour, tore himself away, and fled into the recesses of the house.

## 129-130: AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

Later Chrysis entered my room to hand me a letter from her mistress, that ran as follows: ‘Circe greets Polyaeus. If I were a passionate woman I’d complain of disappointment; as it is I’m thankful for your indifference. I’ve long toyed with the illusion of pleasure. Yet I seek to know how you are, and whether your feet carried you home again; the doctors say a man with no strength has difficulty walking. I tell you, young man, beware of paralysis. I have never seen a sick man in such mortal danger; by heavens you’re as good as dead!’

If the same inactivity grips your hands and knees, you can send for those funeral brass-players. So, what then? Even if I've been deeply hurt, I don't grudge the suffering a cure. If you want to be well, ask Giton. I think you'll regain your strength, if you pass three nights without your 'brother'. As for me, I've no fear of finding a lover I can't satisfy. My mirror and reputation tell no lies. Keep well, if you can.'

When Chrysis saw I had finished reading the whole reproof, she said: 'Such things often occur, especially in this town, where the women can draw the moon down from the sky and so they concern themselves with these things too. Only do write back to my mistress in a more flattering manner, and restore her spirits with unreserved kindness. For I must tell the truth: she has not been herself since the moment she felt injured.'

I obeyed the girl willingly, and wrote as follows: 'Polyaenus greets Circe. I confess, lady, I have often sinned; being human and young as yet. But never before today have I committed a mortal sin. You have my, the offender's, confession: whatever you command, I deserve. I have been a traitor, killed a man, profaned a shrine: exact punishment for these crimes. If you favour execution, I'll bring my sword, if you're satisfied with a flogging, I'll run naked to my lady. Remember this one thing, not I but my equipment offended. An eager soldier, but without his weapons. I know not what troubled me. Perhaps my mind ran on while my body lingered, perhaps in longing for perfect enjoyment, I neglected the right moment. I can't determine what I did. Yet you order me to beware of paralysis: as if anything could be worse than that which robbed me of the means of possessing you. My apology amounts to this: I will give you satisfaction, if you will let me amend my fault'

Chrysis was despatched with this promise, while I took great care of the body which had so offended and, rejecting the baths, anointed myself, in moderation, then dined on strengthening foods, onions I mean, and snails without sauce, drinking wine sparingly. I then composed myself with the gentlest of walks before bed and went to my room, without Giton. I was so anxious to please her I feared lest my 'brother' might enervate the flesh.

### 131: A TOUCH OF MAGIC

Next day I rose, sound in mind and body, went down to that same plane-tree grove, even though I feared the place was inauspicious, and proceeded to wait among the trees for Chrysis to show me the way. I had not been sitting long where I had sat the day before, when Chrysis appeared bringing an old woman with her. After greeting me, she said: ‘Well, the question is, proud lover, whether you’ve begun to regain your courage?’

Then the old woman, one Proselenos, took a twist of varicoloured threads from her clothing, and tied it about my neck. Next, she mixed dust and spit, took it up on her middle finger and, despite my protest, marked my brow. After chanting something, she ordered me to spit three times, and toss stones into my lap three times, after she’d said a spell over them and wrapped them in purple cloth, then laid her hands on me and attempted to test their power over my member. Before one could say a word, it obeyed her command, filling the old woman’s hands with a mighty erection. She, triumphant with joy, cried: ‘See, dear Chrysis, see, what a hare I’ve started, as they say elsewhere!’

‘The noble plane-tree, laurel decked with berries,  
the quivering cypress, and the swaying summits  
of the shorn pine, poured out their summer shade.  
The foaming river’s errant waters played among  
them, their querulous drops troubling the stones.  
A place fit for love: the nightingale bore witness,  
with the elegant swallow, flitting over the grass  
and sweet violets, pursuing their intrigue in song.’

Circe lay there, her marble neck resting on a golden bank, fanning the still air with a spray of flowering myrtle. And, on seeing me, she reddened a little, obviously recalling yesterday's affront; when the others had left, she invited me to sit beside her, laid the myrtle sprig across my eyes, and then, as if she'd set a wall between us, said boldly: 'The question, my paralytic, is whether you're here today as a whole man?' 'Why ask,' I replied, 'rather than try me?' And I threw myself, with no spells uttered, into her arms, enjoying her kisses to satiety. The very charms of her body summoned me and drew me towards love. Now the sound of kisses as our lips met, now our hands wound together explored the modes of love, now our bodies bound in mutual embrace made our spirits as one...

## **132: REPRISAL AND REPROACH**

Alas!...Wounded by manifest insult, Circe finally ran to seek revenge, calling for her lackeys and shouting for me to be whipped. Not content with this grave punishment, the woman summoned all her weaving-women and household slaves and commanded them to spit on me. I put my hands to my eyes, uttering no protest since I knew what I merited, and beaten and spat upon was ejected from the threshold. The old witch, Proselenos, was also thrown out, Chrysis was flogged, while the whole household muttered sadly to themselves, asking what had destroyed their mistress' good mood.

Thinking on all my vicissitudes with a little more courage, I hid the marks of the lash artfully, lest Eumolpus was rendered happier by my punishment, or Giton sadder. So as to simply hide my shame, I affected to be visited by exhaustion, and once in bed turned my whole fire and fury on that member which had been the cause of all my ills:

‘Thrice in hand I seized the dreaded weapon,  
thrice, weaker suddenly than a cabbage stalk,  
fearing the blade, that served me ill in panic.  
Nor could I do now, what I had wished to do;  
that thing, colder from dread than chill winter,  
cloaked in a thousand wrinkles, had fled within.  
So I couldn’t present my head for punishment,  
but, the plaything of that rascal, in mortal fear,  
I turned to words, with power to hurt the more.’

Raising myself on one elbow, I reproached the stubborn creature, roughly as follows: ‘What have you to say for yourself, you disgrace to men and gods? Indeed, you’ve no right even to be addressed seriously. Have I deserved it of you, to be dragged down from heaven, where I was, to Hades? That you should make an exhibition of me in the prime and vigour of my years, imposing the weakness of bowed old age on me? I beg you, show me proof you’re not defunct.’ Though I reproached ‘her’ in this manner:

‘She turned away, her eyes fixed on the ground,  
no more altered in expression, by the speech he had begun,  
than the pliant willow, or a poppy bending its weary head.’

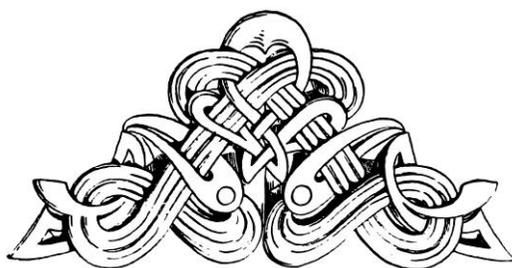
Nonetheless, at the end of this speech of most vile condemnation, I regretted, with a secret blush, my arguing, forgetting all shame, with that part of myself that men of serious note never even seek to admit to their consideration. Then, after rubbing my forehead for a long while, I said to myself: ‘What harm do I do, if I relieve my feelings with a perfectly natural stream of abuse? Don’t we often speak ill of our belly, our throats, and our

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heads when they ache? Why, did not Ulysses quarrel with his own heart, while some tragedians castigate their eyes as if they could hear? Those with gout curse their joints, those with arthritis their hands, the bleary their eyes, and those who often stub their toes attribute all their ills to their feet.

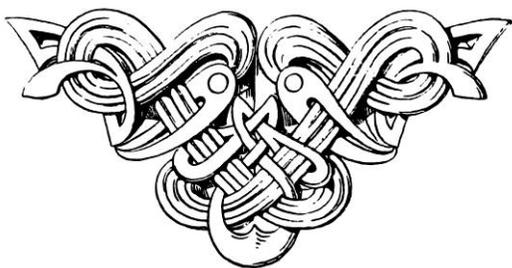
‘Cato’s followers, why wrinkle your brows at me  
why condemn the efforts of my naïve simplicity?  
A happy kindness smiles through my pure speech,  
and my candid tongue reports what real people do.  
Who’s ignorant then of sex, the delights of Venus?  
Who’s banned from stirring limbs in a warm bed?  
The father of truth, Epicurus, commanded the wise  
to love, and declared that such was the goal of life.’

## END OF THE SATYRICON: PART VII



## PART VIII: PRIAPIC MOMENTS

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*'Landscape with the Education of Bacchus'*  
Francesco Zuccarelli, 1702 - 1778  
*The Getty Open Content Program*

### 133: A PRAYER TO PRIAPUS



There is nothing more erroneous than a man's foolish convictions, nor more foolish than sham severity. When I had finished talking to myself, I summoned Giton and said: 'Tell me dear, on your honour: that night when Ascyrtos took you from me, did he stay awake till he'd had you, or was he content with a chaste and lonely night? The lad pressed his eyelids and swore a most formal oath that Ascyrtos had used no force. I knelt at the threshold, and prayed to that god who had turned away from me, Priapus:

'Companion of Bacchus and the Nymphs, to whom lovely Dione gave power over the woodland, whom famed Lesbos and green Thasos obey, whom gold-bearing Lydia worships, whose temple you sited in your very own city of Hypaepa: be with me, O protector of Bacchus, delight of the Dryads, and hear my humble prayer. I do not come to you stained with dark blood, I've not laid hands like some vile enemy on your shrine, but when I was poor, oppressed with want, I committed sin, yet not with my whole body: less guilty he who commits a sin when he's poor. Here's my prayer: unburden my spirit, and forgive the lightest of offences and, whenever some hour of good fortune smiles on me,

I'll not suffer your glory to go unhonoured. Sacred one,  
a horned goat, shall see your altars, the sire of the herd,  
and a sow's suckling brood of squealers too, in sacrifice.  
You'll know this year's vintage, and all the young men,  
tipsy, will tread thrice round your sanctuary, joyously.'

As I was praying, and making ingenious plans regarding how to take care of my promise, the old crone, Proselenos, in ugly black clothes and with straggling hair, entered the shrine and, laying hands on me, dragged me out of the porch.

### **134: OENOTHEA PRIESTESS OF PRIAPUS**

Proselenos cried: 'What witches have squandered your strength, what foulness or corpse have you trodden on by night at the crossroads? You've never spared yourself since you were a lad, no doubt, but weak and tender, tired as a pack-horse on a slope, you've wasted your effort and sweat. Not content with offending yourself, you've roused the gods' anger against me!' And she led me, unresisting, into the priestess' room once more, threw me onto the bed, snatched a cane from beside the door, and when I remained unresponsive beat me again. If the cane hadn't snapped at the first stroke and lessened the force of the blow, she might even have broken my head or my arm. I groaned out loud on account of my manhandling, and shed tears copiously, leaning against the pillow, with my right arm covering my head. Troubled, she wept no less, and sitting on another part of the bed, she proceeded to condemn the tardiness of old age in a tremulous voice, until the priestess entered.

'Why come to my room as if it were an open tomb,' she said, 'especially on a festive day, when even mourners smile?' 'O,' she replied, 'Oenothea, this lad you see was born under an evil star; he can't sell what he has to boy or girl. You've never met so unfortunate a young man: it's a bit

of wash-leather not a prick. What, indeed, can one say of a man who could rise from Circe's couch without taking his pleasure?' Hearing this Oenothea sat down between us, shook her head for a while, and said: 'I'm the only one who knows how to cure that affliction. And lest you think it's too complicated to manage, I propose the young man should sleep with me at night, and see if I don't render the thing more rigid than horn:

'Whatever you see on earth obeys me. When I wish, the flowery turf faints and withers, the juices drying, when I wish, it pours riches, and crags and boulders spurt water like the Nile. The sea quietens its waves, listless before me, the winds silently lay their gales at my feet. The rivers obey me, the Hyrcanian tiger, and the serpents that I command to rear up and hiss. And why not greater still? The moon's disc I draw down to me by my spells, the anxious sun I compel to wheel his fiery team, forced to reverse his course. Such is the power of words. The angry bull is calm, quietened by a virgin's rites; Circe, child of the sun, transforms Ulysses' crew with magical incantations; Proteus takes what form he will. And I, cunning in such arts, can plant Mount Ida's thickets in the sea, or drive great rivers back to their mountain sources.'

## 135: PREPARATIONS FOR THE RITUAL

Horrified by such wondrous claims, I proceeded to gaze at the woman cautiously. ‘Now,’ cried Oenothea, ‘obey my orders!’ and cleansing her hands scrupulously she leant over the bed and kissed me once and then again. Then she set up a table in the centre of the altar-top, which she covered with live coals and, with warm pitch, repaired a wooden wine-cup cracked with age. Then she drove a nail, which had come loose when she took the cup down, back into the smoke-blackened wall. Next she donned a square wrap, placed a giant cooking-pot on the hearth and, from a meat-hook, took down a bag holding a supply of broad beans and half a pig’s head hewn into a thousand mouldy fragments. Loosening the drawstring, she poured a pile of broad beans onto the table, and told me to shell them carefully. I obeyed orders and, with delicate touch, parted the beans from the lowly pods that held them. But she, reproaching me wickedly for my lack of skill, snatched them from me, swiftly tore the pods with her teeth and spat them on the ground like the empty husks of flies.

I gazed around, marvelling at the devices of poverty, and the artistry displayed by each and every thing:

‘No Indian ivory, set in gold, gleamed here,  
nor did the earth, her gifts scorned, shine  
with trodden marble, but the empty ground  
of Ceres’ sacred grove was set with willow  
hurdles, with clay cups turned on the wheel.  
Here the soft lime-wood bowl, pliant plates  
of willow-bark, and there a wine-stained jug.  
And the walls around, made of humble straw

and the clay to hand, with rows of rough nails,  
and hanging there the slender stalks of rushes.  
Their little cottage's smoke-blackened rafters  
held their stores, ripe sorb-berries hung there  
in fragrant woven wreaths, and dried savoury  
and bunches of raisins; such a hostess here as  
once in Athens: Hecale, worthy of reverence,  
whom the Muse bequeathed to every age of  
eloquence to admire, in Callimachus' verse.'

### **136-137: THE DEATH OF THE GOOSE**

Meanwhile Proselenos was gathering up bits of meat, and as she was replacing the bag, containing the pork as ancient as her, on the meat-hook, the stool she was standing on, to gain height, broke, and the old hag's weight sent her tumbling into the coals. The cooking-pot broke at the neck, and put out the fire which was just beginning to burn. A glowing brand scorched her elbow and her whole face was covered with scattered ashes. I leapt up in alarm and lifted her back onto her feet, though not without a smile. Oenothea ran off immediately to the neighbours to fetch some coals, lest the ritual was delayed.

The old hag was out, and I was at the door of the house, when behold, three sacred geese, who I suppose were used to getting their daily feed from her at noon, rushed at me, and gathered round me, as I trembled, honking madly. One tore at my tunic, another untied the strings of my sandals, and dragged them off; the third, the ringleader, and chief of these savages, even chose to attack my shin with his rough bill. So, oblivious to trifles, I wrenched a leg from the little table and began hammering the ferocious creature with the weapon in my hand. Not content with this perfunctory blow, I took revenge with the death of the goose:

‘So, I think, the Stymphalian birds might have fled,  
driven, by Hercules’ use of cunning, into the sky;  
so, the Harpies, dripping vileness, when that table  
baited with food by Phineus ran with their venom:  
the air above trembling, shaken by strange shrieks,  
and all the courts of heaven thrown into disarray.’

The remaining geese had already picked up the beans, spilt and scattered all over the floor and, with their leader gone, returned, I suppose, to the shrine, while I, proud of my spoils and my victory, threw the dead goose behind the bed, and bathed the wound on my shin, which was not too deep, with vinegar. Then, fearful of reproaches, I planned my escape, collected my gear, and started to leave the house. I’d not yet quitted the room when I glimpsed Oenothea striding back with a pot of live coals. So I retreated, threw off my coat, and stood in the entrance as though I’d been awaiting her return all along.

She made up the fire with a heap of dead reeds and, piling on some dry wood, began to apologise for her delay, saying that her friend would not let her go without draining the usual three glasses. ‘And what did you do, while I was gone,’ she asked, ‘and where are the beans?’ Thinking I might have achieved something worthy of praise, I described the whole of my fight, in detail, and lest she prove distressed for long I produced the goose to offset the losses. When she saw the bird, she raised so great an outcry, you’d have thought the geese were back. Troubled and amazed at the strangeness of it being thought a crime, I asked why she was in a temper, and why she’d more sympathy for the goose than for me. But, beating her hands together, she cried: ‘You wicked wretch, you dare to speak? Don’t you realise the dreadful sin you’ve committed: you’ve killed Priapus’ darling bird, the goose all wives welcome. Don’t think what you’ve done is trivial, if the magistrate finds out, you’re for crucifixion. You’ve defiled my house, inviolate till today, with blood, and as for me, any enemy of mine who

wishes, can turn me out of the priesthood.’ ‘Please don’t shout,’ I replied, ‘I’ll get you an ostrich to replace the goose.’

While I stood stupefied, and Oenothea sat on the bed, bewailing the goose’s fate, Proselenos entered with things for the ritual and, seeing the dead goose and ascertaining the cause, began to weep vehemently, and pity me as if I’d killed my own father instead of a common or garden goose. So tired and weary I said: ‘Please let me wash my hands of this by paying; it’s as if I’d provoked you, or even done murder. Look, here’s two gold pieces, you can buy a goose and reimburse the god with that.’ Oenothea, on seeing the money, said: ‘Young man, forgive me for being distressed because of you. It’s a matter of anxiety, not ill-will. We must try our best to keep the matter secret. Only, beg the gods to pardon your actions.’

‘Whoever has cash, sails before the wind,  
and governs good-fortune as he pleases.  
Let him wed Danae, he could command  
Acrisius himself to trust him, like Danae.  
Let him write verse, declaim, snap his  
fingers then win his cases, outdo Cato:  
let him have his ‘proven, not proven’  
in court, and be a Servius or a Labeo.  
Enough: desire what you will, money  
brings it: your purse has Jove’s power.’

Oenothea positioned a wine-jar beneath my hands, then rubbed my outstretched fingers with leeks and celery stalks and dropped hazelnuts into the wine, while muttering a charm. She drew her readings from them, according to whether they floated to the surface or sank. I didn’t fail to notice however that the empty nuts without a kernel, full of air, rose to the surface, while the ripe ones, full of the fruit, fell to the bottom!

Next she cut the goose open, extracted the extremely fatty liver, and from it prophesied my future. Moreover, to remove all trace of the crime, she ran a spit through the goose, and prepared a fine meal, which I ate heartily, though, as she said, I'd seemed at death's door only a moment ago, while the cups of pure wine flowed swiftly amongst us.

### **138-139: ENCOLPIUS IS ANOINTED, BUT ESCAPES**

Next, Oenothea drew out a leather phallus, dipped it in oil, ground pepper and bruised nettle seeds, and proceeded to insert it gradually into my anus. The old crone, Proselenos sprinkled my thighs with the mixture, most cruelly and, drenching my loins with the juice of nasturtiums mixed with artemisia, took a handful of green nettles and began to gently lash everything below my navel...

Leaping up, I ran for it. Though the poor old things were drunk on wine and wilfulness, they took the same road, and pursued me, as I fled, through several streets crying; 'Stop, thief!' yet I escaped, feet bloody from my headlong flight.

Back home, I said to myself: 'Chrysis, who scorned your fate, previously, will follow you now even at the risk of her life. What beauty did Ariadne or Leda have to rival hers? What might Helen or Venus have to match her? Paris himself, who judged between the goddesses, would have sacrificed Helen and all the goddesses for her, if his eager gaze had viewed her beside them. If only I were allowed to kiss her, if I could embrace those divine and heavenly breasts, perhaps my body would regain its vigour, and the parts, as I believe, lulled by venom, might return to normal. May no insult tire me: let me forget my floggings, and think it fine sport to be sent packing. Only let her be kind once more.' And I plagued the bed with tossing to and fro, as if I sought the image of my love.

‘The powers that be, and implacable fate, cannot pursue me alone. Hercules, before me, was driven from the Inachian shore, he bore the sky’s weight; Laomedon suffered the unholy wrath of two gods; Pelias knew Hera’s; Telephus fought unknowingly; and Ulysses went in fear of Poseidon’s wide realm: just as the heavy anger of Priapus pursues me, now, through all the earth, and over hoary Nereus’ waters.’

I now proceeded to enquire of Giton, if anyone had asked for me. ‘No one, today,’ he answered, ‘but yesterday a not inelegant lady came in at the door, and spoke at me for a long time until I was weary of her accusatory tone; finally, she proceeded to say that if the injured party persevered with their complaint, you would merit punishment and be tortured like a slave.’ I had not yet finished making plaintive noises, when Chrysis entered, took me in her arms warmly, and cried: ‘Now I have you, as I wished; you are my desire, you will never quench this fire except with my blood.’

It was at this point that one of Eumolpus’ new slaves suddenly appeared saying their master was furious because I had been absent from duty for two days, and the best thing I might do was to prepare to some fitting excuse, or his wild anger would scarcely abate without a flogging for me.

But I explained myself to Eumolpus, saying: ‘There are greater powers, and they’ve restored me to wholeness. For Mercury, who guides souls to Hades and back again, has granted me those blessings again that his anger took away, so now that I am now more favoured than Protesilaus, or any other of the ancients.’ At this, I lifted my tunic, and offered myself complete for Eumolpus’ approbation. He was in awe, at first, then, in order to credit it, he felt the god’s blessing all over with both hands.

## 140: PHILOMELA AND EUMOLPUS

There was a married woman, of the highest respectability, named Philomela, who, by years of attentiveness, had been in the habit of extorting legacies, but now, being old and past her prime, frequently pressed her son and daughter on childless old men hoping to continue the practice of her art through her children.

She therefore visited Eumolpus, to commend both them, herself, and all her hopes, to his wisdom and kindness, he being, of a certainty, the only person in the whole world who could instruct the young people in sound principles each day. In short she would leave her children in his household, to listen to his discourse, the only inheritance she could leave them. Nor did she stray from her word; leaving her most beautiful daughter and the brother, already a young man, behind, she departed, under the pretence of going to the temple to pay formal thanks.

Eumolpus, who was so intemperate that even I might seem to him a child, did not hesitate to introduce the girl to the rites of sodomy. But, since he always told everyone he was gouty and had weak loins, if he could not maintain the pretence intact he ran the risk of almost ruining the plot. So to establish belief in his deceit, he persuaded the girl to settle down on top of this ‘excellent thing he recommended’, and ordering Corax to climb into the bed in which he was himself lying and place his hands on the floor, to set his master in motion with his loins. Corax obeyed the order in slow motion, rewarding the girl’s efforts with an equivalent action. When the business seemed close to being accomplished, Eumolpus, in a loud tone, exhorted Corax to intensify the action. Thus situated between the paid-servant and the girl, the older man pleased himself while oscillating up and down. This Eumolpus did time and again, to huge laughter, including his own.

I too, not to lose the habit through idleness, approached her brother as he was gazing at his sister and her human automata, to see if he was open to assault. This cleverest of lads did not run away from my flatteries, but, alas, some inimical power visited me in this situation also...

## 141: EUMOLPUS' PROMISE

I said: 'Eumolpus, that ship from Africa, you promised, with your money and slaves has not arrived. The fortune-hunters are weary, and their generosity is diminishing. Either I'm mistaken, therefore, or our mutual good fortune is about to turn again to regret. 'Socrates,' he replied, 'that friend of gods and men used to boast that he had never so much as glanced at the market-place, nor allowed his eyes to rest on any substantial gathering. Indeed nothing is more proper than to converse perpetually with wisdom.' 'All very true,' I said, 'and no one deserves to incur ill-fortune more than those who covet other's wealth. But how would imposters or thieves make a living if they failed to bestow little boxes and purses jingling with coins on the crowd as bait? Just as dumb animals are snared with food, human beings will not be caught unless they have a morsel of expectation to feed on.'

'Well,' Eumolpus answered, 'all those who stand to gain a legacy under my will, except my freedmen, will receive what I grant them, though on one condition, that they cut my body up, and consume it in front of the populace. We know that among some nations this rule is still observed, that dead people shall be eaten by their relatives, with the result that people who are ill are often blamed for marring the taste of their own flesh. I therefore warn my friends not to ignore what I command, but to consume my body with the same spirit as they curse my soul.' His great reputation for wealth dulled the eyes and minds of poor fools. Gorgias was ready to follow his plan for the funeral.

Eumolpus told him: 'I'm not afraid of your stomach revolting, it will obey orders if you promise to repay it with plenty of good things for one hour of unpleasantness. Simply shut your eyes and imagine you're eating ten thousand gold pieces and not human innards. Added to which, we shall find some sauce or other to modify the taste. For no flesh is naturally pleasing, it has to be dressed with art, and reconciled to the unwilling digestion. But if you'd like precedents for my intention, the people of Saguntum when

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besieged by Hannibal, ate flesh, without anticipating a legacy. The residents of Petelia did the same, in the extremities of famine, and had no profit from their diet, except that of banishing hunger. And when Numantia was taken by Scipio Aemilianus some mothers were found clutching the half-consumed bodies of their children to their breast...

### **THE END OF THE EXTANT SATYRICON**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Petronius Arbiter (Gaius, or Titus) who is usually accepted as identical with the author of the *Satyricon*, flourished at the time of the emperors Claudius (AD41-54) and Nero (AD54-68), and Tacitus speaks of him in the *Annals*, where he describes his suicide after condemnation by Nero. At one time Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, Petronius later became Nero's close friend and his arbiter of taste and manners. He appears to have indulged freely in the dubious life of Nero's court, yet in the *Satyricon* reveals a keen awareness of the wider society around him with its weaknesses and follies, as well as his own educated background in Greek and Roman literature, lore, and philosophy. The *Satyricon* is one of the very few light-hearted prose works from the Roman period and, with Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, helped to found the picaresque tradition which later European literature adopted and embellished.

## ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR



Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.