

## PROPERTIUS II

### I

Why do I write so much love poetry  
Which sweetly sounds? It's not Calliope  
Nor Phoebus who have put them in my head:  
My girl's my Muse. For if I've seen her tread  
Shining in Coan silks, then will I write  
A whole book filled with them; if in my sight  
Her hair strays to her brow, the praise that I  
Give it makes her exult with head held high;  
And if she plucks with hands of ivory  
Her lyre, I'll marvel at how skilfully 10  
She plays; kif, fighting sleep. She drops her eyes,  
A thousand new conceits will then arise  
In me; if, strpped, she fights me, then indeed  
I'll write long Iliads for you to read.  
Whatever she has done, whatever said,  
From nought a splendid history is bred.  
But if, Maecenas, Fate had furnished me  
With a Muse to laud heroic soldiery,  
I would not sing of Titans nor the stack  
Of Pelion on Ossa for a track 20  
To Olympus, nor of Thebes nor Troy, whose fame  
Was Homer's, nor the two seas which became  
As one as Xerxes uttered his demand  
Nor Remus' reign nor the wrath of the Carthage land  
Nor the Cimbri's threats nor the nobility  
Of Marius deeds; I'd choose the authority  
And wars of Caesar; you yourself would I  
Next sing of. Though I've sung of Philippi,  
That tomb of Romans, and the rout at sea  
That caused Pompeius' flight off Sicily 30  
And Mutina and Etruria's defeat  
And Pharos' capture; though I'd also treat  
Of Egypt and the Nile, which sluggishly  
In seven streams came in captivity  
To Rome, and the necks of the captive kings, all bound  
With chains of gold, and Actian prows that wound  
Along the Sacred Way; my Muse would blend  
You with these exploits and, should you command  
Or spurn peace, you'd be the soul of loyalty.  
Theseus and Achilles showed fidelity 40  
To Pirithous and Patroclus, one below  
And one above the earth; your steps will go

Joined in great Caesar's fame, confirming thus  
 Your true celebrity. Callimachus  
 With his slim verse could not thunder the scene  
 On Phlegras plain – the battle waged between  
 Jove and Enceladus; even so am I  
 Not fit for war verse nor to sanctify  
 Among his Phrygian fathers Caesar's glory.  
 Of winds at sea the sailor tells a story, 50  
 Of bulls the ploughman, of his battle-shock  
 The soldier, while the shepherd of his flock  
 Will speak; in narrow bed is found the strife  
 / sing of: everyone should live his life  
 Doing what he does best. In love to die,  
 And loving just one girl, is fine. May I  
 Enjoy my love alone. [As I recall,  
 My Cynthia is wont to censure all  
 Capricious girls because of Helena: so  
 She spurns the entire *Iliad*, even though 60  
 I'd have to drink off Phaedra's poisoned cup,  
 The draught which her stepson would never sup,  
 Or die of Circe's herbs or else await  
 Medea's heated cauldron, and, since Fate  
 Has to one girl alone given my heart,  
 It's from my house her funeral will start.  
 Medicine can cure all human suffering:  
 Love won't allow a doctor, though, to bring  
 Him succour. Philoctetes Machaon  
 Once cured; Phoenix's blindness by Chiron 70  
 Was healed; lifeless Androgeon was restored  
 To life by Aesculapius from his hoard  
 Of Crtean herbs. The spear the Mysian king  
 Was wounded by was also the same thing  
 That cured him. He who cures *me* is the man  
 Who drops the fruit in Tantalus' hands and can  
 Fill up the Danaids' jars lest they should be  
 Bent at the tender necks by constantly  
 Trickling water; and Prometheus  
 He'll set free from his rock in Caucasus 80  
 And drive away the vultures from his breast.  
 So when I go to my eternal rest,  
 And on a small stone I'll be a brief name,  
 Then Maecenas, the hope and envied fame  
 Of Roman youth, my rightful pride while I  
 Yrt live and in my death, should you chance by  
 My tomb, alight then from your chariot,  
 Whose decorated harness you once got

From Britain. Weep and say. "How wretchedly  
He perished through a girl;s severity."

II

I sought an unshared bed, quite fancy-free,  
But Love made peace and thereby hoodwinked me.  
How can we bear such grace? Each old affair  
Of yours I pardon, Jove. Her auburn hair,  
Her tapered hands, her tall regality!  
She walks like Jupiter's sister, equally  
Like Pallas as she mounts the shrines, her breast  
With the Gorgon's chevelure of snakes bedressed,  
Or else like Venus stepping on the sea  
That gave her birth and in the company 10  
Of a thousand tender Cupids. Goddesses, yield,  
You whom the shepherds gazed at you peeled  
Your tunics off on Ida! May age never  
Alter her looks, though she should live forever.

III

You said no girl could hurt you – now you're trapped,  
However, and that spirit of yours is sapped!  
For just one month you scarcely could keep mum,  
Poor wretch, and now a second book will come  
To badmouth you. Can a fish live on dry sand  
Or a boar in the sea? I tried to understand;  
Thus could I study hard? Well, love may be  
Put of but never leaves me totally.  
It's not so much her face has captured me,  
Though fair (lilies are not so white as she), 10  
Nor that on her smoothe neck her fair hair flows,  
Nor her twin star-like beams, nor when she goes  
In silks of Araby, shimmering (for I  
Don't flatter vainly) – as if deep snows vie  
With Spanish scarlet or as one may see  
Rose-leaves on milk, as much as the fact that she  
Dances so well once wine-jars are at hand,  
As well as Ariadne, leading her band  
Of Bacchantes, or when she attempts an air  
Upon the lyre, her talents quite as fair 20  
As Aganippe, or she pits her poetry  
Against Corinna's and declares that she  
Outdoes Erinna. In your cradle, dear,  
Did not Love sneeze an omen loud and clear?

These gifts the gods bestowed: do not suppose  
 Your mother gave you them. Such gifts as those  
 Aren't mortal gifts – they're no ten-month creation.  
 To Roman girls a splendid reputation  
 You're given: after Helen, once again  
 This beauty comes to earth. No mortal men 30  
 Will you always delight. For you will be  
 The first to lie with Jove. Should it shock me

That all our youth burns for her? Better it were,  
 O Troy, that you had been destroyed for her.  
 I marvelled once that a girl could be the source  
 Whereby at Pergamum a mighty force  
 Of arms would clash between two continents:  
 But, Paris, now I see that you had sense,  
 And, Menelaus, you (the one's command 40  
 Conflicted by the other's daring stand).  
 For Helen's beauty even Achilles died;  
 With the war's cause even Priam complied.  
 Who'd vie with artists of the bygone days,  
 Let Cynthia pose for him. If he displays  
 Her in the West or East, it matters not -  
 He'll make the folk of either region hot.

#### IV

Within these bounds at least let me remain<sup>1</sup>  
 God help me if I die in sharper pain  
 Through a new love! At first a bull will spurn  
 The yoke but later on he'll grow to learn  
 To softly tread the fields – similarly  
 Young men will rush at love hot-headedly  
 But, broken in, endure both foul and fair.  
 The seer Melampus once was forced to bear  
 Embarrassing chains because he stole the herd  
 Of Iphiclus: by gain he wasn't spurred 10  
 But love of fair Pero who was to be  
 His bride. Complain of each iniquity  
 Your mistress has, ask much of her, and yet,  
 As often as you do, you'll leave upset,  
 As often bite your nails. As often, pound  
 With anger and frustration on the ground!  
 I all in vain with perfumes drenched my hair.  
 I slowly walked with measured footsteps. There  
 Is no herb, no Medean sorcery,  
 No drug compounded for such misery. 20

What crooked seer has not made me his prey?  
 What ancient crone has not day after day  
 Explained my dreams? The lover, being ill,  
 Requires no soft bed nor a doctor's skill.  
 No climate harms him; he's out for a walk -  
 Then suddenly his comrades' startled talk  
 Is heard about his death. Whatever we  
 May think of love, it's fickle. For we see  
 No cause, no overt blow, yet nonetheless  
 Its dark path with it brings so much distress.         30  
 Let him love girls who is my enemy;  
 He who's my friend, let him delight to be  
 A lover of boys. Down a smooth stream you sail  
 Safely upon your skiff; nothing will ail  
 You in a tiny channel. For a boy  
 Will by a single word from you find joy  
 After a spat; a girl, though, won't be led  
 Into forgiveness though your blood be shed.

V

Does all of Rome, then, Cynthia, know your name  
 And do you flaunty your life of total shame?  
 Is this my due? You wretch, I'll make you pay  
 And I'll be wafted somewhere far away.  
 From many cheating girls I'll find there'll be  
 One glad to win fame through my poetry.  
 She'll not crush me but you she'll tear apart.  
 You'll weep too late, you who have held my heart  
 Too long. My anger's fresh – It's time to bid  
 Goodbye. I'll love again when I am rid         10  
 Of pain. The North Wind moves the Carpathian Sea,  
 The South black clouds, and both more violently  
 Than angry lovers make up: while you may,  
 Withdraw your neck from an unjust yoke, I pray.  
 You'll suffer much, but only the first night.  
 If you allow them, all love's ills are light.  
 By Lady Juno's kind pledge, don't mistreat  
 Yourself with ill-will, Cynthia my sweet.  
 The bull with his horns will strike an enemy,  
 The sheep, when he receives an injury,         20  
 Will do so, too. Your clothes I will not tear;  
 Your padlocked door I will not break, I swear,  
 I will not rip apart your neat coiffure;  
 To raise my hand to you I'd not endure.  
 So let some boorish rustic, one whose head

Was never ivy-wreathed, prefer instead  
 Such vulgar brawls. Words age will not efface,  
 Therefore, I'll write: "Cynthia, such splendid grace,  
 Yet fickle." Wink at gossip all you may  
 But at these lines of mine you'll turn quite grey.

## VI

Not thus was Lais thronged, though all of Greece  
 Lay at her door; nor was comic Thaïs  
 Thus visited, wh gave so much delight  
 To all of Athens, Phryne, she who might  
 Have rebuilt Thebes, was not made so content  
 And by so many men. Yet you'd invent  
 Sham kin lest there should be a paucity  
 Of men with rights to kiss you. Jealousy  
 Takes hold of me when young men I behold  
 In portraits, even when their names are told 10  
 To me -even a child; your mother, too,  
 Will make me jealous if she kisses you,  
 Your sister, girlfriend... Almost anything  
 Will set me off. It's so disquieting  
 (Forgive me!) when I think that in that dress  
 There lurks a man. They say such wickedness  
 Launched warfare as in Troy so long ago;  
 The Greeks were ravaged with unwilling woe  
 When Agamemnon's concubine's price was high;  
 Such frenzy caused the Centaurs to let fly 20  
 Their goblets at the head of Pirithous.  
 Why seek Greek instances You, Romulus,  
 Nursed by a she-wolf, tutored us to be  
 Defiers of the Sabine maids, scot-free:  
 Through you Cupid may have his will in Rome.  
 Blest are those women with a happy home -  
 For two, Alcestis and Penelope.  
 Why should we have a shrine of Chastity  
 If brides have *carte blanche*? For the man who drew  
 Lewd panels, bringing filthy pictures to 30  
 A virtuous home, has marred girls' innocent eyes.  
 Because he showed the mystery that lies  
 Beneath the secret joys, may he go blind.  
 Not with such filth our ancestors designed  
 Their homes. But now our temples are arrayed  
 With spiderwebs, and loathsome weeds invade  
 Forsaken gods. What barriers, then, shall I  
 Set up for you that no foe may get by?

Stern guards won't stop a sinful girl, but she  
Who shames to sin is guarded suitably. 40

VII

No wife, no mistress will tear us apart:  
You will be both to me. How must your heart  
Have joyed, dear, when that law was nullified,  
Which caused us many tears lest it divide  
Us two: though Jove himself, against their will,  
Won't separate two lovers. "Caesar, still,  
Is mighty." Yes, in war: the conquering  
Of nations, though, in love means not a thing.  
I'd sooner lose my head, and thus my life,  
Than douse the torch of love to gain a wife, 10  
Or, married, pass your door, now barred to me,  
And look back, weeping at my perfidy.  
My wedding-flute would many a dire dream  
Bring you, a flute that would more dismal seem  
Than a war-blast! To serve Rome victory  
How could I offer sons? There'll never be  
A soldier from my blood. But if, indeed,  
I stayed in Cynthia's camp, more would I need  
Than Castor's mighty horse. Through her my name  
Has been immortalized and hence my fame 20  
Has reached the far North. You alone, my dear,  
Are my delight: may I alone bring cheer  
To you as well. My father's name means less  
Than this love which brings me such happiness.

VIII

I'm robbed of her I long have held so dear.  
My friend, won't you allow me just one tear?  
Love's rancours are the worst: so slaughter me -  
I'll hate you less. For can I bear to see  
Her in another's arms? Will people say  
That she's not mine that was but yesterday?  
Everything changes, loves not least: by those  
You conquered now you're conquered - so it goes  
In love. Great chiefs and tyrants often fall:  
Once Thebes was mighty and once Troy stood tall. 10  
The gifts I gave, the verse I wrote! But she  
Would harshly never vow her love for me.  
So all these years, you bitch, was I too bold  
While subsidizing you and your household?

Have I no rights? Will you forever throw  
 Disgusting insults in my face? And so  
 Shall I die young? So be it. Let the lass  
 Gloat over my demise' let her harass  
 My ghost, abuse my shade, insult my pyre  
 And crush my bones. Did not Haemon expire      20  
 At his Antigone's tomb, stabbed in his side  
 By his own sword? Since he could not abide  
 To go back home, did he not coalesce  
 His bones with hers? You will not, nonetheless,  
 Escape: you must die with me. Let one sword  
 Trickle our blood: though your death will afford  
 Me shame, you'll die. Achilles, left forlorn  
 When Briseis from him was so cruelly torn,  
 Lay down his arms. He'd seen the Greeks had fled,  
 Slain on the shore, the Greek camp blazing red      30  
 With Hector's torch and, in its ugliness,  
 Patroclus' corpse, his hair a tangled mess  
 Of gore, stretched out upon a heap of sand,  
 For fair Briseis able to withstand  
 All this: robbed of his girl, such wretchedness  
 A man will feel. After a late redress  
 His captive was restored; then Hector he  
 Dragged off behind his steeds of Thessaly.  
 I'm no Achilles, so why should one be  
 Surprised that Love's triumphant over me?      40

## IX

I've often been like him: but possibly  
 Another will be chosen presently.  
 For twenty years Penelope preserved  
 Her principles, a woman who deserved  
 So many suitors; for she could delay  
 With her deceitful loom her wedding-day.  
 Although she thought that she would never see  
 Ulysses more, she kept her loyalty.  
 Briseis, when Achilles had been slain,  
 Held him and beat her fair cheeks, quite insane      10  
 With grief; she washed her bleeding lord as he  
 Lay stretched along the Simois; then she  
 Begrimed her hair and took up his huge frame  
 In her small hands; to him no Peleus came,  
 No sea-borne mother, nor his girl who lay  
 Alone on the isle of Scyros far away.  
 Back then all Greece joyed in fidelity:

Though slaughter flourished, so did chastity.  
 But for a man each night you had an itch  
 And couldn't miss one day men-free, you bitch! 20  
 If in far India I had got a post  
 Or if I were becalmed far from the coast,  
 What would you do? You two would merrily  
 Carouse and doubtless say bad things of me.  
 You're with a man who left you once: oh please,  
 Delight in your captivity! Are these  
 The vows I made for your recovery,  
 While Styx was almost over your head and we,  
 Your friends, wept by your bed? In Heaven's name,  
 Where was this fellow then, and what? For shame! 30  
 We by you girls are easily betrayed,  
 For you have constant dealings in this trade.  
 The Syrtes don't so frequently fluctuate  
 Nor leaves in a wintry tempest oscillate  
 Than angry women break their promises,  
 No matter how grave or light the reason is.  
 Well, then, I'll yield since you are resolute:  
 Bring sharper arrows, Cupids, and then shoot  
 And vie to put me from this misery! 40  
 My blood will be the greatest prize for you.  
 The very stars, the morning hoar-frost, too,  
 Shall testify and, in my misery,  
 The door laid open for me stealthily,  
 That nobody has been to me more dear  
 Than you, and, though you often were severe,  
 Nobody will be. No girl else will lie  
 In bed with me: I'll be alone, for I  
 Cannot be yours. Now it's my earnest plea,  
 Since I have given you years of loyalty  
 That man of yours might suddenly turn to stone  
 While making love to you. Lust for a throne  
 Caused the Theban princes death in deadly fight,  
 Their mother trying to part them: well, I might,  
 If Cynthia tried the same, not fail to die  
 As long as you expires as well as I,

X

Let Helicon ring out in another key  
 And give the field the steed of Thessaly.  
 I want to sing of squadrons and to speak  
 About our leader's camp. If I'm too weak,  
 At least I will be praised for bravery:

For great themes wishing's a sufficiency.  
 Let young bards sing of love but let the old  
 Laud war: since Cynthia's story has been told,  
 That's what I'll d. I'll set out earnestly,  
 My Muse another harp now touching me. 10  
 My soul, rise high; my verse, more strength embrace:  
 A loftier tone will ring in elegy's place.  
 The Parthian shot Euphrates will gainsay  
 And, that he held the Crassi, feels dismay.  
 Augustus, even India bows to you  
 And virgin Araby trembles at you, too;  
 May any race that slinks to a distant strand  
 Be later caught by your victorious hand!  
 This camp I'll follow; it shall bring me fame:  
 So may this day commemorate my name! 20  
 As one cannot ouch a tall statue's head,  
 A wreath is placed upon its feet instead,  
 So I, who am unable to ascend  
 Your chariot of praise, may now append  
 A poor man's incense. Ascra's springs aren't known  
 Yet to my verse, just Permessus alone.

XI

Let others write of you or be unknown:  
 Be praised by him who in dry soil has sown  
 His seed. It's certain your black funeral day  
 Will on one bier take all your gifts away.  
 Folks by your grave shall, all unheeding, pass  
 Nor say, "This dust was once a learned lass."

XII

Whoever pained Cupid, didn't he  
 Display to us a wondrous mastery?  
 He first saw lovers' childishness and knew  
 Our great advantages are forfeit through  
 Our petty cares, and he was justified  
 In adding wings and making him fly inside  
 A human's heart; indeed we're tossed this way  
 And that, the wind not settling to stay  
 In just one place, and that's the reason why  
 He bears barbed darts which in his quiver lie 10  
 Upon his back. Before we see the foe,  
 He strikes and from the owound no-one will go  
 Away unscathed. His arrows stay with me,

As do his boyish looks, but certainly  
 He's lost his wings; he never leaves my breast  
 But, waging war, he never gives me rest.  
 What joy have you in my dry veins to cling?  
 Shoot elsewhere if from shame you feel a sting!  
 Storm those who never felt your darts before.  
 My paltry shade, not I, is feeling sore:  
 If that's destroyed, who'll sing such themes (your name  
 Has by little Muse achieved great fame)?  
 Who'd sing her face, hands, dark eyes and the way  
 Her steps become her in their dainty sway.?

### XIII

By not so many darts is Susa armed  
 Than those through which by Cupid I've been harmed.  
 Each delicate Muse he warned me not to shun  
 And ordered me to live, as I have done,  
 In Ascrea's grove, not that her oaks might heed  
 My words, nor to her valley I might lead  
 \Wild beasts, but that my Cynthia'll be spellbound  
 By my verse, and by my skill I will be found  
 More famed than Linus is. Not only do  
 I worship beauty and a woman who 10  
 Boasts of her ancestors: but to recite  
 My verse to a learned lass brings me delight;  
 I bask in her approval. Then - goodbye  
 To silly gossip: in my judgment I  
 Will be secure. If she a kindly ear  
 Will lend, Jove's hatred will I never fear.  
 When death shall close my eyes, then heed me, please,  
 And learn how to conduct my obsequies:  
 No line of masks shall mark my funeral train,  
 Nor do I want a trumpet's empty strain; 20  
 No bier on ivy columns must be spread,  
 No couch of cloth-of-gold to rest my head,  
 No perfumed dishes; there must only be  
 A common burial. Sufficiently  
 Grnad if thre books of verse I am to bear  
 To Persephone as my most precious care.  
 Tearing your bare breast, you'll walk at the rear  
 A nd often call my name for all to hear;  
 On my cod lips your kissed you will place,  
 When all the Syrian offerings in their case 30  
 Are brought. When I am turned to ashes, see  
 That one small urn receives what's left of me.

Over my tiny gravesite let a bay  
 Protect my pyre; and add two lines to say,  
 "These gruesome ashes which you stand above  
 Were once the minion of a single love."  
 My tomb's renown will be no less widespread  
 Than Achilles' blood-stained mound. When you lie dead,  
 Recall the way: white-haired come to the stone  
 That knows you, for the truth is not unknown        40  
 To the earth; therefore don't spurn me when I'm dead.  
 Would I had died upon my infant bed!  
 Why should precarious lives be amplified?  
 Three generations ere old Nestor died  
 Had passed: if he'd cut short his destiny  
 Fighting at Troy, he'd not have had to see  
 His son's interment, wailing at his fate  
 And saying, "Death, why do you come so late?"  
 Yet you'll always lament a departed friend -  
 It's right to love a mate who's met his end.        50  
 Your fair Adonis, as you've testified,  
 Venus, while hunting on the mountainside  
 Of Ida was struck by a cruel boar, and there  
 You washed his corpse and with dishevelled hair  
 You roamed. You'll call back, dear, my silent shade:  
 From my crushed bones what answer could be made?

#### XIV

You did not, Agamemnon, so delight  
 At the collapse of Priam's fathers might;  
 Nor did Ulysses when he reached the shore  
 Of his dear isle of Ithaca.; nor more  
 Did Electra when she'd cradled tearfully  
 The bones she thought Orestes', only to see  
 Him safe; nor Ariadne on the day  
 She saw Theseus unharmed, for whom her way  
 He'd threaded through Daedalus' maze; no, I  
 Garnered more pleasure in the night gone by:        10  
 One more will bring me immortality.  
 No longer does she seek to answer me  
 With high disdain or scorn my tears, but when  
 I'd bowed down suppliant-like before her, then  
 She'd called me paltrier than a stagnant lake.  
 O would that I had not made the mistake  
 Of seeing her methods sooner! Can one cure  
 A corpse? My path was crystal, to be sure,  
 But I was blind. Of course, when one's insane

with love, one's eyes are useless. Then – disdain, 20  
 You lovers – that will work, I've found. Today  
 She'll come, though she said no but yesterday.  
 Others would knock in vain but on my breast,  
 Unmoved by them, her head she'd gently rest.  
 This is am greater victory for me  
 Than the Parthians' defeat, for it shall be  
 My spoil, my captive kings, my chariot, too.  
 So, Venus, on your shrine I'll nail for you  
 Rich gifts and underneath my name I'll say:  
 HERE IN YOUR TEMPLE I, PROPERTIUS, LAY 30  
 MY GIFTS, GODDESS, TO YOU FOR MY DELIGHT  
 IN SPENDING WITH MY MISTRESS ONE WHOLE NIGHT.  
 It's up to you, my dear, whether my ship  
 Should reach the shore or, overburdened, slip  
 Amid the shoals. Should I offend you more,  
 Then may I fall down dead before your door!

XV

I'm happy! O the night that shone for me!  
 Dear bed, made blessed by my ecstasy!  
 The many words we chattered by lamplight!  
 Our frantic couplings in the black of night!  
 Now naked, she would wrestle me, now bait  
 Me with her tunic and make me wait.  
 She's kiss my drooping eyes awake and say,  
 "You lazy thing, why doze your life away?"  
 How varied our embraces, leisurely  
 My kisses! Acts of love that one can't see 10  
 Are useless: yes, Love's mentors are the eyes.  
 Paris, they say, when he saw Helen rise  
 Nude from her husband's bed, was captivated.  
 They say Minerva was intoxicated  
 Seeing Endymion, who then naked lay  
 With that goddess. But if you've gone your way  
 And go bed attired, my hands will tear  
 Your garment off – something you'll have to bear.  
 If I am angered further, you will show  
 Your mother bruises. For it's not as though 20  
 Your sport is marred by sagging breasts: no, she  
 Who's borne a child must know *that* misery.  
 Let's feast our eyes with love, while yet we may:  
 A long night's coming for you, and the day  
 Will not return. Would that. as we embrace,  
 You'd bind us with a chain that we may face

No day apart! Let doves show us the way,  
 Forever yoked in love. He goes astray  
 Who seeks to end a frenzied love-affair:  
 No limit will a true love ever bear. 30  
 The land will sooner raise false crops, the Sunday  
 Drive dusky steeds, the rivers start to run  
 Backwards, the sea dry up than I could be  
 Another's: while I live, I'm hers, and she-Who'  
 Will yet be mine in death. If now and again  
 She countenances nights like this, why then  
 Even a year's enough for me. Should she  
 Allow me many, immortality  
 Would then be mine. One night would deify  
 Any man. If all men wished to live as I, 40  
 weighed down with wine, there'd be no weaponry,  
 No ships of war in sight, the Actian Sea  
 Not tumbling our bones and Rome, beset  
 So often by civil war, would not still let  
 Her hair down in her grief. Posterity  
 At least will rightly praise one thing in me:  
 My battles never vexed a god. While light  
 Remains, do not life's recompenses slight!  
 The sum of your sweet kisses are too few.  
 As dry leaves shed their petals, which they strew 50  
 In cups in great confusion where you see  
 Them float, we who now love spiritedly  
 And with great vigour may tomorrow find  
 That we're then doomed to leave all this behind.

# XVI

Your praetor's from Illyria back again,  
 Your massive catch – to me a bloody pain.  
 Why did Cape Thunder not sweep him away?  
 Neptune, what gifts I'd offer you today!  
 You're banqueting with him; the whole night through  
 Your door is open, but I'm not with you.  
 Be wise, enjoy the harvest, dig in deep,  
 Cynthia, and sheer the foolish, full-fleeced sheep.  
 When he's left penniless, his gifts all gone,  
 Say, "Find another praetorship! Sail on!" 10  
 For her the rods of office carry no weight:  
 No, she alone will wealth evaluate.  
 She makes me fish for sea-pearls constantly;  
 I'm sent to Tyre on a gift-odyssey.  
 Now, Venus, succour me in my distress

To break him for his overzealousness!  
 Can one buy love with gifts? A girl finds pain,  
 O Jupiter, with such unworthy gain.  
 Would that no man was wealthy here in Rome,  
 Even our leader choosing for his home 20  
 A straw hut! There'd be no venality  
 In girls then, who would reach maturity  
 in just one house. You never could embrace  
 So foul a man for one whole week in place  
 Of me. I've not been faithless, though, I swear,  
 But gorgeous girls are fickle everywhere.  
 A naked savage skips about one day,  
 The next he takes my kingdom clean away.  
 Will my tears never cease from all you've done?  
 Or shall my misery attend each one 30  
 Of your ill deeds? A long time has gone by  
 Since I have cared for plays and games, and I  
 Have lost my appetite. Indeed for shame!  
 Unless a shameful love, as people claim,  
 Is deaf. See Antony, who recently  
 With hollow clamour saw his company  
 Of soldiers drown. He made his ships turn tail  
 Because a base love spurred him on to sail  
 On to a distant refuge. Caesar's fame  
 And merit is in this: for the selfsame 40  
 Conquering hand then put the sword away.  
 What emeralds, gowns, topaz of golden ray  
 He gave to you I wish would rapidly  
 Be swept away to storms and turned to sea-born  
 And earth. Consider the unhappiness  
 Eriphyle gained from gifts and the distress  
 With which Creusa had been doomed to burn.  
 Not every time is Jupiter moved to turn  
 Deaf ears to prayers and smile with placid guise  
 At perjured lovers. You have seen the skies 50  
 Rolling with thunder crashing down to earth  
 Below: the Pleiades do not give birth  
 To these, nor moist Orion, nor was he  
 Angry at nothing: no, he usually  
 Was punishing faithless girls. For he, although  
 A god, had been deceived and showed his woe  
 With tears. So do not rate a Sidonian gown  
 So much as to invoke the South Wind's frown.

XVII

A tryst denied, to lead on with a vow  
 Is just as bad as murder! You wretch, now  
 I want to throw myself from off the brink  
 Of some harsh rock or blended poison drink.  
 I've made this prophesy as often as I  
 Have been constrained on bitter nights to lie  
 Alone, racked on our bed. Though Tantalus,  
 Destined to stay forever ravenous,  
 Has shaken you, though you have been in shock  
 At Sisyphus ever rolling up his rock 10  
 To have it tumble down again, no man  
 Can live a tougher life than a lover can -  
 You would not wish it, truly. Envious men  
 Have called me happy – now one day in ten  
 Am I let in. Outside I may not lie  
 Beneath a clear moon with her, nor may I  
 Speak through her door. I wouldn't change her, though:  
 When she knows I am true, she'll weep with woe.

## XVI

Much griping causes hatred: commonly  
 Mute men have often caused docility  
 In a girl. Deny what you have seen and call  
 The hurt you have received no hurt at all!  
 So age has tuned me grey, my cheeks all torn  
 With wrinkles. Well, Aurora didn't scorn  
 Aged Tithonus, suffering him to lie  
 In Dawn's abode; mounting, up in the sky,  
 Her chariot, she called the gods severe  
 And grudgingly performed for us down here 10  
 Her duties; and, before she'd busily  
 Washed down her unyoked steeds, she frequently,  
 As she dismounted, fondled him, and near  
 The land of India, she shed a tear  
 That day approached too soon. Her joy was more  
 That he yet lived than was her sorrow for  
 The death of Memnon. A girl so passing fair  
 Would be with him and kiss his hoary hair.  
 Dislike my youth, then – soon will come the day,  
 You fickle girl, you will be stooped and grey. 20  
 I'm less uneasy when it comes to mind  
 That Cupid can be kind and then unkind.  
 Do you still ape the woad-stained Brits and dare  
 To sport with foreign dyes mixed in your hair?  
 All natural beauty's best" :a Roman face,

Painted with Belgian rouge, is a disgrace  
 Should a woman azure dye to her brows apply,  
 Do we rate beauty by that azure dye?  
 May Acheron blast the girl who stupidly  
 Dyes her hair! Stop it! You're beautiful to me, 30  
 So see me often. You have neither son  
 Nor brother, so let me be the only one  
 Who's both to you; let your face be your shield  
 Always; to too much make-up do not yield.  
 Don't sin, for I'll believe what people say!  
 For gossip over land and sea will stray.

# XIX

Cynthia, your leaving Rome has made me sad;  
 Your rural refuge, though, yet makes me glad.  
 The chaste fields hold no young seducer who  
 Will flatter you and challenge your virtue.  
 There'll be no brawl outside your windows, nor  
 Will you lose sleep because you're shouted for.  
 You'll be alone with lonely hills to see  
 And flocks and needy farmers' fields. There'll be  
 No games, no temples - commonest origin  
 Of all misdeeds - to encourage you to sin. 10  
 You'll often watch the oxen plough the land,  
 The vines cut by the scythe; and you will stand  
 Before some rude shrine, offering a grain  
 Or two of incense when a kid is slain.  
 Bare-ankled, you will dance a country dance,  
 While you are safe from an intruder's glance.  
 I'll hunt: I'm now Diana's acolyte,  
 The rites of Venus vanished from my sight.  
 The horns of the wild beasts I'll hang upon  
 The pine-trees and I'll urge my keen hounds on. 20  
 I won't confront great lions or speedily  
 Close in a wild boar. No, let it be  
 Enough for me to capture a frail hare  
 Or catch a bird with a jointed fowling-snare,  
 Where fair Clitumnus in its thickets flows  
 And cleans its cattle, whiter than the snows.  
 Be good, therefore, remembering that I  
 Shall come back to you, sweetheart, by and by.  
 No lonely woods nor wandering streams that spring  
 From mossy hills can't shake my trembling 30  
 That someone speaks your name unceasingly:  
 Who wouldn't hurt an absent beau like me?

## XX

Why weep much more with your anxiety  
 Than kidnapped Briseis, more bitteely  
 Tahn Hector's captive wife? Wherefore, mad one,  
 Do you pester the gods that I have done  
 You wrong? The mourning dove in Attic trees  
 Did not so harshly trill its miseries.  
 And Niobe, whose pride was ruinous  
 To twelve folk, did not from sad Sipylus  
 Pour down such tears. Though in bronze fetters I'm chained  
 And you in Danaë's tower are contained, 10  
 I'd break those chains, the towers of Danaë  
 O'erleaping. I'd be deaf to what men say  
 Without you::don't imagine that I lie.  
 By both my parents' bones I swear (if I  
 Speak falsely, may they haunt me!) that I'll stay  
 Faithful to you until my sying day:  
 We'll love and die together. But if you  
 Through fame or beauty have not kept me true,  
 Your tranquil bondage might. A week's gone by  
 Since everywhere the talk was you and I: 20  
 Your door's been open to me night and day,  
 Your bad as well. Nor have I had to pay  
 For costly gifts. For those delights I owe  
 You hearty thanks. So many sought you, though  
 I was sought by you alone. How could I be  
 Forgetful of what love you gave to me?  
 But if I am, may I then be afflicted  
 By Tragedy's Furies and by you convicted  
 In Hell, Aeacus. May my penalty  
 Be Tityus's vultures and, in drudgery, 30  
 May I bear Sisyphus' rocks! And do not send  
 Me anxious letters, for my love shall end  
 As it began. Forever shall acclaim  
 Be given me to champion my fame -  
 That I alone did not end suddenly  
 A love-affair nor start it trivially.

## XXI

As gently false as Panthus was about me  
 To you, may Venus show such enmity  
 To him! Don't you consider me a seer  
 Who's truer than Dodona? For it's clear

Someone has gone and wed your handsome guy:  
 Aren't you shamed? So many nights gone by  
 In vain! He's crowing now, for he is free  
 Of you. Meanwhile, in your naïvety,  
 You lie alone. They talk of you, that pair:  
 He brags that, though he wished you were not there, 10  
 You often went to his house. I'm sure his aim  
 Is besting you - such is that husband's fame.  
 Jason deceived Medea - he expelled  
 Her from his home (Creusa now he held  
 The worthier). Ulysses duped Calypso:  
 She saw he beau unfurl his sails and go.  
 You girls too keen to listen, bear in mind,  
 When jilted, not to be so rashly kind!  
 You've long searched for another who'll be true:  
 Once duped, watch out, you silly woman you. 20  
 Anywhere, anytime, in health or infirmity,  
 My heart belongs to you eternally.

## XII

Demophoon, you've known just recently  
 I've had so many girls, consequently  
 So many woes as well. Never in vain  
 I trod the streets, though theatres caused me pain -  
 An actress softly swaying or maybe  
 A songstress pouring out a melody.  
 I *looked* for anguish, finding some fair girl  
 Sitting with breasts uncovered, locks which curl  
 Across her smooth brow, at whose very peak  
 An Indian jewel sat. So, do you seek 10  
 To know why every one attracts me so?  
 The meaning of that 'why' Love does not know.  
 Why does one gash his arms with a ritual knife  
 Or seem to seek to end his very life  
 To a Phrygian piper's crazy beat? For we  
 Al have an innate fault: fortune gave me  
 A constant search for love. Though I be struck  
 By Thamyras's fate, my envious buck,  
 I'll not be blind to beauty. Am I lean  
 And spare, you think? No! Venus has never been 20  
 Hard to revere for me. So ask away:  
 I've often been robust till break of day,  
 May a girl has found; if she refused  
 Me something with one look, then sweat suffused  
 My brow. The Twin Bears Jupiter put to rest

For Alcmena, and the heavens remained unblest  
 With a king for two nights; when he turned to cast  
 His thunderbolt, however, still its blast  
 Ewas just as strong: the act of love won't cheat  
 A lover of his strength. Did the Trojans beat 30  
 A hastier retreat, stormed by the shower  
 Of Achilles' spears after he'd left the bower  
 Of his Briseis? Did the Grecian fleet  
 Not tremble when fierce Hector left the heat  
 Of his Andromache's bed? Yes, these two men  
 Could wreck both ships and walls: Achilles, then,  
 Am I, and Hector too. Both Moon and Sun  
 Serve Heaven: of girls, then, I need more than one.  
 Should one say no, another must replace  
 That girl and hold me in a fond embrace. 40  
 Should one not please me, let her be aware  
 That there's another. Ships will better fare  
 With two lines; should a mother chance to rear  
 Twin babies, she will have much less to fear.  
 If you're unkind, say no: if not, say yes!  
 Why speak if all the words are valueless?  
 A lover's greatest torture is if he  
 Is cheated of his longing suddenly.  
 What sighs have kept him tossing on his bed  
 When she, as to a stranger, "No!" has said! 50  
 He tires the messenger repeatedly  
 For answers he has heard before, for he  
 Bids him divulge betrayals he would hear,  
 Although to know them fills his heart with fear.

### XXIII

I from the ignorant rabble turned my feet:  
 Now even water from a well tastes sweet.  
 Does a free-born man bribe another's slave that he  
 Might send notes to his girl, repeatedly  
 Asking, "What portico shades her now? What green  
 Is she now strolling on?" Then, when you've been  
 Through all the toils of Hercules, she'll write,  
 "Have you a gift for me?" and then you might  
 Confront a grim doorman or, captive, cower  
 In some foul hut. A great price for an hour 10  
 Or two, of joy, once in a year! To hell  
 To lovers whom a closed door pleases well!  
 Oh no, a girl unveiled and fancy-free  
 Who fears no doorman is the girl for me.

This girl will often tread the Sacred Way  
 In shabby sandal, brooking no delay  
 For one who'd make a date with her; no, she  
 Will never put you off, insistently  
 Demanding what your frugal father cries  
 You often gave her. She won't say, "Arise,                   20  
 Begone. Poor man, my husband comes today  
 From the country." Girls who come from far away  
 In Egypt please me. A genteel romance  
 I do not want. A lover has no chance  
 Of freedom, so the man who wants to be  
 A lover must not hope for liberty .

#### XXIV

Do you talk thus now you've become a name,  
 Your girl read everywhere and bringing fame?  
 Who would not sweat to hear this? High-born men  
 Must feel ashamed to hold their tongue. Well, then,  
 Should Cynthia smile on me indulgently,  
 I'd not be called prince of debauchery.  
 I'd not be trounced through Rome and, though I burn  
 For her, she would not dupe me in her turn.  
 No wonder that I seek low girls, for they  
 Defame less. That's sufficient reason, eh?                   10  
 She wants a peacock fan, she wants to hold  
 Hard crystal and she sometimes makes so bold  
 As to entreat for dice of ivory  
 And the Sacra Via's glittering trumpery.  
 It's not the cost but being the plaything  
 Of an artful mistress gives me such a sting!  
 You say of all things this should gladden me?  
 You're fair yet fickle too. O infamy!  
 We've barely spent tow nights à deux in bed,  
 And yet I am a burden there, you've said.                   20  
 You read y verse and raised me recently:  
 And yet has your love fled so suddenly?  
 Who dupes and preens for many has no heart.  
 Let men compete with me in wit and art  
 And never love but one: let him attack  
 Lernaean hydras or perhaps bring back  
 The dragon's golden apples or gulp down  
 Foul poison or be wrecked and nearly drown,  
 Thus for your sake not shirking misery  
 (My sweet, I would these toils on me!).                   30  
 Your bold beau will turn coward whom, although

His boasts bought you esteem, next year will show  
 Him gone for good. But constant will I stay  
 Should I exist for ever and a day  
 Like the Sibyl; Hercules' labours wouldn't see  
 Me altered, nor the black extremity  
 Of life. Upon that day you will compose  
 Me in my grave and say, "Propertius, those  
 Are your remains. You were faithful to me  
 Although of no illustrious family 40  
 And hardly rich." There's nothing I'd not face  
 For you; ill-treatment never will displace  
 My love. A fair girl's habits, in my view,  
 Aren't hard to bear. I think that not a few  
 Have perished for such beauty; nonetheless  
 Many have not retained their faithfulness.  
 Theseus loved Ariadne fleetingly,  
 Demophoon Phyllis, but they proved to be  
 A wicked pair of guests. Medea was borne  
 By Jason's ship but suddenly left forlorn., 50  
 Though she had saved him. You should nobles shun  
 And wealthy folk, for there'll be hardly one  
 Of them to gather, on that final day,  
 Your bones: I'll do that for you, though I pray  
 That you, with unkempt locks and unclad breast,  
 Shall mourn for me and lay me to my rest.

## XXV

Fair Cynthia was born to cause me pain,  
 For I am often barred. Your looks shall gain  
 You fame within my books, so pardon me,  
 You early poets. When senility  
 Arrives, a soldier leaves his sword and shield  
 And rests. The ox grown old declines to yield  
 And pull the plough. Upon the desert shore  
 The rotten ship shall lie while, furthermore,  
 The warrior's idle buckler hangs in peace  
 Within the temple. I will never cease 10  
 In loving you. Old age won't influence me  
 To leave you, even if I live to be  
 Tithonus or Nestor. So I would guess  
 It's better far to cry out one's distress  
 In harsh Perillus' bull, be petrified  
 By the Gorgon's visage or even abide  
 The Caucasus's birds. I won't be swayed,  
 Nevertheless. By rust an iron blade

Is worn down; drops of water constantly  
 Erode the stone; no girl's iniquity 20  
 Quells love, which stays steadfast and hears her threats  
 In innocence and, when it hurts, regrets  
 Its wrongs and pleads with her when disavowed  
 And, lagging, then returns. O you're so proud  
 When happily in love, so credulous  
 Are you. There is no girl who's serious  
 For long. Does any man fulfil his vows  
 In mid-storm? Many a ship with shattered bows  
 Floats in the port. Who'd claim the accolade,  
 His chariot's axle having not yet made 30  
 His seventh turn? The winds of love mislead  
 And mock us: it's a mighty fall indeed  
 That happens late. She loves you? Then O.K.,  
 But in your heart lock your own joys away.  
 A man's strong boasts will cause him so much woe.  
 Though she invites very often, go  
 But once. What's envied won't last long. I'd be  
 Like you if that which in antiquity  
 Pleased girls pleases them now. I am infected  
 By the age: my ways, though, will not be affected. 40  
 Let each man know his way. But you men, who  
 Chase many girls will find they torture you!  
 You've seen a brunette or a pretty blonde -  
 You'll find that both complexions make you fond - ,  
 A Greek or Roman girl, and you're enraptured.  
 By plain or scarlet outfits are you captured:  
 Both bring you pain. One girl keeps you awake:  
 For any man such trouble will she make!

## XXVI

I saw you, darling, shipwrecked in a dream,  
 Wearily swimming the Ionian stream,  
 Confessing all your lies and bootlessly  
 Attempting to hold up out of the sea  
 Your heavy locks, like Helle who was flung  
 Upon the purple waters as she clung  
 To the golden ram's soft fleece. Think of my dread  
 That the sea would take your name and tars would shed  
 Tears for you. How to Neptune did I vow  
 And to Leucothoë, a goddess now, 10  
 And to Jove's Twins! But you just narrowly  
 Raised up your fingertips above the sea  
 And often called my name, about to die

(It seemed). If you had caught Glaucus's eye,  
 You'd be a mermaid, and in jealousy  
 The nymphs Nesaeeand Cymothoë  
 Would scold you. But a dolphin raced to you,  
 The one who carried Arion, in my view.  
 I tried to leap down from the rocky height  
 But then my fear dispelled this wondrous sight.      20  
 Let all men wonder that a girl so fair  
 Is slave to me and that I everywhere  
 Am thought of note! Not even if those kings  
 Of Lydia should bring you offerings  
 Would she say, "Poet, leave my bed." For she  
 Says she hates rich men when my poetry  
 She reads. She loves it more than any maid.  
 In love fidelity gives special aid,  
 As does persistence: he who can be free  
 With gifts can have many lovers equally.      30  
 My sweetheart plans a long trip overseas:  
 I'll follow, tow hearts blown by a single breeze.  
 One shore shall bed us while a single tree  
 Shall shelter us; one spring shall frequently  
 Refresh us; with one plank we'll be supplied,  
 Whether in the bow or stern will we abide.  
 I'll face all, thought the savage East Wind blows,  
 The cold South Wind taking us...where? Who knows?,  
 The winds that vexed the luckless Ulysses  
 And the thousand ships upon Euboean seas,      40  
 And you who moved two coasts when down there flew  
 A dove to guide the troubled *Argo* through  
 Strange seas. Nor may she ever leave my sight  
 Even if Jove should set our ship alight.  
 Our naked corpses then would certainly  
 Land on the selfsame shore: well, let the sea  
 Bear me away as long as you may find  
 A grave on land. Neptune is not unkind  
 To love like ours (with Jove he equally  
 Cherishes love). Witness Amymone,      50  
 Who yielded to that god that he might take  
 Back water with his trident from the lake  
 Of Lerna. He embraced her and redeemed  
 His vow and from her golden urn there streamed  
 Celestial water. Orithyia disclaimed  
 That he who ravished her, the god who tamed  
 Both land and sea, was cruel. Trust in me -  
 Scylla will shw his cordiality,  
 As will Charybdis, she whose ebb and flow

Are constant, and the stars themselves will glow 60  
Unmasked by any clouds, and plain to see  
Shall be Orion and The Kid. I'll be  
Content if, when I am about to die,  
My lot shall be in your fond arms to lie.

XXVII

You seek the dubious hour of your decease,  
Mortals, and by what route you should find peace;  
Phoenician discoveries you'll try to find  
Up in a cloud-free sky – which star is kind  
To man, which forecasts evil! Wheth  
Advance against the British for by sea  
Or the Parthians by land, unseen threats hide  
In wait; you weep that all around the tide  
Of war assails you, with no victory  
Assured. Besides, you feel anxiety 10  
That your house may collapse in conflagration  
Or you may down some poisonous potation.  
Only a lover knows when he'll depart  
This world and how: North Winds won't make him start,  
Nor wars. Although he sits with oar in hand  
Beneath the Styx's reeds upon that strand  
And contemplates Charon's infernal skiff  
With its funereal sails, however, if  
He hears his mistress' cry, an odyssey  
He makes to earth, allowed by no decree. 20

XXVIII

Jove, pity my sick girl: the blame shall lie  
On you if such a lovely girl shall die.  
The air is hot, the earth begins to char  
Beneath the scorching heat of the Dogstar.  
It's not the heat or the malignity  
Of Heaven so much as Cynthia's laxity  
In worship. Hapless gods it has undone -  
The vows they swear are wiped out, every one,  
By wind and waves. Did Venus feel distress  
To be compared to you? She is a goddess 10  
Jealous of all more beautiful than she.  
Did you slight Juno's gait? Did you, maybe,  
Say Pallas' eyes weren't lovely? Fair ones, you  
Can't curb your words. That's what mean tongues will do,  
Caused by your beauty. But may the gods bless

You at your final day with happiness  
 After a troubled life. Io at first  
 Was a mooing cow: now she who quenched her thirst  
 In The Nile is a goddess. In early years  
 Ino wandered the earth, but now she cheers                   20  
 Sailors in peril, as Leucothoë.  
 Andromeda to monsters of the sea  
 Was vowed: now she gains glory everywhere  
 As Perseus' wife. Callisto, as a bear,  
 Wandered the fields of Arcady: now she,  
 Placed in the sky, on the nocturnal sea,  
 Guides ships. But if you're doomed to die, revered  
 In death you'll tell how beauty's to be feared  
 To Semele, and she'll believe you, too,  
 Made wiser by calamity; and you                               30  
 Among Homeric heroines will gain  
 First place unanimously. Now bear your pain  
 As best you can: for Heaven may adjourn  
 Your doom. The magic whirligig will turn  
 To no effect; upon the fireplace lies  
 The laurel, charred; the Moon up in the skies  
 Won't always drop, and from his mournful throat  
 The raven sings of doom. One somber boat  
 Will carry us across that hellish lake.  
 If you can't pity me, for pity's sake,                       40  
 Then pity both. If she should live, then I  
 Shall live, but, should she die, I too shall die.  
 For this a solemn poem I'll pledge and pen  
 "Thanks to great Jove my girl is safe," and then  
 Shall sacrifice before you, telling you  
 Her lengthy tale of peril. Juno, too,  
 Will pardon your fair looks, for she gives way  
 When a maid dies. May your compassion stay,  
 Persephone, as well, and may Pluto  
 Be not more cruel. In the world below                       50  
 Are thousands of fair girls: may one lass be  
 Above! You have Tyro, Antiope,  
 Pasiphaë, Europa, all those who  
 Were born in Vcrete and old Achaea, too.,  
 Thebes, vanquished TroyRome: these the greedy flame  
 Has taken. You from mortal danger came,  
 My sweet: Diana, then, must have her due,  
 So dance for her, and to the goddess, who  
 Was once a cow, stand vigil piously,  
 And pay the ten nights that were pledged to me!       60

Last night, my love, while, drunk, I roamed abroad,  
 Lacking my slaves to lead the way, a horde  
 Of small boys swarmed around me (I don't know  
 How many, for their presence scared me so)  
 Which branches, arrows, fetters which they had  
 In mind to use against me – all unclad.  
 One ruder than the others then cried out,  
 "Take him! You know the man, there is no doubt."  
 That's him that woman told us angrily  
 To deal with." Then a noose was suddenly 10  
 Looped round my neck. "Give him to me," one said,  
 Another, "Atheists should all be dead!  
 She has been waiting for you patiently,  
 Unworthy man, but idiotically  
 You seek another girl. When she unties  
 Her purple nightcap and her heavy eyes  
 Look up, Arabian spices will not drift  
 Towards you, but those that are Love's own gift.  
 Spare him, lads – he's a lover tried and true,  
 And here's the house we were to bring him to." 20  
 They flung my cape back on me,, saying, "Right,  
 Begone and learn to stay home every night."  
 I wished to see if Cynthia slept alone  
 One dawn: she did, and I stood still as stone  
 Because to me she'd never seemed more fair,  
 Even when her crimson tunic she would wear  
 To go to stainless Vesta to express  
 Her dreams to her lest she should cause distress  
 To me. For she seemed like the progeny  
 Of the Lapith, beautiful Ischomache, 30  
 The Centaurs' welcome plunder as they drank  
 Their wine, or like chaste Brimo on the bank  
 Of Boebeis who lay by Mercury:  
 Thus as she woke from sleep she seemed to me.  
 Stark beauty is so potent! She said:"Hey,  
 Why spy upon me at the break of day?  
 You think I'm like you? I'm not so untrue:  
 One man's enough for me, and that is you -  
 Or one ore faithful. Telltale signs aren't seen  
 To show that here two paramours have been. 40  
 Look, I'm not panting from adultery."  
 At this she waved her hand, preventing me  
 From kissing her. Loose sandals on her feet,  
 She tripped away. Imagine my defeat -

She's faithful after all. Since then for me  
Each night has brought me nought but misery.

XXX

Harsh man, will you now sail the Phrygian sea  
And seek the wild shores of the Hyrcani,  
And stain your household gods with blood and bring  
Dread trophies back? Where are you hurrying,  
Madman? There's no escape, for though you make  
It to the Don, regardless in your wake  
Love will go too, too. Though you fly through the air  
On Pegasus, though Perseus, too, should bear  
You onward, though on feathered shoes you wing  
Your way across the sky, there's not a thing 10  
To succour you from Mercury high above.  
Upon you, and all lovers, too, looms Love,  
Oppressing once-keen necks. He" never sleep,  
A zealous watchman who will make you keep  
Your eyes turned down. A sinner's prayers he'll hear  
As long as they have proved to be sincere.  
Let stern old men denounce our revelling:  
Just let us, sweetheart, go on travelling  
The path we sought. Let ancient customs wear  
Their eyes out: here, though, we should hear the air 20  
Of the skilled pipe Minerva cast away  
To float on the Maeander, for she'd say  
It marred her cheeks. Should I feel obloquy  
To be content with one girl? Should this be  
A crime, it's Love's, not mine. With me, my love,  
Enjoy our dewy grotto high above  
On mossy hills. From up there you will see  
The Sisters sitting on a ;promontory,  
Singing of Jove's sweet loves and how each flame  
Roused him and how he finally became 30  
A bird and flew to Troy. If there is none  
Who conquers Love, why'm I the only one  
To be charged with a universal flaw?  
Nor need you with a reverential awe  
Address the Muses: for they certainly  
Know what it is to love, if it should be  
The truth that one of them so long ago  
Was violated by Oeagrus (though  
It actually was Jupiter, concealed)  
On the Bistonian rocks. When you're revealed 40  
By them as leader of the revelry,

While Bacchus waves his wand of melody,  
They'll place the sacred ivy round my head:  
If you're not mine, my genius is dead.

XXXI, XXXII

Why am I late? Apollo's gallery  
Of gold's been opened for the world to see  
By Caesar. It's with Poenic posts marked out,  
With Danaids between. I had no doubtless  
That Phoebus' statue was more fair than he  
Himself as marble lips sang silently  
To the lyre; four steeds of Myron stood around  
The shrine; it was so lifelike; marble-bound,  
The temple rose up in the middle space.  
The chariot of the Sun stood at the base. 10  
A piece of noble African ivory  
Had framed the doors – one showed the misery  
Of Gauls, cast from Parnassus, the other's scene  
Showed Niobe in mourning; in between  
His mother and his sister Phoebus played  
Ans sang in his long cloak. To promenade  
At leisure there would offer you a treat,  
But everyone prohibits me, mt sweet,  
For having faith in you because they see  
You carry torches as you hurriedly 20  
Go to Diana's wood to worship there.  
Who sees you sins, who doesn't will not care  
For you: the eyes must bear the guilt for the deed.  
O Cynthia, why do you feel the need  
To seek the oracles of Praeneste  
(They're often dubious) or make your way  
To Tusculum? Why do you frequently  
Go tLanuvium? That gallery  
Of Pompey's you're not fond of, I surmise,  
Its Attic awnings, in all others' eyes, 30  
Resplendent, and its columns giving shade,  
Its many plane-trees evenly displayed,  
The jets from Maro's statue and the sound  
Of water as it splashes all around  
And Triton's fountain. It's a fallacy -  
Your journeys indicate some secretly-  
Conducted intrigue. It's not Rome you shun,  
It's me, you silly girl! The wiles you've spun  
Are futile, for you spin them clumsily,  
While I'm an expert. It means less to me: 40



Of Inachus brought to the dames of Italy!  
 You often split hot lovers, ever dour.  
 You travelled mush in your covert amour  
 With Jove. When Juno gave you horns and drowned  
 Your human language with a heifer's sound.  
 You'd chafe your mouth with leaves from the oak-trees  
 And in our stall chew on wild strawberries! 10  
 Is it because Jove gave you back your features  
 Which had been yours but then became that creature's  
 That you're so smug? Are Egypt's girls too few  
 To satisfy your worship? Why did you  
 Come all the way to Rome? What gain could be  
 For you that girls sleep partnerless? Trust me,  
 You'll have those horns again or, ve caused me distress one,  
 We'll exile you: no favour has been won'  
 By Nile of Tiber. You've caused me distress  
 Because of your overdevotedness. 20  
 But from these nights once we have been released,  
 Then let us make love's journey thrice - at least!  
 You never listen to my words, although  
 The oxen of Icarius steadily go  
 Behind the setting stars. Quite merciless,  
 You drink away: you feel no weariness  
 At midnight? Are you eager yet to cast  
 The dice? Perish the man who in the past  
 Discovered heady grapes and then made bad  
 Good water mixed with wine! Good cause they had 30  
 To slay you, those Athenian husbandmen!  
 Wine's bitter scent you comprehended then!  
 Polyphemus and Eurytion both were slain  
 By wine which ruins beauty with a stain  
 It puts on youth. A girl oftren won't know  
 Her lover when he's in his cups. And lo!  
 She's not transformed by drink. Go on, then, booze:  
 You're beautiful: your looks will never lose  
 As long as garlands hang down from her face  
 And dip into your cups and with such grace 40  
 You speak my poems. So let the table run  
 More liberally with old Falernian,  
 And in your golden goblet let me see  
 It foam and bubble more luxuriantly.  
 Towards an absent beau a woman's care  
 Is greater, but when he is always there  
 She finds him less appealing. Nonetheless  
 There is no woman who'll remove her dress  
 And go to bed alone quite willingly:

Love forces us to seek some company.

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XXXIV

Why should one trust a girl who's beauteous  
To Love? I almost lost my own girl thus.  
No-one is true – I know whereof I speak.  
It's rare that any fellow will not seek  
A fair girl for himself. Into disputes  
That god provokes close friends as he pollutes  
Kinsmen, Paris committed adultery  
As Menelaus' guest, and certainly  
Medea loved a lover from elsewhere.  
Lynceus, my treacherous friend, did you once dare 10  
To touch my girl? Did you not run aground?  
It had been different if you had not found  
Her staunchly loyal or unable to bear  
Such shame. Stab me or poison me: take care,  
However, to leave her. Though you'll always be  
My friend and share in my prosperity,  
Yet leave my bed alone. I cannot vie  
Even with Jove for her. When no-one's by,  
I'm jealous of my shadow, that's a thing  
Of nought, and fall to pointless trembling. 20.  
There is one reason I allow this crime -  
That you were more than tipsy at the time.  
I'm not duped by an austere, wrinkled brow,  
However. Everybody knows by now  
How fine love is. Old Lynceus at this stage  
Is mad, and I am glad that at his age  
He venerates our gods. Will Socrates  
Avail you now, or the philosophies  
Of Epimenides' lyre? You'll have no aid 30  
In love from ancient men. The slighter muse  
Of Philitas it's better that you use  
As a model or artless Callimachus.  
Though you should tell of the Achelous,  
Love-shattered, and how on the Phrygian plain  
The Maeandr slyly twists, then twists again,  
Concealing the direction of its drift,  
And of Arion, honoured with the gift  
Of human speech, the horse that finished first  
At the funeral games in homage to the cursed 49  
Archemorus, yet still you may not be  
Free from Amphoaraus' destiny  
Or Capaneus's, who was blown apart

By great Jove's thunderbolt. Forget the art  
 Of tragedy: dance gently! Start to turn  
 Your verses on a narrow lathe and burn  
 With love, harsh poet. You'll not safer be  
 Than Homer or Antimachus. Trust me,  
 Few gird hate even gods. None will immerse  
 Themselves in the workings of the universe 50  
 Or why with her brother's steeds the Moon must sweat  
 Or if beyond the Styx we will be met  
 With further life or if a conscious hand  
 Throws thunderbolts. The bull will not withstand  
 The burden of the yoke until the rope  
 Is round his neck: likewise you have no hope  
 Of bearing love's hardships; though wild and free,  
 You first of all must be subdued by me.  
 I've little money, in my family strain  
 No battle triumphs: ah, but now I reign 60  
 And feast with maidens thanks to my forte,  
 Which you slight. Mid the wreaths of yesterday  
 I loll because that god has skewered me  
 Right to the marrow. Virgil's poetry  
 Sings of the shores of Phoebus' Actium  
 And Caesar's brave fleet; even now he's come  
 To when Trojan Aeneas waged a war  
 And founded walls on the Lavinian shore.  
 Make way,, you Roman scribes, you Greeks, make way,  
 For there is something coming any day 70  
 That tops the *Iliad*, For you compose  
 Old Hesiod's principles – in which soil grows  
 The tastiest corn and on which **hill we ought**  
**To raise our grapes. The music you have wrought**  
**Rivals Apollo's. You sing of Thyrsis**  
**Beneath Glaesus' pines and of Daphnis**  
**With his skilled pipes which he played frequently**  
**And tell how maidens can quite easily**  
**Be won with just ten apples or a kid**  
**New-born. You're fortunate that you can bid 80**  
**Successfully with fruit thus! Even Tityrus**  
**May sing to her though she's discourteous.**  
**Corydona's happy, too, who tries to part**  
**Alexis from his master, whose sweetheart**  
**He is. The spent bard lays his pipes aside,**  
**Yet by the compliant nymphs still glorified.**  
**His songs will please all readers, be they green**  
**In love or pros. A dulcet swan is seen**  
**Superior to a "Goose". The brightest flame**

Of his Leucadia, Varro once came 90  
To themes like these, once Jason's tale was through;  
Whaton Catullus sang such verses, too  
(Helen could not vie for celebrity  
With Lesbia). There was such ardency  
In Calvus, also, when he dignified  
Quintilia's death, and Gallus, who had died  
For love of fair Lycoris recently,  
Washed many wounds in Hell. Yes, certainly  
If I with bards like these am classified,  
My Cynthia ever will be glorified.

