

Petronius  
SATYRICA

*Cena Trimalchionis* (26.7–78)

26.7 vĕnerat iam tertius diēs, id est expectātiō liberāe cēnae, sed tot vulneribus cōfossīs fuga magis placēbat quam quiēs. 8 itaque cum maestī dēlibērārēmus quōnam genere praesentem ēvītārēmus procellam, ūnus servus Agamemnonis interpellāvit trepidantēs et, 9 “quid? vōs,” inquit, “nescītis hodiē apud quem fiat? Trimalchiō, lautissimus homō. hōrologium in trīclīniō et būcinātōrem habet subōrnātum, ut subinde sciat quantum dē vītā perdidit.”

10 amicīmur ergō diligenter oblītī omnium malōrum et Gītōna libentissimē servīle officium tuentem iubēmus in balneum sequī. 27 nōs interim vestītī errāre coepimus, immō iocārī magis et circulis accēdere, cum subitō vidēmus senem calvum, tunicā vestītum russeā, inter puerōs capillātōs ludentem pilā. 2 nec tam puerī nōs, quamquam erat operae pretium, ad spectāculum dūxerant quam ipse pater familiae, quī soleātus pilā prasinā exercēbātur. nec amplius eam repetēbat quae terram contigerat, sed follem plēnum habēbat servus sufficiēbatque ludentibus. 3 notāvimus etiam rēs novās, nam duo spadōnēs in diversā parte circuli stābant, quōrum alter matellam tenēbat argenteam, alter numerābat pilās, nōn quidem eās quae inter manūs lūsū expellente vibrābant, sed eās quae in terram dēcidēbant.

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*Dinner with Trimalchio*

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

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

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

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

**4** cum hās ergō mīrārēmur lautitiās, accurrit Menelāus et “hic est” inquit “apud quem cubitum pōnitis, et quidem iam prīncipium cēnae vidētis.” **5** et iam nōn loquēbātur Menelāus, cum Trimalchiō digitōs concrepuit, ad quod signum matellam spadō ludentī subiēcit. **6** exonerātā ille vēsicā aquam poposcit ad manūs digitōsque paululum aspersōs in capite puerī tersit.

**28** longum erat singula excipere. itaque intrāvimus balneum et sūdōre calfactī mōmentō temporis ad frīgidam exīmus. **2** iam Trimalchiō unguentō perfūsus tergēbātur nōn linteīs, sed palliīs ex lānā mollissimā factīs. **3** trēs interim iātralīptae in cōspectū eius Falernum pōtābant et, cum plūrimum rixantēs effunderent, Trimalchiō hoc suum propīn esse dīcēbat. **4** hinc involūtus coccinā gausapā lectīcae impositus est praecedentibus phalerātīs cursōribus quattuor et chīramaxiō, in quō dēliciae eius vehēbantur, puer vetulus, lippus, dominō Trimalchiōne dēfōrmior. **5** cum ergō auferretur, ad caput eius cum minimīs symphōniacus tībīs accessit et tamquam in aurem aliquid sēcrētō dīceret, tōtō itinere cantāvit.

**6** sequimur nōs admīrātiōne iam saturī et cum Agamemnone ad iānuam pervenīmus, in cuius poste libellus erat cum hāc īnscrip̄tiōne fixus: **7** QVISQVIS SERVVS SINE DOMINICŌ IVSSV FORĀS EXIERIT · ACCIPIET PLĀGĀS CENTVM. **8** in aditū autem ipsō stābat ōstiārius prasinātus, cerasinō succīnctus cingulō, atque in lance argenteā pīsum pūrgābat. **9** super līmen autem cavea pendēbat aurea in quā pīca varia intransēs salūtābat.

**29** cēterum ego dum omnia stupeō, paene resupīnātus crūra mea frēgī. ad sinistram enim intransibibus nōn longē ab ōstiārī cellā canis ingēns, catēnā vīnctus, in pariete erat pictus superque quadrātā litterā scrīptum CAVĒ CANEM. **2** et collēgae quidem meī rīsērunt, ego autem collēctō spīritū nōn dēstitī tōtum parietem persequī. **3** erat autem vēnālīcium cum titulīs pictum, et ipse Trimalchiō capillātus cādūceum tenēbat Minervamque dūcente Rōmam intrābat. **4** hinc

We were still admiring these elegant arrangements when Menelaus hurried up to us.

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

No sooner had Menelaus spoken than Trimalchio snapped his fingers. At the signal the eunuch brought up the pissing bottle for him, while he went on playing. With the weight off his bladder, he demanded water for his hands, splashed a few drops on his fingers and wiped them on a boy’s head.

**28** It would take too long to pick out isolated incidents. Anyway, we entered the baths where we began sweating at once and we went immediately into the cold water. Trimalchio had been smothered in perfume and was already being rubbed down, not with linen towels, but with bath-robcs of the finest wool. As this was going on, three masseurs sat drinking Falernian in front of him. Through quarrelling they spilled most of it and Trimalchio said they were drinking his health.<sup>1</sup> Wrapped in thick scarlet felt he was put into a litter. Four couriers with lots of medals<sup>2</sup> went in front, as well as a go-kart in which his favourite boy was riding – a wizened, bleary-eyed youngster, uglier than his master. As he was carried off, a musician with a tiny set of pipes took his place by Trimalchio’s head and whispered a tune in his ear the whole way.

We followed on, choking with amazement by now, and arrived at the door with Agamemnon at our side. On the door-post a notice was fastened which read: ANY SLAVE LEAVING THE HOUSE WITHOUT HIS MASTER’S PERMISSION WILL RECEIVE ONE HUNDRED LASHES.

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

**29** As I was gaping at all this, I almost fell over backwards and broke a leg. There, on the left as one entered, not far from the porter’s cubbyhole, was a huge dog with a chain round its neck. It was painted on the wall<sup>3</sup> and over it, in big capitals, was written: BEWARE OF THE DOG.

My colleagues laughed at me, but when I got my breath back I went on to examine the whole wall. There was a mural<sup>4</sup> of a slave market, price-tags and all. Then Trimalchio himself, holding a wand of Mercury and being led into Rome by Min-

quemadmodum ratiōcinārī didicisset, deinde dispēnsātor factus esset, omnia diligenter cūriōsus pictor cum īnscrīptiōne reddiderat. **5** in dēficiēte vērō iam porticū levātum mentō in tribūnal excelsum Mercurius rapiēbat. **6** praestō erat Fortūna cum cornū abundantī et trēs Parcae aurea pēnsa torquentēs. **7** notāvī etiam in porticū gregem cursōrum cum magistrō sē exercentem. **8** praetereā grande armārium in angulō vidī, in cuius aediculā erant Larēs argenteī positī Venerisque signum marmoreum et pyxis aurea nōn pusilla, in quā barbam ipsius conditam esse dicēbant. **9** interrogāre ergō ātriēnsem coepī quās in mediō pictūrās habērent. “Īliada et Odyssīan,” inquit, “ac Laenātis gladiātōrium mūnus.”

**30** nōn licēbat multa iam cōnsiderāre. nōs iam ad trīclīnium pervēnerāmus, in cuius parte prīmā prōcūrātor ratiōnēs accipiēbat. et quod praecipuē mīrātus sum, in postibus trīclīniī fascēs erant cum secūribus fixī, quōrum īmam partem quasi embolum nāvis aēneum finiēbat, in quō erat scrīptum: **2** GAIŌ POMPEIŌ TRIMALCHIŌNĪ · SĒVIRŌ AVGVSTĀLĪ · CINNAMVS DISPĒNSĀTOR. **3** sub eōdem titulō et lucernā bilychnis dē camerā pendēbat. erant et duae tabulae in utrōque poste dēfixae, quārum altera, sī bene meminī, hoc habēbat īnscrīptum: III ET PRĪDIĒ KALENDĀS IĀNVĀRIĀS GAIVS NOSTER FORĀS CĒNAT, **4** altera lūnae cursum stēllārumque septem imāginēs pictās; et quī diēs bonī quīque incommodī essent distinguente bullā notābantur.

**5** hīs replētī voluptātibus cum cōnārēmur in trīclīnium intrāre, exclāmāvit ūnus ex puerīs, quī suprā hoc officium erat positus, “dextrō pede!” **6** sine dubiō paulisper trepidāvimus nē contrā praeceptum aliquis nostrum līmen trānsīret. **7** cēterum ut pariter mōvimus gressūs, servus nōbīs dēspoliātus prōcubuit ad pedēs ac rogāre coepit ut sē poenae ēriperēmus: nec magnum esse peccātum suum propter quod perīclitārētur, **8** subducta enim sibi vestimenta dispēnsātōris in balneō, quae vix fuissent decem sēstertiōrum. **9** rettulimus ergō dextrōs pedēs,

erva. After this a picture of how he learned accounting and, finally, how he became a steward. The painstaking artist had drawn it all in great detail with descriptions underneath. Just where the colonnade ended Mercury hauled him up by the chin and rushed him to a high platform. Fortune with her horn of plenty and the three Fates spinning their golden threads were there in attendance.

I also noticed in the colonnade a company of runners practising with their trainer. In one corner was a large cabinet, which served as a shrine for some silver statues of the household deities with a marble figure of Venus and an impressive gold casket in which, they told me, the master’s first beard was preserved.<sup>5</sup>

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

‘The Iliad, the Odyssey,’ he said, ‘and the gladiatorial show given by Laenas.’<sup>6</sup>

**30** Time did not allow us to look at many things there ... by now we had reached the dining-room, at the entrance to which sat a treasurer going over the accounts. There was one feature I particularly admired: on the door-posts were fixed rods and axes<sup>7</sup> tapering off at their lowest point into something like the bronze beak of a ship. On it was the inscription: PRESENTED TO C. POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO<sup>8</sup> PRIEST OF THE AUGUSTAN COLLEGE<sup>9</sup> BY HIS STEWARD CINNAMUS.

Beneath this same inscription a fixture with twin lamps dangled from the ceiling and two notices, one on each door-post. One of them, if my memory is correct, had written on it: **30** AND **31** DECEMBER OUR GAIUS IS OUT TO DINNER.<sup>10</sup>

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

Having had enough of these interesting things, we attempted to go in, but one of the slaves shouted: ‘Right foot first!’<sup>11</sup> Naturally we hesitated a moment in case one of us should cross the threshold the wrong way. But just as we were all stepping forward, a slave with his back bare flung himself at our feet and began pleading with us to get him off a flogging. He was in trouble for nothing very serious, he told us – the steward’s clothes, hardly worth ten sesterces, had been stolen from him at the baths. Back went our feet,

dispensatoremque in oecario aureos numerantem deprecati sumus ut servum remitteret poenam. **10** superbus ille sustulit vultum et “non tam iactura me moveret” inquit “quam negligentia nequissimi servi.

**11** vestimenta mea cubitoria perdidit, quae mihi natali meo cliens quidam donaverat, Tyria sine dubio, sed iam semel lota. quid ergo est? dono vobis eum.” **31** obligati tam grandi beneficio cum intrassemus triclinium, occurrit nobis ille idem servus pro quo rogaveramus et stupentibus spississima basia impexit gratias agens humanitati nostrae. **2** “ad summam, statim sciatis” ait “cui dederitis beneficium. vinum dominicum ministratoris gratia est.”

**3** tandem ergo discubimus, pueris Alexandrinis aquam in manus nivatam infundentibus aliisque insequentibus ad pedes ac paronychia cum ingenti subtilitate tollentibus. **4** ac ne in hoc quidem tam molestum tacebant officio, sed obiter cantabant. **5** ego experiri volui an tota familia cantaret, itaque potionem poposci. **6** paratissimus puer non minus me acidum canticum excipit, **7** et quisquis aliquid rogatus erat ut daret: pantomimi chorum, non patris familiae triclinium crederes.

**8** allata est tamen gustatio valde lauta; nam iam omnes discubuerant praeter ipsum Trimachionem, cui locus novo more primus servabatur. **9** ceterum in promulsidari asellus erat Corinthius cum bisaccio positus, qui habebat olivas in altera parte albas, in altera nigras. **10** tegebant asellum duae lancēs, in quarum marginibus nomen Trimalchionis inscriptum erat et argenti pondus. ponticuli etiam ferruminati sustinebant glirēs melle ac papavere sparsos. **11** fuerunt et thumātula ferventia supra craticulam argenteam posita et infra craticulam Syriaca pruna cum granis Punici mali.

**32** in his eramus lautitius, cum Trimalchio ad symphoniam allatus est positusque inter cervicalia minutissima expressit imprudentibus risum. **2** pallio enim coccineo adrasum excluserat caput circaque oneratās veste cervicēs laticlaviam immiserat mappam fimbriis hinc atque illinc pendentibus. **3** habebat etiam in minimō digito sinistrae

and we appealed to the steward, who was counting out gold pieces in the office, to let the man off.

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

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

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

Finally we took our places.<sup>12</sup> Boys from Alexandria poured iced water over our hands. Others followed them and attended to our feet, removing any hangnails with great skill. But they were not quiet even during this troublesome operation: they sang away at their work. I wanted to find out if the whole staff were singers, so I asked for a drink. In a flash a boy was there, singing in a shrill voice while he attended to me – and anyone else who was asked for something did the same. It was more like a musical comedy<sup>13</sup> than a respectable dinner party.

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

**32** We were in the middle of these elegant dishes when Trimalchio himself was carried in to the sound of music and set down on a pile of tightly stuffed cushions. The sight of him drew an astonished laugh<sup>14</sup> from the guests. His cropped head stuck out from a scarlet coat; his neck was well muffled up and he had put round it a napkin with a broad purple stripe and tassels dangling here and there. On the little finger of his left hand

manūs ānulum grandem subaurātum, extrēmō vērō articulō digiti sequentis minōrem, ut mihi vidēbātur, tōtum aureum, sed plānē ferreīs velutī stēllīs ferrūminātum. **4** et nē hās tantum ostenderet dīvitiās, dextrum nūdāvit lacertum armillā aureā cultum et eboreō circulō lāminā splendēte cōnexō.

**33** ut deinde pinnā argenteā dentēs perfōdit “amīcī” inquit “nōndum mihi suāve erat in triclinium venīre, sed nē diūtius absentīvus morae vōbīs essem, omnem voluptātem mihi negāvī.

**2** permittitis tamen finīrī lūsum.” sequēbātur puer cum tabulā terebinthinā et crystallinīs tesserīs, notāvīque rem omnium dēlicātissimam: prō calculis enim albīs ac nigrīs aureōs argenteōsque habēbat dēnāriōs.

**3** interim dum ille omnium textōrum dicta inter lūsum cōnsūmit, gustantibus adhūc nōbīs repositōrium allātum est cum corbe, in quō gallīna erat lignea patentibus in orbem ālīs, quālēs esse solent quae incubant ōva. **4** accessēre continuō duo servī et symphōniā strepente scrūtārī paleam coepērunt, ērutaque subinde pāvōnīna ōva dīvīsere convīvīs. **5** convertit ad hanc scaenam Trimalchiō vultum et “amīcī” ait “pāvōnis ōva gallīnae iussī suppōnī. et meherculēs timeō nē iam conceptī sint. temptēmus tamen, sī adhūc sorbilia sunt.” **6** accipimus nōs cochleāria nōn minus sēlibrās pendentia, ōvaque ex farīnā pingui figūrāta pertundimus. **7** ego quidem paene prōiēcī partem meam, nam vidēbātur mihi iam in pullum coisse. **8** deinde ut audīvī veterem convīvam “hīc nescioquid bonī dēbet esse,” persecūtus putāmen manū pinguissimam ficēdulam invēnī piperātō vitellō circumdatam.

**34** iam Trimalchiō eadem omnia lūsū intermissō poposcerat fēceratque potestātem clārā vōce, sī quis nostrum iterum vellet mulsum sūmere, cum subitō signum symphōniā datur et gustātōria pariter ā chorō cantante rapiuntur. **2** cēterum inter tumultum cum forte paropsis excidisset et puer iacentem sustulisset, animadvertit Trimalchiō colaphisque obiūrgārī puerum ac prōicere rūsus

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

**33** After picking his teeth with a silver toothpick, he began: ‘My friends, I wasn’t keen to come into the dining-room yet. But if I stayed away any more, I would have kept you back, so I’ve deprived myself of all my little pleasures for you. However, you’ll allow me to finish my game.’<sup>15</sup>

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

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

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

**34** At this point Trimalchio became tired of his game and demanded that all the previous dishes be brought to him. He gave permission in a loud voice for any of us to have another glass of mead if we wanted it. Suddenly there was a crash from the orchestra and a troop of waiters – still singing – snatched away the hors d’oeuvres. However in the confusion one of the side-dishes happened to fall and a slave picked it up from the floor. Trimalchio noticed this, had the boy’s ears boxed and told him to throw it down again.



paropsidem iussit. **3** Insecutus est supellectiliarius argentumque inter reliqua purgamenta scōpīs coepit ēverrere. **4** subinde intrāvērunt duo Aethiopēs capillātī cum pusillīs utribus, quālēs solent esse quī harēnam in amphitheātrō spargunt, vīnumque dedere in manūs; aquam enim nēmō porrēxit. **5** laudatus propter ēlegantias dominus “aequum” inquit “Mārs amat. itaque iussī suam cuique mēnsam assignārī. obiter et pūtidiissimī servī minōrem nōbīs aestum frequentia suā facient.”

**6** statim allatae sunt amphorae vitreae diligenter gypsatae, quarum in cervicibus pittacia erant affixa cum hōc titulō: FALERNVM · OPĪMIANVM · ANNORVM CENTVM. **7** dum titulōs perlegimus, complōsit Trimalchiō manūs et “ēheu” inquit “ergō diūtius vīvit vīnum quam homunciō. quārē tangomenās faciāmus. vīnum vīta est. vērū Opīmiānum praestō. heri nōn tam bonum posuī, et multō honestiōrēs cēnābant.” **8** pōtantibus ergō nōbīs et accūrātissimē lautitiās mīrantibus lārvam argenteam attulit servus sic aptātam ut articulī eius vertebraeque luxatae in omnem partem flecterentur. **9** hanc cum super mēnsam semel iterumque abiēcisset, et catēnatiō mōbilis aliquot figurās exprimeret, Trimalchiō adiēcit:

**10** *ēheu nōs miserōs, quam tōtus homunciō nīl est!  
sic erimus cūctī, postquam nōs auferet Orcus.  
ergō vivāmus, dum licet esse bene.*

**35** laudatiōnem ferculum est insecutum plānē nōn prō expectatiōne magnum, novitās tamen omnium convertit oculos. **2** rotundum enim repositōrium duodecim habēbat signa in orbe disposita, super quae proprium convenientemque māteriae strūctor imposuerat cibum: **3** super arietem cicer arietinum, super taurum būbulae frustum, super geminōs testiculōs ac rienēs, super cancrum corōnam, super leōnem ficum Āfricānam, **4** super virginem steriliculam, super libram statēram in cuius alterā parte scriblita erat, in alterā placenta, super scorpiōnem \*\*\* super sagittarium oclopētam, super capricornum locustam

A cleaner came in with a broom and began to sweep up the silver plate along with the rest of the rubbish. Two long-haired Ethiopians followed him, carrying small skin bags like those used by the men who scatter the sand in the amphitheatre, and they poured wine over our hands – no one ever offered us water.

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

Carefully sealed wine bottles were immediately brought, their necks labelled: FALERNIAN CONSUL OPIMIUS 16 ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD.

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

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

Naturally we drank and missed no opportunity of admiring his elegant hospitality. In the middle of this a slave brought in a silver skeleton, **17** put together in such a way that its joints and backbone could be pulled out and twisted in all directions. After he had flung it about on the table once or twice, its flexible joints falling into various postures, Trimalchio recited:

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

**35** After our applause the next course was brought in. Actually it was not as grand as we expected, but it was so novel that everyone stared. It was a deep circular tray with the twelve signs of the Zodiac arranged round the edge. Over each of them the chef had placed some appropriate dainty<sup>18</sup> suggested by the subject. Over Aries the Ram, chickpeas; over Taurus the Bull, a beefsteak; over the Heavenly Twins, testicles and kidneys; over Cancer the Crab, a garland; over Leo the Lion, an African fig; over Virgo the Virgin, a young sow’s udder; over Libra the Scales, a balance with a cheesecake in one pan and a pastry in the other; over Scorpio, a sea scorpion; over Sagittarius the Archer, a sea bream with eyespots; over Capricorn, a lobster;

marinam, super aquarium anserem, super piscēs duos mullōs. **5** in mediō autem caespes cum herbīs excisus favum sustinebat. **6** circumferēbat Aegyptius puer clibanō argenteō panem \*\*\* atque ipse etiam taeterrimā vōce dē Lāserpiciariō mīmō canticum extorsit.

**7** nōs ut tristiōrēs ad tam vilēs accessimus cibōs “suādeō” inquit Trimalchiō “cēnēmus; hoc est iūs cēnae.” **36** haec ut dixit, ad symphōniam quattuor tripudiantēs prōcurrērunt superiōremque partem repositōrii abstulērunt. **2** quō factō, vidēmus inf̄ra altilia et sumina lepōremque in mediō pinnīs subōrnātum, ut Pēgasus vidērētur. **3** notāvimus etiam circā angulōs repositōrii Marsyās quattuor, ex quōrum ūtriculīs garum piperātum currēbat super piscēs, quī in euripō natābant. **4** damus omnēs plausum ā familiā inceptum et rēs ēlēctissimās ridentēs aggredimur.

**5** nōn minus et Trimalchiō eiusmodi methodiō laetus “Carpe” inquit. **6** prōcessit statim scissor et ad symphōniam gesticulātus ita lacerāvit obsōnium ut putārēs essedarium hydraulē cantante pugnāre. **7** ingerēbat nihilō minus Trimalchiō lentissimā vōce: “Carpe, Carpe.” ego suspicātus ad aliquam urbānitātem totiēns iterātā vōcem pertinēre, nōn ērubuī eum quī suprā mē accumbēbat hoc ipsum interrogāre. **8** at ille, quī saepius eiusmodi lūdōs spectāverat “vidēs illum” inquit “quī obsōnium carpit: Carpus vocātur. ita quotiēscumque dicit ‘Carpe’ eōdem verbō et vocat et imperat.”

**37** nōn potuī amplius quicquam gustāre, sed conversus ad eum, ut quam plūrima exciperem, longē accersere fābulās coepi sciscitārīque, quae esset mulier illa quae hūc atque illūc discurreret. **2** “uxor” inquit “Trimalchiōnis, Fortunāta appellātur, quae nummōs modiō mētitur. **3** et modo modo quid fuit? ignōscet mihi genius tuus, nōluissēs dē manū illius panem accipere. **4** nunc, nec quid nec quārē, in caelum abiit et Trimalchiōnis topanta est. **5** ad summam, merō merīdiē sī dixerit illi tenebrās esse, crēdet. **6** ipse nescit quid habeat, adeō saplūtus est; sed haec lupatria prōvidet omnia, et ubi nōn pūtēs. **7** est

over Aquarius the Water-Carrier, a goose; over Pisces the Fishes, two mullets. In the centre was a piece of grassy turf bearing a honeycomb. A young Egyptian slave carried around bread in a silver oven ... and in a sickening voice he mangled a song from the show The Asafoetida Man.<sup>19</sup>

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

‘Let’s eat, if you don’t mind. This is the sauce of all order.’<sup>20</sup> As he spoke, four dancers hurtled forward in time to the music and removed the upper part of the great dish, revealing underneath plump fowls, sows’ udders, and a hare with wings fixed to his middle to look like Pegasus. We also noticed four figures of Marsyas<sup>21</sup> with little skin bottles, which let a peppery fish-sauce go running over some fish, which seemed to be swimming in a little channel. We all joined in the servants’ applause and amid some laughter we helped ourselves to these quite exquisite things.

Trimalchio was every bit as happy as we were with this sort of trick: ‘Carve ’er!’ he cried. Up came the man with the carving knife and, with his hands moving in time to the orchestra, he sliced up the victuals like a charioteer battling to the sound of organ music. And still Trimalchio went on saying insistently: ‘Carve ’er, Carver!’<sup>22</sup>

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

‘You see the fellow doing the carving – he’s called Carver. So whenever he says “Carver!” he’s calling out his name and his orders.’

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

‘Trimalchio’s wife,’ he told me, ‘Fortunata is her name and she counts her money by the sackful. And before, before, what was she? You’ll pardon me saying so, but you wouldn’t of touched a bit of bread from her hand. Nowadays – and who knows how or why – she’s in heaven, and she’s absolutely everything to Trimalchio. In fact, if she tells him at high noon it’s dark, he’ll believe her. He doesn’t know himself how much he’s got, he’s so loaded – but this bitch looks after everything; she’s even in places you wouldn’t think of.

sicca, sōbria, bonōrum cōnsiliōrum — tantum aurī vidēs — est tamen malae linguae, pīca pulvīnāris. quem amat, amat; quem nōn amat, nōn amat.

8 ipse fundōs habet quantum mīlvī volant, nummōrum nummōs. argentum in ōstiārī illius cellā plūs iacet quam quisquam in fortūnīs habet. 9 familia vērō babae babae nōn meherculēs putō decumam partem esse quae dominum suum nōverit. 10 ad summam, quemvīs ex istīs babaecalīs in rūtae folium coniciet. 38 nec est quod pūtēs illum quicquam emere. omnia domī nāscuntur: lāna, citrea, piper; lacte gallināceum sī quaesieris, inveniēs. 2 ad summam, parum illī bona lāna nāscēbātur; arietēs ā Tarentō emit, et eōs culāvīt in gregem. 3 mel Atticum ut domī nāscerētur, apēs ab Athēnīs iussit afferrī; obiter et vernāculae quae sunt, meliusculae ā Graeculīs fient. 4 ecce intrā hōs diēs scrīpsit, ut illī ex Indiā sēmen bōlētōrum mitterētur. nam mūlam quidem nūllam habet quae nōn ex onagrō nāta sit. 5 vidēs tot culcitās: nūlla nōn aut conchyliātum aut coccineum tōmentum habet. tanta est animī beātitudō.

6 reliquōs autem collibertōs eius cavē contemnās. 7 valdē sucōsi sunt. vidēs illum quī in īmō īmus recumbit: hodiē sua octingenta possidet. dē nihilō crēvit. modo solēbat collō suō ligna portāre. 8 sed quōmodo dīcunt — ego nihil sciō, sed audīvī — cum Incubōnī pilleum rapuisset, thēsaurum invēnit. 9 ego nēminī invidēō, sī quid deus dēdit. est tamen subalapā et nōn vult sibi male. 10 itaque proximē cenaculum hōc titulō prōscrīpsit: C. POMPEIVS DIOGENĒS · EX KALENDĪS IVLĪIS CĒNĀCVLVM LOCAT · IPSE ENIM DOMVM EMIT.

11 quid ille quī libertinī locō iacet? quam bene sē habuit. 12 nōn improperō illī. sēstertium suum vidit deciēs, sed male vacillāvit. nōn putō illum capillōs liberōs habēre. nec meherculēs suā culpā; ipsō enim homō melior nōn est; sed libertī scelerātī, quī omnia ad sē fēcērunt. 13 scītō autem: sociōrum ōlla male fervet, et ubi semel rēs inclināta est, amīcī dē mediō. 14 et quam honestam negōtiātiōnem

She's dry, sober and full of ideas – you see all that gold! – but she's got a rough tongue and she's a real magpie when she gets her feet up. If she likes you, she likes you – if she doesn't like you, she doesn't like you.

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

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

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

'But mind you, don't look down on the other freedmen here. They're dripping with the stuff. You see that man on the very bottom couch. At present he's got eight hundred thousand of his own. He started out with nothing. It's not long since he was humping wood on his own back. They say – I don't know myself, I've heard it – they say he stole a hobgoblin's cap and found its treasure. I don't begrudge anyone what God has given him. Besides, he can still feel his master's slap and wants to give himself a good time. For instance, the other day he put up a notice which said: GAIUS POMPEIUS DIOGENES IS MOVING TO HIS HOUSE AND WILL LET THE ROOM OVER HIS SHOP FROM 1 JULY.

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



exercuit, quod illum sic vidēs. libitinārius fuit. **15** solēbat sic cēnāre, quōmodo rēx: aprōs gausapātōs, opera pistōria, avīs \*\*\* cocōs, pistōrēs. plūs vīnī sub mēnsā effundēbātur quam aliquis in cellā habet. phantasia, nōn homō. **16** inclinātis quoque rēbus suis, cum timēret nē crēditōrēs illum conturbāre existimārent, hōc titulō auctiōnem prōscrīpsit: C. IŪLIVS PROCVLVS · AVCTIŌNEM FACIET RĒRVM SVPERVACVĀRVVM.

**39** interpellāvit tam dulcēs fābulās Trimalchiō; nam iam sublātum erat ferculum, hilarēsque convīvae vīnō sermōnibusque publicātis operam coeperant dare. **2** is ergō reclīnātus in cubitum “hoc vīnum” inquit “vōs oportet suāve faciātis: piscēs natāre oportet. **3** rogō mē putātis illā cēnā esse contentum, quam in thēcā repositōriū viderātis? sic nōtus Vlixēs? quid ergō est? oportet etiam inter cēnandum philologiam nōsse. **4** patrōnō meō ossa bene quiēscant, quī mē hominem inter hominēs voluit esse. nam mihi nihil novī potest afferri, sicut ille ferculus iam habuit praxim. **5** caelus hic, in quō duodecim dīi habitant, in totidem sē figurās convertit, et modo fit ariēs. itaque quisquis nāscitur illō signō, multa pecora habet, multum lānae, caput praetereā dūrum, frontem expudōrātā, cornum acūtum. plūrimī hōc signō scolasticī nāscuntur et arietillī.” **6** laudāmus urbānitātem mathēmaticī; itaque adiēcit: “deinde tōtus caelus taurulus fit. itaque tunc calcitrōsī nāscuntur et bubulcī et quī sē ipsī pāscunt. **7** in geminīs autem nāscuntur bīgae et bovēs et coleī et quī utrōsque parietēs linunt. **8** in cancrō ego nātus sum: ideō multīs pedibus stō, et in marī et in terrā multa possideō; nam cancer et hoc et illōc quadrat. et ideō iam dūdum nihil suprā illum posuī, nē genesim meam premerem. **9** in leōne cataphagae nāscuntur et imperiōsī. in virgine mulierōsī et fugitivī et compeditī; **10** in librā laniōnēs et unguentāriī et quicumque aliquid expendunt; **11** in scorpiōne venēnāriī et percussōrēs; in sagittariō strabōnēs, quī holera spectant, lārdum tollunt; **12** in capricornō aerumnōsī, quibus prae

and look at him now! He was an undertaker. He used to eat like a king – boars roasted in their skins, elaborate pastry, braised game birds, as well as fish and hares. More wine was spilt under the table than another man keeps in his cellar. He wasn’t a man, he was an absolute dream! When things were looking black, he didn’t want his creditors to think he was bankrupt, so he put up notice of an auction like this: GAIUS JULIUS PROCULUS AUCTION OF SURPLUS STOCK.

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

‘Now you’re supposed to be enjoying the wine. Fishes have to swim. I ask you, do you think I’m just content with that course you saw in the bottom of the dish? “Is this like the Ulysses you know?”<sup>23</sup> Well then, we’ve got to display some culture<sup>24</sup> at our dinner. My patron – God rest his bones! – wanted me to hold up my head in any company. There’s nothing new to me, as that there dish proves. Look now, these here heavens, as there are twelve gods<sup>25</sup> living in ’em, changes into that many shapes. First it becomes the Ram. So whoever is born under that sign has a lot of herds, a lot of wool, a hard head as well, a brassy front and a sharp horn. Most scholars are born under this sign, and most muttonheads as well.’

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

‘Then the whole heavens turns into the little old Bull. So bullheaded folk are born then, and cow-herds and those who find their own feed. Under the Heavenly Twins on the other hand – pairs-in-hand, yokes of oxen, people with big ballocks and people who do it both ways. I was born under the Crab, so I have a lot of legs to stand on and a lot of property on land and sea, because the Crab takes both in his stride. And that’s why I put nothing over him earlier, so as not to upset my horoscope. Under Leo are born greedy and bossy people. Under the Virgin, effeminate, runaways and candidates for the chain-gang.<sup>26</sup> Under the Scales, butchers, perfume-sellers and anyone who weighs things up. Under Scorpio poisoners and murderers. Under Sagittarius are born cross-eyed people who look at the vegetables and take the bacon. Under Capricorn, people in trouble

mala sua cornua nāscuntur; in aquāriō copōnēs et cucurbitae; **13** in piscibus obsōnātōrēs et rhētorēs. sīc orbis vertitur tamquam mola, et semper aliquid malī facit, ut hominēs aut nāscantur aut pereant.

**14** quod autem in mediō caespitem vidētis et super caespitem favum, nihil sine ratiōne faciō. **15** terra māter est in mediō quasi ōvum corrotundāta, et omnia bona in sē habet tamquam favus.”

**40** “σοφῶς” ūniversī clāmāmus, et sublātis manibus ad cameram iūrāmus Hipparchum Arātumque comparandōs illi hominēs nōn fuisse, dōnec advēnērunt ministrī ac torālia praeposuerunt, in quibus rētia erant picta subessōrēsque cum vēnābulis et tōtus vēnātiōnis apparātus. **2** necdum sciēbāmus quō mitterēmus suspīciōnēs nostrās, cum extrā trīclīnium clāmor sublātus est ingēns, et ecce canēs Lacōnicī etiam circā mēnsam discurrere coepērunt. **3** secūtum est hōs repositōrium, in quō positus erat prīmae magnitudinis aper, et quidem pilleātus, ē cuius dentibus sportellae dēpendēbant duae palmulīs textae, altera caryotis, altera thēbaicīs replēta. **4** circā autem minōrēs porcelli ex coptoplacentīs factī, quasi ūberibus imminērent, scrōfam esse positam significābant. et hī quidem apophorētī fuērunt. **5** cēterum ad scindendum aprum nōn ille Carpus accessit quī altilia lacerāverat, sed barbātus ingēns, fasciīs crūrālībus alligātus et āliculā subōrnātus polymitā, strictōque vēnātōriō cultrō latus aprī vehementer percussit, ex cuius plāga turdī ēvolāvērunt. **6** parātī aucupēs cum harundinibus fuērunt, et eōs circā trīclīnium volitantēs mōmentō excēpērunt. **7** inde cum suum cuique iussisset referri, Trimalchiō adiēcit: “etiam vidēte quam porcus ille silvāticus lōtam comēderit glandem.” **8** statim puerī ad sportellās accessērunt quae pendēbant ē dentibus, thēbaicāsque et caryotās ad numerum divīsere cēnantibus.

**41** interim ego, quī prīvātum habēbam sēcessum, in multās cōgitātiōnēs diductus sum, quārē aper pilleātus intrāsset. **2** postquam itaque omnīs bacalusiās cōsūmpsī, dūrāvī interrogāre illum

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

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

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

**40** ‘Oh, clever!’ we all cried, raising our hands to the ceiling and swearing that Hipparchus and Aratus<sup>27</sup> couldn’t compete with him.

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

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

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

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

interpretem meum quod mē torquēret. 3 at ille: “plānē etiam hoc servus tuus indicāre potest: nōn enim aenigma est, sed rēs aperta. 4 hic aper, cum heri summā cēnā eum vindicāset, ā convīviis dīmissus est; itaque hodiē tamquam libertus in convīvium revertitur.” 5 damnāvī ego stupōrem meum et nihil amplius interrogāvi, nē vidērer numquam inter honestōs cēnāsse.

6 dum haec loquimur, puer speciōsus, vītibus hederisque redimītus, modo Bromium, interdum Lyaeum Euhiumque cōfessus, calathiscō ūvās circumtulit et poēmata dominī suī acūtissimā vōce trādūxit. 7 ad quem sonum conversus Trimalchiō “Dionŷe” inquit “Līber estō.” puer dētrāxit pilleum aprō capitique suō imposuit. 8 tum Trimalchiō rūrsus adiēcit “nōn negābitis mē” inquit “habēre liberum patrem.” laudāmus dictum, et circumeuntem puerum sānē perbāsiāmus.

9 ab hōc ferculō Trimalchiō ad lasanum surrēxit. nōs libertātem sine tyrannō nactī coepimus invītāre convīvārum sermōnēs. 10 Dāma itaque prīmus cum pataracina poposcisset: “diēs,” inquit, “nihil est. dum versās tē, nox fit. itaque nihil est melius quam dē cubiculō rēctā in trīclīnium īre. et mundum frīgus habuimus. 11 vix mē balneus calfcit. tamen calda pōtiō vestiārius est. 12 stāminātās dūxī, et plānē matus sum. vīnus mihi in cerebrum abiit.”

42 excēpit Seleucus fābulae partem et “ego” inquit “nōn cōtīdiē labor: 2 baliscus enim fullō est, aqua dentēs habet, et cor nostrum cōtīdiē liquēscit. sed cum mulsī pultārium obdūxī, frīgōrī laecasīn dīcō. nec sānē lavāre potuī; fuī enim hodiē in fūnus. 3 homō bellus, tam bonus Chrysanthus animam ēbulliit. modo, modo mē appellāvit. 4 videor mihi cum illō loquī. heu, ēheu! utrēs inflāti ambulāmus. minōris quam muscae sumus; muscae tamen aliquam virtūtem habent, nōs nōn plūris sumus quam bullae. 5 et quid sī nōn abstināx fuisset! quīnque diēs aquam in ōs suum nōn conīēcit, nōn mīcam pānis. tamen abiit ad plūrēs. medicī illum perdidērunt, immō magis malus fātus; medicus enim nihil aliud est quam animī cōnsōlātiō.

I was racking my brains with. He of course replied:

‘Even the man waiting on you could explain this obvious point – it’s not puzzling at all, it’s quite simple. The boar here was pressed into service for the last course yesterday, but the guests let it go. So today it returns to the feast as a freedman.’

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

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

The lad pulled the freedman’s cap off the boar and stuck it on his head. Then Trimalchio commented: ‘Now you won’t deny my claim to be the liberated sort.’<sup>28</sup> We applauded his joke and kissed the boy hard as he went round.

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

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

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

‘And yet he had been on an extremely strict diet? For five days he didn’t take a drop of water or a crumb of bread into his mouth. But he’s gone to join the majority. The doctors finished him – well, hard luck, more like. After all, a doctor is just to

6 tamen bene elātus est, vītālī lectō, strāgulīs bonīs. plānctus est optimē — manū mīsīt aliquot — etiam sī malignē illum plōrāvit uxor. 7 quid sī nōn illam optimē accēpisset? sed mulier quae mulier mīlvīnum genus. nēminem nihil bonī facere oportet; aequē est enim ac sī in puteum coniciās. sed antīquus amor cancer est.”

43 molestus fuit, Philerosque prōclāmāvit: “vīvōrum meminerīmus. ille habet quod sibi dēbēbatur: honestē vīxit, honestē obiit. quid habet quod querātur? ab asse crēvit et parātus fuit quadrantem dē stercore mordicus tollere. itaque crēvit, quicquid crēvit, tamquam favus. 2 putō meherculēs illum reliquisse solida centum, et omnia in nummīs habuit. 3 dē rē tamen ego vērū dīcam, quī linguam canīnam comēdi: dūrae buccae fuit, linguōsus, discordia, nōn homō. 4 frāter eius fortis fuit, amīcus amīcō, manū plēnā, ūnctā mēnsā. et inter initia malam parram pilāvit, sed recorrēxit costās illius prīma vīndēmia: vēndidit enim vīnum quantum ipse voluit. et quod illius mentum sustulit, hērēditatē accēpit, ex quā plūs involāvit quam illī relictum est. 5 et ille stīps, dum frātrī suō irāscitur, nesciocui terrae filiō patrimonium ēlēgāvit. longē fugit quisquis suōs fugit. 6 habuit autem ōrāculāriōs servōs quī illum pessum dedērunt. numquam autem rēctē faciet, quī cito crēdit, utique homō negōtiāns. tamen vērū quod frūnītus est, quam diū vīxit. 7 cui datum est, nōn cui dēstinātum. plānē Fortūnae filiū. in manū illius plumbum aurum fīēbat. facile est autem, ubi omnia quadrāta currunt. et quot putās illum annōs sēcūm tulisse? septuāgintā et suprā. sed corneolus fuit, aetātem bene ferēbat, niger tamquam corvus. 8 nōveram hominem ōlim ōliōrum, et adhūc salāx erat. nōn meherculēs illum putō domō canem reliquisse. immō etiam pullārius erat, omnis Minervae homō. nec improbō, hoc solum enim sēcūm tulit.”

44 haec Phileros dixit, illa Ganymēdēs: “nārrātis quod nec ad caelum nec ad terram pertinet, cum interim nēmō cūrat quid annōna mordet. 2 nōn meherculēs hodiē buccam pānis invenīre potuī. et

put your mind at rest. Still, he got a good send-off – he had a bier, and all beautifully draped. His mourners – several of his slaves were left their freedom – did him proud, even though his widow was a bit mean with her tears. And yet he had been extremely good to her! But women as a sex are real vultures. It’s no good doing them a favour, you might as well throw it down a well. An old passion is just an ulcer.’

43 He was being a bore and Phileros said loudly:

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

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

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

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

44 This was Phileros, then Ganymedes said: ‘You’re all talking about things that don’t concern heaven or earth. Meanwhile, no one gives a damn the way we’re hit by the corn situation. Honest to god, I couldn’t get hold of a mouthful of bread to-

quōmodo siccitās persevērat! 3 iam annum ēsuritiō fuit. aedilēs male ēveniat, quī cum pistōribus collūdunt: ‘servā mē, servābō tē.’ itaque populus minūtus labōrat, nam istī maiōrēs māxillae semper Sātūrnālia agunt. 4 ō sī habērēmus illōs leōnēs quōs ego hīc invēnī cum primum ex Asiā vēnī. illud erat vīvere. 5 sī similia silīgine inferior esset, lārvās sīc istōs percolopābant, ut illis Iuppiter irātus esset. 6 meminī Safinium. tunc habitābat ad arcum veterem, mē puerō — piper, nōn homō. 7 is quācumque ibat, terram adūrēbat. sed rēctus, sed certus, amīcus amīcō, cum quō audācter possēs in tenebrīs micāre. 8 in cūriā autem quōmodo singulōs pīlābat, nec schēmās loquēbātur sed dērēctum. 9 cum ageret porrō in forō, sīc illius vōx crēscēbat tamquam tubā. nec sūdāvit umquam nec exspuit; putō enim nescioquid assī habuisse. 10 et quam benignus resalūtāre, nōmina omnium reddere, tamquam ūnus dē nōbīs! itaque illō tempore annōna prō lutō erat. 11 asse pānem quem ēmissēs, nōn potuissēs cum alterō dēvorāre. nunc oculum būblum vīdī maiōrem. heu heu, quōtidīē peius! 12 haec colōnia retrōversus crēscit tamquam cōda vitulī. 13 sed quārē habēmus aedilem nōn trium cauniārum, quī sibi māvult assem quam vītā nostrā? itaque domī gaudet, plūs in diē nummōrum accipit quam alter patrimōnium habet. 14 iam sciō unde accēperit dēnariōs mīlle aureōs. sed sī nōs cōleōs habērēmus, nōn tantum sibi placēret. nunc populus est domī leōnēs, forās vulpēs. 15 quod ad mē attinet, iam pannōs meōs comēdī et, sī persevērat haec annōna, casulās meās vēndam. 16 quid enim futūrum est, sī nec diī nec hominēs huius colōniae miserentur? ita meōs frūnīscar, ut ego putō omnia illa ā diibus fierī. 17 nēmō enim caelum caelum putat, nēmō ieiūnium servat, nēmō Iovem pīlī facit, sed omnēs opertīs oculīs bona sua computant. 18 antēā stolātae ibant nūdīs pedibus in clīvum, passīs capillīs, mentibus pūrīs, et Iovem aquam exōrābant. itaque statim urcēatim plovēbat: aut tunc aut numquam, et omnēs redībant ūdī tamquam mūrēs. itaque diī pedēs lānātōs habent, quia nōs religiōsī nōn sumus. agrī iacent —”

day. And look how there’s still no rain. It’s been absolute starvation for a whole year now. To hell with the food officers! They’re in with the bakers – “You be nice to me and I’ll be nice to you.” So the little man suffers, while those grinders of the poor never stop celebrating. Oh, if only we still had the sort of men I found here when I first arrived from Asia. Like lions they were. That was the life! Come one, come all! If plain flour was inferior to the very finest, they’d thrash those bogeymen till they thought God Almighty was after them.

‘I remember Safinius – he used to live by the old arch then; I was a boy at the time. He wasn’t a man, he was all pepper. He used to scorch the ground wherever he went. But he was dead straight – don’t let him down and he wouldn’t let you down. You’d be ready to play morra<sup>29</sup> with him in the dark. But on the city council, how he used to wade into some of them – no beating about the bush, straight from the shoulder! And when he was in court, his voice got louder and louder like a trumpet. He never sweated or spat – I think he’d been through the oven all right. And very affable he was when you met him, calling everyone by name just like one of us. Naturally at the time corn was dirt cheap. You could buy a penny loaf that two of you couldn’t get through. Today – I’ve seen bigger bull’s-eyes.

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

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

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



45 “ōrō tē,” inquit Echīōn centōnārius, “melius loquere. 2 ‘modo sīc, modo sīc,’ inquit rūsticus: varium porcum perdiderat. 3 quod hodiē nōn est, crās erit: sīc vīta trūdītur. nōn meherculēs patria melior dīcī potest, sī hominēs habēret. sed labōrat hōc tempore, nec haec sōla. nōn dēbēmus dēlicātī esse; ubīque medius caelus est. 4 tū sī aliubī fueris, dīcēs hīc porcōs coctōs ambulāre. et ecce habitūrī sumus mūnus eccellente in trīduō diē fēstā; familia nōn lanistīcia, sed plūrimī libertī. 5 et Titus noster magnum animum habet, et est caldicerebrius. aut hoc aut illud, erit quid utique. nam illī domesticus sum, nōn est mixcix. 6 ferrum optimum datūrus est, sine fugā, carnārium in mediō, ut amphitheater videat. et habet unde: relictum est illī sēstertium tricentiēs, dēcessit illīus pater. male! ut quadringenta impendat, nōn sentiet patrimonium illīus, et sempiternō nōminābitur. 7 iam Māniōs aliquot habet et mulierem essedāriam et dispēnsātorem Glycōnis, quī dēprehēsus est cum dominam suam dēlectārētur. vidēbis populī rixam inter zelotypōs et amasiunculōs. 8 Glycō autem, sēstertiārius homō, dispēnsātorem ad bēstiās dedit. hoc est sē ipsum trādūcere. quid servus peccāvit, quī coactus est facere? magis illa matella digna fuit quam taurus iactāret. sed quī asinum nōn potest, strātum caedit. 9 quid autem Glycō putābat Hermogenis filicem umquam bonum exitum factūram? ille mīlvō volantī poterat unguēs resecāre; colubra restem nōn parit. Glycō, Glycō dēdit suās; itaque quamdiū vīxerit, habēbit stigmam, nec illam nisi Orcus dēlēbit. 10 sed sibi quisque peccat. sed subolfaciō quia nōbīs epulum datūrus est Mammaea, bīnōs dēnāriōs mihi et meīs. quod sī hoc fēcerit, ēripiet Norbānō tōtum favōrem. sciās oportet plēnis vēlīs hunc vincitūrum. 11 et rēvērā, quid ille nōbīs bonī fēcīt? dēdit gladiātōrēs sēstertiāriōs iam dēcrepitōs, quōs sī sufflāssēs, cecidissent; iam meliōrēs bēstiāriōs vidī. occidit dē lucernā equitēs; putārēs eōs gallōs gallīnācēōs: alter burdubasta, alter lōripēs, tertiārius mortuus prō mortuō, quī habēbat nervia praecīsa. 12 ūnus alicuius flātūrae fuit

45 ‘Please, please,’ broke in Echion the rag-merchant, ‘be a bit more cheerful. “First it’s one thing, then another,” as the yokel said when he lost his spotted pig. What we haven’t got today, we’ll have tomorrow. That’s the way life goes. Believe me, you couldn’t name a better country, if it had the people. As things are, I admit, it’s having a hard time, but it isn’t the only place. We mustn’t be soft. The sky don’t get no nearer wherever you are. If you were somewhere else, you’d be talking about the pigs walking round ready-roasted back here.

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

‘But I can almost smell the dinner Mammaea is going to give us – two denarii apiece for me and the family. If he really does it, he’ll make off with all Norbanus’s votes, I tell you he’ll win at a canter. After all, what good has Norbanus done us? He put on some half-pint gladiators, so done in already that they’d have dropped if you blew at them. I’ve seen beast fighters<sup>30</sup> give a better performance. As for the horse-men killed, he got them off a lamp – they ran round like cocks in a backyard. One was just a cart-horse, the other couldn’t stand up, and the reserve was just one corpse instead of another – he was practically hamstrung. One boy did have a bit of spirit

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Thraex, quī et ipse ad dictāta pugnāvit. ad summam, omnēs postea secti sunt; adeo dē magnā turbā ‘adhibēte’ accēperant: plānē fugae merae. **13** ‘mūnus tamen,’ inquit, ‘tibi dedī; et ego tibi plōdō.’ computā, et tibi plūs dō quam accēpī. manus manum lavat.

**46** vidēris mihi, Agamemnōn, dīcere ‘quid iste argūtat molestus?’ quia tū, quī potes loquere, nōn loquis. nōn es nostrae fasciae, et ideō pauperōrum verba dēridēs. scīmus tē prae litterās fatuum esse. **2** quid ergō est? aliquā diē tē persuādeam ut ad villam veniās et videās casulās nostrās? inveniēmus quod manducēmus, pullum, ova: bellē erit, etiam sī omnia hōc annō tempestās disparpallāvit. inveniēmus ergō unde saturī fīamus. **3** et iam tibi discipulus crēscit cicarō meus. iam quattuor partēs dīcit; sī vixerit, habēbis ad latus servulum. nam quicquid illī vacat, caput dē tabulā nōn tollit. ingeniōsus est et bonō filō, etiam sī in avēs morbōsus est. **4** ego illī iam trēs cardēlēs occīdī, et dīxī quia mustella comēdit. invēnit tamen aliās nēniās, et libentissimē pingit. **5** cēterum iam Graeculis calcem impingit et Latīnās coepit nōn male appetere, etiam sī magister eius sibi placēns fit nec ūnō locō cōnsistit. scit quidem litterās, sed nōn vult labōrāre. **6** est et alter nōn quidem doctus, sed cūriōsus, quī plūs docet quam scit. itaque fēriātīs diēbus solet domum venīre, et quicquid dederis, contentus est. **7** emī ergō nunc puerō aliquot libra rubricāta, quia volō illum ad domūsiōnem aliquid dē iūre gustāre. habet haec rēs pānem. nam litterīs satis inquinātus est. quod sī resilierit, dēstināvi illum artificium docēre, aut tōnstrīnum aut praecōnem aut certē causidicum, quod illī auferre nōn possit nisi Orcus. **8** ideō illī cōtīdiē clāmō: ‘Prīmigenī, crēde mihi, quicquid discis, tibi discis. vidēs Philerōnem causidicum: sī nōn didicisset, hodiē famem ā labrīs nōn abigeret. modo, modō, collō suō circumferēbat onera vēnālia; nunc etiam adversus Norbānum sē extendit. litterae thēsaurum est, et artificium numquam moritur.’”

**47** eiusmodī fabulae vibrābant, cum Trimalchiō intrāvit et dētersā fronte unguentō manūs lāvit spatiōque minimō interpositō

he was in Thracian armour,<sup>31</sup> and even he didn’t show any initiative. In fact, they were all flogged afterwards, there were so many shouts of “Give ’em what for!” from the crowd. Pure cowards, that’s all. “Well, I’ve put on a show for you,” he says. “And I’m clapping you,” says I. “Reckon it up, I’m giving more than I got. So we’re quits.”

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

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

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

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

2 “ignōscite mihi” inquit “amicī, multīs iam diēbus venter mihi nōn respondit. nec medicī sē inveniunt. prōfuit mihi tamen mālicorium et taeda ex acētō. 3 spērō tamen, iam veterem pudōrem sibi impōnit. aliōquīn circā stomachum mihi sonat, putēs taurum. 4 itaque sī quis vestrum voluerit suā rē causā facere, nōn est quod illum pudeātur. nēmō nostrum solidē nātus est. ego nūllum putō tam magnum tormentum esse quam continēre. hoc solum vetāre nē Iovis potest. 5 rīdēs, Fortunāta, quae solēs mē nocte dēsomnem facere? nec tamen in trīcliniō ūllum vetuō facere quod sē iuvet, et medicī vetant continēre. vel sī quid plūs venit, omnia forās parāta sunt: aqua, lasanī, et cētera minūtālīa. 6 crēdite mihi, anathēmīasis in cerebrum it et in tōtō corpore flūctum facit. multōs sciō periisse, dum nōlunt sibi vērū dicere.”

7 grātiās agimus liberālītātī indulgentiaeque eius, et subinde castīgāmus crēbrīs pōtiunculīs rīsum. 8 nec adhūc sciēbāmus nōs in mediō, quod aiunt, clīvō labōrāre. nam commundātīs ad symphōniam mēnsīs trēs albī suēs in trīclīnium adductī sunt capistrīs et tintinnābulīs cultī, quōrum ūnum bīmum nōmenculātor esse dicēbat, alterum trīmum, tertium vērō iam sexennem. 9 ego putābam petauristārīōs intrāsse et porcōs, sicut in circulis mōs est, portenta aliquā factūrōs. 10 sed Trimalchiō expectātiōne discussā “quem” inquit “ex eīs vultis in cēnam statim fierī? gallum enim gallināceum, penthiacum et eiusmodī nēniās rūsticī faciunt: meī cocī etiam vitulōs aēnō coctōs solent facere.” 11 continuōque cocum vocārī iussit, et nōn expectatā ēlēctiōne nostrā maximum nātū iussit occīdī, et clārā vōce: “ex quotā decuriā es?” 12 cum ille sē ex quadrāgēsīmā respondisset “ēmp̄ticius an” inquit “domī nātus?” “neutrum” inquit cocus “sed testāmentō Pānsae tibi relictus sum.” 13 “vidē ergō” ait “ut dīlīgenter pōnās; sī nōn, tē iubēbō in decuriā viātōrum conicī.” et cocum quidem potentiae admonitum in culīnam obsōnium dūxit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

He then said to the man in a loud voice: ‘Which division are you from?’ When he replied he was from number forty, Trimalchio asked: ‘Were you bought or were you born here?’ ‘Neither,’ said the chef, ‘I was left to you in Pansa’s will.’ ‘Well, then,’ said Trimalchio, ‘see you serve it up carefully – otherwise I’ll have you thrown into

**48** Trimalchiō autem mīti ad nōs vultū respexit et “vīnum” inquit “sī nōn placet, mūtābō; vōs illud oportet bonum faciātis. **2** deōrum beneficiō nōn emō, sed nunc quicquid ad salivam facit, in suburbānō nāscitur eō, quod ego adhūc nōn nōvī. dicitur cōnfine esse Tarraciniēnsibus et Tarentīnīs. **3** nunc coniungere agellīs Siciliam volō, ut cum Āfricam libuerit ire, per meōs finēs nāvigem.

**4** sed nārrā tū mihi, Agamemnōn, quam contrōversiam hodiē dēclāmāsti? ego autem sī causās nōn agō, in domūsiōnem tamen litterās didici. et nē mē putēs studia fastīdītum, trēs bybliothēcās habeō, ūnam Graecam, alteram Latīnam. dīc ergō, sī mē amās, peristasim dēclāmātiōnis tuae.” **5** cum dixisset Agamemnōn, “pauper et dīves inimīci erant —” ait Trimalchiō, “quid est pauper?” “urbānē,” inquit Agamemnōn et nescioquam contrōversiam exposuit. **6** statim Trimalchiō, “hoc,” inquit, “sī factum est, contrōversia nōn est; sī factum nōn est, nihil est.”

**7** haec aliaque cum effūsissimīs prōsequerēmur laudātiōnibus, “rogō,” inquit, “Agamemnōn mihi cārissime, numquid duodecim aerumnās Herculis tenēs, aut dē Vlīxe fābulam, quemadmodum illī Cyclōps pollicem forcipe extorsit? solēbam haec ego puer apud Homērum legere. **8** nam Sibyllam quidem Cūmīs ego ipse oculīs meīs vidī in ampullā pendēre, et cum illī puerī dicerent, “Σίβυλλα, τί θελεῖς;” respondēbat illa, “ἀποθανεῖν θέλω.”

**49** nōndum efflāverat omnia, cum repositōrium cum sue ingentī mēnsam occupāvit. **2** mīrārī nōs celeritātem coepimus, et iūrāre nē gallum quidem gallīnāceum tam cito percoquī potuisse, **3** tantō quidem magis, quod longē maior nōbīs porcus vidēbātur esse quam paulō ante appāruerat. deinde magis magisque Trimalchiō intuēns eum **4** “quid? quid?” inquit, “porcus hic nōn est exinterātus? nōn meherculēs est. vocā, vocā cocum in mediō.” **5** cum cōstitisset ad mēnsam cocus trīstis et dīceret sē oblītum esse exinterāre: “quid? oblītus?” Trimalchiō exclāmat. “putēs illum piper et cumīnum nōn

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

**48** Trimalchio looked round at us with a gentle smile: ‘If you don’t like the wine, I’ll have it changed. It is up to you to do it justice. I don’t buy it, thank heaven. In fact, whatever wine really tickles your palate this evening, it comes from an estate of mine which as yet I haven’t seen. It’s said to join my estates at Tarracina and Tarentum.<sup>32</sup> What I’d like to do now is add Sicily to my little bit of land, so that when I want to go to Africa, I could sail there without leaving my own property.

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

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

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

‘Tell me, my dear Agamemnon,’ continued Trimalchio, ‘do you remember the twelve labours of Hercules and the story of Ulysses – how the Cyclops<sup>33</sup> tore out his eye with his thumb. I used to read about them in Homer, when I was a boy. In fact, I actually saw with my own eyes the Sybil at Cumae<sup>34</sup> dangling in a bottle, and when the children asked her in Greek: “What do you want, Sybil?” she used to answer: “I want to die.”’

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

‘What’s this? Isn’t this pig gutted? I’m damn certain it isn’t. Call the chef in here, go on, call him!’ The downcast chef stood by the table and said he’d forgotten it. ‘What, you forgot!’ shouted Trimalchio. ‘You’d think he’d only left out the pepper and cumin.’

coniēcisse. dēspoliā!” 6 nōn fit mora, dēspoliātur cocus atque inter duōs tortōrēs maestus cōsistit. dēprecārī tamen omnēs coepērunt et dīcere: “solet fierī.” “rogāmus mittās.” “postea sī fēcerit, nēmō nostrum prō illō rogābit.” 7 ego, crūdēlissimae sevērītātis, nōn potuī mē tenēre, sed inclinātus ad aurem Agamemnonis, “plānē,” inquam, “hic dēbet servus esse nēquissimus: aliquis oblīvīscerētur porcum exinterāre? nōn meherculēs illī ignōscerem, sī piscem praeterīset.” 8 at nōn Trimalchiō, quī relaxātō in hilaritātem vultū “ergō” inquit “quia tam malae memoriae es, palam nōbīs illum exinterā.” 9 receptā cocus tunicā cultrum arripuit porcīque ventrem hinc atque illinc timidā manū secuit. 10 nec mora, ex plāgīs ponderis inclinātiōne crēscētibz thumātula cum botulīs effūsa sunt.

50 plausum post hoc automātum familia dēdit et “Gaiō fēliciter!” conclāmāvit. necnōn cocus pōtiōne honōrātus est, et argenteā corōnā pōculumque in lance accēpit Corinthiā. 2 quam cum Agamemnon propius cōsiderāret, ait Trimalchiō: “solus sum quī vēra Corinthea habeam.” 3 exspectābam ut prō reliquā insolentiā diceret sibi vāsa Corinthō afferri. 4 sed ille melius “et forsitan” inquit “quaeris quārē sōlus Corinthēā vēra possideam: quia scīlicet aerārius ā quō emō Corinthus vocātur. quid est autem Corinthēum, nisi quis Corinthum habeat? 5 et nē mē pūtētis nesapium esse, valdē bene sciō unde primum Corinthea nāta sint. cum Īlium captum est, Hannibal, homō vafer et magnus steliō, omnēs statuās aēneās et aureās et argenteās in ūnum rogiū congegessit et eas incendit; factae sunt in ūnum aēra miscellānea. 6 ita ex hāc massā fabri sustulērunt et fēcērunt catilla et paropsidēs et statuncula. sic Corinthea nāta sunt, ex omnibus in ūnum, nec hoc nec illud.

7 ignōscētis mihi quod dixerō: ego mālō mihi vitrea, certē nōn olunt. quod sī nōn frangerentur, māllem mihi quam aurum; nunc autem vilia sunt. 51 fuit tamen faber quī fēcīt phialam vitream, quae nōn frangēbātur. 2 admissus ergō Caesarem est cum suō mūnere \*\*\*

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

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

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

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

But not Trimalchio. His face relaxed into a smile.

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

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

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

‘I’m the only person in the world with genuine Corinthian.’

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

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

‘You mustn’t take me for a fool: I know very well where Corinthian metalwork first came from. When Troy was captured that crafty snake Hannibal piled all the bronze, silver and gold statues into one heap and set them on fire, and they were all melted to a bronze alloy. The metalworkers took this solid mass and made plates, dishes, and statuettes out of it. That is how Corinthian plate<sup>35</sup> was born, not really one thing or another, but everything in one. You won’t mind my saying so, but I prefer glass – that’s got no taste at all. If only it didn’t break, I’d prefer it to gold, but it’s cheap stuff the way it is.

51 ‘Mind you, there was a craftsman once who made a glass bowl that didn’t break. So he got an audience with the Emperor,<sup>36</sup> taking his present with him ...



deinde fēcit reporrigere Caesarem et illam in pavimentum prōiēcit. **3** Caesar nōn pote valdius quam expāvit. at ille sustulit phialam dē terrā; collisa erat tamquam vāsum aēneum. **4** deinde martiolum dē sinū prōtulit et phialam ōtiō bellē corrēxit. **5** hōc factō putābat sē solium Iovis tenēre, utique postquam ille dīxit: ‘numquid alius scit hanc conditūram vitreōrum?’ — vidē modo: **6** postquam negāvit, iussit illum Caesar dēcollārī: quia enim, sī scītum esset, aurum prō lutō habērēmus.

**52** in argentō plānē studiōsus sum. habeō scyphōs urnālēs plūs minus \*\*\* quemadmodum Cassandra occīdit filiōs suōs, et puerī mortuī iacent sīc ut vīvere pūtēs. **2** habeō capidem quam reliquit patrōnō meō rēx Mīnos, ubi Daedalus Niobam in equum Troiānum inclūdīt. **3** nam Hermerōtis pugnās et Petraitis in pōculis habeō, omnia ponderōsa; meum enim intellegere nullā pecūniā vēndō.”

**4** haec dum refert, puer calicem prōiēcīt. ad quem respiciēns Trimalchiō “cito” inquit “tē ipsum caede, quia nūgāx es.” statim puer dēmissō labrō ōrāre. **5** at ille “quid mē” inquit “rogās? tamquam ego tibi molestus sim. suādeō, ā tē impetrēs, nē sis nūgāx.” **6** tandem ergō exōrātus ā nōbīs missiōnem dedit puerō. ille dīmissus circā mēnsam percucurrit. \*\*\* et “aquam forās, vīnum intrō” clāmāvit. **7** excipimus urbānitātem iocantis, et ante omnēs Agamemnōn, quī sciēbat quibus meritis revocārētur ad cēnam.

**8** cēterum laudātus Trimalchiō hilarius bibit et iam ēbriō proximus “nēmō” inquit “vestrum rogāt Fortūnātā meam ut saltet? crēdite mihi: cordācem nēmō melius dūcit.” **9** atque ipse ērēctīs suprà frontem manibus Syrum histriōnem exhibēbat concinente tōta familia “madēia perimadēia.” **10** et prōdīssēt in medium, nisi Fortūnāta ad aurem accessisset; crēdō, dīxerit nōn decēre gravitātem eius tam humilēs ineptiās. **11** nihil autem tam inaequāle erat; nam modo Fortūnātā verēbātur, modo ad nātūrā suā revertēbātur.

Then he made Caesar hand it back to him and dropped it on the floor. The Emperor couldn’t have been more shaken. The man picked the bowl off the ground – it had been dented like a bronze dish – took a hammer from his pocket and easily got the bowl as good as new. After this performance he thought he’d be in high heaven, especially when the Emperor said to him:

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

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

**52** ‘Now I’m very keen on silver. I have some three-gallon bumpers more or less ... how Cassandra killed her sons, and the boys are lying there dead – very lifelike. I have a bowl my patron left to me with Daedalus shutting Niobe in the Trojan Horse.<sup>37</sup> What’s more, I have the fights of Hermeros and Petraitis<sup>38</sup> on some cups – all good and heavy. No, I wouldn’t sell my know-how at any price.’

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

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

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

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

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

‘Doesn’t anyone want my dear Fortunata to dance?’ he said. ‘Honestly, no one dances the Cordax<sup>39</sup> better.’ Then he stuck his hands up over his forehead and gave us a personal imitation of the actor Syrus, while all the staff sang in chorus: ‘Madeia, Perimadeia.’<sup>40</sup> In fact, he would have taken the floor, if Fortunata had not whispered in his ear. She must have told him, I suppose, that such low fooling did not suit his dignity. But you never saw anyone so changeable – one minute he would be frightened of Fortunata and the next minute he would be back in character again.

53 et plānē interpellāvit saltātiōnis libīdinem āctuārius, quī tamquam urbis ācta recitāvit: 2 “VII kalendās Sextilēs: in praediō Cūmānō, quod est Trimalchiōnis, nātī sunt puerī XXX, puellae XL; sublāta in horreum ex āreā trītici milia modium quīngenta; bovēs domitī quīngentī. 3 eōdem diē: Mithridātēs servus in crucem āctus est, quia Gai nostrī geniō male dīxerat. 4 eōdem diē: in arcam relātum est, quod collocārī nōn potuit, sēstertium centiēs. 5 eōdem diē: incendium factum est in hortīs Pompeiānīs, ortum ex aedibus Nastae vilīci.” 6 “quid?” inquit Trimalchiō “quandō mihi Pompeiānī hortī ēmptī sunt?” 7 “annō priōre” inquit āctuārius “et ideō in ratiōnem nōndum vēnērunt.” 8 excanduit Trimalchiō et “quicumque” inquit “mihi fundī ēmptī fuerint, nisi intrā sextum mēsem scierō, in ratiōnēs meās inferrī vetuō.” 9 iam etiam ēdicta aedilium recitābantur et saltuāriōrum testāmenta, quibus Trimalchiō cum ēlogiō exhērēdābatur; 10 iam nōmina vilicōrum et repudiāta ā circītore liberta in balneātōris contuberniō dēprehēnsa, et ātriēnsis Baiās relēgātus; iam reus factus dispēnsātor et iūdicium inter cubiculārīōs āctum.

11 petauristārii autem tandem vēnērunt. bārō īnsulssimus cum scālīs cōstitit puerumque iussit per gradūs et in summā parte ōdaria saltāre, circulōs deinde ārdentēs trānsilīre et dentibus amphoram sustinēre. 12 mīrābātur haec sōlus Trimalchiō dīcēbatque ingrātum artificium esse: cēterum duo esse in rēbus hūmānīs, quae libentissimē spectāret, petauristāriōs et cornicinēs; reliqua animālia, acroāmata trīcās merās esse. 13 “nam et cōmoedōs” inquit “ēmeram, sed mālūi illōs Ātellāniam facere, et choraulēn meum iussī Latīnē cantāre.”

54 cum maximē haec dīcente eō puer \*\*\* Trimalchiōnis dēlāpsus est. conclāmāvit familia, nec minus convīvae, nōn propter hominem tam pūtīdum, cuius etiam cervicēs frāctās libenter vīdissent, sed propter malum exitum cēnae, nē necesse habērent aliēnum mortuum plōrāre. 2 ipse Trimalchiō cum graviter ingemisset superque

53 What really interrupted his coarse insistence on dancing was his accountant, who sounded as though he was reading out a copy of the Gazette:

‘26 July: Births on the estate at Cumae: male 30, female 40. Wheat threshed and stored: 500,000 pecks. Oxen broken in: 500. On the same date: the slave Mithridates crucified<sup>41</sup> for insulting the guardian spirit of our dear Gaius. On the same date: Deposits to the strong-room (no further investment possible): 10,000,000 sesterces. On the same date: a fire broke out on the estate at Pompeii beginning at the house of Nasta the bailiff.’

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

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

Trimalchio flared up:

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

The official edicts were read out and the wills of certain gamekeepers. In specific codicils they said they were leaving Trimalchio nothing. Then the names of some bailiffs; the divorce of a freedwoman, the wife of a watchman, on the grounds of adultery with a bath-attendant; the demotion of a hall-porter to a job at Baiae;<sup>42</sup> the prosecution of a steward; and the result of an action between some bedroom attendants.

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

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

‘As a matter of fact,’ he said, ‘once I even bought some comic-actors, but I preferred them putting on Atellan farces,<sup>43</sup> and I told my conductor to keep his songs Latin.’

54 Just as he was saying this, the boy tumbled down<sup>44</sup> on Trimalchio’s couch. Everyone screamed, the guests as well as the servants – not because they were worried over such an awful person (they would happily have watched his neck being broken) but because it would have been a poor ending to the party if they had to offer their condolences for a comparative stranger. Trimalchio himself groaned

bracchium tamquam laesum incubuisset, concurrere medicī, et inter primos Fortunata crinibus passis cum scypho, miseramque se atque infelicem proclamavit. <sup>3</sup> nam puer quidem qui ceciderat circumibat iam dudum pedes nostros et missionem rogabat. pessime mihi erat, ne his precibus per ridiculum aliquid catastropha quaeretur. nec enim adhuc exciderat cocus ille qui oblitus fuerat porcum exinterare.

<sup>4</sup> itaque totum circumspicere triclinium coepi, ne per parietem automatum aliquod exiret, utique postquam servus verberari coepit, qui bracchium domini contusum alba potius quam conchyliata involverat lana. <sup>5</sup> nec longe aberravit suspicio mea; in vicem enim poenae venit decretum Trimalchionis, quo puerum iussit liberum esse, ne quis posset dicere tantum virum esse a servo vulneratum.

<sup>55</sup> comprobamus nos factum et quam in praecipiti res humanae essent vario sermone garimus. <sup>2</sup> “ita” inquit Trimalchio “non oportet hunc casum sine inscriptione transire” statimque codicillos poposcit et non diu cogitatione distorta haec recitavit:

<sup>3</sup> *quod non expectes, ex transverso fit ubique,  
nostra et supra nos Fortuna negotia curat.  
quare da nobis vina Falerna, puer.*

<sup>4</sup> ab hoc epigrammate coepit poetarum esse mentio diuque summa carminis penes Mopsum Thracem memorata est, donec Trimalchio <sup>5</sup> “rogo” inquit “magister, quid putas inter Ciceronem et Publilium interesse? ego alterum puto disertiores fuisse, alterum honestiores. quid enim his melius dici potest?

<sup>6</sup> *luxuriae rictu Martis marcent moenia.  
tuus palatio clausus pavore pascitur  
plumato amictus aureo Babylonicus,  
gallina tibi Numidica, tibi gallus spadon.  
ciconia etiam, grata peregrina hospita  
pietaticultrix, gracilipes, crotalistris,  
avis exul hiemis, titulus tepidi temporis,*

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

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

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

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

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

This epigram brought the conversation round to poetry and for quite a time the first place among poets was given to Mopsus of Thrace<sup>45</sup> until Trimalchio said:

‘Tell me, professor, how would you compare Cicero and Publilius?’<sup>46</sup> I think Cicero was the better orator, but Publilius the better man. Now could there be anything finer than this:

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

*nēquitiae nīdum in caccabō fēcit tuae.  
quō margaritam cāram tibi, bācam Indicam?  
an ut mātṛōnā ōrnātā phalerīs pelagiīs  
tollat pedēs indomita in strātō extrāneō?  
smaragdum ad quam rem viridem, pretiōsum vitrum?  
quō Carchēdoniōs optās ignēs lapideōs?  
nisi ut scintillet probitās ē carbunculis?  
aequum est induere nūptam ventum textilem,  
palam prōstāre nūdā in nebulā lineā?*

**56** “quod autem” inquit “putāmus secundum litterās difficillimum esse artificium? **2** ego putō medicum et nummulārium: medicus, quī scit quid homunciōnēs intrā praecordia sua habeant et quandō febris veniat, **3** etiam sī illōs ōdī pessimē, quod mihi iubent saepe anatīnam parārī; nummulārius, quī per argentum aes videt. **4** nam mūtae bēstiae labōriōsissimae bovēs et ovēs: bovēs, quōrum beneficiō pānem mandūcāmus; ovēs, quod lāna illae nōs glōriōsōs faciunt. **5** et facinus indignum, aliquis ovillam est et tunicam habet. **6** apēs enim ego dīvinās bēstiās putō, quae mel vomunt, etiam sī dīcuntur illud ā Iove afferre. idēō autem pungunt, quia ubicumque dulce est, ibi et acidum inveniēs.”

**7** iam etiam philosophōs dē negōtiō deiciebat, cum pittacia in scyphō circumferri coepērunt, **8** puerque super hoc positus officium apophorēta recitāvit. “argentum scelerātum”: allāta est perna, suprā quam acētābula erant posita. “cervīcal”: offla collāris allāta est. “sērisapia et contumēlia”: xērophagiae ē sale datae sunt et contus cum mālō. **9** “porrī et persica”: flagellum et cultrum accēpit. “passerēs et muscārium”: ūvam passam et mel Atticum. “cēnātōria et forēnsia”: offlam et tabulās accēpit. “canāle et pedāle”: lepus et solea est allāta. “mūraena et littera”: mūrem cum rānā alligāta fascemque bētae accēpit. **10** diū rīsimus. sexcenta huiusmodi fuērunt, quae iam excidērunt memoriae meae.

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

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

He was still putting the philosophers out of work when tickets were brought round in a cup and the boy whose job it was read out the presents.<sup>47</sup> ‘Rich man's prison<sup>48</sup> – a silver jug. Pillow<sup>49</sup> – a piece of neck came up. Old man's wit and a sour stick<sup>50</sup> – dry salt biscuits came up and an apple on a stick. Lick and spit<sup>51</sup> got a whip and a knife. Flies and a fly-trap<sup>52</sup> was raisins and Attic honey. Dinner-clothes and city-suit<sup>53</sup> got a slice of meat and a notebook. Head and foot<sup>54</sup> produced a hare and a slipper. Lights and letters<sup>55</sup> got a lamprey and some peas.’ We laughed for ages. There were hundreds of things like this but they've slipped my mind now.

57 cēterum Ascyrtos, intemperantis licentiae, cum omnia sublātis manibus ēlūderet et usque ad lacrimās rīdēret, ūnus ex conlibertīs Trimalchiōnis excanduit — is ipse quī suprā mē discumbēbat — et 2 “quid rīdēs” inquit “vervex? an tibi nōn placent lautitiae domini mei? tū enim beātor es et convīvare melius solēs. ita tūtēlam huius loci habeam propitiam, ut ego sī secundum illum discumberem, iam illi bālātum clūssem. 3 bellum pōmum, quī rīdeātur aliōs; larifuga nescioquis, nocturnus, quī nōn valet lōtium suum. ad summam, sī circummīnxerō illum, nesciet quā fugiat. nōn meherculēs soleō citō fervere, sed in molle carne vermēs nāscuntur. rīdet. 4 quid habet quod rīdeat? numquid pater fētum emit lamnā? eques Rōmānus es? et ego rēgis filiū. quārē ergō servīvisti? quia ipse mē dedī in servitūtem et mālū cīvis Rōmānus esse quam tribūtārius. et nunc spērō mē sic vīvere ut nēminī iocus sim. 5 homō inter hominēs sum, capite apertō ambulō; assem aerārium nēminī dēbeō; cōstitutum habuī numquam; nēmō mihi in forō dixit ‘redde quod dēbēs.’ 6 glēbulās ēmī, lāmellulās parāvī; vīginti ventrēs pāscō et canem; contubernālem meam redēmī, nē quī in capillis illius manus tergeret; mille dēnāriōs prō capite solvī; sēvir grātis factus sum; spērō, sic moriar ut mortuus nōn ērubescam. 7 tū autem tam labōriōsus es ut post tē nōn respiciās? in aliō peduclum vidēs, in tē ricinum nōn vidēs. tibi sōlī ridiclī vidēmur; 8 ecce magister tuus, homō maior nātus: placēmus illi. tū lacticulōsus, nec mu nec ma argūtās, vasus fictilis, immō lōrus in aquā: lentior, nōn melior. 9 tū beātor es: bis prandē, bis cēnā. ego fidem meam mālō quam thēsaurōs. ad summam, quisquam mē bis poposcit? annis quadrāgintā servīvī; nēmō tamen scit utrum servus essem an liber. et puer capillātus in hanc colōniam vēnī; adhūc basilica nōn erat facta. 10 dedī tamen operam ut dominō satis facerem, hominī maiestō et dignitōsō, cuius plūris erat unguis quam tū tōtus es. et habēbam in domō quī mihi pedem oppōnerent hāc illāc; tamen — geniō illius grātiās — enatāvī. 11 haec sunt vēra āthla; nam ingenuum nāscī tam

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

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

‘By god, it takes a lot to make me boil, but if you’re too soft, worms like this only come to the top. Look at him laughing! What’s he got to laugh at? Did his father pay cash for him? You’re a Roman knight, are you? Well, my father was a king.

‘“Why are you only a freedman?” did you say? Because I put myself into slavery. I wanted to be a Roman citizen, not a subject with taxes to pay.<sup>56</sup> And today, I hope no one can laugh at the way I live. I’m a man among men, and I walk with my head up. I don’t owe anybody a penny – there’s never been a court-order out for me. No one’s said “Pay up” to me in the street.’

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

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



facile est quam ‘accēde istōc.’ quid nunc stupēs tamquam hircus in erviliā?”

**58** post hoc dictum Gītōn, quī ad pedēs stābat, rīsum iam diū compressum etiam indecenter effūdīt. quod cum animadvertisset adversārius Ascyltī, flexit convīcium in puerum et **2** “tū autem” inquit “etiam tū rīdēs, cēpa cirrāta? iō Sātūrnālīa, rogō, mēnsis December est? quāndō vīcēsīmā numerāstī? \*\*\* quid faciat, crucis offla, corvōrum cibāria. cūrābō iam tibi Iovis īrātus sit, et istī quī tibi nōn imperat. **3** ita satur pāne fīam ut ego istud conlībērtō meō dōnō, aliōquīn iam tibi dēpraesentiārum reddidissem. bene nōs habēmus, at istī nūgae. plānē quālis dominus, tālis et servus. **4** vix mē teneō, nec sum nātūrā caldicerebrius, sed cum coepī, mātrem meam dupundī nōn faciō. rēctē, vidēbō tē in pūblicum, mūs, immō terrae tūber: **5** nec sūrsum nec deorsum nōn crēscō, nisi dominum tuum in rūtae folium nōn conīcī, nec tibi parserō, licet meherculēs Iovem Olympium clāmēs. cūrābō longē tibi sit comula ista besālis et dominus dupunduārius. **6** rēctē, veniēs sub dentem: aut ego nōn mē nōvī, aut nōn dērīdēbis, licet barbam auream habeās. **7** Athāna tibi īrāta sit cūrābō, et eī quī tē prīmus deurode fēcīt. nōn didicī geōmetriās, critica et alogās meniās, sed lapidāriās litterās sciō, partēs centum dīcō ad aes, ad pondus, ad nummum. **8** ad summam, sī quid vīs, ego et tū spōnsiunculam: exī, dēferō lamnam. iam sciēs patrem tuum mercēdēs perdidisse, quamvīs et rhētoricam scīs. ecce: ‘quī dē nōbīs longē veniō, lātē veniō: solve mē.’ **9** dīcam tibi, quī dē nōbīs currit et dē locō nōn movētur; quī dē nōbīs crēscit et minor fit. curris, stupēs, satagis, tamquam mūs in matellā. **10** ergō aut tacē aut meliōrem nōlī molestāre, quī tē nātum nōn putat, nisi sī mē iūdicās ānulōs buxeōs cūrāre, quōs amīcae tuae involāstī. **11** Occupōnem propitium! eāmus in forum et pecūniās mūtūemur: iam sciēs hoc ferrum fidem habēre. **12** vah, bella rēs est volpis ūda! ita lucrum faciam et ita bene moriar ut populus per exitum meum iūret, nisi tē ubīque togā perversā fuerō persecūtus.

prizes in life: being born free is as easy as all get-out. Now what are you gawping at, like a goat in a vetch-field?”

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

‘So!’ he said. ‘You’re amused too, are you, you curly-headed onion? A merry Saturnalia<sup>57</sup> to you! Is it December, I’d like to know? When did you pay your liberation tax?<sup>58</sup> ... Look, he doesn’t know what to do, the gallows’ bird, the crow’s meat.

‘God’s curse on you, and your master too, for not keeping you under control! As sure as I get my bellyful, it’s only because of Trimalchio that I don’t take it out of you here and now. He’s a freedman like myself. We’re doing all right, but those good-for-nothings, well – . It’s easy to see, like master, like man. I can hardly hold myself back, and I’m not naturally hot-headed – but once I start, I don’t give a penny for my own mother.

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

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

‘Try this: Something we all have. Long I come, broad I come. What am I? I’ll give you it: something we all have that runs and doesn’t move from its place: something we all have that grows and gets smaller.<sup>59</sup> ‘You’re running round in circles, you’ve had enough, like the mouse in the pisspot. So either keep quiet or keep out of the way of your betters – they don’t even know you’re alive – unless you think I care about your box-wood rings that you swiped from your girl-friend! Lord make me lucky! Let’s go into town and borrow some money. You’ll soon see they trust this iron one. Pah! a drowned fox makes a nice sight, I must say. As I hope to make my

13 bella rēs et iste quī tē haec docet: mufrius, nōn magister. nōn aliter didicimus. dicēbat enim magister: ‘sunt vestra salva? rēcta domum. cave circumspiciās, cave maiōrem maledicās.’ 14 at nunc mera mapālia: nēmō dupondii ēvādīt. ego, quod mē sīc vidēs, propter artificium meum diīs grātiās agō.” 59 coeperat Ascyrtos respondēre convīciō, sed Trimalchiō dēlectātus collibertī ēloquentiā “agite” inquit “scordaliās dē mediō. suāviter sit potius, et tū, Hermeros, parce adulēscentulō.

2 sanguen illi fervet, tū melior estō. semper in hāc rē quī vincitur vincit. et tū cum essēs cāpō, cocococo, aequē cor nōn habēbās. sīmus ergō, quod melius est, ā prīmītiīs hilarēs et Homēristās spectēmus.”

3 intrāvit factiō statim hastisque scūta concrepuit. ipse Trimalchiō in pulvīnō cōnsēdit, et cum Homēristae Graecīs versibus colloquerentur, ut insolenter solent, ille canōrā vōce Latīnē legēbat librum. mox silentiō factō “scītis” inquit “quam fābulam agant?”

4 Diomēdēs et Ganymēdēs duo frātrēs fuērunt. hōrum soror erat Helena. Agamemnōn illam rapuit et Diānae cervam subiēcīt. ita nunc Homēros dicit quemadmodum inter sē pugnent Trōiānī et Tarentīnī.

5 vicit scīlicet et Īphigeniām, filiām suam, Achillī dedit uxōrem. ob eam rem Aiāx īnsānit, et statim argūmentum explicābit.” 6 haec ut dīxit Trimalchiō, clāmōrem Homēristae sustulērunt, interque familiam discurrentem vitulus in lance ducēnāriā ēlixus allātus est, et quidem galeātus. 7 secūtus est Aiāx strictōque gladiō, tamquam īnsānīret vitulum, concīdit, ac modo versa modo supīnā gesticulātus, mucrōne frustra collēgit mīrantibusque partītus est.

60 nec diū mīrārī licuit tam ēlegantēs strophās; nam repente lacūnāria sonāre coepērunt tōtumque trīclīnium intremuit.

2 cōsternātus ego exsurrēxī, et timuī nē per tēctum petauristārius aliquis dēscenderet. nec minus reliquī convīvae mīrantēs ērēxēre vultūs, expectantēs quid novī dē caelō nūntiārētur. 3 ecce autem dīductīs lacunāribus subitō circulus ingēns, dē cūpā videlicet grandī excussus, dēmīttitur, cuius per tōtum orbem corōnae aureae cum

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

59 Ascyrtus began to answer this abuse, but Trimalchio, highly amused by his friend’s fluency, said: ‘No slanging matches! Let’s all have a nice time. And you, Hermeros, leave the young fellow alone. His blood’s a bit hot – you should know better. In things like this, the one who gives in always comes off best. Besides, when you were just a chicken, it was cock-a-doodle too, and you had no more brains yourself. So let’s start enjoying ourselves again, that’ll be better, and let’s watch the recitations from Homer.’ In came the troupe immediately and banged their shields with their spears. Trimalchio sat up on his cushion and while the reciters spouted their Greek lines at one another in their usual impudent way, he read aloud in Latin in a sing-song voice. After a while, he got silence and asked: ‘Do you know which scene they were acting? Diomede and Ganymede were the two brothers. Their sister was Helen. Agamemnon carried her off and offered a hind to Diana in her place. So now Homer is describing how the Trojans and Tarentines fought each other. Agamemnon, of course, won and married off his daughter Iphigenia to Achilles.60 This drove Ajax insane, and in a moment or two he’ll explain how it ended.’

As Trimalchio said this, the reciters gave a loud shout, the servants made a lane, and a calf was brought in on a two-hundred pound plate: it was boiled whole and wearing a helmet. Following it came Ajax, slashing at the calf61 with a drawn sword like a madman. After rhythmically cutting and slicing, he collected the pieces on the point and shared them among the surprised guests.

60 But we were not given long to admire these elegant turns, for all of a sudden, the coffered ceiling began rumbling62 and the whole dining-room shook. I leapt to my feet in panic, as I was afraid some acrobat was coming down through the roof. The other guests also looked up to see what strange visitation this announced. Would you believe it – the panels opened and suddenly an enormous hoop was let down, with gold crowns and alabaster jars of toilet cream hanging from it.

alabastrīs unguentī pendēbant. **4** dum haec apophorēta iubēmur sūmere, respiciēns ad mēnsam \*\*\* iam illic repositōrium cum placentīs aliquot erat positum, quod medium Priāpus ā pistōre factus tenēbat, gremiōque satis amplō omnis generis pōma et ūvās sustinēbat mōre vulgātō. **5** avidius ad pompam manūs porrēximus, et repente nova lūdōrum commissiō hilaritātem refēcit. **6** omnēs enim placentae omniaque pōma etiam minimā vexātiōne contācta coepērunt effundere crocum, et usque ad ōs molestus ūmor accēdere. **7** ratī ergō sacrum esse ferculum tam religiōsō apparātū perfūsum, cōsurrēximus altius et “Augustō, patrī patriae, fēliciter” dīximus. quibusdam tamen etiam post hanc venerātiōnem pōma rapientibus, et ipsī mappās implēvimus, ego praecipuē, quī nullō satis amplō mūnere putābam mē onerāre Gītōnis sinum.

**8** inter haec trēs puerī candidās succinctī tunicās intrāvērunt, quōrum duo Larēs bullātōs super mēnsam posuērunt, ūnus pateram vīnī circumferēns “dīi propitiī” clāmābat. \*\*\* aiēbat autem ūnum Cerdōnem, alterum Fēliciōnem, tertium Lucrōnem vocārī. **9** nōs etiam vēram imāginem ipsius Trimalchiōnis, cum iam omnēs bāsiārent, ērubuimus praeterīre.

**61** postquam ergō omnēs bonam mentem bonamque valitūdinem sibi optārunt, Trimalchiō ad Nīcerōtem respexit et, **2** “solēbās,” inquit, “suāvius esse in convictū; nescioquid nunc tacēs nec muttīs. ōrō tē, sīc fēlicem mē videās, nārrā illud quod tibi ūsū vēnit.” **3** Nīcerōs dēlectātus affābilitāte amīcī, “omne mē,” inquit, “lucrum trānseat, nisi iam dūdum gaudimōniō dissiliō, quod tē tālem videō. **4** itaque hilaria mera sint, etsī timeō istōs scholasticōs, nē mē rīdeant. viderint: nārrābō tamen, quid enim mihi aufert quī rīdet? satius est rīdērī quam dēridērī.”

**5** haec ubi dicta dedit, tālem fābulam exōrsus est: **6** “cum adhūc servīrem, habitābāmus in vīcō angustō; nunc Gāvillae domus est. ibi, quōmodo dīi volunt, amāre coepī uxōrem Terentīi cōpōnīs: nōverātis

While we were being told to accept these as presents, I looked at the table ... Already there was a tray of cakes in position, the centre of which was occupied by a Priapus made of pastry, holding the usual things in his very adequate lap – all kinds of apples and grapes.

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

Naturally we thought the fish must have some religious significance to be smothered in such an odour of sanctity, so we raised ourselves to a sitting position and cried: ‘God save Augustus, the Father of his People!’

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

While all this was going on, three boys in brief white tunics came in. Two of them set down on the table the household deities,<sup>63</sup> which had amulets round their necks; the other, carrying round a bowl of wine, kept shouting: ‘God save all here!’

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

**61** After we had all wished each other health and happiness, Trimalchio looked at Niceros and said: ‘You used to be better company at a party. You’re keeping very quiet nowadays: you don’t say a word – I don’t know why. Do me a favour to please me. Tell us about that adventure you had.’

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

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

‘When thus he spake,’ he began this story: ‘When I was still a slave, we were living down a narrow street – Gavilla owns the house now – and there as heaven would have it, I fell in love with the wife of Terentius the innkeeper.

Melissam Tarentinam, pulcherrimum bacciballum. **7** sed ego nōn meherculēs corporāliter illam aut propter rēs veneriās cūrāvī, sed magis quod benemōria fuit. **8** sī quid ab illā petī, numquam mihi negātum; fēcīt assem, sēmisse habuī; in illiūs sinum dēmandāvī, nec umquam fefellitū sum. **9** huius contubernālis ad villam suprēmum diem obiit. itaque per scūtum per ocream ēgī agīnāvī, quemadmodum ad illam pervenīrem: scītis autem, in angustiīs amicī appārent.

**62** forte dominus Capuae exierat ad scrūta scīta expedienda. **2** nactus ego occāsiōnem persuādeō hospitem nostrum ut mēcūm ad quīntum mīliārium veniat. erat autem mīles, fortis tamquam Orcus.

**3** apocūlāmus nōs circā gallicinia; lūna lūcēbat tamquam merīdiē.

**4** vēnimus inter monimenta: homō meus coepit ad stēlās facere; sedeō ego cantābundus et stēlās numerō. **5** deinde ut respexī ad comitem, ille exuit sē et omnia vestīmenta secundum viam posuit. mihi anima in nāsō esse; stābam tamquam mortuus. **6** at ille circummīnxit vestīmenta sua, et subitō lupus factus est. nōlite mē iocārī putāre; ut mentiar, nūllius patrimonium tantī faciō. **7** sed, quod coeperam dīcere, postquam lupus factus est, ululāre coepit et in silvās fugit. **8** ego prīmitus nesciēbam ubi essem; deinde accessī, ut vestīmenta eius tollerem: illa autem lapidea facta sunt. **9** quī morī timōre nisi ego? gladium tamen strīnxī et mātūtīnās umbrās cecidī dōnec ad villam amīcae meae pervenīrem. **10** in lārvam intrāvī, paene animam ēbullīvī, sūdor mihi per bifurcum volābat, oculī mortuī; vix umquam refectus sum. **11** Melissa mea mīrārī coepit quod tam sērō ambulārem et, ‘sī ante,’ inquit, ‘vēnissēs, saltem nōbīs adiūtāssēs; lupus enim villam intrāvit et omnia pecora tamquam lanius sanguinem illīs mīsīt. nec tamen dērīsīt, etiāmsī fūgit; servus enim noster lanceā collum eius trāiēcīt.’ **12** haec ut audīvī, operīre oculōs amplius nōn potuī, sed lūce clārā nostrī domum fūgī tamquam copō compīlātus; et postquam vēnī in illum locum in quō lapidea vestīmenta erant facta, nihil invēnī nisi sanguinem. **13** ut vērō domum vēnī, iacēbat mīles meus in lectō

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

‘One day her husband died out at the villa. So I did my best by hook or by crook to get to her. After all, you know, a friend in need is a friend indeed.

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

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

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

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

‘I couldn’t close my eyes again after I heard this. But when it was broad daylight I rushed off home like the innkeeper after the robbery. And when I came to the spot where his clothes had turned to stone, I found nothing but bloodstains. However, when I got home, my soldier friend was lying in bed like a great ox with the doctor

tamquam bovis, et collum illius medicus cūrabat. intellēxī illum versipellem esse, nec posteā cum illō pānem gustāre potuī, nōn sī mē occidissēs. 14 viderint quid dē hōc aliī exopinissent; ego sī mentior, geniōs vestrōs irātōs habeam.”

63 attonitīs admīratiōne ūniversīs, “salvō,” inquit, “tuō sermōne,” Trimalchiō, “sī qua fidēs est, ut mihi pilī inhorruērunt, quia sciō Nicerōnem nihil nūgārum nārrāre: immō certus est et minimē linguōsus. 2 nam et ipse vōbīs rem horribilem nārrābō: asinus in tēgulīs. 3 cum adhūc capillātus essem, nam ā puerō vītā Chīam gessi, ipsimī nostrī dēlicātus dēcessit, meherculēs margaritum, catamītus, omnium numerum. 4 cum ergō illum māter misella plangeret et nostrum plūrēs in trīstimōniō essēmus, subitō strīgae coepērunt; putārēs canem lepōrem persequī. 5 habēbāmus tunc hominem Cappadocem, longum, valdē audāculum et quī valēbat: poterat bovem irātum tollere. 6 hic audācter strictō gladiō extrā ōstium prōcucurrit, involūtā sinistrā manū cūrīōsē, et mulierem tamquam hōc locō — salvum sit quod tangō — mediam trāiēcit. audīmus gemitum et — plānē nōn mentiar — ipsās nōn vīdimus. 7 bārō autem noster intrōversus sē prōiēcit in lectum, et corpus tōtum lividum habēbat quasi flagellis caesus, quia scilicet illum tetigerat mala manus. 8 nōs clūsō ōstiō redīmus iterum ad officium, sed dum māter amplexāret corpus filiī suī, tangit et videt manuciolum dē strāmentīs factum. nōn cor habēbat, nōn intestīna, nōn quicquam: scilicet iam puerum strīgae involāverant et supposuerant strāmentīcium vavatōnem. 9 rogō vōs, oportet crēdātis, sunt mulierēs plūssciae, sunt Nocturnae, et quod sūrsum est, deorsum faciunt. 10 cēterum bārō ille longus post hoc factum numquam colōris suī fuit, immō post paucōs diēs phrenēticus periit.” 64 mīrāmur nōs et pariter crēdimus, ōsculātīque mēnsam rogāmus Nocturnās ut suīs sē teneant dum redīmus ā cēnā.

seeing to his neck. I realized he was a werewolf and afterwards I couldn’t have taken a bite of bread in his company, not if you killed me for it. If some people think differently about this, that’s up to them. But me – if I’m telling a lie may all your guardian spirits damn me!”

63 Everyone was struck with amazement.

‘I wouldn’t disbelieve a word,’ said Trimalchio. ‘Honestly, the way my hair stood on end – because I know Niceros doesn’t go in for jokes. He’s really reliable and never exaggerates. Now I’ll tell you a horrible story myself. A real donkey on the roof! When I was still in long hair (you see, I led a very soft life from my boyhood) the master’s pet slave died. He was a pearl, honest to god, a beautiful boy, and one of the best. Well, his poor mother was crying over him and the rest of us were deep in depression, when the witches suddenly started howling – you’d think it was a dog after a hare. At that time we had a Cappadocian chap, tall and a very brave old thing, quite the strong man – he could lift an angry ox. This fellow rushed outside with a drawn sword, first wrapping his left hand up very carefully, and he stabbed one of the women right through the middle, just about here – may no harm come to where I’m touching! We heard a groan but – naturally I’m not lying – we didn’t see the things themselves. Our big fellow, however, once he was back inside, threw himself on his bed. His whole body was black and blue, as though he’d been whipped. The evil hand, you see, had been put on him.

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

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

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



2 et sãnē iam lucernae mihi plūrēs vidēbantur ārdēre tōtumque trīclīnium esse mūtātum, cum Trimalchiō “tibi dīcō” inquit “Plocame, nihil nārās? nihil nōs dēlectāris? et solēbās suāvius esse, canturīre bellē deverbia, adicere mēlicam. heu, heu, abistis dulcēs cārīcae.”

3 “iam” inquit ille “quadrīgae meae dēcucurrērunt, ex quō podagricus factus sum. aliōquīn cum essem adulēscentulus, cantandō paene tisticus factus sum. 4 quid saltāre? quid deverbia? quid tōnstrīnum? quandō parem habuī nisi ūnum Apellētem?” 5 oppositāque ad os manū, nescioquid taetrum exsībilāvit quod postea Graecum esse affirmābat.

necnōn Trimalchiō ipse cum tubicinēs esset imitātus, ad dēliciās suās respexit, quem Croesum appellābat. 6 puer autem lippus, sordidissimīs dentibus, catellam nigram atque indecenter pinguem prasinā involvēbat fasciā, pānemque sēmēsem pōnēbat suprà torum, ac nauseā recūsantem sagīnābat. 7 quō admonitus officiō Trimalchiō Scylacem iussit addūcī “praesidium domūs familiaeque.” nec mora, ingentis fōrmæ adductus est canis catēnā vīnctus, admonitusque ōstiārīi calce ut cubāret, ante mēnsam sē posuit. 8 tum Trimalchiō iactāns candidum pānem “nēmō” inquit “in domō meā mē plūs amat.” 9 indignātus puer, quod Scylacem tam effūsē laudāret, catellam in terram dēposuit hortātusque est ut ad rixam properāret. Scylax, canīnō scīlicet ūsus ingeniō, taeterrimō lātrātū trīclīnium implēvit Margarītamque Croesī paene lacerāvit. 10 nec intrā rixam tumultus cōstitit, sed candēlābrum etiam suprà mēnsam ēversum et vāsa omnia crystallina comminuit et oleō ferventī aliquot convīvās respersit. 11 Trimalchiō, nē vidērētur iactūrā mōtus, bāsiāvit puerum ac iussit suprà dorsum ascendere suum. 12 nōn mōrātus ille ūsus est equō, manūque plānā scapulās eius subinde verberāvit, interque rīsū prōclāmāvit: “bucca, bucca, quot sunt hīc?” 13 repressus ergō aliquamdiū Trimalchiō camellam grandem iussit miscērī et pōtiōnēs dīvidī omnibus servīs, quī ad pedēs sedēbant, adiectā exceptiōne: “sī

By this time, to tell the truth, there seemed to be more lights burning and the whole dining-room seemed different, when Trimalchio said: ‘What about you, Plocamus, haven’t you a story to entertain us with. You used to have a fine voice for giving recitations with a nice swing and putting songs over – ah me, the good old days are gone.’

‘Well,’ said Plocamus, ‘my galloping days finished after I got gout. Besides, when I was really young I nearly got consumption through singing. How about my dancing? How about my recitations? How about my barber’s shop act? When was there anybody so good apart from Apelles<sup>64</sup> himself?’ Putting his hand to his mouth he let out some sort of obscene whistle which he afterwards insisted was Greek.

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

A hound of enormous size was immediately led in on a chain. A kick from the hall-porter reminded him to lie down and he stretched himself out in front of the table. Trimalchio threw him a piece of white bread, remarking: ‘Nobody in the house is more devoted to me.’

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

Not wanting to seem disturbed by the damage, Trimalchio gave the boy a kiss and told him to climb on his back. The lad climbed on his mount without hesitation, and slapping his shoulder blades with the flat of his hand, shouted amid roars of laughter: ‘Big mouth, big mouth, how many fingers have I got up?’

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

quis” inquit “nōluerit accipere, caput illi perfunde. interdiū sevēra, nunc hilaria.”

**65** hanc hūmānitatem īnsecūtae sunt matteae, quārum etiam recordātiō mē, sī qua est dīcentī fidēs, offendit. **2** singulae enim gallinae altilēs prō turdis circumlātae sunt et ōva ānserīna pilleāta, quae ut comēssēmus, ambitiosissimē ā nōbīs Trimalchiō petiit dīcēns exossātās esse gallīnās. **3** inter haec trīclīniū valvās līctor percussit, amictusque veste albā cum ingentī frequentīā cōmissātor intrāvit. **4** ego maiestāte conterritus praetōrem putābam vēnisse. itaque temptāvī assurgere et nūdōs pedēs in terram dēferre. **5** rīsīt hanc trepidātiōnem Agamemnōn et “continē tē” inquit “homō stultissime. Habinnās sēvir est īdemque lapidārius, quī vidērētur monumenta optimē facere.”

**6** recreātus hōc sermōne reposuī cubitum, Habinnamque intranssem cum admīrātiōne ingentī spectābam. **7** ille autem iam ēbrius uxōris suae umerīs imposuerat manūs, onerātusque aliquot corōnis et unguentō per frontem in oculōs fluente, praetōriō locō sē posuit, continuōque vīnum et caldam poposcit. **8** dēlectātus hāc Trimalchiō hilaritāte et ipse capāciōrem poposcit scyphum, quaesivitque quōmodo acceptus esset. **9** “omnia” inquit “habuimus praeter tē; oculī enim meī hīc erant. et meherculēs bene fuit. **10** Scissa lautum novendiāle servō suō misellō faciēbat, quem mortuum manū mīserat. et, putō, cum vicensimāriīs magnam mantissam habet; quīnquāgintā enim millibus aestimant mortuum. **11** sed tamen suāviter fuit, etiam sī coactī sumus dīmidīās pōtiōnēs suprā ossucula eius effundere.”

**66** “tamen” inquit Trimalchiō “quid habuistis in cēnā?” “dicam” inquit “sī potuerō; nam tam bonae memoriae sum, ut frequenter nōmen meum oblivīscar. **2** habuimus tamen in prīmō porcum botulō corōnātum et circā sangunculum et gizeria optimē facta et certē bētam et pānem autopŷrum dē suō sibi, quem ego mālō quam candidum; et vīrēs facit, et cum meā rē causā faciō, nōn plōrō.

feet. He added the condition: ‘If anyone won’t take it, pour it over his head. Day’s the time for business, now’s the time for fun.’

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

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

Relieved by this information I resumed my position and watched Habinnas’ entry<sup>65</sup> with huge admiration. Being already drunk, he had his hands on his wife’s shoulders; loaded with several garlands, oil pouring down his forehead and into his eyes, he settled himself into the praetor’s place of honour<sup>66</sup> and immediately demanded some wine and hot water. Trimalchio, delighted by these high spirits, demanded a larger cup for himself and asked how he had enjoyed it all.

‘The only thing we missed,’ replied Habinnas, ‘was yourself – the apple of my eye was here. Still, it was damn good. Scissa was giving a ninth-day dinner<sup>67</sup> in honour of a poor slave of hers she’d freed on his death-bed. And I think she’ll have a pretty penny to pay with the five per cent liberation tax, because they reckon he was worth fifty thousand. Still, it was pleasant enough, even if we did have to pour half our drinks over his wretched bones.’

**66** ‘Well,’ said Trimalchio, ‘what did you have for dinner?’

‘I’ll tell you if I can – I’ve such a good memory that I often forget my own name. For the first course we had a pig crowned with sausages and served with blood-puddings and very nicely done giblets, and of course beetroot and pure wholemeal bread – which I prefer to white myself: it’s very strengthening and I don’t regret it when I do my business.

3 sequēns ferculum fuit scriblita frīgida et suprā mel caldum infūsum eccellente Hispānum. itaque dē scriblita quidem nōn minimum ēdī, dē melle mē usque tetigī. circā cicer et lupīnum, calvae arbitrātū et mala singula. 4 ego tamen duo sustulī et ecce in mappā alligātā habēō; nam sī aliquid mūneris meō vernulae nōn tulerō, habēbō convīcium. bene mē admonet domina mea. 5 in prōspectū habuimus ursīnae frustum, dē quō cum imprūdēns Scintilla gustāset, paene intestīna sua vomuit; 6 ego contrā plūs libram comēdī, nam ipsum aprum sapiēbat. et sī, inquam, ursus homunciōnem comēst, quantō magis homunciō dēbet ursum comēsse? 7 in summō habuimus cāseum mollem ex sapā et cocleās singulās et cordae frusta et hēpatia in catillīs et ōva pilleāta et rāpam et senape et catillum concacātum — pāx Palamēdēs! etiam in alveō circumlāta sunt oxycomina, unde quīdam etiam improbē ternōs pugnōs sustulērunt. nam pernae missiōnem dedimus.

67 sed nārrā mihi, Gaī, rogō, Fortūnāta quārē nōn recumbit?”  
2 “quōmodo nōstī” inquit “illam” Trimalchiō “nisi argentum composuerit, nisi reliquiās puerīs dīvīserit, aquam in os suum nōn coniciet.” 3 “atquī” respondit Habinnās “nisi illa discumbit, ego mē apocolō.” et coeperat surgere, nisi signō datō Fortūnāta quater amplius ā tōtā familiā esset vocāta. 4 venit ergō galbinō succincta cingillō, ita ut infā cerasina appārēret tunica et periscelidēs tortae phaecasiaeque inaurātae. 5 tunc sūdāriō manus tergēns, quod in collō habēbat, applicat sē illī torō, in quō Scintilla Habinnae discumbēbat uxor, ōsulātaque plaudentem “est tē” inquit “vidēre?” 6 eō deinde perventum est, ut Fortūnāta armillās suās crassissimīs dētraheret lacertīs Scintillaeque mīrantī ostenderet. ultimō etiam periscelidēs resolvit et rēticulum aureum, quem ex obrussā esse dīcēbat. 7 notāvit haec Trimalchiō iussitque afferrī omnia et “vidētis” inquit “mulieris compedēs: sīc nōs barcalae dēspoliāmur. sex pondō et sēlibram dēbet habēre. et ipse nihilō minus habēō decem pondō armillam ex

The next course was cold tart and a concoction of first-class Spanish wine poured over hot honey. I didn’t eat anything at all of the actual tart, but I got stuck into the honey. Scattered round were chickpeas, lupines, a choice of nuts and an apple apiece – though I took two. And look, I’ve got them tied up in a napkin, because if I don’t take something in the way of a present to my little slave, I’ll have a row on my hands.

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

‘To finish up with, we had some cheese basted with new wine, snails all round, chitterlings, plates of liver, eggs in pastry hoods, turnips, mustard, and then, wait a minute, little tunny fish! There were pickled cumin seeds too, passed round in a bowl, and some people were that bad-mannered they took three handfuls. You see, we sent the ham away.

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

‘You know her,’ replied Trimalchio, ‘unless she’s put the silver away and shared out the leftovers among the slaves, she won’t put a drop of water to her mouth.’

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

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

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

‘A woman’s chains, you see. This is the way us poor fools get robbed. She must have six and a half pounds on her. Still, I’ve got a bracelet myself, made up from one-tenth per cent to Mercury<sup>68</sup> – and it weighs not an ounce less than ten pounds.’

millēsīmīs Mercuriī factam.” 8 ultimō etiam, nē mentīrī vidērētur, statēram iussit afferrī et circulātum approbārī pondus. 9 nec melior Scintilla, quae dē cervīce suā capsellam detrāxit aureolam, quam Feliciōnem appellābat. inde duo crotalia prōtulit et Fortunātae invicem cōsideranda dēdit et “dominī” inquit “meī beneficiō nēmō habet meliōra.” 10 “quid?” inquit Habinnās “excatarissāstī mē, ut tibi emerem fabam vitream. plānē sī filiam habērem, auriculās illī praeciderem. mulierēs sī nōn essent, omnia prō lutō habērēmus; nunc hoc est caldum meiere et frīgidum pōtāre.”

11 interim mulierēs sauciae inter sē rīsērunt ēbriaque iūnxērunt ōscula, dum altera diligentiam mātris familiae iactat, altera dēliciās et indiligentiam virī. 12 dumque sīc coherens, Habinnās fūrtim cōnsurrēxit, pedēsque Fortunātae correptōs super lectum immisit. 13 “au! au!” illa prōclāmāvit aberrante tunicā super genua. composita ergō in gremiō Scintillae indecentissimam rubōre faciem sūdāriō abscondit.

68 interpositō deinde spatiō cum secundās mēnsās Trimalchiō iussisset afferrī, sustulērunt servī omnēs mēnsās et aliās attulērunt, scobemque crocō et miniō tīctam sparsērunt et, quod numquam ante videram, ex lapide specularī pulverem trītum. 2 statim Trimalchiō “poteram quidem” inquit “hōc ferculō esse contentus; secundās enim mēnsās habētis. sed sī quid bellī habēs, affer.”

3 interim puer Alexandrīnus, quī caldam ministrābat, lusciniās coepit imitārī clāmante Trimalchiōne subinde: “mūtā!” ecce alius lūdus. 4 servus quī ad pedēs Habinnae sedēbat, iussus, crēdō, ā dominō suō prōclāmāvit subitō canōrā vōce: *intereā medium Aenēās iam classe tenēbat*. 5 nūllus sonus umquam acidior percussit aurēs meās; nam praeter errantis barbariae aut adiectum aut dēminūtum clāmōrem, miscēbat Ātellānicōs versūs, ut tunc primum mē etiam Vergilius offenderit. 6 lassus tamen cum aliquandō dēsisset, adiēcit Habinnās et “numquam” inquit “didicit, sed ego ad circulātōrēs eum mittendō

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, the women giggled tipsily between themselves and kissed each other drunkenly, one crying up her merits as a housewife, the other crying about her husband’s demerits and boy-friends. While they had their heads together like this, Habinnas rose stealthily and taking Fortunata’s feet, flung them up over the couch.

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

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

‘I could make you just settle for this. There’s dessert for you! The first tables’ve deserted.69 However, if you people have anything nice, bring it on!’

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

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

‘Meantime Aeneas was in mid-ocean with his fleet.’70

No more cutting sound ever pierced my eardrums. Apart from his barbarous meandering up and down the scale, he mixed in Atellan verses, so that Virgil actually grated on me for the first time in my life. When he did finally stop through exhaustion, Habinnas said: ‘He’s never had any real training. I just had him taught by sending him along to peddlers

ērudībam. 7 itaque parem nōn habet, sive mūliōnēs volet sive circulātōrēs imitārī. dēspērātum valdē ingeniōsus est: īdem sūtor est, īdem cocus, īdem pistōr, omnis Mūsae mancipium. 8 duo tamen vitia habet, quae sī nōn habēret, esset omnium numerus: recutītus est et stertit. nam quod strabonus est, nōn cūrō; sicut Venus spectat. ideō nihil tacet, vix oculō mortuō umquam. illum ēmī trecentis dēnāriis.”

69 interpellāvit loquentem Scintilla et “plānē” inquit “nōn omnia artificia servī nēquam nārrās. agaga est; at cūrābō stigmam habeat.” 2 risit Trimalchiō et “ad cognōscō” inquit “Cappadocem: nihil sibi defraudat, et meherculēs laudō illum; hoc enim nēmō parentat. tū autem, Scintilla, nōlī zēlotypa esse. crēde mihi, et vōs nōvimus. 3 sic mē salvum habeātis, ut ego sic solēbam ipsumam meam debattuere, ut etiam dominus suspicārētur; et ideō mē in vilicātiōnem relēgāvit. sed tacē, lingua, dabō pānem.” 4 tamquam laudātus esset nēquissimus servus, lucernam dē sinū fictilem prōtulit et amplius sēmihōrā tubicinēs imitātus est succinente Habinnā et inferius lābrum manū dēprimente. 5 ultimō etiam in medium prōcessit et modo harundinibus quassīs choraulās imitātus est, modo lacernātus cum flagellō mūliōnum fāta ēgit, dōnec vocātum ad sē Habinnās bāsiāvit, pōtiōnemque illi porrēxit et “tantō melior” inquit “Massa, dōnō tibi calīgās.”

6 nec ūllus tot malōrum finis fuisset, nisi epidīpnis esset allāta, turdi silīgineī ūvīs passīs nucibusque farsī. 7 īsecūta sunt Cydōnia etiam mala spīnis cōnfixa, ut echīnōs efficerent. et haec quidem tolerābilia erant, sī nōn ferculum longē mōnstrōsius effēcisset ut vel famē perīre māllemus. 8 nam cum positus esset, ut nōs putābāmus, ānser altilis circāque piscēs et omnium genera avium: “amīcī” inquit Trimalchiō “quicquid vidētis hīc positum, dē ūnō corpore est factum.” 9 ego scīlicet homō prūdētissimus, statim intellēxī quid esset, et respiciēs Agamemnonem “mīrābor” inquam “nisi omnia ista dē cērā facta sunt aut certē dē lutō. vidī Rōmae Sātūrnālībus eiusmodī cēnārum

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

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

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

‘Now, Scintilla, don’t be jealous. Believe me, we know all about you women too. As sure as I stand here, I used to bang the mistress so much that even the old boy suspected; so he sent me off to look after his farms. But I’d better save my breath to cool my porridge.’

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

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

There would have been no end to all these trials if an extra course had not arrived – pastry thrushes stuffed with raisins and nuts. After them came quinces with thorns stuck in them to look like sea urchins. All this would have been all right, but there was a far more horrible dish that made us prefer even dying of hunger. When it was put on the table, looking to us like a fat goose surrounded by fish and all sorts of game, Trimalchio said: ‘Whatever you see here, friends, is made from one kind of stuff.’ I, of course, being very cautious by nature, spotted immediately what it was and glancing at Agamemnon, I said: ‘I’ll be surprised if it isn’t all made of wax, or any rate mud. I’ve seen that sort of imitation food produced at the Saturnalia in Rome.’



imāginem fieri.” 70 necdum finieram sermōnem, cum Trimalchiō ait: “ita crēscam patrimōniō, nōn corpore, ut ista cocus meus dē porcō fēcīt. 2 nōn potest esse pretiōsior homō. volueris, dē vulvā faciet piscem, dē lārdō palumbam, dē pernā turturem, dē colēpiō gallinam. et ideō ingeniō meō impositum est illī nōmen bellissimum; nam Daedalus vocātur. 3 et quia bonam mentem habet, attulī illī Rōmā mūnus cultrōs Nōricō ferrō.” quōs statim iussit afferri, īnspectōsque mīrātus est. etiam nōbīs potestātem fēcīt ut mucrōnem ad buccam probārēmus.

4 subitō intrāvērunt duo servī, tamquam quī rixam ad lacum fēcissent; certē in collō adhūc amphorās habēbant. 5 cum ergō Trimalchiō iūs inter litigantēs diceret, neuter sententiam tulit dēcernentis, sed alteriūs amphoram fuste percussit. 6 cōsternātī nōs īnsolentiā ēbriōrum intentāvimus oculōs in proeliantēs, notāvimusque ostrea pectinēsque ē gastrīs lābentia, quae collēcta puer lance circumtulit. 7 hās lautitiās aequāvit ingeniōsus cocus; in crāticulā enim argenteā cocleās attulit et tremulā taeterrimāque vōce cantāvit. 8 pudet referre quae secuntur: inauditō enim mōre puerī capillātī attulērunt unguentum in argenteā pēlve pedēsque recumbentium ūnxērunt, cum ante crūra tālōsque corōllīs vīxissent. 9 hinc ex eōdem unguentō in vīnārium atque lucernam aliquantum est īnfūsum.

10 iam coeperat Fortūnāta velle saltāre, iam Scintilla frequentius plaudēbat quam loquēbātur, cum Trimalchiō “permittō” inquit “Philargyre, etsī prasinianus es fāmōsus, dīc et Menophilae, contubernālī tuae, discumbat.” 11 quid multa? paene dē lectīs dēiectī sumus, adeō tōtū triclīnium familia occupāverat. 12 certē ego notāvi super mē positum cocom quī dē porcō ānserem fēcērat, muriā condimentisque fētentem. 13 nec contentus fuit recumbere, sed continuō Ephesum tragoedum coepit imitārī et subinde dominum suum spōnsiōne prōvocāre “sī prasinus proximīs circēnsibus prīmam palmam.”

70 I hadn’t quite finished what I was saying when Trimalchio said: ‘As sure as I hope to expand – my investments of course, not my waist-line – my chef made it all from pork. There couldn’t be a more valuable man to have. Say the word and he’ll produce a fish out of a sow’s belly, a pigeon out of the lard, a turtle dove out of the ham, and fowl out of the knuckle. So he’s been given a nice name I thought of myself – he’s called Daedalus.<sup>71</sup> And seeing he’s a clever lad, I brought him some carvers of Styrian steel as a present from Rome.’

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

All of a sudden in came two slaves, apparently having had a quarrel at the well; at any rate they still had water jugs on their shoulders. But while Trimalchio was giving his decision about their respective cases, neither of them paid any attention to his verdict: instead they broke each other’s jugs with their sticks. Staggered by their drunken insolence, we couldn’t take our eyes away from the fight till we noticed oysters and scallops sliding out of the jugs, which a boy collected and carried round on a dish. The ingenious chef was equal to these elegant refinements – he brought in snails on a silver gridiron, singing all the time in a high grating voice.

I blush to say what happened next. Boys with their hair down their backs came round with perfumed cream in a silver bowl and rubbed it on our feet<sup>72</sup> as we lay there, but first they wrapped our legs and ankles in wreaths of flowers. Some of the same stuff was dropped into the decanter and the lamp.

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

‘Philargyrus – even though you are such a terrible fan of the Greens<sup>73</sup> – you have my permission to join us. And tell your dear Menophila to sit down as well.’

Need I say more? We were almost thrown out of our places, so completely did the household fill the dining-room. I even noticed that the chef, the one who had produced the goose out of pork, was actually given a place above me, and he was reeking of pickles and sauce. And he wasn’t satisfied with just having a place, but he had to start straight off on an imitation of the tragedian Ephesus,<sup>74</sup> and then challenge his master to bet against the Greens winning at the next races.

71 diffusus hāc contentiōne Trimalchiō “amīcī,” inquit “et servī hominēs sunt et aequē ūnum lactem bibērunt, etiam sī illōs malus fātus oppresserit. tamen mē salvō citō aquam liberam gustābunt. ad summam, omnēs illōs in testāmentō meō manū mittō. 2 Philargyrō etiam fundum lēgō et contubernālem suam, Cariōnī quoque īnsulam et vīcēsīmam et lectum strātum. 3 nam Fortūnātam meam hērēdem faciō, et commendō illam omnibus amīcīs meīs. et haec ideō omnia publicō, ut familia mea iam nunc sīc mē amet tamquam mortuum.”

4 grātiās agere omnēs indulgentiae coeperant dominī, cum ille oblitus nūgārū exemplar testāmentī iussit afferri et tōtum ā primō ad ultimum ingemēscēte familiā recitāvit. 5 respiciēns deinde Habinnam “quid dīcis,” inquit “amīce cārissime? aedificās monumentum meum quemadmodum tē iussī? 6 valdē tē rogō ut secundum pedēs statuae meae catellam pingās et corōnās et unguenta et Petraitis omnēs pugnās, ut mihi contingat tuō beneficiō post mortem vīvere; praetereā ut sint in fronte pedēs centum, in agrum pedēs ducentī. 7 omne genus enim pōma volō sint circā cinerēs meōs, et vīneārū largiter. valdē enim falsum est vīvō quidem domōs cultās esse, nōn cūrārī eās, ubi diūtius nōbīs habitandum est. et ideō ante omnia adicī volō: HOC MONVMENTVM · HĒRĒDEM NŌN SEQVĀTVR. 8 cēterum erit mihi cūrae ut testāmentō caveam nē mortuus iniūriam accipiam. praepōnam enim ūnum ex libertīs sepulchrō meō cūstōdiae causā, nē in monumentum meum populus cacātum currat. 9 tē rogō ut nāvēs etiam faciās plēnīs vēlīs euntēs, et mē in tribūnālī sedentem praetextātum cum ānulīs aureīs quīnque et nummōs in publicō dē sacculō effundentem; scīs enim quod epulum dedi bīnōs dēnārīōs. faciantur, sī tibi vidētur, et triclinia. 10 faciās et tōtum populum sibi suāviter facientem. 11 ad dexteram meam pōnās statuam Fortūnātae meae columbam tenentem, et catellam cingulō alligātā dūcat, et cicarōnem meum, et amphorās cōpiōsē gypsātās nē effluent vīnum. et urnam licet frāctam sculpās, et super eam puerum plōrantem.

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

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

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

Then looking at Habinnas, he said: ‘What have you to say, my dear old friend? Are you building my monument the way I told you? I particularly want you to keep a place at the foot of my statue and put a picture of my pup there, as well as paintings of wreaths, scent-bottles, and all the contests of Petraitis, and thanks to you I’ll be able to live on after I’m dead. And another thing! See that it’s a hundred feet facing the road and two hundred back into the field. I want all the various sorts of fruit round my ashes and lots and lots of vines. After all, it’s a big mistake to have nice houses just for when you’re alive and not worry about the one we have to live in for much longer. And that’s why I want this written up before anything else:

THIS MONUMENT DOES NOT GO TO THE HEIR

‘But I’ll make sure in my will that I don’t get done down once I’m dead. I’ll put one of my freedmen in charge of my tomb to look after it and not let people run up and shit on my monument. I’d like you to put some ships there too, sailing under full canvas, and me sitting on a high platform in my robes of office, wearing five gold rings<sup>75</sup> and pouring out a bagful of money for the people. You know I gave them all a dinner and two denarii apiece. Let’s have in a banqueting hall as well, if you think it’s a good idea, and show the whole town having a good time. Put up a statue of Fortunata on my right, holding a dove, and have her leading her little dog tied to her belt – and my little lad as well, and big wine-jars tightly sealed up so the wine won’t spill. And perhaps you could carve me a broken one and a boy crying over it.

hōrologium in mediō, ut quisquis hōrās inspiciet, velīt nōlit, nōmen meum lēgat. **12** īnscriptiō quoque vidē diligenter sī haec satis idōnea tibi vidētur: GAIŌ POMPEIVS TRIMALCHIŌ MAECĒNĀTIĀNVS · HĪC REQVIĒSCIT · HVIC SĒVIRĀTVS ABSENTĪ DĒCRĒTVS EST · CVM POSSET IN OMNIBVS DECVRIIS RŌMAE ESSE · TAMEN NŌLVIT · PIVS FORTIS FIDĒLIS · EX PARVŌ CRĒVIT · SĒSTERTIVM RELĪQVIT TRECENTIĒS · NEC VMQVAM PHILOSOPHV AVDĪVIT · VALĒ · ET TV̄.

**72** haec ut dīxit, Trimalchiō flēre coepit ūbertim. flēbat et Fortūnāta, flēbat et Habinnās, tōta dēnique familia tamquam in fūnus rogāta lāmentātiōne trīclīnium implēvit. **2** immō iam coeperam etiam ego plōrāre, cum Trimalchiō “ergō” inquit “cum sciāmus nōs moritūrōs esse, quārē nōn vīvāmus? **3** sīc nōs fēlicēs videam, coniciāmus nōs in balneum, meō periculō, nōn paenitēbit. sīc calet tamquam furnus.” **4** “vērō, vērō” inquit Habinnās “dē ūnā diē duās facere, nihil mālō” nūdisque cōsurrēxit pedibus et Trimalchiōnem gaudentem subsequi coepit.

**5** ego respiciēs ad Ascylton “quid cōgitās?” inquam “ego enim sī viderō balneum, statim expīrābō.” **6** “assentēmur” ait ille “et dum illi balneum petunt, nōs in turbā exeāmus.” **7** cum haec placuissent, dūcente per porticum Gītōne ad iānuam vēnimus, ubi canis catēnārius tantō nōs tumultū excēpit ut Ascyltos etiam in piscinam ceciderit. necnōn ego quoque ēbrius, dum natantī opem ferō, in eundem gurgitem tractus sum. **8** servāvit nōs tamen ātriēnsis, quī interventū suō et canem plācāvit et nōs trementēs extrāxit in siccum. **9** et Gītōn quidem iamdūdum sē ratiōne acūtissimā redēmerat ā cane: quicquid enim ā nōbīs accēperat dē cēnā, lātrantī sparserat, at ille āvocātus cibō furōrem suppresserat. **10** cēterum cum algentēs ūdique petissēmus ab ātriēnse ut nōs extrā iānuam ēmitteret, “errās” inquit “sī putās tē exīre hāc posse quā vēnistī. nēmō umquam convīvārum per eandem iānuam ēmissus est: aliā intrant, aliā exeunt.”

A clock in the middle, so that anybody who looks at the time, like it or not, has got to read my name. As for the inscription now, take a good look and see if this seems suitable enough:

‘HERE SLEEPS GAIUS POMPEIUS TRIMALCHIO MAECENATIANUS  
ELECTED TO THE AUGUSTAN COLLEGE IN HIS ABSENCE  
HE COULD HAVE BEEN ON EVERY BOARD IN ROME  
BUT HE REFUSED GOD-FEARING BRAVE AND TRUE  
A SELF-MADE MAN HE LEFT AN ESTATE OF 30,000,000  
AND HE NEVER HEARD A PHILOSOPHER FAREWELL  
AND YOU FARE WELL, TRIMALCHIO’

**72** As he finished Trimalchio burst into tears. Fortunata was in tears, Habinnas was in tears, in the end the whole household filled the dining-room with their wailing, like people at a funeral. In fact, I’d even begun crying myself, when Trimalchio said: ‘Well, since we know we’ve got to die, why don’t we live a little. I want to see you enjoying yourselves. Let’s jump into a bath – you won’t be sorry, damn me! It’s as hot as a furnace.’ ‘Hear! Hear!’ said Habinnas. ‘Turning one day into two – nothing I like better.’ He got up in his bare feet and began to follow Trimalchio on his merry way.

I looked at Ascyltus. ‘What do you think?’ I said. ‘Now me, if I see a bath, I’ll die on the spot.’ ‘Let’s say yes,’ he suggested, ‘and while they’re going for their bath, we can slip out in the crowd.’ This seemed a good idea, so Giton led us through the portico till we reached the door, where the hound chained there greeted us with such a noise that Ascyltus actually fell into the fishpond. Not only that, as I was drunk too, when I tried to help the struggling Ascyltus I was dragged into the same watery trap. However, the hall-porter saved us and by his intervention pacified the dog and dragged us trembling to dry land. Giton had already bought off the beast in a most ingenious way. He had scattered whatever he had got from us at dinner in front of the barking hound, and distracted by the food, it had choked down its fury.

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

73 quid faciāmus hominēs miserrimī et novī generis labyrinthō inclūsī, quibus lavārī iam coeperat vōtum esse? 2 ultrō ergō rogāvimus ut nōs ad balneum dūceret, prōiectisque vestimentis, quae Gītōn in aditū siccare coepit, balneum intrāvimus, angustum scilicet et cisternae frigidariae simile, in quō Trimalchiō rēctus stābat. ac nē sic quidem pūtīdissimam eius iactātiōnem licuit effugere, nam nihil melius esse dicēbat quam sine turbā lavārī, et eō ipsō locō aliquandō pistrīnum fuisse. 3 deinde ut lassātus cōsēdit, invītātus balneī sonō dīdūxit usque ad cameram ōs ēbrium et coepit Menecratis cantica lacerāre, sicut illī dicēbant quī linguam eius intellegēbant. 4 cēterī convīvae circā lābrum manibus nexīs currēbant et gingiliphō ingentī clāmōre exsonābant. aliī autem restrictis manibus ānulōs dē pavīmentō cōnābantur tollere, aut positō genū cervicēs post terga flectere et pedum extrēmōs pollicēs tangere. 5 nōs, dum illī sibi lūdōs faciunt, in solium quod Trimalchiōnī parābātur dēscendimus. ergō ēbrietāte discussā in aliud trīclīnium dēductī sumus ubi Fortūnāta disposuerat lautitiās \*\*\* lucernās aēneolōsque piscātōrēs notāvimus et mēnsās tōtās argenteās calicēsque circā fictilēs inaurātōs et vīnum in cōspectū saccō dēfluēns. 6 tum Trimalchiō “amīcī” inquit “hodiē servus meus barbātōriam fēcīt, homō praefiscinī frūgī et mīcārius. itaque tangomenās faciāmus et usque in lūcem cēnēmus.”

74 haec dicente eō gallus gallināceus cantāvit. quā vōce cōnfūsus Trimalchiō vīnum sub mēnsā iussit effundī lucernamque etiam merō spargī. 2 immō ānulum trāiēcīt in dexteram manum et “nōn sine causā” inquit “hic būcinus signum dedit; nam aut incendium oportet fiat, aut aliquis in vīcīniā animam abiciet. longē ā nobīs! 3 itaque quisquis hunc indicem attulerit, corōllārium accipiet.” 4 dictō citius gallus allātus est, quem Trimalchiō iussit ut aēnō coctus fieret. 5 lacerātus igitur ab illō doctissimō cocō quī paulō ante dē porcō avēs piscēsque fēcerat in caccabum est coniectus. dumque Daedalus pōtiōnem ferventissimam haurit, Fortūnāta molā buxeā piper trīvit.

73 What could we do after this piece of bad luck, shut up in this modern labyrinth<sup>77</sup> and now beginning to regret that bath? We asked him to please show us the way to the bath-hall, and, throwing off our clothes, which Giton began drying at the door, we went in. There stood Trimalchio, and not even there could we get away from his filthy ostentation. He told us there was nothing better than a private bath, and that there had once been a bakery on that very spot. Then he sat down as though tired, and being tempted by the acoustics of the bath, with his drunken mouth gaping at the ceiling, he began murdering some songs by Menecrates<sup>78</sup> – or so we were told by those who understood his words.

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

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

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

74 Just as he was speaking, a cock crowed. Upset by this, Trimalchio ordered some wine to be poured out under the table and even had the lamps sprinkled with it undiluted. He actually changed his ring to his right hand.<sup>79</sup>

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

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

6 sūmptīs igitur matteīs, respiciēs ad familiam Trimalchiō “quid? vōs” inquit “adhūc nōn cēnāstis? ābīte, ut aliū veniant ad officiū.” 7 subiit igitur alia classis, et illī quidem exclāmāvēre “valē Gaī,” hī autem “avē Gaī.”

8 hinc primum hilaritās nostra turbāta est; nam cum puer nōn īnspeciōsus inter novōs intrāset ministrōs, invāsīt eum Trimalchiō et ōsculārī diūtius coepit. 9 itaque Fortunāta, ut ex aequō iūs firmum approbāret, male dīcere Trimalchiōnī coepit et pūrgāmentum dēdecusque praedicāre, quī nōn continēret libīdinem suam. ultimō etiam adiēcīt: “canis!” 10 Trimalchiō contrā offēnsus convīciō calicem in faciem Fortunātae immīsīt. 11 illa tamquam oculum perdidisset exclāmāvit manūsque trementēs ad faciem suam admōvit.

12 cōsternāta est etiam Scintilla trepidantemque sinū suō tēxit. immō puer quoque officiōsus urceolum frīgidum ad mālām eius admōvit, super quem incumbēns Fortunāta gemere ac flēre coepit. 13 contrā Trimalchiō “quid enim?” inquit “āmbūbaia nōn meminit? dē māchinā illam sustulī, hominem inter hominēs fēcī. at īnflat sē tamquam rāna, et in sinum suum cōspuit, cōdex, nōn mulier. 14 sed hic quī in pergulā nātus est aedēs nōn somniātur. ita genium meum propitium habeam, cūrābō dōmata sit Cassandra caligāria. 15 et ego, homō dipundiārius, sēstertium centiēs accipere potuī. scīs tū mē nōn mentīrī. Agathō unguentārius proximē sēdūxit mē et ‘suādeo’ inquit ‘nōn patiāris genus tuum interīre.’ 16 at ego dum bōnātus agō et nōlō vidērī levis, ipse mihi asciam in crūs impēgī. 17 rēctē, cūrābō mē unguibus quaerās. et, ut dēpraesentiārum intellegās quid tibi fēcērīs: Habinnā, nōlō statuam eius in monumentō meō pōnās, nē mortuus quidem lītēs habeam. immō, ut sciat mē posse malum dare, nōlō mē mortuum bāsiet.”

75 post hoc fulmen Habinnās rogāre coepit ut iam dēsineret īrāscī et “nēmō” inquit “nostrum nōn peccat. hominēs sumus, nōn deī.”

2 idem et Scintilla flēns dīxit, ac per genium eius Gaium appellandō

After this dish Trimalchio looked at the servants and said: ‘Why haven’t you had dinner yet? Off you go and let some others come on duty.’ Up came another squad and as the first set called out: ‘Good night, Gaius!’ the new arrivals shouted: ‘Good evening, Gaius!’

This led to the first incident that damped the general high spirits. Not a bad-looking boy entered with the newcomers and Trimalchio jumped at him and began kissing him at some length. Fortunata, asserting her just and legal rights, began hurling insults at Trimalchio, calling him a low scum and a disgrace, who couldn’t control his beastly desires. ‘You dirty dog!’ she finally added. Trimalchio took offence at this abuse and flung his glass into Fortunata’s face. She screamed as though she’d lost an eye and put her trembling hands across her face. Scintilla was terrified too and hugged the quaking woman to her breast. An obliging slave pressed a little jug of cold water to her cheek, while Fortunata rested her head on it and began weeping. Trimalchio on the other hand said: ‘Well, well, forgotten her flute-girl days, has she? She doesn’t remember, but she was bought and sold, and I took her away from it all and made her as good as the next. Yet she puffs herself up like a frog and doesn’t even spit for luck. Like wood, not woman. But those as are born over a shop don’t dream of a house. May I never have a day’s good luck again, if I don’t teach that Cassandra<sup>80</sup> in clogs some manners! ‘There was I, not worth twopence, and I could have had ten million. And you know I’m not lying about it. Agatho, who runs the perfume shop, he took me on one side just recently and said: “You don’t want to let your family die out, you know!” But me, trying to do the right thing and not wanting to look changeable, I cut my own throat.

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

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



rogāre coepit ut sē frangeret. 3 nōn tenuit ultrā lacrimās Trimalchiō et “rogō” inquit “Habinnā, sīc pecūlium tuum frūniscāris: sī quid perperam fēcī, in faciem meam īnsue. 4 puerum bāsiāvī frūgālissimum, nōn propter fōrmam, sed quia frūgī est: decem partēs dīcit, librum ab oculō legit, thraecium sibi dē diāriīs fēcit, arcisellium dē suō parāvit et duās trullās. 5 nōn est dignus quem in oculis feram? sed Fortūnāta vetat. 6 ita tibi vidētur, fulcīpedia? suādēo bonum tuum concoquās, mīlva, et mē nōn faciās ringentem, amāsiuncula: aliōquīn experiēris cerebrum meum. 7 nōstī mē: quod semel dēstināvi, clāvō trabālī fixum est. sed vīvōrum meminerīmus. 8 vōs rogō, amīcī, ut vōbīs suāviter sit. nam ego quoque tam fuī quam vōs estis, sed virtūte meā ad hoc pervēnī. corcillum est quod hominēs facit, cētera quisquilia omnia. 9 bene emō, bene vēndō; alius alia vōbīs dīcet. fēlicitāte dissiliō. tū autem, sterteia, etiamnum plōrās? 10 iam cūrābō fātum tuum plōrēs.

sed ut coeperam dīcere, ad hanc mē fortūnam frūgālītās mea perdūxit. tam magnus ex Asiā vēnī quam hic candēlābrus est. ad summam, quōtidiē mē solēbam ad illum mētīrī, et ut celerius rōstrum barbātum habērem, labra dē lucernā ungēbam. 11 tamen ad dēliciās ipsimī annōs quattuordecim fuī. nec turpe est quod dominus iubet. ego tamen et ipsimae satis faciēbam. scītis quid dīcam: taceō, quia nōn sum dē glōriōsīs. 76 cēterum, quemadmodum dī volunt, dominus in domō factus sum, et ecce cēpī ipsimī cerebellum. 2 quid multa? cohērēdem mē Caesarī fēcit, et accēpī patrimōnium lātīclāvium. 3 nēmīnī tamen nihil satis est. concupīvī negōtiārī. nē multīs vōs mōrer, quīnque nāvēs aedificāvī, onerāvī vīnum — et tunc erat contrā aurum — mīsī Rōmam. 4 putārēs mē hoc iussisse: omnēs nāvēs naufragārunt. factum, nōn fābula. ūnō diē Neptūnus trecentiēs sēstertium dēvorāvit. 5 putātis mē dēfēcisse? nōn meherculēs mī haec iactūra gustī fuit, tamquam nihil factī. alterās fēcī maiōrēs et meliōrēs et fēliciōrēs, ut nēmō nōn mē virum fortem dīceret. 6 scītis, magna

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

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

‘But to come back to earth – I want you to enjoy yourselves, my dear people. After all, I was once like you are, but being the right sort I got where I am. It’s the old headpiece that makes a man, the rest is all rubbish. “But right – sell right!” – that’s me! Different people will give you a different line. I’m just on top of the world, I’m that lucky.

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

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

76 ‘Well, as heaven will have it, I became boss in the house, and the old boy, look, was mine, heart and soul. That’s about it – he made me co-heir with the Emperor<sup>81</sup> and I got a senator’s fortune.<sup>82</sup> But nobody gets enough, never. I wanted to go into business. Not to make a long story of it, I built five ships, I loaded them with wine – it was absolute gold at the time – and I sent them to Rome. You’d have thought I ordered it – every single ship was wrecked. That’s fact, not fable! In one single day Neptune swallowed up thirty million. Do you think I gave up? This loss, I swear, just whetted my appetite – it was as if nothing had happened. I built more boats, bigger and better and luckier, so nobody could say I wasn’t a man of courage.

nāvis magnam fortitudinem habet. onerāvi rūsus vīnum, lārdum, fabam, sēplasiū, mancipia. **7** hōc locō Fortūnāta rem piā fecit: omne enim aurum suum, omnia vestīmenta vēdidit et mī centum aureōs in manū posuit. hoc fuit pecūliū meī fermentum. **8** citō fit quod dī volunt. ūnō cursū centiēs sēstertium corrotundāvi. statim redēmī fundōs omnēs quī patrōnī meī fuerant. aedificō domum, comparō vēnālicia, coemō iūmenta; quicquid tangēbam crēscēbat tamquam favus. **9** postquam coepī plūs habēre quam tōta patria mea habet, manum dē tabulā: sustulī mē dē negōtiātiōne et coepī per libertōs faenerāre. **10** et sānē nōlentem mē negōtium meum agere exhortāvit mathēmaticus quī vēnerat forte in colōniam nostram, Graeculiō, Serāpa nōmine, cōsiliātor deōrum. **11** hic mihi dixit etiam ea quae oblītus eram; ab aciā et acū mī omnia exposuit; intestinās meās nōverat; tantum quod mihi nōn dīxerat quid prīdiē cēnāveram. putāssēs illum semper mēcum habitāsse.

**77** rogō, Habinnā — putō, interfuisti: ‘tū dominam tuam dē rēbus illīs fecisti. tū parum fēlix in amīcōs es. nēmō umquam tibi parem grātiā refert. tū lātifundia possidēs. tū vīperam sub ālā nūtrīcās.’ **2** et, quod vōbīs nōn dīxerim, etiam nunc mī restāre vītae annōs trīgintā et mēnsēs quattuor et diēs duōs. praetereā citō accipiam hērēditātem. hoc mihi dīcit fātus meus. **3** quod sī contigerit fundōs Āpūliae iungere, satis vīvus pervēnerō. **4** interim dum Mercurius vigilat, aedificāvi hanc domum. ut scītis, casa adhūc erat; nunc templum est. habet quattuor cēnātiōnēs, cubicula vīgintī, porticūs marmorātōs duōs, sūsum cellātiōnem, cubiculum in quō ipse dormiō, vīperae huius sessōrium, ōstiārī cellam perbonam; hospitium hospitēs centum capit. **5** ad summam, Scaurus cum hūc venit, nusquam māvoluit hospitārī, et habet ad mare paternum hospitium. et multa alia sunt, quae statim vōbīs ostendam. **6** crēdite mihi: assem habeās, assem valeās; habēs, habēberis. sic amīcus vester, quī fuit rāna, nunc est rēx.

You know, the greater the ship, the greater the confidence. I loaded them again – with wine, bacon, beans, perfumes and slaves. At this point Fortunata did the decent thing, because she sold off all her gold trinkets, all her clothes, and put ten thousand in gold pieces in my hand. This was the yeast my fortune needed to rise. What heaven wants soon happens. In one voyage I carved out a round ten million. I immediately bought back all my old master’s estates. I build a house, I invest in slaves and haulage. Whatever I touched grew like a honeycomb. Once I had more than the whole country, then down tools! I retired from business and began advancing loans to freedmen.

‘Actually I was tired of trading on my own account, but it was an astrologer who convinced me. He happened to come to our colony, a sort of Greek, Serapa by name, and he could have told heaven itself what to do. He even told me things I’d forgotten. He went through everything for me from A to Z. He knew me inside out – the only thing he didn’t tell me was what I ate for dinner the day before. You’d have thought he’d never left my side.

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

‘And he said – though I shouldn’t tell you – I have thirty years, four months, and two days to live. What’s more, I shall soon receive a legacy. My horoscope tells me this. If I’m allowed to join my estates to Apulia,<sup>83</sup> I’ll have lived enough.

‘Meantime, under the protection of Mercury, I built this house. As you know, it was still a shack, now it’s a shrine. It has four dining-rooms, twenty bedrooms, two marble colonnades, a row of box-rooms up above, a bedroom where I sleep myself, a nest for this viper, and a really good lodge for the porter. In fact, when Scaurus<sup>84</sup> came here, he didn’t want to stay anywhere else, even though he’s got his father’s guest house down by the sea. And there are a lot of other things I’ll show you in a second.

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

7 interim, Stiche, profer vitālia, in quibus volō mē efferrī. profer et unguentum et ex illā amphorā gustum, ex quā iubeō lavārī ossa mea.” 78 nōn est mōrātus Stichus, sed et strāgulam albam et praetextam in trīclīnium attulit. \*\*\* iussitque nōs temptāre an bonīs lānīs essent cōnfecta. 2 tum subrīdēs “vidē tū” inquit “Stiche, nē ista mūrēs tangant aut tineae; aliōquīn tē vīvum comburam. ego glōriōsus volō efferrī, ut tōtus mihi populus bene imprecētur.” 3 statim ampullam nardī aperuit omnēsque nōs ūnxit et “spērō” inquit “futūrum ut aequē mē mortuum iuвет tamquam vīvum.” 4 nam vīnum quidem in vīnārium iussit infundī et “putāte vōs” ait “ad parentālia mea invītātōs esse.”

5 ibat rēs ad summam nauseam, cum Trimalchiō ēbrietāte turpissimā gravis novum acroāma, cornicinēs, in trīclīnium iussit addūcī, fultusque cervicālibus multīs extendit sē suprā torum extrēmum et “fingite mē” inquit “mortuum esse. dīcite aliquid bellī.” 6 cōsonuēre cornicinēs fūnebrī strepitū. ūnus praecipuē servus libitīnāriū illius, quī inter hōs honestissimus erat, tam valdē intonuit ut tōtam concitāret vicīniam. 7 itaque vigilēs, quī cūstōdiēbant vicīnam regiōnem, ratī ārdere Trimalchiōnis domum, effrēgērunt iānuam subitō et cum aquā secūribusque tumultuārī suō iūre coepērunt. 8 nōs occāsionem opportunissimam nactī Agamemnonī verba dedimus, raptimque tam plānē quam ex incendiō fūgimus.

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

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

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

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

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

‘I want you to think you’ve been invited to my wake.’

The thing was becoming absolutely sickening, when Trimalchio, showing the effects of his disgusting drunkenness, had a fresh entertainment brought into the dining-room, some cornet players. Propped up on a lot of cushions, he stretched out along the edge of the couch and said: ‘Pretend I’m dead and say something nice.’85

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

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