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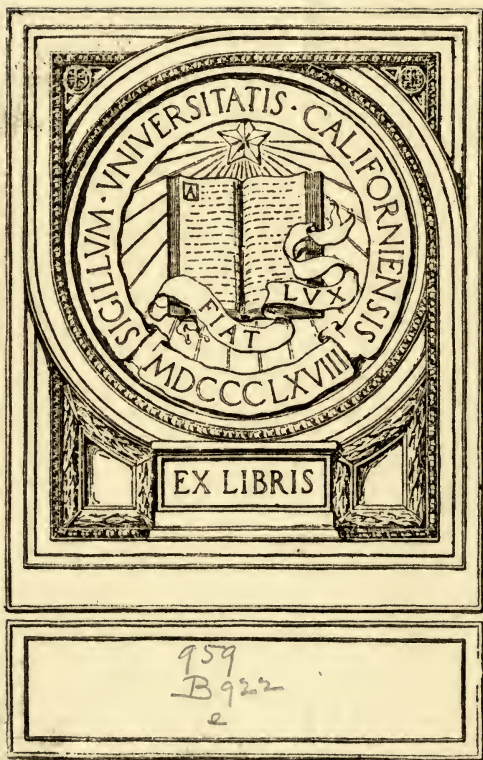
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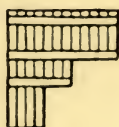
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# EPHEMERA

GREEK PROSE POEMS

By  
MITCHELL S. BUGK



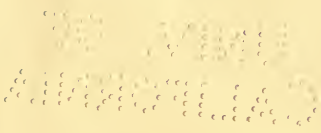
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NICHOLAS L. BROWN

# EPHÉMERA

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Printed May, 1916

EPHEMERA

GREEK PROSE POEMS

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MITCHELL S. BUCK

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## INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five of these pastels, under the title of "Syrinx," were published in the spring of 1914. The others, which make up the present volume, have never before appeared in print.

In contrast to the simpler forms and vistas of *Syrinx*, a new series has been drawn from the more complex, more voluptuous, life of *Æolia* and the Archipelago.

On the isles beyond the shores of Hellas, many races lived and mingled, rising and falling, migrating, building and destroying. Perhaps the one direct ideal shining through this exotic kaleidoscope was the reflection of that idealism of Beauty which transfigured all lands and peoples where the influence of the Hellenes was felt.

Decadent and distorted though this may, at times, have been, in its true form the influence was not without admirable results—an outflow of literature and art which is handed down to the modern world as a precious heritage—flowers of that clean sensual delight which has been, in all ages, the companion of Genius and the liberator of the Soul.



SYRINX



One drowsy day of summer, Syrinx wandered in the cool depths of the forest. And there Pan found her, singing and garlanded with flowers.

— Brown-limbed and supple nymph, all the pine-crowned satyrs and the dryads babble thy name. Now even Pan himself desires— thou art very fair . . . I love thee.

But pale Syrinx only smiled in disdain for words too often heard.

The god's quick eyes darkened. He smiled. His ready hand leapt out . . . The frail virgin darted away like a shadow among the trees and over the fields. . . .

Her soft lips open to her striving breath, her eyes appealing, the nymph slips over the flowered bank of a clear stream . . . The waters ripple about her thighs.

— O naiads, help me quickly!

Pan reaches out . . . His arms enfold a thicket of sighing reeds.

Later, he culls the swaying reeds to cut them in uneven lengths and bind them side by side. Then, placing them to his lips, he sighs . . .

The clear notes glide out across the fields. Sometimes they are very sad and men who

hear them weep; sometimes they are loud and clear and men who hear them laugh and sing; sometimes they shrill and men draw their cloaks about them, dreaming of singular things.



## THE SHEPHERD

When it is night, before the moon has risen and the skies are spattered thick with stars; when, in the distance, all things blend into one and the sleeping earth touches the archèd sky, I stand before my tiny hut and pray.

Below me on the hillside, their coats glowing softly in the starlight, lie my sheep. And from the trees, the brooks, the grasses, the incessant chorus of midsummer nights trills through the air.

Yet I know not to what or to whom I pray. Not to the sun or moon for they are nowhere to be seen; not to the gods for there is no temple nor even a statue here; not to the stars for there are too many and some, neglected, would be jealous.

Perhaps it is to the sighing wind I pray; perhaps to the shadows and the rolling hills; perhaps to the night itself which seems so peaceful, all embracing, mysteriously divine.

## IN THE FOREST

Down the shadowed forest glade, the nymph flashes like a silver arrow from a bow. Her golden hair streams out like a flying veil; her eyes are bright with terror; her crimson, sobbing lips are salt with tears.

Behind her, a dark shadow darting nimbly over the silent earth, a satyr speeds, his cheeks all flushed with red, his clutching hands stretched out.

— Ho, ho, ho! chuckles an old man, leaning upon a staff. Ho, ho, ho! Why dost thou run? Thou wilt be caught! Thou wilt be caught!

High overhead in the sunlight, a bird sings gloriously to the open sky. On the forest path, a squirrel rushes madly over the grass and scampers up a mossy trunk.

A gasp—quick steps upon the earth—a cry.

— Ho, ho, ho! chuckles an old man, leaning upon a staff. Ho, ho, ho! Why didst thou run? Why didst thou run!

## VIRGIN LOVE

I sit before my window drawing the gleaming threads from the distaff—and I wait. Yet even when I see him I am silent, clasping my longing hands over my knees to still their trembling.

Tossing the boyish curls away from his brow, bright-eyed and lovely, how can I hope that he should think of me? How dare I hope that he, so beautiful, should stoop to love?

His voice thrills in my heart; his accidental touch flashes like fire through my veins. And then my veiling lashes droop, I bite my lips and lay sweet, cooling flowers against my cheeks.

When he looks at me and smiles, I fear him. Yet some day, perhaps, he will hold me in his arms and then—then I will only love him and be very happy.

## DELPHI

On the wide green slopes of Parnassus there is a marble temple, a very holy temple in the eyes of men, where a god speaks in a mysterious way.

Purified by the ritual ablutions, clad in spotless white and crowned with laurel, a young priestess, very pale and very beautiful, approaches the dread chasm which opens upon the underworld.

Her flesh quivers at the approaching ecstasy, her breast rises and falls in the divine afflation, her eyes darken with prophecy. How frail she is to be the mouthpiece of a god! . . . But at length her limbs relax, her head falls forward and, very slowly, she begins to speak.

But I—I love the simple gods of the woods and fields; they are nearer, they speak more gently, and their voice is the song of birds and the murmurings of the night.

## THE FRIEND

Surely I dream. It is not possible thou hast really gone. It is not possible that I have lost thee.

From the shadows, I saw thee in his arms above the flower-strewn threshold. And all that night I stood alone under the stars, my hand still clasping the charred fragments of the torch burned for thy good fortune.

The distant rumor of the sea murmurs thy name; the silence of the forests is perfumed with thy memory. Each well-remembered gesture, each fair word, each glance of eyes which understood so well . . .

Thou hast but gone on a long journey, hast thou not? And life ebbs quickly, hand in hand with death . . . But thou wilt return. Before I know the dream is true, surely thou wilt return . . .

## LESBOS

Upon the bosom of this sun-kissed sea, beneath fair skies, caressed by gentle southern winds perfumed like enamored sighings, lies the Isle of Dreams.

Its marble cliffs, bright with anemone, fragrant with myrtle, rest like glorious temples on the blue waters. On the flowered grass among the olive groves or shadowed by the pines where lapping waves caress the sandy shore, virgins and youths, inspired with beauty, walk singing, hand in hand.

In the bright cities, laughter fills the air, mingling with pulsing music and fresh voices. From the altars of the sanctuaries, thin filaments of incense waver out, diffusing through the sunlight.

There Sappho lives to sing of love. There young Larichus, white-limbed and beautiful, pours from the glittering wine cups crimson libations to the gods. And over all, the breath of desire floats like a perfumed cloud.

## THE RAGGED CLOAK

—Release my arm, O insolent, and give me back that rose thou hast dared to steal!

—I love thee.

—Thou lovest?—beggar! Then look not at me whose love is worth a mina at the least. Away, tattered chlamys, seek thy kind!

—I love thee.

—Ho, friends! Who wants a beggar for a lover? Here is one ready—almost anxious. Look at his faded cloak! Behold this rent through which I thrust my hand! . . . Ah! . . . Ah! . . . Off with thy rags, deceiver! How wicked of thee to cheat me so! What! What sayest thou?

—I scorn thee.

## TO THE APHRODITE

Thou art the source of all the loves; truly thou art very fair. Yet who could say I am not fairer still?

Thy rounded limbs are cold like snow while mine are yielding and warm, glowing with quivering life at a lover's touch. Thy lips which seem so beautiful are white and hard, while mine are like red poppies, tremulous and sweet. No perfumed breath exhales from thee, nor canst thou gasp thine ecstasy into a silenced ear.

Yet I adore thee, for thou art immortal and divine. In the twilight of the sanctuary, thy pure and flawless limbs will glow through the eddying incense after my own, so beautiful now, have crumbled into dust. Men will look up to thee long after remembrance of me has passed away, and still thou wilt inflame their quickening desire when my frail shade is lost among the dead.



## ASHES OF DESIRE

How soft this couch of thine! Beneath my tingling nudity, its glowing silken covers scarcely seem to bear me up . . . Let me lie so awhile, laved in the utter silence of the flesh.

Spread out my hair like waves about my head . . . A moistened tendril clings to my weary lips. Draw it away for me, so that I need not stir even a finger to complete my peace.

How fair these moments—and how dearly bought! . . . Alas! . . . Yet be not hurt because I call them dearly bought. Thou art a man—thou couldst not understand. Nor couldst thou know I love thee more for them than for all other things . . .

## PHAON

Must I woo thee, flower of Lesbian youth,  
fair-skinned and supple, insensible to love,  
disdainful as a god? Must Sappho sing to  
thee and play the man, bringing her sweetest  
lyrics to thy scornful loveliness?

Among these perfumed gardens where the  
glowing rose and hyacinth breathe out their  
fragrant souls, among the tinkling fountains  
and the olive groves, canst thou not find,  
within thine heart, one spark of love which  
I can sigh into a flame?

Alas! Thy brow is icy cold, thine hand  
all unresponsive to my touch. Thine eyes  
look far away, in pure content of Aphrodite's  
gift.

Why wilt thou have it so? Perhaps, in  
days to come, when Sappho's cithern sleeps  
and Sappho wanders in the twilight land,  
men will look back to thee and curse thy  
beauty that it stilled her song . . . Ah!  
Phaon!

## FALSE DAWN

O friend, I am not She thou seekest. My hair is warm and golden, mine eyes are blue; like hers, my lips are sweet—thou knowest.

But in thine ears my voice echoes like a voice heard long ago which calls thee still across the vast solitudes. The touch of my hand is but the shadow of some past 'caress which distant memory recalls to thee.

Because I too have loved, I know. And I have seen her image weaving like a phantom through the desire of thine eyes.

Because I too have loved, O friend, search on: I am not She thou seekest.

## THE ISLE

How the sea glitters in the sunlight! Far out over the flashing waters, seest thou the white sail of that speeding boat which almost seems to fly above the ripples?

Here on this pebbled beach, caressed by the clear blue waters, where spreading reaches from the lapping waves glide up like the pleading hands of nereids, the gods are very near.

They say, to this lovely island, mighty Zeus, concealed by the semblance of a white bull, bore on his back Europa, the peerless virgin, the source of his desire.

It may be at this very spot they came up from the waters. Perhaps among the grassy dells through which we lately wandered, they also loved. Perhaps in this grotto by the shore they slept, wearied with love, the virgin murmuring through some happy dream, her fair head pillowed on a god-like breast.

## THE VOTARESS

For the beauty thou has given me, O goddess, I thank thee . . .

I stand in my marbled bath and see, reflected in the green water, the clear glory of my body, smooth and glowing beneath the caress of my hands. On the streets, I appear in my fairest vestments and costliest jewels. When the passing men turn to look at me, I part my sanguined lips in a warm smile; and each month, at the full moon, O goddess, I lay at thy feet a mina earned in thy name.

Yet neither thy love nor the white poppies of Persephone bring the forgetfulness I crave. Through the long days when I am alone, I dream of sunlit meadows and crystal streams and, above the noises of the city, the call of shepherds' pipes whispers in my ears . . .

Then I close my door and, weeping, clothe myself in a simple linen tunic which my lovers never see and which is marked with green and red.

## AT THE GAMES

Well run, Lysippos! Well run, O gleaming arrow! Artemis herself is not one half so fleet!

(By Zeus! nor half so marvelously agile—that I swear! See how the gliding muscles of his thighs ripple beneath the skin. Behold the slender waist, the broad, smooth bosom stirred by the breath of conflict.)

Ah! The laurel! The laurel to the guide of winds! . . . Ho, Nisos, why limpest thou? Ho, ho! Thou wert outrun a thousand times, thou feigner of accidents!

(No wonder that, when he shows himself on the Agora, even the cheeks of the old men grow pale; no wonder the philosophers cease their windy nothings and gaze abashed—But they are all fools! . . . Listen, I will tell thee a great secret . . . It is I he loves! It is I he loves! . . . Ah! . . . By Zeus! he is coming this way!)

## THE EPICURE

Go, thou of the golden hair, and bathe thyself in perfumed waters; rub thy body with wine and fragrant oils so thy suppled skin may glow and glide, softer than silk beneath my touch.

Loose thou thine hair above the smoking incense that, being pregnant with the divine fragrance, it may delight me as it falls about my face, over my lips.

Then lay upon thy slender nudity this tunic, these silken scarves and, over all, this purple vestment broidered with fine gold.

When thou hast done these things—return. If thou art smiling, warm with desire: if I find thee fair: perhaps thou wilt be loved.

## THE ORGY

— Plunge thy wreath . . . into the wine, as I do. Now drink from the blossoms. It is delicious. . . . Ho, there! My friend is thirsty. I am sure he is thirsty. Give him the Cretan wine; he likes it because it is red . . .

— O lassitude! . . . Thy lips are like a flower at my throat . . .

— This roasted fowl, I swear, is daintier than a beautiful woman. Now I maintain that pleasures such as this . . .

— Let her alone, thou ape; she is a Lesbian . . . What is it to thee? . . . Who threw that cup? O shame! It was a rare Etruscan glaze! How strangely the fragments gleam . . .

— O lovely, glowing limbs! O skin like petals of the rose! More maddening than all wines the fair breath sobbing past thy crimsoned lips . . .

— Gods! Gods! I weep. See, my sleeve is all wet with tears! I can drink . . . no more . . . I can drink . . .

— O Dionysos, strike the profaner dead!



## NOCTURNE

Far away, on an island of the sea, lives a woman in a palace of gold. Chains of gold are about her waist, and upon her arms rings of gold and rubies and stones of beryl. All alone she lives, resting by night upon a couch of purple and by day upon a throne of ivory.

They say no one has ever known the warm desire of her lips nor, with a trembling hand, caressed the pliant splendor of her limbs. Strange tales are whispered—she is very fair . . . But once each month when the world is hushed and the round moon gleams high in the heavens, she stands on the terrace of her dwelling. Alone in the moonlight, like a silvery image, she slips from her veils and loosening her hair from its glittering mesh, lets it float like a deep shadow into the night . . . The warm wind of the south caresses it with a thousand furtive hands and, stealing between the wavering strands, sweeps on, laden with a singular perfume.

Then love starts from its troubled slumber and in the dim temples of Astarté the flowers upon the altars bloom afresh.

## THE SEEKER

They asked: —What seekest thou?

And the old man answered: —I seek for Truth.

—I seek for Truth — all other desires are long since dead. For many years, in far lands, before strange gods, my fruitless quest has drawn me on. But in the sanctuaries all is vanity, all is lust for temporal power, all is profaned by the impious hand of man.

—Many have asked: What seekest thou? And at my answer some have laughed while others have eagerly revealed strange phantoms which they worshiped—satisfied. But in the sanctuaries all is vanity, all is lust for temporal power, all is profaned by the impious hand of man.

Those gathered around him as he spoke, laughed also. But one, standing alone, said gently:

—O friend who seekest vainly, not in shadowy temples but among the fields, beneath outspreading trees, upon the bosom of the waters, lies the occult heart of thy desire. For Truth, alone, does not exist. Seek Beauty if thou desirest peace.

## ON THE AGORA

— Seest thou that young man in the white linen tunic with a yellow sash? Look at him well.

— I see him. Who is he?

— He is a poet. His verses are very strange. In them one can hear the sighing of the wind, the murmur of waters, the whisperings of the trees . . . They are very strange . . . But that is not all. Some which I have heard are stranger still . . . They say he has seen the nymphs. They say he has slept in the forests among the satyrs; that Pan himself once listened from a leafy bower while he sang . . . And when he plays the syrinx, no one can resist him.

— He is looking this way. How strangely piercing his eyes! . . . He is very beautiful. Let us go speak with him . . .

— I dare not. I dare not.

## SHADOW GOLD

High on the terrace, the hot night close about me, the starry sky pressing down over mine eyes, I lie stretched out upon a couch awaiting forgetfulness which never comes. Crouched on the floor at my feet, a slave girl dreams gently, one slender arm thrown out across the draperies, a cheek pillowed on a hollowed shoulder.

Instead of the sleep for which I long in vain, innumerable visions flit across my memory—gleaming visions of beauty with eyes that gaze at me and hands that beckon . . . I curse them, shadows of joys which never were and, one by one, they fade away.

One vision only never fades as I toss sleepless upon my couch—one vision with golden hair where once my hands strayed undenied . . . alas! . . . With soft, warm lips where once I drank of immortality—one vision with averted head and white limbs fragrant with another love than mine . . .

I stir uneasily and groan. The slave girl awakes with a whimpering sigh and, raising her head, looks at me with drowsy, questioning eyes.

P A N

These are the forests of Arcadia . . .  
Knowest thou why they are so fair, why the  
wind sighs so gently among the trees, why the  
leaves are so green, the earth so warm and  
soft, why the fields are bright with flowers  
and why, from the reeds beside the brooks,  
strange whispers come?

Knowest thou, too, why the sun shines down  
so bright by day and why, at night, the moon-  
light dreams upon the sleeping world, peo-  
pling the deep shadows of the rocks and trees  
with unknown things?

Listen and I will tell thee . . . A god  
dwells here.

From far away, echoing over the flowering  
fields, gliding among the trees, hearest thou  
those limpid notes clear as the love-song of a  
bird? Hearest thou those pure, sweet notes  
blending with earth and sky, voicing the  
subtle spirit of the woods and fields?

It is the god . . . be still and listen.

## CIRCE

Bathed in the flooding moonlight, thy golden palace gleams amidst the whispering pines and cypress trees. From the wide open doors, the road winds like a pale ribbon across the fields to the dark line of the shore.

Within thy palace, lamps are burning, harps and citherns whisper and sigh of love; and the laughter of thy guests, the clashing of cups and dishes, echo among the trees.

But thou—thou standest alone, high on the terrace. The moonlight covers thee like a misty veil through which thy jewels flash like living eyes.

How beautiful, how darkly, deadly beautiful thou art! How black thine unbound hair, how deep thine eyes! How like a spirit of the night as thou standest, with arms outstretched, murmuring strange words above the smoking incense, while the hoarse croakings of the frogs, the shrieks of flitting bats, resound like sweetest music in thine ears!

## THE FALLING LEAVES

When the sun sets all too soon beyond the mountains and the western skies are flooded with pallid crimson:

When the trees stand naked and black against the afterglow and the evening star shines high above the gathering mists of twilight:

When the earth is chilled by sweeping winds: when the water of the pools lies dead and silent and the last leaves drop, one by one, from the trees:

The naiads forsake the springs, the syrinx of the satyrs is heard no more, and the dryads, deep in the hearts of the trees, whimper and wrap themselves in the shelter of their long, dark hair.

And I—I stand alone in the vast solitude—  
and tremble.



## LETHE

Through the yellow twilight of the underworld, two shadows glided over the asphodel in bloom. At the verge of a leaden stream, they paused.

— Here thou drinkest, said One, and all remembrance will be washed from thee. It is the Law. There is no other way, no other path from life to life.

— I cannot! Oh, I cannot drink! . . . Why must I lose that which is greater than all other things? My heart is filled with memories . . .

— Be brave. In a moment thou wilt not even know thou hast forgotten.

Along the shore, the lotos blooms floated like pale flames; and softly the dark water glided onward, hiding the secrets in its breast.



LESBIA



## H Y M E N E A L

Hasten, Belovèd. The torches flicker in the cool night wind and the court pales in the moonlight. The guests laugh and sing, the flutes shrill and the floor slips with wine under the sandals of the dancing-girls.

Yet thou delayest, watching me from the corners of thine eyes, while the slave patiently fills thy cup once more . . . Hasten, Belovèd, ere I weep and be ashamed.

Somewhere the flowers wither upon a threshold—warm roses, slender myrtle and crocus from the sunny fields. They too have waited so long for thee . . .

Hasten, Belovèd. Surely the east is brightening for the sun. It is the breeze of morning that swirls the flaring torches . . . Hasten, Belovèd, ere I weep and be ashamed.

## ADVICE

Impatient, rosy child, if thou art weary of thy maidenhood, since no man loves thee, take thy youth to the son of Dionysos in the temple garden; and afterward, love where thou canst . . .

When thou art all a woman, thy cheeks will not flood with crimson when thou art spoken to: thou wilt not stammer and look toward the ground. Nor will the longing of thine eyes know fear.

Yet, love is both virgin and voluptuous to the desire of men. And when, in times to come, thy limbs are warm and bright, when even the burning ardor of the goddess is thy friend, thou wilt reveal a passionate semblance of maidenhood to set thy lovers' hearts aflame.

## THE TREES

In the level sun-rays, the hill slopes flare with color. The water's mirror reflects the glory of the west: at first sheer yellow like pale gold; then tinted with crimson; and soon, above the twilight, steeped in glowing red.

Slowly the purple shadows deepen among the hills. The birds twitter softly in the dusk. Shrill voices of the night call to each other across the solitudes.

The slender trees rise black against the sky. High among their branches gleams the adolescent moon, its flowing light turning the fields to silver and the forests to ebony. And the soft wind bears from the distant city echoes of the songs of festival.

## SONG

If I sigh, his eyes fill with tears; if I smile, they darken with longing; and when I touch him, he turns pale and trembles. But in tormenting him, I grievously torment myself. I draw very near. I wait . . .

When I feel his knotted muscles love surges through me and I quiver with desire . . . I give myself utterly and close mine eyes. My head falls back upon his arm. His eager lips unite with mine.

Then mine arms creep softly over his shoulders and, because I love him, I hold him closely and will not let him go.

## DIONYSIA

Through the deep shadows of the trees and the vine-laden trellises, a maddened crowd rushed like an avalanche of furies, brandishing thyrsi and flaring torches, beating drums and cymbals.

Young men clad like sileni, frenzied with wine, darted like flames through the tumult. Grown men, crimsoned and crowned with bedraggled ivy, danced like satyrs to the screaming music. And, on the seething crest, rushed a man dragging a young girl who stumbled, panting and crazed with fear, her chiton, half torn from her glistening body, smeared with blood.

— Io Iacchos! they cried, flourishing gleaming kanthari, writhing in ecstasy. They staggered, leaped, rolled upon the grass, swarmed like bees; and then, suddenly dispersing, ran shrieking in groups among the trees . . .

## P E N U M B R A

Was it but a few short hours past, Belovèd,  
when first thy lips found mine? Now it is  
day; the sun flames in the sky and I am all  
alone. Surely, it was long ago I saw thee  
here.

All our delights so fleeting and so quickly  
sped! The hours past seem far away among  
the years of memory . . . Was I too  
easily conquered, loving thee? Didst thou  
desire less than I gave—or more?

When the west blushes to receive the sun,  
a light thou knowest will guide thy steps  
through the lengthening shadows. Love  
blooms in the twilight of our dreams, but we  
may not live and dream forever, thou and I.  
And love may not always pass the shadowy  
portals nor dwell beyond the leadened waters  
of oblivion.



## ASTARTE

Divine Astarté, because I also am a woman,  
I adore thee. With my blood pulsing to the  
song of life, with my body, supple and lan-  
guorous and mine eager soul, I worship thee,  
O Spirit of the World.

Goddess, when thine hand touches me for  
an instant, I swoon, my flesh quivers and mine  
eyes are blinded. The sun shrouds in a cloak  
of purple; the moon burns like a crimson disc  
among the stars; the wide spaces of infinity  
envelop me; despair and exultation unite  
within my heart.

Yet for such as I thou reignest, Astarté—  
robed in scarlet and flaming with desire.  
And, outstretched alone upon my couch among  
the shadows, I adore thee—I who also am a  
woman—Eternal Queen of mine own Mys-  
tery.

## THE SHIP

In the pale shadow of a canopy, I drowse through the long hours while the boat slips over the flashing sea. The rhythmic murmur of the waves steals through my dreams. I hear the voice of a sailor in the prow, the rippling hurry of water along the sides.

Beyond the shadow, the deck flares with light. The blazing sun of the south hangs motionless in the sky. The sultry air exhales the arid spaces of the desert.

But with the dusk, a cool breeze blows from the sea, the sail bellies, the cordage creaks and, before us, the dim forms of islands rise through the shadows.

## THE CITY

Here at the blue sea's verge lies the great city, the white walls of its quays and houses gleaming in the sunlight, filled with the rumor of countless voices, shrill cries, music, the ceaseless beating of the waters.

Bright city, for thee I shall be very famous and very wealthy, for I am beautiful. Thou knowest well how beautiful I am . . .

Countless are those who give their love. Their teeth shine like pearls born of the sea; no passion daunts them; no pain or sorrow is too great for them to bear—and smile. But I . . . the world shall gasp desire before me.

And I will make thee drunk, O city, perfumed and corrupt; I will make thee drunk with love and poems from my crimsoned, violate lips.

## THE MERCHANT

These treasures I have gathered for many years. And if thou wilt . . . Here are mirrors of bronze; and here a silver bracelet, heavy with sards from Lydia. It is enchanted, caressing the arm of her that wears it, if only she be fair . . . Thou seest!

Here are perfumes and rare essences in alabaster vials from Corinth and the isle of Crete. And here, perfumes no less immortal in brown clay vases from Etruria.

This rose powder from the amorous blooms of Mitylene will make thy nails lustrous as nacre. And here is purest kohl to shadow the flaming languor of thine eyes.

These glowing silks have come from many lands. This is thy color . . . O Isis! How beautiful! . . . The price? Nay, take it, and the bracelet also. They would be desolate, away from thee. And as my only payment, I pray thee wear them once, passing my door.

## THE GARDEN

Beside me in the shadowy garden of my dwelling stands my Well-Belovèd, clad in a perfumed saffron tunic and shod with gilded sandals. His arm rests lightly upon my shoulders, his eyes are bright with laughter.

I move softly beneath the gold-encircled arm, and sigh:

— I love thee.

— I love thee because I know thee well and because thou knowest me. From thy caress comes only happiness . . . And when mine eyes meet his, he smiles.

My hair is golden as the sun; mine eyes are jewels; my lips are dew-kissed flowers. I know—for many have told me. I stand in the star-lit garden of my dwelling and raise mine arms and laugh and sigh. And, as the great moon rises in the east, a song trembles upon my lips—a song of joyous understanding; of all desire fulfilled.

ATROPOS

— Thine hand . . . . What wouldst thou?

— Thee.

— Me? . . . . Man, there is no desire in thine eyes; thinkest thou it is polite to jest?

— Thy price?

— Truly? Art thou wealthy?

— Thy price!

— Well, friend, thirty drachmae to thee. But first, tell me . . . .

— Where is thy dwelling?

— How strange thou art! . . . . What hast thou to do with love?

— Nothing.

— Nothing? . . . . Ah! . . . .

## THE NEOPHYTE

Upon the storm-scarred summits of the mountains, among the shifting valleys of the desert wastes, across the waters' murmuring infinity, I called: but the spirits of the hills were silent; the voices of the sea made me no answer.

I turned mine eyes to the sapphire gateway of the dawn, the flaming sunset, the star-jeweled curtains of the night. I tuned my voice to the song of birds; I lay as a friend among the flowers.

And then I sought the cold, still gods, half luminous in the temple dusks. Their carven lips gave forth no word, their eyes gazed always beyond immeasured futures, but the sign of peace was graven on their brows.

And the earth awoke, pulsing with life, as I laid my heart upon the purpled altars of the dead.

## THE PERFUMES

Safe within a box of ebony, I store my perfumes, in vases gold and crimson, in vials of green, pale as the leaves of springtime.

There are glowing syrups, laden with the souls of a thousand roses; cool, green liquids from the soft blooms of the lotos; thin, sterile drops from strange, dark flowers of the night. There is even a perfume which has . . . which never knew the flowers.

But, deep hidden in a secret place, there are two vials—the one of iron, sombre and cold, the other of purest azure, warm and fragile as an unknown thing. And sometimes, when the world is hushed and dark, I bar my doors and . . . later . . . swoon softly in the warm, throbbing silence of my dreams. . . .



## IRIS

Iris, little flute-player, thy rosy mouth drooping, thine eyes brimming with tears, why dost thou crouch alone against the rough wall, thy reeds lying neglected in the dust?

Are they broken, the wax-tipped friends of thy song? Art thou hurt, or hungry, or weary of thy life? Has thy loved one flown away? . . .

Listen, child. In my garden are roses and a pool where thou canst wash away thy sorrow, perfumes which will delight thee and golden ribbons to bind the soft crown of thy hair. To-night and to-morrow and for many days, thou shalt play only when thou wishest and dance only when it pleases thee.

Then, when thou smilest again, I will find thee a new Belovèd, fairer and kindlier than the last; yes, truly—though I drag her to thee, shrieking and bewailing, and chain her with golden fetters to thy couch.

## PANDEMOS

I love thee, daughter of Kypris, for thou art beautiful and the cool scent of thy flowing hair is ravishing.

But I love also the sister who lives next door to thee, and soft-limbed Chrysis who plays the flute at thy festivals. Their love, like thine, is clear and unafraid.

Thou quiverest like a cithern string beneath my touch. Thy cheeks blush divinely and the farm flower of thy lips writhes in the fire of my kiss. . . .

Yet I will not love thee always, nor thy sister, nor Chrysis who babbles youth and happiness through the doubled reeds. For it is not thee I love; it is thy beauty only as, for an instant, I behold in thee the mystery of all the world. .

## THE STRANGER

Thou seekest pleasure, stranger? Lo, I am queen of pleasure; I am ruler of all delights. With one glance of mine eyes, I can sway thee like the stricken palm.

If thou hast sorrow, I can drive it from thee; if thou art happy, I can double thine ecstasy. I can make thee long for death.  
. . . Girl, bring wine and cakes—quickly!

This is my house. Thou seest—I have many friends. I am rich; but I think nothing of money. I love where it pleases me, and I am pleased with thee. Give thy cloak to the slave. . . . Pardon, thou hast dropped thy purse. . . .

## THE GIFTS

I have given thee a saffron vestment rich  
with gold, a circlet heavy with rubies for  
thine arm, a gleaming sapphire for thy brow  
—and thou hast smiled upon me.

I have given thee a necklace of 'rosy pearls  
to hang about thy neck, sandals of gilded  
leather for thy slender feet, rare oils and  
heavy perfumes—and thou hast loved me.

Thou hast given me thyself and all thy  
love: mad, scarlet nights, mornings of pale  
delight and languorous noondays—and thou  
hast been my slave.

Yet, if I had not crowned thee with jewels;  
if I had not set thy path aflame with rubies,  
no less I would have loved thee. And yet  
. . . and yet, I think, thou never wouldst  
have known . . .

· LOST LOVE

So wanton at play thou wert, dishevelled  
with love; now thou playest with another,  
singing low the joys I first awoke in thee.  
Thou wert so gentle and voluptuous; now  
thou seekest another couch, and mine, still  
vaguely fragrant of thy limbs, is cold.

Does thy new friend stand, foot-weary, be-  
fore thy door, sighing of desire? Does he  
bear thee, as to a shrine, garlands of the  
brightest roses to languish about thy love?  
Does he search out for thee the choicest wines  
to warm the all-desired blossoms of thy lips?  
. . . Though he protest his love, some day  
he will leave thee for another . . .

O faithless one, return to me. O child of  
Aphrodite, do not leave me desolate, lest  
I . . . forget thee . . . which would  
be worst of all.

## THE SHADOW

Thou seest, stranger, she has gone; and we know not whither. This gaping doorway, these empty walls darkened with the fumes of many lamps, this desolate garden: these are her heritage.

Through the nights, long since, we heard her weeping. And then, one morning, she was gone. This necklace upon my breast was hers. Little Iris sleeps now upon her abandoned couch.

Perhaps she is dead. Perhaps she was only weary of this place. Perhaps she wished, suddenly . . . to forget. . . But she has gone as thou seest, O silent stranger, and, in all the world, we know not whither.

## THE WINE

Slaves, bring more wine—bright scarlet wine of Syracuse and Cyprian wine which gleams like yellow gold . . . This gross food sickens me. Take it away! Bring wine, and the large goblets.

Who are these women? They have come to dance? I wonder . . . But no—send them away. When women dance, I dream of terrible things . . . Ah! at last, laggard! Pour quickly!

Now I forget, O crimson flood! I have bought thee like a courtesan, but thine impassioned touch . . . upon my lips . . . is cold. I will be faithful to thee until death. For I am very faithful—true, O Dionysos! . . . Come, friend, drink also: and when thou art weary, sleep; and pray for . . . what thou wishest . . . in thy dreams.

## NOCTURNE

Deep with mystery is the night, when the round moon sails high the seas above the earth and subtle spirits of the dark swirl through the narrow ways.

The placid river shines like a polished mirror. All the world is hushed save for the rustle of a bird among the rushes at the water's edge or the distant chanting of priests within the ghostly temples.

Somewhere in the city, a dog howls; where a lamp still casts a flickering glow from a window, a woman's laughter tinkles; from the house tops, the plash of falling water mingles with a low song of gladness . . .

But when the moon sinks toward the west, a warm wind blows from the desert, the leaves of the palms rustle and whisper among themselves, and a long, vague sigh sweeps out to meet the rising sun.



## ISIS

Thine eyes gaze into the vague distances and thy lips curve in a proud smile. Thine hands are motionless and cold, thy slender limbs are relaxed and thy feet are united upon the stones.

Mother of all Nature: Goddess, fecund, inexhaustible: what is thy mystery we know not—we who also love? Why dost thou always smile, even when quite alone in the dim sanctuary?

Thy voice, kept for the ears of gods, must be very sweet. The ardor of thy limbs must be joyous to thy lord . . .

Dreamest thou, formless and beyond all things, drifting through the eternal silence of thy love? . . . Or hast thou never truly known of life and desire and fear—thou who speakest not nor communest, save in the shadowy visions of thine own soul?

## VIGIL

Through the echoing silences of the night,  
beneath the star-paled arches of the sky, I  
lifted up my voice and sang of love.

I sang of pain, of happiness and the long  
hours of waiting; of revelation and eternal  
mystery; hot longing, quivering silence and  
a lustral calm. I sang and smiled and wept,  
my voice floating above the slumbering city,  
mine eyes turned toward the shadowy desert.

Alone, I sang . . . No voice replied,  
whispering through the dusk, no heart  
warmed in a swift response, no lips sought  
mine to drink their song. Only the soft caress  
of the night wind touched me for an instant  
and then passed on toward the sandy wastes.

## COPPER AND GOLD

Browned by the desert sun and the swift wind, lithe and strong, thine eyes aflame with conquest, thou seekest me out; thou layest thine hand upon me.

Beside thee, I pale; and yet, because I am a woman, I can bear thine hand upon me and thy kiss upon my lips. I have become precious as a rare jewel because thou lovest me; and strong because I have looked upon thee and I have known thee, O my Well-Belovèd.

And I will love thee not only in the night when the soft air breathes of the slumbering flowers, but also in the flaring mid-day when the light of thine eyes blinds me and the world throbs in the glory of the sun.



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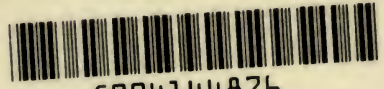
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