

IDYLL 1: THE SONG OF THYRSIS

THYRSIS

Sweet song of whispers, goatherd, there, by the springs,
The pine tree sings, and you too sound sweet
On your pan-pipes. You'd be first after Pan, second place.
And if he'd get the he-goat with horns, you'd get the she.
And if he'd get the she-goat as his win, you'd
Get the kid. And the flesh of a kid is fine till you milk it.

GOATHERD

Sweeter still is your song, shepherd, than the splashing
Stream as it slips off the stones from high up.
If the Muses will lead off an ewe as their gift,
You'll take a lamb from the pen for your glory. But if they
Are pleased to take the lamb, you'll lead the ewe and go after.

THYRSIS

Would you please, in the name of the Nymphs, be pleased to sit
On the slope of the ridge, where the tamarisk is, goatherd,
And play us your pipe? In the meantime I'll pasture your goats.

GOATHERD

It's not right, shepherd, at noon we've no right
To play the pipe. Pan keeps us frightened. For it's just then
He's tired from the hunt and comes in to sleep, but
Sharp tempered. And an angry rheum hangs always at his nostril.
But since you, Thyrsis, always sing the Sorrows of Daphnis,
And the songs of the herders are your deep devotion,
Let's sit beneath the elm and by Priapus,
Facing the Nymphs of the springs, just where the shepherd's seat
Sits amongst the oaks. And if you should sing as once
You sang in your match against Libyan Chromis,
I'll give you a goat with twins to milk three times,
(She may have two kids, but she'll fill two pails besides),
And this deep wood cup, washed over with sweet wax,
Two-handled, new-cut, the scent of the blade still on it.
Up at the lip of the cup winds ivy,
Ivy twined with helichrysum, and all throughout
The tendril twists in the glory of its golden fruit.
And there a woman, like a wonder of the gods, is crafted,
Adorned with a robe and a fillet. Two men crowd round,
Lovely themselves with their long hair; each with the other,
Each with the other they quarrel with words. But she

Pays them no mind. Now laughing she glances at one of the men,
Now again her will flits in another direction. But they
Labor in vain, a long time, with swollen eyes, for love.
Alongside these a fisherman is crafted,
And a rough rock, where he's standing, looking lively.
The old fisher's hauling in his huge net for a cast;
He looks just like a man working hard.
You'll say he's fishing with all the strength of his limbs;
All the muscles of his neck are straining,
Even if his hair is grey. He's got a young strength.
Just a bit further on from the old, sea-beaten man
Is a beautiful vineyard, weighed down with bunches of dark grapes,
And a small boy sits on the wall of dry rocks,
Keeping watch. But a couple of foxes get right past.
The one creeps through the rows, plotting mischief
For the fresh fruit; the other's using all her craft
To get at the boy's satchel and says she won't let up
Until she gets to breakfast on his biscuits.
But the boy, meanwhile, plaits a lovely cricket cage,
Weaving asphodel with rushes. He has no care
For his satchel, nor do the vines concern him,
Not nearly so much as he rejoices in his weaving.
And curling acanthus spreads over the chalice in every direction,
A goatherd's marvel, a wonder to bewilder your heart.
I gave a goat to a Calydnian ferryman for it,
And I paid him a big, white, milky cheese besides.
It hasn't yet touched my lip, but still it remains
Unused. I would gladly offer you this pleasure,
If only you, my friend, would sing me that lovely hymn.
I won't sneer. Come then, man, for you can't
Keep a song down with Hades, who utterly forgets.

THE SONG OF THYRSIS

Begin, my Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

I am Thyrsis, my voice is fair,
Fair-voiced is Thyrsis of Aetna.
Where Nymphs were you then, when Daphnis longed,
Nymphs, when with love he was drowning?
Did you get by Peneius, its lovely glades,
Did you get by the glades of the Pindus?
For you did not stay by our mighty flood,

You abandoned the river Anapus;
You abandoned Aetna and its climbing crags,
And the hallowed streams of the Acis.

Begin, my Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

As he died they were howling, the jackals and the wolves,
The lion did lament him from the coppice.
Many cows round his feet, and many were the bulls,
Many calves and heifers who were crying.

Begin, my Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

First came Hermes down from the mountain,
And 'Daphnis,' did Hermes say,
'Who wears you down, O good my son,
For whom is your love so great?'

Begin, my Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

There came the neatherds, came shepherds and the goatherds,
All asked what the sorrow might be.
Priapus came, and said 'Daphnis, wretch,
Oh why do you melt away?
For there's a lass who waits at every fountain
She wanders through the glades for thee.'

Begin, my Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'You love like flint, you're set as stone,
No more do you a neatherd seem.
But like a goatherd watches how the she-goats bleat,
And watches as they're mounted by the hes,
And he melts with longing, and he drowns his eyes
That a billy he's not born to be,'

Begin, my Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'So you, when you see the maidens how they laugh

Your eyes melt just to dance with them.'
To these the neatherd made no response,
Naught but continued all the same,
And brought to an end his bitter love
And brought to an end his fate.

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

And sweet Cypris came, laughing all the time,
She was laughing in her secret heart,
But in anger she spoke, heaving with rage,
'You boasted you could wrangle Love.
But Daphnis, now, tell me who is tripped up,
And who bested by grievous Love?'

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'Cypris of grief' did Daphnis now answer,
'Cypris who nurses resentment,
Cypris detested by all mankind,
Do you dream that our sun has set?
To Love will Daphnis be a hateful spite,
Always, and even in Hades.'

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'And who hasn't heard of Cypris and the neatherd?
Get then to Ida and Anchises.
There the bees are humming, lovely by their hives,
There are the galingale and oaks.'

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'And Adonis is there, in his perfect hour,
And there puts his sheep out to pasture,
And there takes aim at every hare
And tracks every beast of the mountain.'

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'Or go face to face again with Diomedes,
Stand close to him and say,
"Now I have vanquished the neatherd Daphnis,
Come, then, and fight with me!"

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'Farewell O wolves, O jackals, farewell,
O bears who are lurking in the mountains,
I Daphnis no longer am neatherd in your woods
No longer in your glades or in your coppice.
Arethusa farewell, and the beautiful waters
Of the rivers pouring from the Thybris.'

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'Daphnis am I, who in this place
Puts out his cows to pasture;
Daphnis am I, who in this place
Waters his bulls and his heifers.'

Begin again, Muses, my Muses bring,
Begin the song the herders sing.

'O Pan, Pan, if on lofty Lycaeus,
If you haunt enormous Maenalus,
Now come to the island of Sicily,
Leave the Helice highland,
And leave the steep barrow of Lycon's son,
Grave that's a wonder to the gods.'

Bring an end, Muses, my Muses bring,
Bring an end to the song the herders sing.

'Take my pipe, my Lord, well-bound about its lip,
That smells like honey from the wax,
For I am lost at the hands of Love,
Drawn already into Hades.'

Bring an end, Muses, my Muses bring,
Bring an end to the song the herders sing.

'Now the brambles, may you blossom with violets,
And blossom with violets the acanthus,
The juniper grow lovely with locks of narcissus,
Each thing become another.
Let the pine bear pears, since Daphnis dies,
Let the hart now rend the hound.
Let the wide-eyed owls sing down from the mountains
And drown out the nightingales.'

Bring an end, Muses, my Muses bring,
Bring an end to the song the herders sing.

He said so much and stopped. And Cypris
Wished to raise him back up,
But the flax of the Fates had spun too far
And Daphnis went into the flood.
The eddies washed over the friend of the Muses,
Whom the Nymphs had never detested.

Bring an end, Muses, my Muses bring,
Bring an end to the song the herders sing.

Now, give me the goat and the pail, so I
Can milk her and pour to the Muses. Farewell,
Ye Muses, a thousand times farewell. For you
I'll ever sing another hour, a sweeter song.

GOATHERD

Full of honey be your lovely mouth, my Thyrsis,
And full of honey-comb too. May you eat
A sweet fig from Agilia, since you sing
Better than any cicada. Here's your chalice. See
How beautifully it smells, my friend. You'd think
The Hours had filled it at their spring. Cissaetha,
Come 'ere. Go on and milk her. But you, miss goat,
Had better not strut, or that billy'll get right up.

IDYLL 6: DAMOETAS AND DAPHNIS SING THE CYCLOPS

Damoetas and Daphnis the neatherd, once,
Aratus, gathered their herds together
In a single spot. The one of these boys
Had just sprouted golden down, the other
Already had half a beard. These two
Sat near a certain spring, the both of them,
On a summer noon, and this is what they sang.
Daphnis went first, since he first made the challenge.

THE SONG OF DAPHNIS

Galatea's slinging apples at your sheep,
Polyphemus, and taunting
Never will you learn to love a girl,
Just stick to goat-herding.
And you, poor Cyclops, never look her way,
Just sitting and piping
That sweet song. And now she's pelting
The bitch who looks after your flocks.
It barks and looks into the ocean
And the lovely waters show
The dog's reflection, racing up and down
The softly breaking shore.
Careful, Polyphemus, or the bitch'll sic
Galatea as she's coming from the water
And tear up the lovely skin
Of her ankles. But she'll
Just flirt from there, Galatea;
Just like the lightest threads
Of thistledown, when summer's fair and parching,
She flies from the one who loves
And chases the one who doesn't,
Desperate to make a move.
For in love, Polyphemus, very often,
When fair seems fine, it isn't.

Then Damoetas piped a prelude, and this is what he sang.

THE SONG OF DAMOETAS, SINGING AS POLYPHEMUS

I swear to Pan, I saw her throwing
Apples at my sheep;

It didn't escape me, nor my one sweet eye,
Which I pray will see to the end.
And may Telemus, that seer who makes
Such baleful pronouncements,
Bring bale on his own house; he can
Keep it for his children.
Now I'm the one who's teasing Galatea;
I never look her way, I say
I have a woman already. And when she
Hears that, my god,
She gets so jealous that she
Melts, she goes crazy,
Peeping up from the sea, looking
At my cave and at my sheep.
It was me who sicced my dog to howl,
Since, when I was in love,
It wined with its snout on its haunches.
And, maybe, when Galatea sees
Me doing these things so often,
She'll send me a message.
If not, my door is locked, until she
Agrees to make
Her beautiful bed with me, here,
On my island.
Because my face isn't nearly
As ugly as they say.
Just yesterday, when it was calm,
I looked into the sea,
And there, in that reflection, my beard
Was beautiful, and my
One eye was beautiful, at least
If I'm the judge,
And the gleam of these teeth was brighter
Than Parian marble.
To block the evil eye, I spat
On my breast three times;
It was the old witch Cotyttaris
Who taught me that.

When he'd said this much, Damoetas
Gave a kiss to Daphnis, and the one
Gave his syrinx to the other, and the other
Gave his lovely flute. Now Damoetas
Played the flute, and Daphnis the neatherd

Piped on the syrinx. And straight away
The heifers began to dance
In the tender grass. Victory belonged
To neither man, but both went unbeaten.