

The Art of Love - Ovid

Book I Part I: His Task

Should anyone here not know the art of love,
read this, and learn by reading how to love.
By art the boat's set gliding, with oar and sail,
by art the chariot's swift: love's ruled by art.
Automedon was skilled with Achilles's chariot reins,
Tiphys in Thessaly was steersman of the Argo,
Venus appointed me as guide to gentle Love:
I'll be known as Love's Tiphys, and Automedon.
It's true Love's wild, and one who often flouts me:
but he's a child of tender years, fit to be ruled.
Chiron made the young Achilles perfect at the lyre,
and tempered his wild spirits through peaceful art.
He, who so terrified his enemies and friends,
they say he greatly feared the aged Centaur.
That hand that Hector was destined to know,
was held out, at his master's orders, to be flogged.
I am Love's teacher as Chiron was Achilles's,
both wild boys, both children of a goddess.
Yet the bullock's neck is bowed beneath the yoke,
and the spirited horse's teeth worn by the bit.
And Love will yield to me, though with his bow
he wounds my heart, shakes at me his burning torch.
The more he pierces me, the more violently he burns me,
so much the fitter am I to avenge the wounds.
Nor will I falsely say you gave me the art, Apollo,
no voice from a heavenly bird gives me advice,
I never caught sight of Clio or Clio's sisters
while herding the flocks, Ascra, in your valleys:
Experience prompts this work: listen to the expert poet:
I sing true: Venus, help my venture!
Far away from here, you badges of modesty,
the thin headband, the ankle-covering dress.
I sing of safe love, permissible intrigue,
and there'll be nothing sinful in my song.
Now the first task for you who come as a raw recruit
is to find out who you might wish to love.
The next task is to make sure that she likes you:
the third, to see to it that the love will last.
That's my aim, that's the ground my chariot will cover:
that's the post my thundering wheels will scrape.

Book I Part II: How to Find Her

While you're still free, and can roam on a loose rein,
pick one to whom you could say: 'You alone please me.'
She won't come falling for you out of thin air:
the right girl has to be searched for: use your eyes.
The hunter knows where to spread nets for the stag,
he knows what valleys hide the angry boar:
the wild-fowler knows the woods: the fisherman
knows the waters where the most fish spawn:

You too, who search for the essence of lasting love,
must be taught the places that the girls frequent.
I don't demand you set your sails, and search,
or wear out some long road to discover them.
Perseus brought Andromeda from darkest India,
and Trojan Paris snatched his girl from Greece,
Rome will grant you lots of such lovely girls,
you'll say: 'Here's everything the world has had.'
Your Rome's as many girls as Gargara's sheaves,
as Methymna's grapes, as fishes in the sea,
as birds in the hidden branches, stars in the sky:
Venus, Aeneas's mother, haunts his city.
If you'd catch them very young and not yet grown,
real child-brides will come before your eyes:
if it's young girls you want, thousands will please you.
You'll be forced to be unsure of your desires:
if you delight greatly in older wiser years,
here too, believe me, there's an even greater crowd.

Book I Part III: Search while you're out Walking

Just walk slowly under Pompey's shady colonnade,
when the sun's in Leo, on the back of Hercules's lion:
or where Octavia added to her dead son Marcellus's gifts,
with those rich works of foreign marble.
Don't miss the Portico that takes its name
from Livia its creator, full of old masters:
or where the daring Danaids prepare to murder their poor husbands,
and their fierce father stands, with out-stretched sword.
And don't forget the shrine of Adonis, Venus wept for,
and the sacred Sabbath rites of the Syrian Jews.
Don't skip the Memphite temple of the linen-clad heifer:
she makes many a girl what she herself was to Jove.
And the law-courts (who'd believe it?) they suit love:
a flame is often found in the noisy courts:
where the Appian waters pulse into the air,
from under Venus's temple, made of marble,
there the lawyer's often caught by love,
and he who guides others, fails to guide himself:
in that place of eloquence often his words desert him,
and a new case starts, his own cause is the brief.
There Venus, from her neighbouring temples, laughs:
he, who was once the counsel, now wants to be the client.

Book I Part IV: Or at the Theatre

But hunt for them, especially, at the tiered theatre:
that place is the most fruitful for your needs.
There you'll find one to love, or one you can play with,
one to be with just once, or one you might wish to keep.
As ants return home often in long processions,
carrying their favourite food in their mouths,
or as the bees buzz through the flowers and thyme,
among their pastures and fragrant chosen meadows,
so our fashionable ladies crowd to the famous shows:
my choice is often constrained by such richness.

They come to see, they come to be seen as well:
the place is fatal to chaste modesty.
These shows were first made troublesome by Romulus,
when the raped Sabines delighted unmarried men.
Then no awnings hung from the marble theatre,
the stage wasn't stained with saffron perfumes:
Then what the shady Palatine provided, leaves
simply placed, was all the artless scene:
The audience sat on tiers made from turf,
and covered their shaggy hair, as best they could, with leaves.
They watched, and each with his eye observed the girl
he wanted, and trembled greatly in his silent heart.
While, to the measure of the homely Etruscan flute,
the dancer, with triple beat, struck the levelled earth,
amongst the applause (applause that was never artful then)
the king gave the watched-for signal for the rape.
They sprang up straightaway, showing their intent by shouting,
and eagerly took possession of the women.
As doves flee the eagle, in a frightened crowd,
as the new-born lamb runs from the hostile wolf:
so they fled in panic from the lawless men,
and not one showed the colour she had before.
Now they all fear as one, but not with one face of fear:
Some tear their hair: some sit there, all will lost:
one mourns silently, another cries for her mother in vain:
one moans, one faints: one stays, while that one runs:
the captive girls were led away, a joyful prize,
and many made even fear itself look fitting.
Whoever showed too much fight, and denied her lover,
he held her clasped high to his loving heart,
and said to her: 'Why mar your tender cheeks with tears?
as your father to your mother, I'll be to you.'
Romulus, alone, knew what was fitting for soldiers:
I'll be a soldier, if you give me what suits me.
From that I suppose came the theatres' usual customs:
now too they remain a snare for the beautiful.

Book I Part V: Or at the Races, or the Circus

Don't forget the races, those noble stallions:
the Circus holds room for a vast obliging crowd.
No need here for fingers to give secret messages,
nor a nod of the head to tell you she accepts:
You can sit by your lady: nothing's forbidden,
press your thigh to hers, as you can do, all the time:
and it's good the rows force you close, even if you don't like it,
since the girl is touched through the rules of the place.
Now find your reason for friendly conversation,
and first of all engage in casual talk.
Make earnest enquiry whose those horses are:
and rush to back her favourite, whatever it is.
When the crowded procession of ivory gods goes by,
you clap fervently for Lady Venus:
if by chance a speck of dust falls in the girl's lap,
as it may, let it be flicked away by your fingers:
and if there's nothing, flick away the nothing:

let anything be a reason for you to serve her.
If her skirt is trailing too near the ground,
lift it, and raise it carefully from the dusty earth:
Straightaway, the prize for service, if she allows it,
is that your eyes catch a glimpse of her legs.
Don't forget to look at who's sitting behind you,
that he doesn't press her sweet back with his knee.
Small things please light minds: it's very helpful
to puff up her cushion with a dextrous touch.
And it's good to raise a breeze with a light fan,
and set a hollow stool beneath her tender feet.
And the Circus brings assistance to new love,
and the scattered sand of the gladiator's ring.
Venus' boy often fights in that sand,
and who see wounds, themselves receive a wound.
While talking, touching hands, checking the programme,
and asking, having bet, which one will win,
wounded he groans, and feels the winged dart,
and himself becomes a part of the show he sees.
When, lately, Caesar, in mock naval battle,
exhibited the Greek and Persian fleets,
surely young men and girls came from either coast,
and all the peoples of the world were in the City?
Who did not find one he might love in that crowd?
Ah, how many were tortured by an alien love!

Book I Part VI: Triumphs are Good too!

Behold, now Caesar's planning to add to our rule
what's left of earth: now the far East will be ours.
Parthia, we'll have vengeance: Crassus's bust will cheer,
and those standards wickedly laid low by barbarians.
The avenger's here, the leader, proclaimed, of tender years,
and a boy wages war's un-boy-like agenda.
Cowards, don't count the birthdays of the gods:
a Caesar's courage flowers before its time.
Divine genius grows faster than its years,
and suffers as harmful evils the cowardly delays.
Hercules was a child when he crushed two serpents
in both his hands, already worthy of Jupiter in his cradle.
How old were you, Bacchus, who are still a boy,
when conquered India trembled to your rod?
Your father's years and powers arm you, boy,
and with your father's powers and years you'll win:
though your first beginnings must be in debt to such a name,
now prince of the young, but one day prince of the old:
Your brothers are with you, avenge your brothers' wounds:
your father is with you, keep your father's laws.
Your and your country's father endowed you with arms:
the enemy stole his kingship from an unwilling parent:
You hold a pious shaft, he a wicked arrow:
Justice and piety stick to your standard.
Let Parthia's cause be lost: and their armies:
let my leader add Eastern wealth to Latium.
Both your fathers, Mars and Caesar, grant you power:
Through you one is a god, and one will be.

See, I augur your triumph: I'll reply with a votive song,
and you'll be greatly celebrated on my lips.
You'll stand and exhort your troops with my words:
O let my words not lack your courage!
I'll speak of Parthian backs and Roman fronts,
and shafts the enemy hurl from flying horses.
If you flee, to win, Parthia, what's left for you in defeat?
Mars already has your evil eye.
So the day will be, when you, beautiful one,
golden, will go by, drawn by four snowy horses.
The generals will go before you, necks weighed down with chains,
lest they flee to safety as they did before.
The happy crowd of youths and girls will watch,
that day will gladden every heart.
And if she, among them, asks the name of a king,
what place, what mountains, and what stream's displayed,
you can reply to all, and more if she asks:
and what you don't know, reply as memory prompts.
That's Euphrates, his brow crowned with reeds:
that'll be Tigris with the long green hair.
I make those Armenians, that's Persia's Danaan crown:
that was a town in the hills of Achaemenia.
Him and him, they're generals: and say what names they have,
if you can, the true ones, if not the most fitting.

Book I Part VII: There's always the Dinner-Table

The table laid for a feast also gives you an opening:
There's something more than wine you can look for there.
Often rosy Love has clasped Bacchus's horns,
drawing him to his gentle arms, as he lay there.
And when wine has soaked Cupid's drunken wings,
he's stayed, weighed down, a captive of the place.
It's true he quickly shakes out his damp feathers:
though still the heart that's sprinkled by love is hurt.
Wine rouses courage and is fit for passion:
care flies, and deep drinking dilutes it.
Then laughter comes, the poor man dons the horns,
then pain and sorrow leave, and wrinkled brows.
Then what's rarest in our age appears to our minds,
Simplicity: all art dispelled by the god.
Often at that time girls captivated men's wits,
and Venus was in the vine, flame in the fire.
Don't trust the treacherous lamplight overmuch:
night and wine can harm your view of beauty.
Paris saw the goddesses in the light, a cloudless heaven,
when he said to Venus: 'Venus, you win, over them both.'
Faults are hidden at night: every blemish is forgiven,
and the hour makes whichever girl you like beautiful.
Judge jewellery, and fabric stained with purple,
judge a face, or a figure, in the light.

Book I Part VIII: And Finally There's the Beach

Why enumerate every female meeting place fit for the hunter?
The grains of sand give way before the number.

Why speak of Baiae, its shore splendid with sails,
where the waters steam with sulphurous heat?
Here one returning, his heart wounded, said:
'That water's not as healthy as they claim.'
Behold the suburban woodland temple of Diana,
and the kingdom murder rules with guilty hand.
She, who is virgin, who hates Cupid's darts,
gives people many wounds, has many to give.

Book I Part IX: How To Win Her

So far, riding her unequal wheels, the Muse has taught you
where you might choose your love, where to set your nets.
Now I'll undertake to tell you what pleases her,
by what arts she's caught, itself a work of highest art.
Whoever you are, lovers everywhere, attend, with humble minds,
and you, masses, show you support me: use your thumbs.
First let faith enter into your mind: every one of them
can be won: you'll win her, if you only set your snares.
Birds will sooner be silent in the Spring, cicadas in summer,
an Arcadian hound turn his back on a hare,
than a woman refuse a young man's flattering words:
Even she you might think dislikes it, will like it.
Secret love's just as pleasing to women as men.
Men pretend badly: she hides her desire.
If it was proper for men not to be the first to ask,
woman's role would be to take the part of the asker.
The cow lows to the bull in gentle pastures:
the mare whinnies to the hoofed stallion.
Desire in us is milder and less frantic:
the male fire has its lawful limits.
Remember Byblis, who burned with incestuous love,
for her brother, and bravely punished herself with the noose?
Myrrha loved her father, but not as a daughter should,
and then was hidden by the covering bark:
oozing those tears, that pour from the tree as fragrance,
and whose droplets take their name from the girl.
Once, in the shady valleys of wooded Ida
there was a white bull, glory of the herd,
one small black mark set between his horns:
it the sole blemish, the rest was milky-white.
The heifers of Cnossos and Cydon longed
to have him mount up on their backs.
Pasiphae joyed in adultery with the bull:
she hated the handsome heifers with jealousy.
I sing what is well-known: not even Crete, the hundred-citied,
can deny it, however much Cretans lie.
They say that, with unpractised hands, she plucked
fresh leaves and tenderest grasses for the bull.
She went as one of the herd, unhindered by any care
for that husband of hers: Minos was ousted by a bull.
Why put on your finest clothes, Pasiphae?
Your lover can appreciate none of your wealth.
Why have a mirror with you, when you seek highland cattle?
Why continually smooth your hair, you foolish woman?
But believe the mirror that denies you're a heifer.

How you wish that brow of yours could bear horns!
If you'd please Minos, don't seek out adulterers:
If you want to cheat your husband, cheat with a man!
The queen left her marriage bed for woods and fields,
like a Maenad roused by the Boeotian god, they say.
Ah, how often, with angry face, she spied a cow,
and said: 'Now, how can she please my lord?
Look, how she frisks before him in the tender grass:
doubtless the foolish thing thinks that she's lovely.'
She spoke, and straightaway had her led from the vast herd,
the innocent thing dragged under the arching yoke,
or felled before the altar, forced to be a false sacrifice,
and, delighted, held her rival's entrails in her hand.
The number of times she killed rivals to please the gods,
and said, holding the entrails: 'Go, and please him for me!'
Now she claims to be Io, and now Europa,
one who's a heifer, the other borne by the bull.
Yet he filled her, the king of the herd, deceived
by a wooden cow, and their offspring betrayed its breeding.
If Cretan Aerope had spurned Thyestes's love
(and isn't it hard to forego even one man?),
the Sun would not have veered from his course mid-way,
and turned back his chariot and horses towards Dawn.
The daughter who savaged Nisus's purple lock
presses rabid dogs down with her thighs and groin.
Agamemnon who escaped Mars on land, Neptune at sea,
became the victim of his murderous wife.
Who would not weep at Corinthian Creusa's flames,
and that mother bloodstained by her children's murder?
Phoenix, Amyntor's son wept out of sightless eyes:
Hippolytus was torn by his fear-maddened horses.
Phineus, why blind your innocent sons?
That punishment will return on your own head.
All these things were driven by woman's lust:
it's more fierce than ours, and more frenzied.
So, on, and never hesitate in hoping for any woman:
there's hardly one among them who'll deny you.
Whether they give or not, they're delighted to be asked:
And even if you fail, you'll escape unharmed.
But why fail, when there's pleasure in new delights
and the more foreign the more they capture the heart?
The seed's often more fertile in foreign fields,
and a neighbour's herd always has richer milk.

Book I Part X: First Secure the Maid

But to get to know your desired-one's maid
is your first care: she'll smooth your way.
See if she's close to her mistress's thoughts,
and has plenty of true knowledge of her secret jests.
Corrupt her with promises, and with prayers:
you'll easily get what you want, if she wishes.
She'll tell the time (the doctors would know it too)
when her mistress's mind is receptive, fit for love.
Her mind will be fit for love when she luxuriates
in fertility, like the crop on some rich soil.

When hearts are glad, and nothing sad constrains them,
 they're open: Venus steals in then with seductive art.
 So Troy was defended with sorrowful conflict:
 in joy, the Horse, pregnant with soldiers, was received.
 She's also to be tried when she's wounded, pained by a rival:
 make it your task then to see that she's avenged.
 The maid can rouse her, when she combs her hair in the morning,
 and add her oar to the work of your sails,
 and, sighing to herself in a low murmur, say:
 'But I doubt that you'll be able to make her pay.'
 Then she should speak of you, and add persuasive words,
 and swear you're dying, crazed with love.
 But hurry, lest the sails fall and the breeze dies:
 anger melts away, with time, like fragile ice.
 You ask perhaps if one should take the maid herself?
 Such a plan brings the greatest risk with it.
 In one case, fresh from bed, she'll get busy, in another be tardy,
 in one case you're a prize for her mistress, in the other herself.
 There's chance in it: even if it favours the idea,
 my advice nevertheless is to abstain.
 I don't pick my way over sharp peaks and precipices,
 no youth will be caught out being led by me.
 Still, while she's giving and taking messages,
 if her body pleases you as much as her zeal,
 make the lady your first priority, her companion the next:
 Love should never be begun with a servant.
 I warn you of this, if art's skill is to be believed,
 and don't let the wind blow my words out to sea:
 follow the thing through or don't attempt it:
 she'll endure the whispers once she's guilty herself.
 It's no help if the bird escapes when its wings are limed:
 it's no good if the boar gets free from a loosened net.
 Hold fast to the stricken fish you've caught on the hook:
 press home the attempt, don't leave off till you've won.
 She'll not give you away, sharing the guilt for the crime,
 and you'll know whatever your lady's done, and said.
 But hide it well: if the informer's well hidden,
 you'll always secretly know your mistress's mind.

Book I Part XI: Don't Forget Her Birthday!

It's a mistake to think that only farmers working the fields,
 and sailors, need to keep an eye on the season:
 Seed can't always be trusted to the furrow,
 or a hollow ship to the wine-dark sea,
 It's not always safe to capture tender girls:
 often the time itself makes for success.
 If her birthday's here, or the April Kalends,
 that delight in joining months, Venus's to Mars,
 or if the Circus is decorated, not as before
 with clay figurines but with the wealth of kings,
 delay the thing: then winter's harsh, the Pleiades are here,
 then the tender Kid is merged with the ocean wave:
 it's best to hold off then: then he who trusts the deep,
 can scarcely save the wreckage of his mangled boat.
 It's fine to start on that day of tears when the Allia

flowed with the blood poured from Roman wounds,
or when the Sabbath day returns, the holy day
of the Syrian Jews, less suitable for *buying* things.
Let your mistress's birthday be one of great terror to you:
that's a black day when anything has to be *given*.
However much you avoid it, she'll still win: it's
a woman's skill, to strip wealth from an ardent lover.
A loose-robed pedlar comes to your lady: she likes to buy:
and explains his prices while you're sitting there.
She'll ask you to look, because you know what to look for:
then kiss you: then ask you to buy her something there.
She swears that she'll be happy with it, for years,
but she needs it now, now the price is right.
If you say you haven't the money in the house, she'll ask
for a note of hand – and you're sorry you learnt to write.
Why - she asks doesn't she for money as if it's her birthday,
just for the cake, and how often it *is* her birthday, if she's in need?
Why - she weeps doesn't she, mournfully, for a sham loss,
that imaginary gem that fell from her pierced ear?
They many times ask for gifts, they never give in return:
you lose, and you'll get no thanks for your loss.
And ten mouths with as many tongues wouldn't be enough
for me to describe the wicked tricks of whores.

Book I Part XII: Write and Make Promises

Try wax to pave the way, pour it out on scraped tablets:
let wax be your mind's true confidante.
Bring her your flattering words and play the lover:
and, whoever you are, add a humble prayer.
Achilles was moved by prayer to grant Hector's body to Priam:
a god's anger's deflected by the voice of prayer.
Make promises: what harm can a promise do?
Anyone can be rich in promises.
Hope lasts, if she's once believed in,
a useful, though deceptive, goddess.
If you've given, you can quite reasonably be forgotten:
she carried it off, and now she's nothing to lose.
But if you don't give, always appear about to:
like barren fields that always cheat the farmer,
like the gambler who goes on losing, lest he's finally lost,
and calls the dice back endlessly into his eager hand.
This is the work, the labour, to have her without giving first:
and she'll go on giving, lest she lose what she's freely given.
So go on, and send your letter's flattering words,
try her intention, test the road out first.
Cydippe was deceived by the message the apple brought,
and unaware the girl by her own words was caught.
I warn you, youths of Rome, learn the noble arts,
not just to defend some trembling client:
like the crowd, the grave judge, the elected senate,
a woman will give her hand, won by eloquence.
But let your powers be hidden, don't display your eloquence:
let irksome words vanish from your speech.
Who, but a mindless fool, declaims to his sweet friend?
A strong letter often causes her displeasure.

Let your speech be credible, use ordinary words,
flattering though, speak as if you were present.
If she won't receive the letter, returns it un-read,
stick to your plan, and hope she'll read it later.
In time stubborn oxen come to the plough,
in time the horse learns to suffer the bridle:
constant use wears away an iron ring,
the curved plough's lost to the endless furrow.
What's harder than stone, softer than water?
Yet soft water carves the hardest stone.
Once steadfast you'll conquer Penelope herself in time:
you'll see Troy captive, though it's captured late.
She reads and won't reply? Don't press her:
just let her keep on reading your flattery.
If she wants to read, she'll want to answer what she's read:
such things proceed by number and by measure.
Perhaps at first a cool letter comes to you,
asking: would you please not trouble her.
What she asks, she fears: what she doesn't ask, she wants,
that you go on: do it, and you'll soon get what you wish.

Book I Part XIII: Be Where She Is

Meanwhile, if she's being carried, reclining on her bed,
secretly approach your lady's litter,
and to avoid offering your words to odious ears,
hide what you can with skill and ambiguous gestures.
If she's wandering at leisure in the spacious Colonnade,
you join here there also, lingering, as a friend:
now make as if to lead the way, now drop behind,
now go on quickly, and now take it slow:
don't be ashamed to slip amongst the columns,
a while, then move along side by side:
don't let her sit all beautiful in the theatre row without you:
what you'll look at is the way she holds her arms.
Gaze at her, to admire her is fine:
and to speak with gestures and with glances.
And applaud, the man who dances the girl's part:
and favour anyone who plays a lover.
When she rises, rise: while she's sitting, sit:
pass the time at your lady's whim.

Book I Part XIV: Look Presentable

Don't delight in curling your hair with tongs,
don't smooth your legs with sharp pumice stone.
Leave that to those who celebrate Cybele the Mother,
howling wildly in the Phrygian manner.
Male beauty's better for neglect: Theseus
carried off Ariadne, without a single pin in his hair.
Phaedra loved Hippolytus: he was unsophisticated:
Adonis was dear to the goddess, and fit for the woods.
Neatness pleases, a body tanned from exercise:
a well fitting and spotless toga's good:
no stiff shoe-thongs, your buckles free of rust,
no sloppy feet for you, swimming in loose hide:

don't mar your neat hair with an evil haircut:
let an expert hand trim your head and beard.
And no long nails, and make sure they're dirt-free:
and no hairs please, sprouting from your nostrils.
No bad breath exhaled from unwholesome mouth:
don't offend the nose like a herdsman or his flock.
Leave the rest for impudent women to do,
or whoever's the sort of man who needs a man.

Book I Part XV: At Dinner Be Bold

Ah, Bacchus calls to his poet: he helps lovers too,
and supports the fire with which he is inflamed.
The frantic Cretan girl wandered the unknown sands,
that the waters of tiny sea-borne Dia showed.
Just as she was, from sleep, veiled by her loose robe,
barefoot, with her yellow hair unbound,
she called, for cruel Theseus, to the unhearing waves,
her gentle cheeks wet with tears of shame.
She called, and wept as well, but both became her,
she was made no less beautiful by her tears.
Now striking her sweet breast with her hands, again and again,
she cried: 'That faithless man's gone: what of me, now?
What will happen to me?' she cried: and the whole shore
echoed to the sound of cymbals and frenzied drums.
She fainted in terror, her next words were stifled:
no sign of blood in her almost lifeless body.
Behold! The Bacchantes with loose streaming hair:
Behold! The wanton Satyrs, a crowd before the god:
Behold! Old Silenus, barely astride his swaybacked mule,
clutching tightly to its mane in front.
While he pursues the Bacchae, the Bacchae flee and return,
as the rascal urges the mount on with his staff.
He slips from his long-eared mule and falls headfirst:
the Satyrs cry: 'Rise again, father, rise,'
Now the God in his chariot, wreathed with vines,
curbing his team of tigers, with golden reins:
the girl's voice and colour and Theseus all lost:
three times she tried to run, three times fear held her back.
She shook, like a slender stalk of wheat stirred by the wind,
and trembled like a light reed in a marshy pool.
To whom the god said: 'See, I come, more faithful in love:
have no fear: Cretan, you'll be bride to Bacchus.
Take the heavens for dowry: be seen as heavenly stars:
and guide the anxious sailor often to your Cretan Crown.'
He spoke, and leapt from the chariot, lest she feared
his tigers: the sand yielded under his feet:
clasped in his arms (she had no power to struggle),
he carried her away: all's easily possible to a god.
Some sing 'O Hymenaeus', some 'Bacchus, euhoel!'
So on the sacred bed the god and his bride meet.
When Bacchus's gifts are set before you then,
and you find a girl sharing your couch,
pray to the father of feasts and nocturnal rites
to command the wine to bring your head no harm.
It's alright here to speak many secret things,

with hidden words she'll feel were spoken for her alone:
and write sweet nothings in the film of wine,
so your girl can read them herself on the table:
and gaze in her eyes with eyes confessing fire:
you should often have silent words and speaking face.
Be the first to snatch the cup that touched her lips,
and where she drank from, that is where you drink:
and whatever food her fingers touch, take that,
and as you take it, touch hers with your hand.
Let it be your wish besides to please the girl's husband:
it'll be more useful to you to make friends.
If you cast lots for drinking, give him the better draw:
give him the garland you were crowned with.
Though he's below you or beside you, let him always be served first:
don't hesitate to second whatever he says.
It's a safe well-trodden path to deceive in a friend's name,
though it's a safe well-trodden path, it's a crime.
That way the procurer procures far too much,
and reckons to see to more than he was charged with.
You'll be given sure limits for drinking by me:
so pay attention to your mind and feet.
Most of all beware of starting a drunken squabble,
and fists far too ready for a rough fight.
Eurytion the Centaur died, made foolish by the wine:
food and drink are fitter for sweet jests.
If you've a voice, sing: if your limbs are supple, dance:
and please, with whatever you do that's pleasing.
And though drunkenness is harmful, it's useful to pretend:
make your sly tongue stammer with lispings sounds,
then, whatever you say or do that seems too forward,
it will be thought excessive wine's to blame.
And speak well of your lady, speak well of the one she sleeps with:
but silently in your thoughts wish the man ill.
Then when the table's cleared, the guests are free,
the throng will give you access to her and room.
Join the crowd, and softly approach her,
let fingers brush her thigh, and foot touch foot.
Now's the time to speak to her: boorish modesty
fly far from here: Chance and Venus help the daring.
Not from my rules your eloquence will come:
desire her enough, you'll be fluent yourself.
Your's to play the lover, imitate wounds with words:
use whatever skill you have to win her belief.
Don't think it's hard: each think's herself desired:
the very worst take's pleasure in her looks.
Yet often the imitator begins to love in truth,
often, what was once imagined comes to be.
O, be kinder to the ones who feign it, girls:
true love will come, out of what was false.
Now secretly surprise her mind with flatteries,
as clear water undermines the hanging bank.
Never weary of praising her face, her hair,
her elegant fingers, and her slender feet.
Even the chaste like their beauty to be commended:
her form to even the virgin's pleasing and dear.
Why is losing the contest in the Phrygian woods

a cause of shame to Juno and Pallas still?
Juno's peacock shows his much-praised plumage:
if you watch in silence, he'll hide his wealth again.
Race-horses between races on the testing course,
love it when necks are patted, manes are combed.

Book I Part XVI: Promise and Deceive

Don't be shy of promising: promises entice girls:
add any gods you like as witness to what you swear.
Jupiter on high laughs at lovers' perjuries,
and orders Aeolus's winds to carry them into the void.
Jupiter used to swear by the Styx, falsely, to Juno:
now he looks favourably on his own example.
Gods are useful: as they're useful, let's think they're there:
take wine and incense to the ancient altars:
indifferent calm and it's like, apathy, don't chain them:
live innocently: the divine is close at hand:
pay what you owe, hold dutifully to agreements:
commit no fraud: let your hands be free from blood.
Delude only women, if you're wise, with impunity:
where truth's more to be guarded against than fraud.
Deceive deceivers: for the most part an impious tribe:
let them fall themselves into the traps they've set.
They say in Egypt the life-giving waters failed
in the fields: and there were nine years of drought,
then Thrasius came to Busiris, and said that Jove
might be propitiated by shedding a stranger's blood.
Busiris told him: 'You become Jove's first victim,
and you be the stranger to give Egypt water.'
And Phalaris roasted impetuous Perillus's body
in the brazen bull: the unhappy creator was first to fill his work.
Both cases were just: for there's no fairer law
than that the murderous maker should perish by his art.
As liars by liars are rightfully deceived,
wounded by their own example, let women grieve.

Book I Part XVII: Tears, Kisses, and Take the Lead

And tears help: tears will move a stone:
let her see your damp cheeks if you can.
If tears (they don't always come at the right time)
fail you, touch your eyes with a wet hand.
What wise man doesn't mingle tears with kisses?
Though she might not give, take what isn't given.
Perhaps she'll struggle, and then say 'you're wicked':
struggling she still wants, herself, to be conquered.
Only, take care her lips aren't bruised by snatching,
and that she can't complain that you were harsh.
Who takes a kiss, and doesn't take the rest,
deserves to lose all that were granted too.
How much short of your wish are you after that kiss?
Ah me, that was boorishness stopped you not modesty.
Though you call it force: it's force that pleases girls: what delights
is often to have given what they wanted, against their will.
She who is taken in love's sudden onslaught

is pleased, and finds wickedness is a tribute.
 And she who might have been forced, and escapes unscathed,
 will be saddened, though her face pretends delight.
 Phoebe was taken by force: force was offered her sister:
 and both, when raped, were pleased with those who raped them.
 Though the tale's known, it's still worth repeating,
 how the girl of Scyros mated Achilles the hero.
 Now the lovely goddess had given her fatal bribe
 to defeat the other two beneath Ida's slopes:
 now a daughter-in-law had come to Priam
 from an enemy land: a Greek wife in Trojan walls:
 all swore the prescribed oath to the injured husband:
 now one man's grief became a nation's cause.
 Shamefully, though he gave way to a mother's prayer,
 Achilles hid his manhood in women's clothes.
 What's this, Aeacides? Spinning's not your work:
 your search for fame's through Pallas's other arts.
 Why the basket? Your arm's meant to bear a shield:
 why does the hand that will slay Hector hold the yarn?
 Throw away the spindle wound laboriously with thread!
 The spear from Pelion's to be brandished by this hand.
 By chance a royal virgin shared the room:
 through her rape she learned he was a man.
 That she was truly won by force, we must think:
 but she still wanted to be won by force.
 She often cried: 'Stop!' afterwards, when Achilles hurried on:
 now he'd taken up stronger weapons than the distaff.
 Where's that force now? Why do you restrain
 the perpetrator of your rape, Deidamia?
 No doubt as there's a sort of shame in having started first,
 so it's pleasant to have what someone else has started.
 Ah! The youth has too much faith in his own beauty,
 if he waits until she asks him first.
 The man must approach first: speak the words of entreaty:
 she courteously receives his flattering prayers.
 To win her, ask her: she only wants to be asked:
 give her the cause and the beginning of your longing.
 Jupiter went as a suppliant to the heroines of old:
 no woman ever seduced great Jupiter.
 If you find she disdains the advent of your prayerful sighs,
 leave off what you've begun, retrace your steps.
 What shuns them, they desire the more: they hate what's there:
 remove her loathing by pursuing less.
 The hoped-for love should not always be declared:
 introduce desire hidden in the name of friendship.
 I've seen the most severe of women fooled this way:
 he who once was a worshipper, became a lover.

Book I Part XVIII: Be Pale: Be Wary of Your Friends

A pale colour would shame a sailor on the ocean wave,
 who's blackened by the rays of the sun:
 and shame the farmer who turns the soil with curved plough
 and heavy harrow, underneath the heavens.
 And you who seek the athlete's crown, you too
 would be ashamed if all your body was white.

Let all lovers be pale: it's the colour fitting for love:
it suits, though fools have thought it of no value.
Orion wandered pale, for Side, in the woods,
Daphnis was pale for his reluctant Naiad.
Let your leanness show your heart: don't think it a shame
to slip a cape over your shining hair:
Let youthful limbs be worn away by sleepless nights
and care, and the grief of a great love.
To gain your desire, be miserable,
and those who see you can say 'You're in love.'
Should I lament, warn you perhaps that right and wrong
are confused by all? Friendship and loyalty empty words.
Ah me, it's not safe to praise your love to a friend:
if he believes your praise, he'll steal her himself.
But Patroclus never disgraced Achilles's bed:
and how modest Phaedra was with Pirithous.
Pylades loved Hermione, just as Phoebus Pallas,
or as Castor was twin to you Pollux.
Who hopes for that, hopes for apple-bearing tamarisks,
and looks for honey in the middle of the stream.
All delight in what's shameful: care only for their pleasures,
and are pleased too when trouble comes to others.
Ah it's a crime! It's not their rivals that lovers fear:
flee those you think are friends, and you'll be safe.
Beware of brothers, relatives, and dear friends:
that crowd offers you true cause for fear.

Book I Part XIX: Be Flexible

I've done, but there's diversity in women's
hearts: a thousand minds require a thousand methods.
One soil doesn't bear all crops: vines here
are good, olives there: this teems with healthy wheat.
There are as many manners of heart as kinds of face:
a wise man will adapt to many forms,
and like Proteus now, melt into the smooth waters,
now be a tree, now a lion, now a bristling boar.
These fish are speared, those caught on a hook:
others trawled in billowing nets with straining ropes.
One mode won't suit you for every age-group:
the older hinds spot a trap from further off.
If the simple find you cunning, and the modest crude,
the poor things will straightaway mistrust themselves.
So it happens that she who fears to trust an honest man,
falls to the embrace of some low rascal.
Part of my task is left: part of the labour's done.
Moor my boat here to the anchor-chains.