

# The Satyricon of Petronius

By T. Petronius Arbiter

After this, when all of us had wished him Health and Happiness, Trimalchio, turning to Niceros, “You were wont.” said he, “to be a good Companion, but what’s the matter we get not a word from ye now? Let me entreat ye, as you would see me Happy, do not break an old Custom.”

Niceros, pleased with the frankness of his Friend “Let me never thrive,” said he, “if I am not ready to caper out of my Skin, to see you in so good a Humour; therefore what I say shall be all Mirth, tho’ I am afraid those Grave Fopps may laugh but let them look to ‘t, I’ll go on nevertheless, for what am I the worse for any one Swearing? I had rather they laugh at what I say, than at my self.”

Thus when he spake— —he began this Tale:—

“While I was yet a Servant we liv’d in a narrow Lane, now the House of Gavilla: There, as the Gods would have it, I fell in Love with Tarentius’s Wife; he kept an Eating-house. Ye all knew Melissa Tarentina, a pretty little Punching-block, and withal Beautiful; but (so help me Hercules) I minded her not so much for the matter of the point of that, as that she was good-humour’d; if I asked her any thing, she never deny’d me; and what Money I had, I trusted her with it, nor did she ever fail me when I’d occasion. It so happened, that a she-companion of hers had dy’d in the Country, and she was gone thither, how to come at her I could not tell, but a Friend is seen at a dead lift, it also happened my Master was gone to Capua to dispatch somewhat or other: I laid hold of the opportunity, and persuaded mine Host to take an Evenings Walk of four or five Miles out of Town, for he was a stout Fellow, and as bold as a Devil. The Moon shone as bright as Day, and about Cockcrowing we fell in with a Burying-place, and certain Monuments of the Dead: my Man loitered behind me a star-gazing, and I sitting expecting him, fell a Singing and numbering them, when looking round me, what should I see but mine Host stript stark-naked, and his Cloaths lying by the High-way-side. The sight struck me every where, and I stood as if I had been dead; but he Piss’d round his Cloaths, and of a sudden was turned to a Wolf. Don’t think I jest, I value no Man’s Estate at that rate, as to tell a Lye. But as I was saying, after he was turned to a Wolf, he set up a Howl, and fled to the Woods. At first I knew not where I was, till going to take up his Cloaths, I found them also turn’d to Stone. Another Man would have dy’d for fear, but I drew my Sword, and slaying all the Ghosts that came in my way, lighted at last on the place where my Mistress was: I entred the first Door; my eyes were sunk in my Head, the Sweat ran off me by more streams than one, and I was just breathing my last without thought of recovery; when my Melissa coming to me, began to wonder why I’d be walking so late; and ‘if.’ said she, ‘you had come a little sooner, you might have done us a kindness, for a Wolf came into the Farm, and has made Butchers work enough among the Cattle, but tho’ he got off, he has no reason to laugh, for a Servant of ours ran him through the Neck with a Pitch-fork.’ As soon as I had heard her, I could not hold open my Eyes any longer, and ran home by Daylight, like a Vintner whose House had been robb’d: But coming by the place where the Cloaths were turned to Stone, I saw nothing but a Puddle of Blood; and when I got home, found mine Host lying a-bed like an Oxe in his Stall, and a Chirurgeon dressing his Neck. I understood afterwards he was a Fellow that could change his Skin; but from that day forward, could never eat a bit of Bread with him, no if you’d have kill’d me. Let them that don’t believe me, examine the truth of it; may your good Angels plague me as I tell ye a Lye.”