

# The Satyricon

by Gaius Petronius, adapted by Martin Foreman

## Characters

PETRONIUS (M, 35-60)

TRIMALCHIO (M, 35-60) *also playing BACCHUS*

ENCOLPIUS (M, 20s)

ASCYLTO (M, 20s)

GITON (M, under 20)

**Actors** (any sex / age)

\*\* identified as A B C D E F G when 21st century and their roles (below) when 1st century

\*\* all Actors are onstage throughout the play providing background to the main scene

## Roles (M)

AGAMEMNON (scene 2)

LICHAS (5, 6, 14, 15)

MAN (8)

EUMOLPUS (11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

CONSTABLE (12,13)

## Roles (M/X)

(SHIP'S) MATE (6, 7, 14)

## Roles (F)

OLD WOMAN (3)

TRYPHAENA (5,14)

DORIS (7, 8)

QUARTILLA (8)

DAPHNE (9)

FORTUNATA (9)

WORSHIPPERS (8)

CHRYSIS (16)

CIRCE (16)

PRIESTESS (16)

## Roles (X)

BROTHEL / BATHHOUSE CLIENTS (3, 12)

INNKEEPER (5)

CROWD / STALLHOLDERS\* / BYSTANDERS (2, 7, 16)

PRIAPUS (8)

STEWARD (9)

SLAVES (9)

SAILORS (14)

SOLDIER (18)

\*VEGETABLES (=night watchman), BUNS, MEAT, FRUIT

## SCENE 3: A STREET THEN A BROTHEL

ENCOLPIUS            Now, was it that way I came? Or that way? We came out, turned left, then right - or was it second right? Giton was hungry and he was looking for . . .

OLD WOMAN            You all right, dearie?

ENCOLPIUS            No, I'm lost.

OLD WOMAN            Where do you want to be?

ENCOLPIUS            Back at my lodgings. You don't know where they are, do you?

OLD WOMAN            Me? We've only just met, dearie.

ENCOLPIUS            It's a tall building. Lot of children running around outside. Landlady name of Drusilla.

OLD WOMAN            Drusilla? I know her. Tall, pretty, blonde, figure like a goddess?

ENCOLPIUS            No, she's short, fat, dark and got two hairy moles on her face.

OLD WOMAN            That's the one. Lovely girl.

ENCOLPIUS            She's as old as you are.

OLD WOMAN            That's what I mean. You come with me, dearie. She's not far.

ENCOLPIUS            She must be. It took me an hour to get here.

OLD WOMAN            You must have come the long way, dearie.

ENCOLPIUS            I came straight down that road.

OLD WOMAN            Like I said. You must have followed the sewer, it winds all over the place. You always know where you are by the stink. (*sniffs*) Wind's in the west again.

ENCOLPIUS            Are you sure you know her?

OLD WOMAN            Who?

ENCOLPIUS            Drusilla!

OLD WOMAN            Of course, I do, dearie. You come with me, I'll take you to her. What's your name?

ENCOLPIUS            Encolpius. What's yours?

OLD WOMAN            Drusilla.

ENCOLPIUS            That's my landlady's name.

OLD WOMAN            So it is, what a coincidence.

ENCOLPIUS            Where are you taking me?

OLD WOMAN            I told you, back to your place.

ENCOLPIUS            This doesn't look like it.

OLD WOMAN            It's a short cut. In you go.

ENCOLPIUS            This isn't the entrance.

OLD WOMAN            We're round the back. Some people prefer the back passage.

*SFX*                    *Imperceptibly at first, but growing louder, the sound of various acts of love-making*

ENCOLPIUS            Are you sure?

OLD WOMAN            Of course I'm sure. I've lived here all my life. You can trust me. I'm as honest as the day I was born. The ides of March, if I remember.

ENCOLPIUS            Well . . . I don't recognise this place.

OLD WOMAN            It's a bit dark here. Some of them like it like that.

ENCOLPIUS            Some of who?

OLD WOMAN            Clients.

ENCOLPIUS            Ow!

OLD WOMAN            Sorry, don't know my own strength. Just being friendly.

ENCOLPIUS            What are you doing? Get off!

OLD WOMAN            Thought you might like to thank me.

ENCOLPIUS            Thank me? For what?

OLD WOMAN            Bringing you home.

ENCOLPIUS            This isn't home.

OLD WOMAN            I'll get you there. Just a little business first.

ENCOLPIUS            What business?

OLD WOMAN            This business.

ENCOLPIUS            I'm not interested.

OLD WOMAN            That's what they all say, dearie. Just give me time to get down to it and you'll be in ecstasy.

ENCOLPIUS            I'd rather be in my lodgings.

OLD WOMAN            Just a couple of sesterces. It's worth it, I promise.

*SFX*                    *Love-making, flagellation and other unidentifiable noises now loud*

*ENCOLPIUS fights off OLD WOMAN while prostitutes and clients gather round. Meanwhile, ASCYLLOS has wandered in at the other side of the building and is pursued by an old man. ASCYLLOS and ENCOLPIUS back into each other. Business whereby the two (mostly ASCYLLOS, with ENCOLPIUS not very helpful) fight everyone else and escape outside.*

## SCENE 5 (part): AN INN

INNKEEPER           What were you thinking?

PETRONIUS           Excuse me?

INNKEEPER           You were watching them. You weren't happy.

PETRONIUS           I was trying to remember.

INNKEEPER           Remember what?

PETRONIUS           If I wrote that bit.

INNKEEPER           What bit?

PETRONIUS           That bit - Lichas and Tryphaena picking up the boys. So much of my work was lost. Other writers just fill the gaps with whatever comes into their heads.

INNKEEPER           So you're Petronius!

PETRONIUS           Yes.

INNKEEPER           I've been longing to meet you.

PETRONIUS           It feels like my work, but I'm not sure.

INNKEEPER           You're the one telling these stories.

PETRONIUS           Most of them.

INNKEEPER           I've got a question.

PETRONIUS           What is it?

INNKEEPER           What about me?

PETRONIUS           What about you?

INNKEEPER           What happens to me, the innkeeper?

PETRONIUS           Happens? Nothing.

INNKEEPER           Nothing?

PETRONIUS           No, you just slip back into the background and we never hear from you again. Well, not the innkeeper. We see the actor again.

INNKEEPER           Have I got a name?

PETRONIUS           No.

INNKEEPER           A gender?

PETRONIUS           Does it matter?

INNKEEPER           Not really, but it still isn't fair.

PETRONIUS           What isn't?

INNKEEPER All these characters come in then disappear and you wonder what happens to them and you never know.

PETRONIUS It can't be helped. You can't tell everyone's story.

INNKEEPER Like the slaves.

PETRONIUS What slaves?

INNKEEPER The slaves at Tryphaena's house. The ones who cater to every need. Will we meet them? Get to know their names? What their lives are like?

PETRONIUS No, they won't appear. They're just slaves.

INNKEEPER So they're not important. Slaves are never important.

PETRONIUS Oh they are, but not to this story. To themselves, to someone else. There'll be other slaves.

INNKEEPER Will we hear their stories?

PETRONIUS Maybe.

INNKEEPER Their names?

PETRONIUS I'm not sure.

INNKEEPER But whatever happens, people'll remember you.

PETRONIUS Yes.

INNKEEPER Just for telling stories.

PETRONIUS And for my work for the Emperor. And for the way I die.

INNKEEPER Ah.

PETRONIUS It's time for you to go. A bit of advice. Next time, serve fresher bread.

INNKEEPER But there isn't going to be a next time.

PETRONIUS No. Pity about that.

*Exit PETRONIUS and INNKEEPER*

## SCENE 8 (part): NIGHT WORSHIP

PETRONIUS            I put that scene in for the Emperor. He enjoyed slapstick.

A misunderstood young man, Nero. Good-looking, sensitive, interested in the arts. Decent singing voice. Even wrote poems. They weren't bad.

Problem was, he became Emperor too young. Sixteen. Didn't know how to rule. Thought if he threw them bread and circuses everyone would be happy. Worked for a while but . . .

Now, he's remembered as mad and vicious. Killed his mother, rejoiced when Rome burned. That's not true - he tried to save the city. As for killing his mother, well, he had his reasons. We all do.

Next: Bacchus and Priapus. The god of wine and the god of fertility. Bacchus, fat, drunk and falling off a donkey. Priapus, with the enormous - and I mean gigantic, huge - genital organ.

Some men say it's a torture because it never goes down. Some men say it's a blessing because it never goes down. Women, I believe, are equally divided on the matter.

Once a year, women worship Bacchus and Priapus in secret. Men don't know what goes on at these ceremonies but many are keen to find out.

*ENCOLPIUS and ASCYLLOS watch from the sidelines*

MAN                    You all get naked, don't you?

QUARTILLA            None of your business.

MAN                    And drunk?

WORSHIPPER D        Perhaps.

MAN                    And you dance.

WORSHIPPER A        It's a religious ceremony.

MAN                    With your tits bobbing about.

QUARTILLA            Hand me that ribbon. Thanks.

MAN                    Can I come?

WORSHIPPER B        No.

MAN                    I'll keep very quiet.

WORSHIPPER C        No.

MAN                    I won't tell anyone.

WORSHIPPERS, QUARTILLA & DORIS    No!

MAN                    I could come if I were a woman.

QUARTILLA            Yes.

MAN So I am a woman.

WORSHIPPER D No you're not.

MAN Yes I am.

DORIS No, you're not.

MAN If I say I'm a woman, I'm a woman. It's the law.

WORSHIPPER A No, it isn't.

MAN Well, it should be. Otherwise you're discriminating against me. I insist on coming with you. As a woman. Definitely a woman. Not a man.

QUARTILLA Come if you want. Call yourself what you like. And if we women see you, I promise you'll come home not so much as a woman but much less of a man.

*The WORSHIPPERS (inc MAN) form circles around BACCHUS and PRIAPUS. The chanting gets stronger and the gestures obscene. ENCOLPIUS joins in while ASCYLTOSS hangs back. At the peak everyone throws themselves to the ground. ENCOLPIUS lands across DORIS. When ENCOLPIUS tries to get up DORIS pulls him back down by the groin.*

*ENCOLPIUS screeches.*

WORSHIPPER B What's that?

DORIS A man. I have him.

QUARTILLA A man!

WORSHIPPER C Punish him!

MAN *(deep voice)* Castrate him! *(high-pitched voice)* Castrate him!

DORIS I know you.

ENCOLPIUS No, you don't.

WORSHIPPER A Grab him!

MAN I've got him.

QUARTILLA No, you haven't. That's me.

MAN Oh, right.

WORSHIPPER D Sounds like there's more than one man here.

MAN *(high-pitched)* No, there isn't.

WORSHIPPER C Let's check.

MAN I'm fine. Check her.

*More confusion, at the end of which the MAN runs away. ENCOLPIUS breaks free but lingers nearby.*

WORSHIPPER D Gone! Heretics! Blasphemers!

WORSHIPPER B May they rot in Hades!

DORIS I recognised one of them, a low-life, Encolpius, hangs around the market.

QUARTILLA Don't worry, we can deal with him.

WORSHIPPER A Like this? (*makes a cutting gesture*)

WORSHIPPER C Could be a waste of a good man - and it's over so quick.

WORSHIPPER B Can't leave him unpunished.

QUARTILLA There's always the curse . . .

WORSHIPPER D Not the curse!

QUARTILLA Yes, the curse. Begin.

WORSHIPPER D Hubble, bubble, toil and . . .

QUARTILLA Wrong curse!

WORSHIPPER D Sorry.

*As they chant ENCOLPIUS is at first intrigued then hypnotised by the spell.*

QUARTILLA Bacchus lord of song and wine  
Priap' lord of this your shrine

WORSHIPPERS Hear your faithful servants' prayer  
(*inc DORIS*) Our loyalty to you we swear

QUARTILLA Hear your faithful servants' prayer

WORSHIPPERS Our loyalty to you we swear.

QUARTILLA Curse the man who saw us here

WORSHIPPERS His sacrilege will cost him dear

QUARTILLA What once stood proud must now lie low

WORSHIPPERS What once was great must never grow

QUARTILLA Lust will come but never fire

WORSHIPPERS Shame will always quench desire

ALL Curse the man who saw us here  
His sacrilege will cost him dear  
Lust will come but never fire  
Shame will always quench desire

*ENCOLPIUS collapses unconscious.*

WORSHIPPER A The curse is laid?

QUARTILLA The curse is laid.

WORSHIPPER C Will he ever recover?

QUARTILLA            That depends.  
WORSHIPPER D        On what?  
QUARTILLA            On how desperate he is to get his manhood back.  
WORSHIPPER B        Will he suffer?  
QUARTILLA            He will suffer. In many unpleasant ways.  
WORSHIPPER C        He'll think he's going through hell  
QUARTILLA            He doesn't know what real hell is.  
WORSHIPPER B        Few men do.

**ACT TWO opening**

*PETRONIUS is watching the Actors cleaning / setting the stage. ASCYLLOS, ENCOLPIUS and GITON are resting*

- A                    You all right, love?
- E                    I'm okay. (*assuming that E played FEMALE SLAVE in previous scene*)
- D                    Tough scene, that.
- E                    Sometimes I can't get it out of my head. Especially the baby.
- C                    Take a rest. We'll finish this.
- E                    You sure?
- B                    Aye. Come for a drink afterwards.
- E                    Might do.
- B                    Would do you good.
- PETRONIUS        I don't know where that slave came from. I didn't create her. I wrote a comedy, not a tragedy. People want to laugh, not cry.
- D                    You wrote about life - and all life comes to an end. Sometimes violently.
- PETRONIUS        I suppose it does.
- Are we ready?
- C                    All yours.

**SCENE 10: A LODGING-HOUSE**

- PETRONIUS        (*to audience*) Everyone back? Glasses full, bladders empty? Then I'll begin. We're in another town. Here's Encolpius where you'd expect - in the Forum, lecturing the crowd.

*ENCOLPIUS making a speech. The crowd jeers*

- PETRONIUS (cont)    Back in the lodging-house, Ascylltos and Giton are doing what young men do. With a woman, with a man, or on their own depending on what's, so to speak, to hand.

*ASCYLLOS and GITON embracing. PETRONIUS withdraws.*

*ENCOLPIUS gives the crowd the finger and runs away.*

*ASCYLLOS and GITON still entwined. Enter ENCOLPIUS out of breath.*

- ENCOLPIUS )                    You!
- ASCYLLOS )                    *together*                    It's not . . .
- GITON        )                    You're back.

## SCENE 12 (part): A BATHHOUSE

PETRONIUS Perhaps that scene was funnier on the page than on the stage.

ENCOLPIUS I'm not in the mood to laugh.

I still can't find him. Get him back for me.

PETRONIUS Giton? I can't help you. I don't know where he is. Characters take on a life of their own, make their own decisions. I merely observe.

*They sit in silence.*

ENCOLPIUS Why did you write The Satyricon?

PETRONIUS To make people laugh. Show them how ridiculous the Trimalchios and Fortunatas and Eumolpuses of the world are.

And vanity.

ENCOLPIUS Vanity?

PETRONIUS The Satyricon was my Odyssey.

ENCOLPIUS With me as Ulysses.

PETRONIUS Men on an endless journey but with no heroes or villains, no monsters or gods. Just life. In the gutter, not the stars.

ENCOLPIUS I don't want the stars or the gutter. I just want Giton . . .

PETRONIUS Ah, but does he want you? He's young, needs to see the world.

ENCOLPIUS He can see the world with me. Without him, I'm nothing.

B We're getting bored over here. Can we forget the self-pity?

ENCOLPIUS It's my story! Self-pity is part of who I am. Have you never been in love?

E Love is it, or lust?

ENCOLPIUS A bit of both, I suppose.

B Fucking get on with it!

ENCOLPIUS If it gets me back Giton . . .

*PETRONIUS and ENCOLPIUS stand*

A Which scene is it?

PETRONIUS Let's make it the bath-house.

*The ACTORS get into position*

D Why the bath-house?

PETRONIUS It's where men meet, do business of every kind. Women too, sometimes, of little modesty. Sooner or later, everyone goes to the bath-house.

*PETRONIUS withdraws. GITON is leaning disconsolately against a wall.*

## SCENE 13 |(part): THE LODGING-HOUSE

ENCOLPIUS            You all right?

GITON                Yes.

ENCOLPIUS            You want anything?

GITON                No.

ENCOLPIUS            Not even food?

GITON                No.

ENCOLPIUS            You must be ill.

GITON                Just tired.

*SFX*                    *hammering at the door*

ENCOLPIUS            Who's there?

CONSTABLE (off)      Open in the name of the law!

ENCOLPIUS            What law?

CONSTABLE (off)      Kidnapping. I have reason to believe that you have on the premises property belonging to another citizen.

ENCOLPIUS            What property?

CONSTABLE (off)      A slave by the name of Giton.

ASCYLLOS (off)        I know he's in there.

ENCOLPIUS            *(whisper, to GITON)* Hide!

*GITON tries various places to hide*

ENCOLPIUS (cont)     *(loudly)* He isn't here!

CONSTABLE (off)      I need to inspect the premises.

ENCOLPIUS            You can't!

ASCYLLOS (off)        It's me, your brother!

ENCOLPIUS            I don't have a brother.

ASCYLLOS (off)        Your best pal.

ENCOLPIUS            I don't have a best pal.

ASCYLLOS (off)        Come on! You can't still be mad at me.

ENCOLPIUS            Oh, I can. I fucking well can.

CONSTABLE (off)      Let us in or we'll break the door down.

*SFX*                    *sound of door almost breaking*

ENCOLPIUS            All right, come in.

*CONSTABLE attempts to enter but is blocked by ENCOLPIUS*

ENCOLPIUS No-one here. You can see. Bye.

CONSTABLE Hold on! Whose leg is that?

ENCOLPIUS Leg? What leg? Oh that leg. It's mine. Spare, in case I break one. Ancient Rome, lots of accidents, never know when a spare leg comes in handy.

CONSTABLE There are two of them.

ENCOLPIUS It's good to have a spare of a spare.

*CONSTABLE forces his way in, followed by ASCYLLOS. CONSTABLE half pulls GITON out from his hiding place.*

CONSTABLE *(to ASCYLLOS)* Is this him?

ASCYLLOS Aye, I'd recognise that arse anywhere.

*The rest of GITON comes out*

CONSTABLE *(to ENCOLPIUS)* I arrest you on a charge of kidnapping.

ENCOLPIUS Hold on! He came here of his own accord, didn't you?

GITON Yes, I did.

ASCYLLOS But you'd gone with me, hadn't you?

GITON Yes, I had.

ENCOLPIUS But you didn't want to, did you?

GITON No. I didn't. Want what?

ENCOLPIUS To go with him.

GITON Yes, I didn't.

CONSTABLE Didn't what?

GITON Whatever. Can I get something to eat?

ENCOLPIUS Now you're hungry?!

CONSTABLE *(to ASCYLLOS)* Are you pressing charges?

*ASCYLLOS and ENCOLPIUS look at each other*

ASCYLLOS No, I'm not.

CONSTABLE Good, because I don't have time for this. I have two desperate, hardened, vicious, violent criminals to catch. They are said to be somewhere in the town.

ENCOLPIUS Anyone we know?

CONSTABLE Names of Ascylltos and Encolpius.

*Predictable reaction from ASCYLLOS and ENCOLPIUS*

GITON These two . .

*ENCOLPIUS kicks him*

GITON                    These two don't know them.  
 ENCOLPIUS            What're they charged with?  
 CONSTABLE            Theft.  
 ASCYLLOS              Theft?  
 CONSTABLE            A pouch of gold from sea-captain Lichas.  
 GITON                   I remember that . . .

*ASCYLLOS kicks him*

GITON                    . . . I don't remember anything.  
 ENCOLPIUS            Hardened criminals?  
 CONSTABLE            Either that or idiots. No-one steals from Lichas and lives.  
 ASCYLLOS              If that's the case, they'll have long gone. Be half way to Gaul by now . . .  
 ENCOLPIUS            . . . crossed the Channel . . .  
 ASCYLLOS              . . . and freezing their balls off in Caledonia.  
 CONSTABLE            If you see them, let me know. There's a reward in it.  
 GITON                   How much?

*Both ASCYLLOS and ENCOLPIUS kick him*

GITON (cont)           Cause we don't need the money.  
 CONSTABLE            *(making to leave)* Well, if everyone's happy . . .  
 ASCYLLOS              Oh, we are.  
 ENCOLPIUS            Ecstatic.  
 GITON                   I'm not.

*CONSTABLE turns back*

I'm hungry.

*CONSTABLE exits*

ENCOLPIUS            You weren't thinking of betraying us, were you?  
 GITON                   I wasn't thinking.  
 ENCOLPIUS            That's normal.  
 GITON                   I'm hungry!  
 ASCYLLOS              That's even more so.

## SCENE 16 (part): CROTON MARKET

*SFX the market in the background as CIRCE and her slave CHRYSIS enter; CIRCE sends CHRYSIS to ENCOLPIUS.*

CHRYSIS                    Good day, young master.

ENCOLPIUS                Good day to you.

CHRYSIS                    Cocky young fellow, aren't you?

ENCOLPIUS                Cocky? I wish.

CHRYSIS                    I have a customer for you.

ENCOLPIUS                A customer?

CHRYSIS                    My mistress. She goes for types like you. Low-lifes. The dregs of society.

ENCOLPIUS                That's flattering.

CHRYSIS                    She sees a mule-driver stinking of sweat and the juices start flowing. A hairy bare-arsed kitchen slave covered in grease is her idea of heaven.

ENCOLPIUS                No accounting for taste.

CHRYSIS                    Me, on the other hand, I wouldn't touch a slave. I know where they've been. A nobleman, that's my fancy. I won't sit on the lap of anyone who hasn't got a pedigree as long as my arm.

ENCOLPIUS                Do you have much luck?

CHRYSIS                    Now and then. Anyway, you wait here.

*CIRCE comes over and CHRYSIS retreats*

CIRCE                      I am Circe.

ENCOLPIUS                The enchantress and minor goddess who bore the wanderer Ulysses two sons and who can turn men into pigs?

CIRCE                      No, just a beautiful woman brought into this story to bring spice into your life.

ENCOLPIUS                So no enchantress, but you are enchanting me.

CIRCE                      You are in the market, aren't you?

ENCOLPIUS                *(looking around)* We both are.

CIRCE                      I mean for a girlfriend. I saw your boyfriend, but that's not a problem is it?

ENCOLPIUS                Boyfriend? What boyfriend? Giton? A childhood fling. Over. Barely remember him.

CIRCE                      Don't his lips inflame you, doesn't his body arouse every passion in you?

ENCOLPIUS                Long time ago . . .

CIRCE                      And me? Do my lips inflame you? My body arouse your passion? Take me in your arms. Show me your love.

ENCOLPIUS                We're not alone.

CIRCE Yes, we are. No-one can see us. The market has gone.

ENCOLPIUS It has a habit of doing that.

CIRCE Your beloved boy is nowhere around.

*She kisses him passionately and he responds; they become more physical until . . .*

What's the problem? My kissing? No-one has complained before. My breath? I chewed mint all morning. My underarms? Do you think I didn't wash?

ENCOLPIUS No, it's . . .

CIRCE It must be fear of your boy that's keeping you limp.

ENCOLPIUS Afraid of Giton? (*laughs ruefully*)

ALL (*softly*) Lust will come but never fire  
Shame will always quench desire

ENCOLPIUS I am cursed.

CIRCE You are cursed? What about me? The time I took to wash and dress this morning, wasted. Look at my robe - filthy. Because some little pansy pretended he could satisfy me. Now I have to sacrifice to Venus to beg her forgiveness.

*CIRCE storms off*

ENCOLPIUS You, prick, where've you gone? I can hardly see you. Bastard! Traitor! What have I done to deserve this? No wonder you're hiding. You should be fucking ashamed. Except you're not fucking anything! You've lost me Giton and I can't get you up for a girl. You're dragging me to hell when I should be in heaven. You're making me old when I'm still young. I should cut you off and throw you away.

*CHRYSIS returns*

CHRYSIS Psst!

ENCOLPIUS What is it?

CHRYSIS My mistress apologises for her temper. She says you are in great danger. If a man cannot respond to someone as beautiful as she, he is as good as dead. She wishes to save you from a life without life.

ENCOLPIUS How?

CHRYSIS She bids you come to her tomorrow, but first you must follow these instructions to give you strength. Tonight you must eat onions and snail heads without seasoning. Then sleep long and alone. In the morning rise at leisure, oil yourself moderately, do not wash, then return here at this time. My mistress and the priestess will meet you. You will then sacrifice yourself at the altar of love.

ENCOLPIUS Sacrifice??

*But CHRYSIS has gone*

*LIGHTING reflects the passing of time. The PRIESTESS and CIRCE enter, make symbolic preparations with CHRYSIS assisting as required, ending with CIRCE spreading her legs. Meanwhile:*

ENCOLPIUS (cont)     *(miming the actions)* Eat onions and snail heads? Yuch.

Sleep alone - well that's not difficult.

Rise, oil myself, do not wash *(sniffs his armpits)*.

Sacrifice myself? Why not? I have nothing left to live for.

PRIESTESS           Is the soldier ready for battle?

ENCOLPIUS          Uh . . .

PRIESTESS          Come forward, young man. Seek the god's favour.

ENCOLPIUS          Oh, Priapus, son of Bacchus, god of fields and fertility, hear my prayer.

Restore my strength, return my manhood. I shall not let your glory go unthanked. I shall sacrifice to you a horned goat, a litter of pigs, a cow with udder swollen with milk. The best wines will flood your temple and drunken young men displaying their virility will march in triumph round your shrine.

PRIESTESS          Amen! Unsheath the weapon. Let battle commence!

*ENCOLPIUS attempts to make love to CIRCE but*

ALL                   *(loud)* His sacrilege will cost him dear

*(louder)* Lust will come but never fire

*(loudest)* Shame will always quench desire

ENCOLPIUS          No! No! Priapus, I beg you!

CIRCE                He is as good as dead.

PRIESTESS          Then we must try the second cure.

ENCOLPIUS          The second? What is that?

PRIESTESS          Satyrion. *[NOT "Satyricon"]*

*She produces an evil-looking drink.*

Made of blood of goat, root of mandrake, Spanish fly and tiger's tooth.

And two bulbs of raw garlic.

ENCOLPIUS          Tasty (!)

PRIESTESS          You must down it in one.

ENCOLPIUS          I'll try anything. *(drinks and retches)*

PRIESTESS          Oh Venus, take pity on your acolyte and bestow your grace on this pitiful wretch who seeks to serve her.

CIRCE                Do you feel anything?

ENCOLPIUS Sick.

PRIESTESS Do you feel anything?

CIRCE *(her hand on ENCOLPIUS' groin)* No.

PRIESTESS The gods demand more.

ENCOLPIUS What?

PRIESTESS Hold him.

*CHRYSIS holds ENCOLPIUS as PRIESTESS starts whipping him with a branch.*

ENCOLPIUS Aagh!

CIRCE My poor boy. What torment you are suffering. But it is nothing compared to the torment of my aching, empty thighs.

ENCOLPIUS Aagh! Your torment is worse than mine? Ouch!

CIRCE You have bewitched me. Without your love, without your body I cannot live.

ENCOLPIUS OW! I'm sure you can. Stop! Please stop!

*PRIESTESS stops*

CIRCE Are you in rut?

ENCOLPIUS I'm in agony.

PRIESTESS We are only halfway through the treatment.

ENCOLPIUS I'm in rut! I'm in rut!

PRIESTESS We can see that you are not.

*The beating continues. ENCOLPIUS yelps with pain.*

CHRYSIS He has fainted.

CIRCE Slap him awake. If he will not honour me, he must honour the priestess.

*CHRYSIS and CIRCE manoeuvre ENCOLPIUS, half-conscious, onto the PRIESTESS. He wakes to find himself (not) making love to her.*

ENCOLPIUS Aagh! What nightmare is this?

PRIESTESS Bloody cheek. Get him off me.

*She considers*

We need the ultimate cure.

CIRCE What?

CHRYSIS What?

ENCOLPIUS What?

PRIESTESS *(drawing out a large leather dildo)* This.

ENCOLPIUS            Not that! Not that!

PRIESTESS            Do not worry, it is oiled.

ENCOLPIUS            I'm still worried.

PRIESTESS            With pepper seeds and nettle leaves.

ENCOLPIUS            I'm not hungry!

PRIESTESS            Hold him down.

*The action begins. ENCOLPIUS screams.*

ENCOLPIUS            I'm going through hell!

CIRCE                    He thinks he's in hell.

PRIESTESS            He doesn't know what real hell is.

CHRYSIS                Few men do.

*ENCOLPIUS continues screaming as*

ALL                    WHAT ONCE STOOD PROUD MUST NOW LIE LOW  
                          WHAT ONCE WAS GREAT MUST NEVER GROW  
                          LUST WILL COME BUT NEVER FIRE  
                          SHAME WILL ALWAYS QUENCH DESIRE

*LIGHTING dims to black*

## SCENE 18: PETRONIUS' DINNER

*Lines will be re-allocated to include Actors F and G*

*GITON and ENCOLPIUS in post-coital sleep, watched by PETRONIUS*

PETRONIUS Ah, youth. Wasted on the young.

*SOLDIER enters; ENCOLPIUS and GITON wake up slowly*

Who are you?

SOLDIER An emissary from the emperor.

PETRONIUS How is the boy?

SOLDIER The emperor Nero is no boy.

*ASCYLTOS wanders in*

PETRONIUS He's only twenty-six. Compared to me he's a boy. He'll be dead by the time he's thirty.

SOLDIER You are likely to be dead before him. He has given orders to detain you.

PETRONIUS Ah. Do you know why?

SOLDIER Not my business, sir.

PETRONIUS I suspect that oaf Tigellinus has gained the divine ear. He was always jealous of me.

*SOLDIER goes off. Over the next few lines the whole cast wander in*

ENCOLPIUS Detained? What does that mean?

ASCYLTOS What do you think?

PETRONIUS Art lasts, life does not.

ENCOLPIUS Seriously? What will you do?

PETRONIUS Do? It is late in the day. Shall we dine?

GITON Eat?

ASCYLTOS You haven't stopped stuffing yourself!

GITON So?

PETRONIUS Nothing ostentatious. A few friends, some wine, good conversation. See what's left of Trimalchio's feast. Ascyltos, bring me a knife.

*The cast assemble a dinner with PETRONIUS in the centre*

Cheer up! We're not at a funeral. My last supper should be one to remember. Your health, everyone.

*Mutters of "your health", "Cheers". Someone says "Long life" and is hissed by his neighbour.*

Someone, say something. You, Actors, what did you think of the stories?

D A bit over the top, some of them.

B Fun to watch, fun to act.

C I'd do it again.

E That poor girl. I can't forget her.

PETRONIUS I don't know where she came from. Too depressing for my tastes.

*Almost absent-mindedly, he cuts his wrists and blood begins to flow.*

And Ascyrtos on Lichas' ship. Shouldn't have been there. Why did they have to keep changing my story?

A You're not the only one. Think how Agatha Christie and that Will Shakespeare feel, the way their work is always mucked about.

D Better to be remembered poorly than not remembered at all. Who knows my name? Any of my names?

*They eat.*

A You're obsessed with copulation.

PETRONIUS It's what brings us into the world.

B Not the way you prefer it.

PETRONIUS True. Imagine if we kept having more and more children until the world overflowed with people.

D That will never happen.

PETRONIUS Let us hope not. Encolpius, what did you learn from the stories?

ENCOLPIUS Learn? Can't think of anything.

PETRONIUS Not even to steer clear of secret ceremonies?

I'm glad. You will live your adventures again and again. It's better if you don't remember what happened before.

Giton?

GITON *(busy eating)* What?

PETRONIUS What have you learnt?

GITON *(confused)* Unh?

PETRONIUS Perfect. May you remain forever sixteen.

GITON I'm . . . sixteen! Yes, I'll always be sixteen!

PETRONIUS *(laughs)* As long as you're old enough to enjoy life. That's all that matters.

Let me enjoy this moment. Bring me cloths.

*ASCYLTOS brings him cloth and wraps them around his wrist*

Ascyrtos? I didn't expect you to be so solicitous.

ASCYLTOS You didn't, did you? You created me for nothing but fighting, drinking and fucking. But I care for people, look out for them. *continued . . .*

- ASCYLLOS (cont)      You gave me a huge prick but no love. Encolpius gets Giton. I get men I don't want, almost never get a woman and spend half the time with aching balls and a permanent stiffie. You don't even have me wank and to top it off I disappear!
- PETRONIUS            I'm sorry. But look what happens to Encolpius. The agony he has to go through before he gets his manhood back. You wouldn't want that.
- ASCYLLOS             Why not? What's pleasure? Sensation. What's pain? Sensation. At least pain tells you you're alive. Give me pain, give me love, give me anything but oblivion.
- PETRONIUS            It's a point of view.

*Silence as the company eat - perhaps a quiet conversation in the background. From here on ENCOLPIUS, GITON and ASCYLLOS are oblivious to what is happening around them; if they talk, the audience cannot hear them. We see their relationships as at the beginning of the play - strong affection & flirting between ENCOLPIUS and GITON, bromance with ASCYLLOS.*

- E                        What about us?
- PETRONIUS            Us?
- E                        Women.
- PETRONIUS            What about women?
- E                        Your stories are all about men.
- PETRONIUS            Not true. There are plenty of women in them.
- E                        But men dictate what happens.
- PETRONIUS            Again, not true. Tryphaena and Circe took the initiative; plenty of other women did the same.
- E                        They still lived in in a man's world.

*She gets up from the table and begins to change into modern clothes*

- How many women are sitting at this table? Women are half the world. Women want to hear women's stories. Ordinary women. All you give us are slaves, whores and the rich. How many women sitting in the audience can identify with them?
- What can your stories tell them?
- PETRONIUS            Nothing that you don't want to hear.
- E                        What's the point? You're just another dead white male.
- PETRONIUS            Not yet, but you'll soon get your wish.

*PETRONIUS unties the cloths round his wrists. The blood begins to flow again.*

- C                        What about trans, non-binaries? You didn't include them.
- PETRONIUS            Who?
- C                        Transgenders. Non-binaries - not one sex or the other.
- PETRONIUS            We didn't have them in my day. Just the occasional hermaphrodite.

C That's what you think.

*A starts to change into modern clothes*

A The stories had the ring of truth. Most of the time the men were driven by desire.

B Lust.

A And gluttony. And avarice. Power.

D It all comes down to the same in the end. Be in control. Be on top.

*B is also getting changed.*

B And the women?

D Careful!

*D starts to change.*

A They used men's desires to achieve their goals.

B Maybe they just wanted the same thing - to get laid.

D Maybe they had no choice. They were just trying to survive in a man's world.

E They didn't all survive.

PETRONIUS That's all any of us do. Try to survive. We don't always succeed.

A What do you think?

C Me?

E You must have an opinion.

C Someone once said only fools express opinions; the wise stay silent.

B Probably Socrates.

A "Let your guide be Socrates,  
the wisest man who ever lived."

*C is the last of the actors to get changed.*

E What about Giton?

B What about him?

E Forced to have sex with all these men.

B And women.

PETRONIUS Nobody forces him.

D He's only sixteen!

GITON I'm . . .!

*Everyone turns to him, but he does not finish the sentence and returns to the past.*

E And that boy in Eumolpus' story. Stalked and seduced.

A Sounded like he wanted it. Ask him how he feels.

- E He isn't here!
- A So don't assume you know how he feels.
- PETRONIUS Nero became emperor at sixteen. It's not the age, it's the situation. Giton is young, he's free . . .
- B . . . dumb and full of cum . . .
- PETRONIUS . . . let him do what he wants.
- E You wouldn't say that if he was a girl.
- A Why not? Girls want the same as boys, don't they?
- D Young people should be protected.
- C The idea of young keeps changing.
- A Everything changes, all the time. People will look back at these stories and maybe they'll be appalled by what was said and done - or maybe they'll laugh or maybe they'll just wonder at the complexity of human relationships. Some will claim to be guardians of morality and denounce those who went before. What they forget is that the generations who follow them will look back on their lives and see all the injustice and abuse that they don't see.
- B What are you going on about?
- A All I'm saying is the present always condemns the past - and the present will be the past one day.
- D You've gone all philosophical.
- A Well, what do I know? We're only actors, aren't we? Bring us on when you need us. Put words in our mouths. Then send us home and forget us. But some of us, we watch, we think.
- PETRONIUS It's only a story, a collection of stories. From long, long ago.
- PETRONIUS slumps. As he dies GITON carries on eating, ENCOLPIUS begins to weep, ASCYLLOS hesitates then checks the body and finds a pouch of money. The Actors bow in respect. Finally, all except PETRONIUS turn to the audience.*
- ENCOLPIUS Ladies,
- GITON gentlemen,
- ASCYLLOS and
- C non-binaries,
- ALL The Satyricon!

*CURTAIN / BLACKOUT*