

THE SATYRICON

"It's only a story, a collection of stories. From long, long ago."

by Gaius Petronius and Martin Foreman

CAST

Characters

PETRONIUS / TRIMALCHIO (M, 35-60)

Petronius and Trimalchio can be played by different actors

ENCOLPIUS (M, 20s)

ASCYLTOS (M, 20s)

GITON (M, under 20)

Actors (any sex / age)

This version presumes five Actors identified as A B C D E when 21st century and as the characters below when 1st century. Roles can be allocated differently and played by more (not fewer) actors.

A

AGAMEMNON (Act 1) / 1st SELLER (Act 1) / EUMOLPUS (Act 2)

B

CROWD (1) / LICHAS (1&2) / 2nd SELLER (1) / MAN (1) / SLAVE (1) / CONSTABLE (2) / SOLDIER (2)

C

CROWD (1) / INNKEEPER (1) / SAILOR (1&2) / WORSHIPPER (1) / STEWARD (1) / CHRYSIS (2)

D

CROWD (1) / OLD WOMAN (1) / 3rd SELLER (1) / QUARTILLA (1) / FORTUNATA (1) / SAILOR (2) /
PRIESTESS (2)

E

CROWD (1) / TRYPHAENA (1&2) / GIRL (1) / SLAVE (1) / CIRCE (2)

Note on dialogue: this draft was written with Scottish actors in mind, particularly for Encolpius and Ascyltos. Some of the phrasing and vocabulary would be changed for other accents.

SCENE 1: INTRODUCTION

As the audience enters and takes their seats, the CHARACTERS and ACTORS are on stage, warming up.

Drum roll

PETRONIUS Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to...

D Pssst!

PETRONIUS Ladies and gentlemen,

D Pssst!!!

PETRONIUS Excuse me. *(consults with D)* What is it?

D You've forgotten . . . *(inaudible)*

A *(to the other Actors)* "Ladies and gentlemen"! Have you seen them? I doubt they understand "ladies and gentlemen" except as stinking public toilets.

PETRONIUS *(to D)* Must I?

D If you don't, I'll walk.

PETRONIUS All right.

(to the audience) Ladies, gentlemen and non-binaries, welcome to The Satyricon.

My name is Gaius Petronius. I am an Arbiter - a judge - of elegance. Equivalent to, say, editor of *Vogue* - a commander in the Fashion Police. Strictly speaking, I *was* an arbiter. I've been dead for two thousand years. But my story . . .

ENCOLPIUS Hold on, it's my story. I'm the one that tells it. It's all about me and what happens to me.

PETRONIUS A minor point. I created you and I'm the one who put the words into your mouth.

ENCOLPIUS It's still my story. I want credit.

PETRONIUS And credit you shall get. Lights!

Spotlight on ENCOLPIUS

This, ladies, gentlemen - and non-binaries - is Encolpius.

Encolpius claims to have been a gladiator

ENCOLPIUS What do you mean "claims"?

PETRONIUS Throw him a trident and he'd stab his own foot with it.

ENCOLPIUS That only happened once!

PETRONIUS Let's be generous and call him a student, young, brash and with his eye on the main chance - although the main chance seldom has its eye on him.

ENCOLPIUS We'll see.

PETRONIUS Thank you, Encolpius.

continued . . .

PETRONIUS (cont) Next up is Ascyltos.

ASCYLTOS At your service.

PETRONIUS Ascyltos should be the gladiator.

ASCYLTOS Fucking right.

PETRONIUS If there's a fight, he'll be in the middle of it, and if there's a fight he probably started it.

ASCYLTOS Who, me?

PETRONIUS He says he's a student. He can't remember what he studies but he maintains the age-old tradition of getting drunk regularly. And if he ever does reach old age he'll proudly tell you he's a graduate of the University of Life.

ASCYLTOS That it?

PETRONIUS That'll do for now.
Finally, there's Giton.

GITON What am I supposed to do?

PETRONIUS Strike a pose or take a bow.

GITON tries to do both and fails

What can I tell you about Giton? Well, he's sixteen years old and just discovered sex. What's the expression? Young, dumb and full of cum. That's all you need to know.

GITON Sixteen? I'm not sixteen. I'm [AGE OF ACTOR]

PETRONIUS The character is sixteen! Good grief! How many times have we gone through this in rehearsal? *(to audience)* What I was saying about dumb? Typecasting. *(to GITON)* Go away.

I'd like to call them heroes, but they're not handsome or virtuous and if they've got brains they haven't yet learnt how to use them.

ENCOLPIUS Thanks a bunch.

PETRONIUS No matter, let's set them off on their adventures and hope they get through them unscathed. So, on with the Show.

Drum roll

Ladies , gentlemen and non-binaries, welcome to...

E What about us?

PETRONIUS What about...? I forgot. Lights

That lot at the back are Actors. We'll bring them on when we need them for minor roles. Until then forget them.

C Forget us? Thank you!

B Fuck that!

PETRONIUS I say they're Actors, but that's giving them the benefit of the doubt. They're only here because we couldn't afford anyone better. We pay peanuts, you (*the audience*) get monkeys. They'll all play several characters, so pay attention and don't get confused when they turn up as different people in different scenes.

B For fuck's sake, get on with it!

PETRONIUS Indeed. Places, everyone.

Ladies, gentlemen, non-binaries, The Satyricon!

An extended drum roll as PETRONIUS withdraws, ENCOLPIUS leaps onto a podium and the ACTORS gather round. ASCYLtos loiters behind ENCOLPIUS. GITON wanders upstage.

Everyone freezes except PETRONIUS and GITON, who is picking his nose or scratching his backside.

SCENE 5: AN INN

ASCYLtos Morning, Castor and Pollux. You finally got out of the sack.

ENCOLPIUS I've a bone to pick with you.

ASCYLtos Chicken or duck? All I've got is stale bread.

ENCOLPIUS Don't be funny. Giton told me what you've been up to. No wonder you didn't come back last night.

ASCYLtos I fell in with a couple of gladiators who'd got their freedom. The stories they told. The plans they had. Move to Sicily, get into the slave trade. Trouble is, they spent all their prize money on drink. Most of it. Some of it fell in my tunic. I mean, our need's as great as theirs.

ENCOLPIUS Stop changing the subject. You tried to have it off with Giton. Don't deny it.

ASCYLtos I didn't say anything.

ENCOLPIUS He told me everything.

ASCYLtos Did he?

ENCOLPIUS (*to GITON*) Didn't you?

GITON Yes, I did.

ENCOLPIUS (*to GITON*) But you didn't, did you?

GITON Didn't what?

ENCOLPIUS Do it. You didn't do it.

ASCYLtos (*to GITON*) We didn't do it, did we?

GITON No!

ENCOLPIUS Are you sure?

GITON No! I mean yes! I mean . . .

ENCOLPIUS *(to ASCYLLOS)* Did you or didn't you try to have it off with him?

ASCYLLOS Aye, I did. But no I didn't. Have it off. You can't blame me. Look at him, he's as cute as Cupid and he's gagging for it. You'd gone off on one of your public speeches, could have been there for hours. What were we supposed to do? Count three-legged dogs or cats with one eye?

GITON I saw one this morning. Dog with one eye. Or was it a cat with three legs?

ENCOLPIUS Go and fuck some whore, not my boyfriend!

ASCYLLOS It was for his sake, not mine! He was the one who needed to get off. I was just going to help him out. Honest!

During the following LICHAS) and TRYPHAENA enter and sit nearby. LICHAS places a robe on the seat beside him. The INNKEEPER serves them.

ENCOLPIUS You're unbelievable! You're my best friend. We've known each other since your Mum breast-fed me before she ran off with that Christian.

ASCYLLOS I thought he was a Mithraite.

ENCOLPIUS Whatever. Your Dad gave me work minding the pigs. Best job I ever had.

ASCYLLOS Only job you've ever had.

ENCOLPIUS We've been pals, mates, buddies all our lives. I've helped you, you've helped me, through thick and thin. And now I've got a boyfriend all of my own, you want to steal him from me.

ASCYLLOS I don't want to steal him. I just want to share him. We share everything else. Why not him?

ENCOLPIUS He doesn't want to be shared! Do you?

GITON Well . . . No.

ENCOLPIUS See, and I don't want to share him. So go and get your own boyfriend or girlfriend or whatever. Selfish prick.

ASCYLLOS Aye, well, all pricks are selfish, aren't they? We just follow where our pricks lead, do what they tell us. And my prick was telling me . . .

ENCOLPIUS Okay, okay, okay. Put your prick away and let's forget it.

ASCYLLOS I can't forget my prick. That's the fucking point!

Tension breaks in laughter

ENCOLPIUS Oh, Ascylos, my brother, I can't stay mad at you.

ASCYLLOS I can't either. Friends?

ENCOLPIUS Friends.

ASCYLLOS Giton?

GITON Whatever. You going to finish that bread?

They eat

TRYPHAENA Hello, boys. New in town?

ASCYLLOS) No.

ENCOLPIUS) Yes.

TRYPHAENA It's a bit confusing when you first get here, but you'll soon find your way around.
You wouldn't be gladiators, by any chance?

ENCOLPIUS Well, I've always . . .

ASCYLLOS No, we're not.

LICHAS I'm sure you've seen action in the ring.

ASCYLLOS Whose ring?

ENCOLPIUS Actually, we're students.

TRYPHAENA You must be very bright.

ENCOLPIUS You could have heard me yesterday, in the Forum.

TRYPHAENA What were you doing there?

ENCOLPIUS Giving a lecture. About modern education.

TRYPHAENA It must have been fascinating.

ENCOLPIUS Agamemnon joined in.

LICHAS Agamemnon, father of Electra, her of the Electra Complex who wanted to kill her
mother and marry her father, that Agamemnon?

EVERYONE ELSE NO!

TRYPHAENA We should introduce ourselves. I'm Tryphaena. This is Lichas, he owns that ship in the
harbour.

ENCOLPIUS Impressive. I'm Encolpius.

ASCYLLOS Ascyltos.

TRYPHAENA And this Ganymede?

GITON My name's not Ganymede. It's Giton.

TRYPHAENA Delighted to meet you, Giton. I see you like baps.

GITON I like buns too.

LICHAS There's a coincidence. So do I.

GITON First thing I remember is chewing my Mum's baps, first one, then the other. I like
them when they're sticky.

TRYPHAENA You must try mine sometime.

LICHAS *(to ASCYLLOS)* And where were you? In the gymnasium? I'm sure you exercise regularly, but your friend here looks as if he's never been in a gym.

ENCOLPIUS I never have time.

LICHAS Make time. Start at home, basic exercises. Create a really strong core. Stand up. *(ENCOLPIUS is reluctant.)* Stand up! I'll show you.

LICHAS starts to swivel his (own) hips.

Like this. Strengthens the back, the hips, the pelvic muscles. Especially good for the pelvis.

ENCOLPIUS begins to swivel.

No! No! that's not right. Like this.

LICHAS grabs ENCOLPIUS and pulls to him so they are swivelling crotch to crotch.

Change direction, change speed . . .

TRYPHAENA *(to GITON)* I'd love to see your pelvic muscles working sometime.

As they swivel, ENCOLPIUS finds and removes a pouch from LICHAS' belt or tunic. He manages to extricate himself and he and LICHAS sit down.

TRYPHAENA (cont) What are you doing today, boys? I have a villa up in the hills, slaves catering to your every need. Why not join us? *(sniffs)* After you've been to the baths?

ASCYLLOS We can't afford . . .

TRYPHAENA A question of cash, is it?

ENCOLPIUS kicks ASCYLLOS before he can say more.

ENCOLPIUS No, we're fine for money, thanks. We'd love to join you later.

LICHAS Of course you will. Or I'll know the reason why.

TRYPHAENA Tryphaena's place. Ask anyone. They'll direct you. We'll lay on dinner. And then we'll lay . . . Well, we'll see.

LICHAS That's settled then. My dear, shall we go?

TRYPHAENA Till later, Ganymede. *(blows GITON a kiss)* You two as well.

Exit LICHAS and TRYPHAENA

ASCYLLOS What the fuck was that about? She was going to give us money!

ENCOLPIUS They already have given us money. Look! There's enough in there to feed us for a month.

ASCYLLOS Or him *(GITON)* for a couple of days.

ENCOLPIUS We'd better get out of here before they come back.

GITON *(mouth full, as usual)* What's that? *(the robe)*

ASCYLLOS They must have left it. *(feels it)* Good quality.

ENCOLPIUS Grab it and let's go!

Exit ENCOLPIUS, GITON, ASCYLLOS

INNKEEPER clears props and dismantles set

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 9: TRIMALCHIO'S HOUSE

A What now?

PETRONIUS I was wondering about that. Originally I had Encolpius's ordeal here.

B Ordeal?

PETRONIUS To recover his manhood. I think he should wait. Anticipation is half the pleasure. For those watching.

ENCOLPIUS and GITON are on one side of the stage. They begin to make love but ENCOLPIUS is impotent.

I think we'll move on to Trimalchio's feast.

D Sounds like a plan.

PETRONIUS: The guests. We need Seleucus, Phileros, Ganymedes, Echion, Agamemnon . . .

AGAMEMNON I'm here!

PETRONIUS . . . Niceros, Plocamus. Then there're acrobats, slaves, chefs . . .

E Hold on! There are only [NUMBER OF ACTORS] of us. Not enough for all these guests, slaves, entertainment . . .

PETRONIUS It's a feast. I wrote it big, over the top. Goes on for hours. Music, dancers.

E Can't be helped. Two or three guests maximum, a couple of slaves, no entertainment.

PETRONIUS No entertainment? What about food? We have, in no particular order, sausages, damsons, dormice...

The others crowd round, looking over his shoulder at the manuscript.

B peahen eggs. garden warblers . . .

C winged hare, sows' bellies . . .

A whole wild boar stuffed with live birds, suckling piglets . . .

D garnished pork, oysters, scallops, snails . . .

E We won't get half of that.

PETRONIUS I created a spectacle here!

E We'll do our best.

PETRONIUS Even in death the gods are punishing me. Who's Trimalchio?

A Gordon's off sick tonight. It'll have to be you. *[assuming same actor plays both roles]*

PETRONIUS Must I?

B There's no-one else.

PETRONIUS All right. Get on with it.

PETRONIUS and FORTUNATA withdraw to prepare their characters as the other Actors set the scene centre stage. At the side ASCYLTIOS joins ENCOLPIUS and GITON.

TRIMALCHIO Where's that pisspot Agamemnon? Make yourself fucking useful. Find some guests. Pretty boys. I want some fresh arse tonight. Keep me entertained.

AGAMEMNON As you wish, sire.

TRIMALCHIO Wife? That all the jewellery you got?

FORTUNATA It's all you bought me this week.

TRIMALCHIO It'll have to do.

 You. (*MALE SLAVE*) Pot. Number one.

FORTUNATA Can't you go outside?

TRIMALCHIO Can't be arsed.

FORTUNATA At least turn away.

SFX *urinating - strong, then gap, then strong, then gap, then strong, then dribble*

TRIMALCHIO shakes himself, peers down at the pot

TRIMALCHIO Don't like the look of that. Take it to the oracle. See how long I've got. Make sure she says at least twenty years.

MALE SLAVE wanders into the audience

MALE SLAVE Can you have a look at this?

TRIMALCHIO The oracle, I said. That lot wouldn't know what to do with it.

MALE SLAVE rushes offstage, there is the sound of flushing before he comes back with the empty pot.

TRIMALCHIO (cont) Right, I'm off for a nap.

TRIMALCHIO reposes at the back of the stage while final preparations take place centre stage, where FORTUNATA sits preening / drinking

ENCOLPIUS A dinner party, you said.

AGAMEMNON That's right.

ENCOLPIUS And we're invited?

ASCYLLOS Why us?

AGAMEMNON He said he wanted fresh . . .

ENCOLPIUS Fresh . . . ?

AGAMEMNON . . . meat.

ENCOLPIUS He wants us to bring fresh meat?

AGAMEMNON No, he wants you to be . . .

GITON Will there be lots of food?

AGAMEMNON Three times as much as you can eat. And Falernian wine.

ENCOLPIUS The best in the Empire, they say.

ASCYLLOS And we won't have to pay?

AGAMEMNON Not with money.

ASCYLLOS With what?

AGAMEMNON Entertainment . . .

ASCYLLOS Another tunic-lifter. I'm not going.

GITON There's food!

AGAMEMNON You won't regret it. Trimalchio's feasts are legendary.

GITON I'm up for it!

ENCOLPIUS You're always up for it.

GITON And you're not.

ENCOLPIUS I was just tired.

GITON Never happened before.

ENCOLPIUS The richest man in the Empire, you said? And he's inviting us? We have to go.

ASCYLLOS All right, as long as there's wine.

They move towards the centre of the stage

GITON And food, lots of food.

ENCOLPIUS Anything we should know about our host?

AGAMEMNON He likes flattery. Obsequiousness.

ASCYLLOS He wants us to grovel.

AGAMEMNON A bit of grovelling always helps. A lot helps even more.

STEWARD Welcome, honoured guests.

MALE SLAVE barks loudly; *ENCOLPIUS starts*

ENCOLPIUS What was that!?

AGAMEMNON A picture of a barking dog. Realistic, wasn't it?

GITON He almost shat his tunic.

AGAMEMNON Fortunata, divine beauty! I crave indulgence in bringing to worship at your perfumed feet, Ascylltos, traveller from far off Asturia . . .

ASCYLLOS Where?

AGAMEMNON . . . and the scholar Encolpius, who only last week enthralled the Forum with his lecture on modern education, a topic on which I was able to correct his several errors with a little . . .

ENCOLPIUS Several errors?

FORTUNATA Who's that (*GITON*)?

AGAMEMNON A minion, divine beauty, servant to Encolpius.

FORTUNATA A gift for Trimalchio?

ASCYLLOS I knew it! Another fucking orgy. At least let's eat first.

ENCOLPIUS Uuhh... This boy is, shall we say, used... I'm sure our host would prefer fresh . . . uh ...

ASCYLLOS . . . meat!

GITON Where do I sit?

ENCOLPIUS At my feet. You pour my wine and I give you scraps off my plate.

GITON Thanks a fucking bunch!

FORTUNATA Stuff yourselves, boys. You don't know when he'll turn up.

The guests start to eat.

SFX *fanfare*

Enter TRIMALCHIO preceded by MALE SLAVE, STEWARD and FEMALE SLAVE walking backwards and throwing petals at his feet. TRIMALCHIO stops

SFX *loud farts*

TRIMALCHIO That's better.

Centre stage, facing the audience, snaps his fingers

Steward!

STEWARD Sire?

TRIMALCHIO Who am I?

STEWARD You are Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, the wealthiest man in the Empire.

MALE SLAVE And one day you will die.

TRIMALCHIO Make sure it doesn't happen soon.

ENCOLPIUS His slave told him he was going to die?

AGAMEMNON Our host has someone tell him once a day, to remind him he's mortal.

(to FORTUNATA) What happened to the slave who told him before?

FORTUNATA Said it twice one day. Had to lose his life, or the gods would have taken his master. Pity. He had a nice arse. Good to hold on to.

The guests make to stand.

TRIMALCHIO Don't bother, lads. Make yourselves at home. How's the food?

ENCOLPIUS Excellent.

AGAMEMNON Beyond description.

ASCYLLOS No bad.

GITON Don't know. Haven't had any yet.

TRIMALCHIO And who are you?

ENCOLPIUS My servant, sir, Giton.

TRIMALCHIO Come over here, boy.

TRIMALCHIO picks meat and holds it up.

Try this.

GITON holds out a hand.

Nah. Take it from my mouth. With yours.

TRIMALCHIO puts the meat in his mouth. GITON looks back at ENCOLPIUS for guidance, then bites off the meat.

TRIMALCHIO laughs. EVERYONE JOINS IN

TRIMALCHIO Thought I'd bite him, didn't he? Away you go, lad, back to your master. Any time you want to eat, just come to me. You two, what are your names?

ENCOLPIUS Encolpius, sir, at your service.

ASCYLTOS Ascyltos.

TRIMALCHIO How much land have you got? How many slaves? How much money?

ENCOLPIUS We've got a pou . . .

ASCYLTOS None, sir, we're poor men.

TRIMALCHIO What's a poor man?

TRIMALCHIO laughs. EVERYONE JOINS IN

I admit it. I was once. Born a slave, inherited a small farm from my master for services rendered, if you get my drift. A bit of business here, a bit there and here I am, the richest man in the Empire bar the Emperor himself. You, Enky-whatever it is, you got education?

ENCOLPIUS Yes, sir, I have studied for many years.

TRIMALCHIO I don't need to study. I've got libraries instead - one Greek, one Latin. Where's education got you? Begging at my table for crumbs!

No need to thank me, I'm a generous, humble man. You won't find anyone more generous or humble than me, so drink to me everyone!

Right, where's the entertainment? Acrobats and horn-blowers?

STEWARD You said this would be a quiet affair, sire.

TRIMALCHIO Did I? Fuck that. I want dancing boys. You (*GITON*) dance for me. Well, come on!

GITON reluctantly gets up, starts to dance, then FORTUNATA stands, pushes GITON aside and dances lewdly.

AGAMEMNON (*to ENCOLPIUS and ASCYLTOS*) She always does this. Thinks she still has a figure. Couldn't dance when she was young and can't dance now she's old and drunk.

TRIMALCHIO Plonk your arse, wife. Here, boy, come and have another piece of meat.

GITON I'm not hungry.

ENCOLPIUS You're always hungry!

GITON Not tonight.

TRIMALCHIO I said, come here, boy! Let's see what you're made of.

TRIMALCHIO starts to fondle GITON; FORTUNATA slaps him

FORTUNATA Dirty dog! Get your hands off him while I'm around. Don't know why you're feeling him. My boobs are bigger than his balls.

TRIMALCHIO Trouble is, they droop even lower. All right, boy, fuck off back to your master.

ASCYLLOS *(to ENCOLPIUS)* What did I tell you?

TRIMALCHIO Pain in the arse, my beloved wife, but I couldn't do without her. Made her my heir and she's worth every penny.

Come on, stuff yourselves! The best food you'll get this year. Everything here comes from my land. Wine's from an estate I bought recently. Don't know where. They tell me it links my property between Rome and Venice.

SFX *fart*

I needed that. Haven't shat in days. Doctor's made me eat pomegranates and vinegar. Seems to be working.

SFX *loud fart*

That's better. Any of you need to go, don't hold it in. I've known people die because they were too embarrassed to admit that what goes in has to come out.

You *(MALE SLAVE)*, number two.

TRIMALCHIO goes offstage, followed by MALE SLAVE with chamber pot and towel; the others continue feasting.

SFX *shitting*

Business between ENCOLPIUS and GITON over food.

TRIMALCHIO and MALE SLAVE return

TRIMALCHIO What was it?

MALE SLAVE examines chamberpot.

MALE SLAVE Wild boar and uh... quince, sir.

TRIMALCHIO When did I have them?

MALE SLAVE The boar three days ago, sir. The quince yesterday.

TRIMALCHIO That's about right. Meat takes longer. You know what to do with it.

MALE SLAVE heads towards the audience with chamberpot, stops and takes it offstage, returning without the pot.

- TRIMALCHIO (cont) Nothing like a good shit. Empty belly makes room for more food. Dung on the fields gives us food. Which turns into shit again.
- AGAMEMNON Profound, sire, profound.
- TRIMALCHIO But a fucking waste! Why don't we just eat shit and save the hassle of ploughing and harvesting?
- AGAMEMNON Very profound, sire!
- TRIMALCHIO Why don't we eat shit? You (*GITON*), I'll give you ten denarii to eat one of my turds.
- GITON does not know how to react. ENCOLPIUS wonders whether to encourage him.*
- Changed my mind. Much better fertilising the asparagus. Tastes good, doesn't it?
- Mind you, I have my limits. I never touch the mushrooms. It's where she (*FORTUNATA*) has her morning piss. Doesn't half smell strong. God knows where it comes from.
- TRIMALCHIO laughs. EVERYONE JOINS IN*
- Tuck in, everyone. I'll lie down a while. Amuse yourselves.
- TRIMALCHIO lies back and closes his eyes.*
- GITON (*loud whisper*) I'm still hungry!
- ENCOLPIUS Here you are. (*to ASCYLLOS*) We'll go when he's (*GITON*) had enough.
- ASCYLLOS Then we'll be here all night,
- TRIMALCHIO (*sitting up abruptly*) You ever been dead?
- ENCOLPIUS Beg pardon, sire?
- TRIMALCHIO You ever been dead?
- ASCYLLOS No-o.
- TRIMALCHIO Me neither. Pity.
- ENCOLPIUS Why?
- TRIMALCHIO I'd like to know what people say about me after I'm gone. Nobody ever tells the truth to my face.
- ENCOLPIUS Why not?
- TRIMALCHIO I wouldn't like it. I'd get upset. I don't like to be upset. I prefer being calm, thoughtful.
- ENCOLPIUS Much the best way to be.
- TRIMALCHIO You know how people have - what do they call them? - fancy speeches at the funeral?
- AGAMEMNON Eulogies, sire.
- TRIMALCHIO That's right, eulogies. I won't hear mine.

ENCOLPIUS That's true.

TRIMALCHIO I was thinking, have the funeral now, so I can hear what people say about me.

AGAMEMNON Excellent idea, sire.

ASCYLLOS Right now?

TRIMALCHIO Why not?

GITON You want us to kill you?

ASCYLLOS and ENCOLPIUS are horrified

TRIMALCHIO Nah. I'll just pretend to be dead.

FORTUNATA It would give me some peace.

TRIMALCHIO lies back. After a pause:

TRIMALCHIO How come nobody's wailing? All my slaves. You rhetora-whatever-you-call-yourself, loving wife. Everyone. Should be shattered, heart-broken. Wail!

AGAMEMNON starts wailing extravagantly. The STEWARD and SLAVES join in. ENCOLPIUS and ASCYLLOS add their voices, then everybody does. GITON uses the opportunity to grab some food. The wails die down.

TRIMALCHIO (*not moving, eyes closed*) Well?

STEWARD Sire?

TRIMALCHIO The eu.. the eugory.. the fancy speech! Let's hear it.

STEWARD From whom, sire?

TRIMALCHIO All the nobs who come to my funeral.

STEWARD They're not here, sire. They haven't heard of your unfortunate demise. I'm sure they would be here if they could, sire. Perhaps your wife . . . ?

FORTUNATA He was rich, he was my husband. He's dead. Will that do?

TRIMALCHIO Say something nice.

FORTUNATA He didn't beat me.

TRIMALCHIO How about the stuff I gave you?

FORTUNATA And he gave me some jewellery. He was conned by the jeweller but he never did have taste.

TRIMALCHIO You serious? I'll have him whipped.

FORTUNATA You can't. You're dead.

TRIMALCHIO Agamemnon. Earn your keep. Say something nice about me. Just the truth. I was the best, that kind of stuff.

AGAMEMNON Oh, ye deities, cast your omnivident eyes down upon us poor mortals, bereft this day of the epitome, the zenith, the aristos, the earthbound helios . . .

TRIMALCHIO	What the fuck are you on about? Can't understand a fucking word. What's the point of a eu, a eur . . . of a fancy speech if the dead man can't understand it? You, Enky-what's-your-name. You're educated. Say something nice and make sure I fucking understand it.
ENCOLPIUS	Uh... beloved brethren
<i>FORTUNATA coughs</i>	
ENCOLPIUS (cont)	and sister. We, uh, are, uh, gathered today to commemorate the life and mourn the death of . . . the . . . celebrated, uh . . .
TRIMALCHIO	much-loved
ENCOLPIUS	. . . much-loved, uh, businessman, husband . . . father?
FORTUNATA	Not by me. About two dozen bastards here and there.
TRIMALCHIO	Thirty-seven at the last count.
ENCOLPIUS	. . . prolific father, respected statesman, celebrated philanthropist . . .
ASCYLLOS	host?
ENCOLPIUS	. . . generous host . . .
GITON	pervert?
ENCOLPIUS	. . . lover of youth . . .
AGAMEMNON	. . . sponsor of the arts . . .
ENCOLPIUS	. . . erudite . . .
TRIMALCHIO	What?
ENCOLPIUS	. . . scholar. Loved by all who knew him . . .
FORTUNATA	That's a laugh.
ENCOLPIUS	. . . honest . . .
<i>STEWARD chokes</i>	
ENCOLPIUS	. . . a fair master . . .
<i>SFX</i>	<i>Scream</i>
ENCOLPIUS	. . . whose passing we all grieve. Lucky the gods who welcome him into their midst. A place waits for him at the right hand of Jupiter. Minerva will seek his counsel, Ganymede be his cupbearer, Venus his constant companion, Mars his, uh, his . . .
ASCYLLOS	Bum-boy? Footstool?
AGAMEMNON	Shield-bearer!
TRIMALCHIO	That'll do. I'm getting bored. Why isn't everyone in uncontrollable grief? Shouldn't they throw themselves on my body and beg my soul not to leave them?
STEWARD	Of course, sire.
TRIMALCHIO	Not you! Wife!

FORTUNATA Must I?

TRIMALCHIO Second thoughts, no. Had enough of you in life to last eternity. Go count my money.
How about the pretty boy?

ENCOLPIUS pushes GITON, still eating, onto TRIMALCHIO. TRIMALCHIO pinches his backside.

GITON Hey, you're supposed to be dead!

TRIMALCHIO You're right. A stiff can't be stiff. Get off me. How about the slaves? Freedom for any
slave who shows his love for me after I'm dead.

*MALE SLAVE and STEWARD, followed by FEMALE SLAVE, pile onto him wailing "Our dear master, why did he
leave us?"*

AGMEMNON As an honoured guest for many years, I can do no less.

AGAMEMNON lies carefully across TRIMALCHIO's face and wails perfunctorily.

The wailing gets louder and the bodies writhe, competing to smother TRIMALCHIO

TRIMALCHIO Get off me. I can't fucking breathe.

No respect any of you. You might have killed me.

FORTUNATA I thought that's what you wanted.

TRIMALCHIO They'll be fucking dead if they try that again.

(to guests) Why so glum? I've come back to life. Celebrate. Let's eat, drink and be
merry, for tomorrow we die.

MALE SLAVE is about to remind him that he will die, but holds himself back in time.

Not me, of course. I've sacrificed enough oxen at Jupiter's temple to get me another
thirty years.

SLAVES are clearing tables.

Agamemnon, tell us a story. A good one.

AGAMEMNON Well, sire, in your honour, I could . . .

SFX *Breaking dish*

I could relate . . .

TRIMALCHIO What was that?

STEWARD Nothing, sire.

TRIMALCHIO Don't fuck with me. I know the sound of breaking pottery.

Someone broke a fucking plate. Who was it? Tell me now!

ASCYLLOS I'm sure it was an accident.

TRIMALCHIO Was it you?

ASCYLLOS Uh, no.

- TRIMALCHIO Good, because even though you're a guest if you broke a plate I would have your thumbs cut off to remind you not to be so fucking clumsy. *(to ENCOLPIUS and GITON)*
Was it one of you?
- ENCOLPIUS *(drunk)* I don't think it was. I've been eating from this plate and it's still quite whole and I think I'd know if I . . .
- TRIMALCHIO SHUT THE FUCK UP!
Right, which one of you was it?
No response
Kill them *(SLAVES)*.
- STEWARD Is that wise, sire? One new slave costs more than a plate. Two would be an extravagance.
- TRIMALCHIO I SAID, fucking kill them both. And you can add yourself if I hear any complaints.
- FORTUNATA There is no point in wasting two slaves.
- TRIMALCHIO I will waste as many slaves as I want. How many have I got?
- STEWARD At the last count, sire, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two male, nine hundred and seventeen female. Not including suckling babes - currently about twenty - and thirty-three with various wounds and ailments who will be disposed of if they do not recover.
- TRIMALCHIO So, wife, I can waste two, twenty or two hundred and twenty of my slaves if I want to. They're my fucking property. I can do what I fucking like with them. *(to STEWARD)*
Can't I?
- STEWARD Indeed, sire.
- TRIMALCHIO *(to the other slaves)* I can do what I like with you, can't I?
- SLAVES Yes, sir, of course, sir.
- TRIMALCHIO So, what's it going to be? One of you or both of you? I ain't got all day. Who dropped the fucking plate?
- SILENCE, then*
- FEMALE SLAVE *(falling to her knees, terrified)* It was me, sir.
- TRIMALCHIO Right. Come over here, girl. Steward, how much did she cost me?
- STEWARD If I remember correctly, sir, she was an infant in a group that you bought with your second farm. She cost you nothing because she was not expected to survive.
- The cast freezes as FEMALE SLAVE address the audience*
- FEMALE SLAVE My name is Daphne.
Like my mother, I have always been a slave. When she died, I was sent to work in the

kitchens.

I was lucky. The head cook protected me. He did not rape me until I was twelve and he lets no other man touch me.

He will buy his freedom next year and he will buy mine and our daughter's too. That is all I want, that is all I ever wanted. To be free.

The cast unfreezes

TRIMALCHIO How long has she worked for me?

STEWARD Fifteen years, sir.

TRIMALCHIO Not bad going if she cost me nothing. The plate, how much was it?

STEWARD From the third best set, sir. We have many others. A trifle, nothing more.

TRIMALCHIO Still more expensive than she was. I could have got more use out of it. And I didn't have to feed it. Now it's gone but she's still here and she's useless and costs me money to feed. I'd say I was losing out here.

STEWARD Yes, sir.

TRIMALCHIO Crucify her in the morning. Give her to the guards until then.

FEMALE SLAVE No! No!

MALE SLAVE makes to get hold of FEMALE SLAVE. Terrified for her life, she runs into the audience, begs them to save her. Eventually MALE SLAVE drags her back to the stage and forces her down at TRIMALCHIO's feet.

FEMALE SLAVE Please, my lord! Spare me! For the love of the gods, spare me!

TRIMALCHIO You'll meet the gods soon enough.

I'm a fair man, an honest man, a generous man. Everyone knows that.

I respect everyone and they respect me. Look after my property and I'll look after you. Destroy my property and that's the end of you. That's only fair, isn't it? Justice.

Take her away.

SFX: a baby crying

FEMALE SLAVE Please sir, I beg you. I have a child.

TRIMALCHIO That is my child.

FEMALE SLAVE I bore her!

TRIMALCHIO All children of slaves are mine.

FEMALE SLAVE She needs me!

TRIMALCHIO Nobody fucking needs you except the guards who need your cunt!

FEMALE SLAVE Set us free! I beg you, set us free!

TRIMALCHIO You'll be free soon enough.

FEMALE SLAVE My baby! My daughter!

TRIMALCHIO A girl? Another useless mouth to feed. Give it to the dogs.

STEWARD Give . . . ?

TRIMALCHIO Give the brat to the dogs and get this bitch out of my sight.

FEMALE SLAVE is taken off screaming.

SFX: The sounds of her screams and the crying baby fade.

TRIMALCHIO reclines and looks around smiling as

LIGHTING TO BLACK: INTERVAL

SCENE 16: CROTON MARKET

PETRONIUS (cont) Fortune's wheel keeps turning. Even I could not avoid fate. Once I was Nero's favourite. An emperor should flaunt his wealth and I ensured his entertainments were popular. Some of his wealth even flaunted my way. Then came the fall.

I'm lucky, I suppose. Some of my stories survived. And my ghost lives on, inhabiting whatever body is to hand. This one is not bad. Older and thinner than I was when I died. A bit sepulchral, but better-looking than me. Unfortunately, I can't keep it; the owner wants it back.

SFX *faint market sounds that fade during the ENCOLPIUS / GITON dialogue*

Time for one last tale. We are in the market of a town called Croton and our young heroes - let's call them heroes now, they have gone through so much they deserve it - our heroes are doing what lovers always do when love eludes them. They quarrel.

ENCOLPIUS Where were you?

GITON Wandering around.

ENCOLPIUS You could have told me.

GITON Why? Do you care?

ENCOLPIUS I worry about you.

GITON I can look after myself.

ENCOLPIUS Are you mad at me?

GITON No.

ENCOLPIUS Look me in the eye and say that.

GITON Leave me alone!

ENCOLPIUS You really want me to?

GITON Yes. No. I want. . . I want us to fuck! We share a bed but it's like Socrates and Alcibiades: nothing happens.

ENCOLPIUS So much has been going on. No time. No energy.

GITON I've got energy.

ENCOLPIUS Of course you do, you're sixteen!

GITON I'm . . . ! How old am I?

ENCOLPIUS You'll always be sixteen to me. And I'm twenty-four. It's not so easy at my age.

GITON Right(!)

ENCOLPIUS Besides, you went off with Ascylltos that time. Then there was Tryphaena. I'm sure you've had others - women, men, the gods know what else.

GITON I'd rather have you.

ENCOLPIUS And me you.

GITON So show me! Now!!

ENCOLPIUS Here in the market?

GITON There is no market.

ENCOLPIUS You're right. Where did it go?

They look around

GITON It just disappeared.

They are both looking at the audience.

There's no-one here.

ENCOLPIUS I don't like people watching. It feels like there are eyes on me.

GITON There's no-one. We're all alone.

ENCOLPIUS All right then.

They embrace and all seems well until

VOICES (offstage) What once stood proud must now lie low

What once was great must never grow

GITON Again!

ENCOLPIUS I'm cursed.

GITON You keep saying that. Your love should be stronger than any curse.

ENCOLPIUS No love is stronger than a woman's curse.

GITON Then you're as weak as a woman. Fuck off.

GITON tries to walk away but ENCOLPIUS restrains him.

GITON (cont) Let me go.

ENCOLPIUS No.

GITON Let me go!

ENCOLPIUS Not like this.

GITON Let me go!!

GITON starts hitting ENCOLPIUS.

ENCOLPIUS I love you! I love you!

GITON Just words. All I get from you is words. Let me go! Let me fucking go!

GITON succeeds in pushing ENCOLPIUS away

I don't love you. You're weak, pathetic, sexless. There's nothing to love.

ENCOLPIUS Giton!

GITON Leave me alone! Fuck off! Just fuck off!

GITON exits

ENCOLPIUS Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!

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 You are enchanting.

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*)
- VOICES (offstage) 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 even 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*
- VOICES (offstage) *(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 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 *(raising the branch)* 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

VOICES (offstage) 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

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

PETRONIUS (cont) Who are you?
SOLDIER An emissary from the emperor.
PETRONIUS How is the boy?
SOLDIER The emperor Nero is no boy.

ASCYLLOS 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?
 ASCYLLOS 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?
 ASCYLLOS 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. Ascylltos, bring me a knife.

The cast quickly assemble a dinner, sit at table with PETRONIUS in the centre, reminiscent of the Last Supper.

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.

PETRONIUS (cont) And Ascylltos 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 Jane Austen and Agatha Christie feel, the way their books are 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.

ASCYLLOS brings him cloth and wraps them around his wrist

PETRONIUS (cont) Ascylos? I didn't expect you to be so solicitous.

ASCYLLOS 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, Circe - you played them - took the initiative.
E Forced to, 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've got are a model and a hag. How many women can identify with them?

D Who's the hag?
B Who's the model?
E What can your stories tell me?
PETRONIUS I don't know. Nothing that you don't want to hear.
E 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, ASCYLtos 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,

ASCYLtos and

C non-binaries,

ALL The Satyricon!

CURTAIN / BLACKOUT