“Hymn to Aphrodite”

Artfully adorned Aphrodite, deathless
cild of Zeus and weaver of wiles I beg you
please don’t hurt me, don’t overcome my spirit,
goddess, with longing,

but come here, if ever at other moments
hearing these my words from afar you listened
and responded: leaving your father’s house, all
golden, you came then,
hitching up your chariot: lovely sparrows
drew you quickly over the dark earth, whirling
on fine beating wings from the heights of heaven
down through the sky and

instantly arrived - and then O my blessed
goddess with a smile on your deathless face you
asked me what the matter was this time, what I
called you for this time,

what I now most wanted to happen in my
raving heart: “Whom this time should I persuade to
lead you back again to her love? Who now, oh
Sappho, who wrongs you?

If she flees you now, she will soon pursue you;
if she won’t accept what you give, she’ll give it;
if she doesn’t love you, she’ll love you soon now,
even unwilling.”

Come to me again, and release me from this
want past bearing. All that my heart desires to
happen-make it happen. And stand beside me,
goddess, my ally.

* Wealth without virtue is no harmless neighbor.

* When anger spreads inside your breast
keep watch against an idly barking tongue.

But I’m not one of those with a resentful
temperament: I have a quiet heart.

* I don’t expect to touch the sky with my two hands.

* “Sweet Mother, I can’t weave my web
overcome with longing for a boy
because of slender Aphrodite.”

* And you, my Dika, crown your lovely locks with garlands,
twining shoots of anise in your tender hands,
for the blessed Graces come the sooner to those adorned
with flowers, and turn away from the ungarlanded.

* maidens [keeping vigil all through the night till morning
used to sing the song of your love and of your
violet-robed bride.

But wake up. March off to the young unmarried
men who shared your childhood and beg their presence
so that we may look on less sleep than does the
clearvoiced nightingale.

* Cretan women once danced this way
on gentle feet in time
around the lovely altar, softly
treading the tender flowers of grass.
come to me from Crete to the sacred recess of this temple: here you will find a grove of apple trees to charm you, and on the altars frankincense fuming.

Here ice water babbles among the apple branches and musk roses have overshadowed all the ground; here down from the leaves’ bright flickering enthrancement settles.

There are meadows, too, where the horses graze knee deep in flowers, yes, and the breezes blow here honey sweet and softer [ ]

Here now you, my goddess Cypris in these golden wineglasses gracefully mix nectar with the gladness of our festivities and greet this libation.

* 

The moon appeared in all her fullness and so the women stood around the altar.

* 

He is dying, Cytherea, Adonis the delicate. What shall we do? “Beat your breasts, girls, and tear your clothes.”

* 

And since you are my friend get yourself a younger bedmate for I can’t bear to keep house together being the elder.

* 

To what shall I best liken you, dear bridegroom? Most of all to a slender sapling I liken you.

* 

As a sweet apple reddens on a high branch at the tip of the topmost bough: The apple-pickers missed it. No, they didn’t miss it: They couldn’t reach it.

Lift high the roofbeam, Hymenaeus, lift high, you carpenters: Hymenaeus, the groom is coming, Ares’ equal, greater far than a mortal man.

* 

“Virginty, virginity, where have you gone and left me?” “Never again will I come to you, never again.”

* 

O Dream on your dark wings you come circling whenever sleep descends on me, sweet god, and by your power keep off the cruel memory of pain.

Then hope gets hold of me that I won’t share anything that the blessed gods [ ]

for I would not be so these toys [ ]

But may I have [ ]

them all [ ]

* 

I don’t know what to do. I have two thoughts.

* 

a tender girl picking flowers

* 

In my season I used to weave love garlands.

* 

a sweetvoiced girl

* 

far more melodious than the lyre, more golden than gold

* 

Delicate girl, in the old days I strayed from you, and now again [ ]

* 

Not one girl, I think, will ever look on the sunlight of another time who has such talent as this one does.
Do I really still long for virginity?

Fool, don’t try to bend a stubborn heart.

I was in love with you, Attis, once, long ago. To me you seemed a little girl, and not too graceful.

You have forgotten me or else you love some other person more than me.

Then love shook my heart like the wind that falls on oaks in the mountains.

You came, and I was mad to have you: your breath cooled my heart that was burning with desire.

For me neither the honey nor the bee.

To Andromeda
That country girl has witched your wishes, all dressed up in her country clothes and she hasn’t got the sense to hitch her rags above her ankles.

Another to the Same
When you lie dead there will be no memory of you, no one missing you afterward, for you have’ no part in the roses of Pieria. Unnoticed in the house of Hades, too, you’ll wander, fluttering after faded corpses.

Please Abanthis, your Sappho calls you: won’t you take this Lydian lyre and play another song to Gongyla while desire still flutters your heart-strings

for that girl, that beautiful girl: her dress’s clinging makes you shake when you see it, and I’m happy, for the goddess herself once blamed me,
Our Lady of Cyprus,
for praying [*

May you sleep upon your gentle companion’s breast.

Please, my goddess, goldencrowned Aphrodite, let this very lot fall to me.

In my eyes he matches the gods, that man who sits there facing you - any man whatever - listening from close-by to the sweetness of your voice as you talk, the
sweetness of your laughter; yes, that - I swear it sets the heart to shaking inside my breast, since once I look at you for a moment, I can’t speak any longer,

but my tongue breaks down, and then all at once a subtle fire races inside my skin, my eyes can’t see a thing and a whirring whistle thrums at my hearing,
cold sweat covers me and a trembling takes ahold of me all over: I’m greener than the grass and appear to myself to be little short of dying.

But all must be endured, since even a poor [*

Gongyla surely some sign most of all Hermes entered, the Guide of Souls I said, “O my Master, [by the blessed goddess I [ have no pleasure being above the ground:
a desire to die takes hold of me, and to see the dew-wet lotus flowers on the banks of Acheron.”
“Honestly, I would like to die.”
She was leaving me, saying goodbye, her cheeks wet with tears, and she said to me:
“What a cruel unhappiness,
Sappho, I swear that I leave you against my will.

This is what I replied to her:
“Go, fare well, and remember me,
for you certainly know how we cared for you.

If you don’t, why then, I would like
to remind you [ ] and the beautiful times we had:

for with many a crown of roses
mixed with crocus and violets
you were garlanded while you were at my side

and with many a flower necklace
you encircled your tender throat,
plaiting blossoms together to make a wreath,

and with many perfumes [ precious, queenly [ you anointed yourself [ ]

and on beds of soft luxury
you would satisfy all your longing
for that tender girl [ ]

Never was there a festival
at a shrine or a temple where
we were absent [ ]

nor a grove or a dance [ ]

I think that someone will remember us in another time.

* *

Some say thronging cavalry, some say foot soldiers,
others call a fleet the most beautiful of sights the dark earth offers, but I say it’s whatever you love best.

And it’s easy to make this understood by everyone, for she who surpassed all human kind in beauty, Helen, abandoning her husband - that best of men - went sailing off to the shores of Troy and never spent a thought on her child or loving parents: when the goddess seduced her wits and left her to wander,
she forgot them all, she could not remember anything but longing, and lightly straying aside, lost her way. But that reminds me now: Anactoria,
she’s not here, and I’d rather see her lovely step, her sparkling glance and her face than gaze on all the troops in Lydia in their chariots and glittering armor.

*