

LOVE IN POMPEII

By THEODORE PRATT

25,000 words

About the Author

Theodore Pratt is one of the comparatively few people ever allowed to enter the cámara secreta (secret rooms) in the Museo Nazionale of Naples, which contain most of the erotic objects dug up in the excavation of both Pompeii and Herculaneum, some of which, and their uses, are mentioned in this work. Mr. Pratt is an American and the author of twenty-seven books, several successful plays, a number of Hollywood motion pictures, and endless stories and articles. His books have been translated into most of the main languages of the world and their sales are now more than ten million. His The Tormented has been hailed as one of the best studies of the sexual sickness of nymphomania ever written; several years ago it was published in Paris by Flammarion as L'Obsédée. Much the same holds true for his novel about the male side of this subject, Handsome, which deals with satyriasis. Mr. Pratt's contributions to Sexology, the American magazine of sex science, in both English and as translated into Spanish, are well known. He believes that serious erotica, as opposed to mere pornography, has a place in literature no matter how much frowned upon and misunderstood generally, and he presents Love In Pompeii in the spirit of depicting what ideal, fully-realized sex expression could be for many people if they had the wish, courage and imagination to attain it, but most of all, as he terms it, "the lack of taught prudery and guilt."

Something that could, perhaps, give no offense to your feelings
Might seem a monstrous crime, viewed by another man's eyes.

Well, whoever you are, in case my license offends you,
Learn at least this much -- manner must go with the theme.

Who would forbid us to take light from a light that is offered,
Who would keep account of the waves in the domain of the sea?

When you have found the places where a woman loves to be fondled,
Let no feeling of shame keep your caresses away.

Let passion employ all the inventions of love,
Use all of the words, the helpful cries, and the whispers.

They knew a thousand ways of love.

--Excerpts from The Art of Love,
by Publius Ovidius Naso (Ovid).

It is suggested to the publisher that the work be illustrated with reproductions of phallic amulets found in Pompeii and Herculaneum as illustrated in HERCULANUM ET POMPEII, Recueil Général des Peintures, Bronzes, Mosaïques, Etc., Découverts Jusqu'à ce Jour, Et Reproduits d'après Le Antichità di Ercolano, Il Museo Borbonico, et tous les ouvrages analogues; Augmenté de sujets inédits, Graves au trait sur cuivre, par H. Roux Aîné, et accompagné d'un texte explicatif par M. L. Barré. Musée Secret, Paris, M DCCC XL.

Or, possibly, the phallic face amulet as mentioned prominently in LOVE IN POMPEII, which appears on Plate 49 of the above volume, be used as a frontispiece. A crude tracing of this is ~~xxx~~ below.



I

The beautiful Clodia Nepos was being depilated by her chamber slave, Allius. She lay naked on a padded red Roman chaise, so far down on it that her neck rested against its curved low back. Even so, in this awkward position, she maintained natural grace. Her magnificent breasts thrust themselves upward without faltering, firmly, asserting their ripe taut fullness and tipped with tiny round brown nipples. Her long, shapely legs were bent and spread apart, with her feet resting on the end of the couch, so that Allius could attend her, preparing her for her lover, Sasia Cinna.

There was little hair for the quiet, efficient slave to pluck with the small bronze tweezers she used. Already it had been taken from Clodia's lovely armpits, leaving them satin sweet and dry. Long previously, most of it had been removed from the intimate parts now spread before Allius. The generously protuberant mount, her pudendum, the cushion for love, was as smoothly bare and white as the soft round cheeks of her buttocks below. Usually hidden by silky hair, baring it added a visual dimension to its inviting, full-lipped cleft. Here was the mysterious entrance to the greatest joy of life, the supreme altar sought most by men at which to worship and find maximal bliss.

The slave, now looking closely, and running her fingers lightly over the parts to be sure they were without stubble, took one last hair

and then put down her tweezers. From the low table nearby she picked up no strong perfume that rested there. She was trained to know that a man's full appreciation of a woman needed the delicate natural scent of her fresh, clean body and was only interfered with by overpowering perfumes. A flagon of musk was taken up by the slave and from it a single small drop was placed on one finger, which then lightly touched the intimate parts she had depilated, followed by other brief touches on the breasts and the lobes of the ears; this would bring out and subtly affirm the sweet female scent.

In a low voice Allius announced, "It is done, Mistress."

Clodia sat up. She looked at herself in the large round movable mirror at her side, mounted on a bronze stand and made of metal burnished and polished so that it gave back her clear reflection. "He will like me tonight, Allius?"

The slave answered fondly, "It is known, Mistress, that you are the same as the statue of Venus." She pointed to the beautiful life-size marble statue of the Goddess of Love which stood on its toes on the marble floor at one end of the large high room.

Clodia was exactly like this because she had posed for it. The white statue duplicated her precisely, for it had been made by the loving hands of Sasia in his vocation as sculptor and artist; by indenting the eyes, causing shadows to appear in them, he had even managed to convey, in the gleaming marble, Clodia's dark luminous eyes.

As Venus she held out her shapely white arms as though ready to receive another full-size statue that stood at the opposite end of the room. For this, in turn, Sasia had himself posed, it being a self-reproduction, and he represented the popular god, Priapus. In the guise of Sasia he was tall and muscular, with thick curly hair and a straight Roman nose in a handsome face.

The chief attribute of Priapus as the god of the male generative organ had not been neglected, for the chaste white marble sex member of the statue was in full, realistic erection, thrust out at the properly natural slightly upward angle seven inches from the body, duplicating exactly the dimensions of Sasia, who was a little over average, with full potent scrotum below. Like him, the pudendum of the statue was ^ccircumsized, as was the fashion of the day, following a period when the custom was believed to deaden sensation, only to be discovered that the opposite held true. The neat, clean circumcision laid bare the head of the phallus, with its tiny orifice and decided flange.

It was toward this aspect of Priapus, as so graphically represented by her lover, that Venus, in the reproduction of Clodia, seemed to yearn. Each stood there perpetually in marble, the one eternally prepared and the other reaching out her arms for his readiness. Priapus could never go to her and Venus never to him, but Clodia could go to Priapus. When she could not have Sasia in the flesh she had him in stone, climbing upon the statue and putting herself over him, not only her arms embracing him but her legs as well, taking him into her and working against him as though he lived, responded, and was almost the same as the real man.

Thus frequently, except for when Sasia sent word by a slave that he would visit her, did Clodia give obeisance to the god, for she was an extremely religious person. It was utterly convenient to have her favorite deity made in the practical and effective guise of the one she adored. Some Roman merchants who were forced to travel about the Empire on their business had like statues of Priapus in their homes, often made in their own image, for the use of their wives during

their absences, to insure her content and so that she might not look elsewhere for it.

The chamber in Clodia's luxurious villa in Pompeii occupied by her and Allius on this late afternoon of August 24th, 79 A. D., was quite large and never meant for a bedroom, which were usually small and cramped spaces, cubiculum designed only for spending the night. This room was formerly the banquet hall of the villa, now turned into a chamber furnished, decorated, and equipped especially for a new kind of banquet served in it -- every course known in the practise of love.

Around its walls, painted by Sasia, were thirty-six frescoes, each depicting a different attitude of love. These he had executed with great care and detail after long experience with Clodia, to follow their favorite sequence of putting their bodies together. Even here, as in the statues, Sasia had reproduced their likenesses so that in many ways, around the walls forever, did they perennially know each other, three dozen times at once. To look at yourself, to see yourself so engaged, was marvellously inspirational.

There was nothing else on the plastered walls except these delicately tinted frescoes, so vivid that the two depicted in them seemed to live and actually move. There were no windows in the room and only two doorways, one leading out to the atrium, the other to the multiple baths installed for those attending lengthy banquets, and which were provided with hot and cold water. The baths were another reason the quarters were perfect in which to practise the various nuances and more complicated acts of love, those known by few, practised by fewer, abused by some, feared and misunderstood by most, and condemned, at least outwardly, by the majority, to the result of incalculable loss of pleasure by mankind.

In the center of the large long room, placed directly between

the two gleaming statues, was the bed. This, too, was unlike that furnished for sleeping, which was almost always no more than a narrow couch. This bed was nearly as broad as it was long and it had, at each end, a headboard several feet high padded and ornamented with rich embroidery. The bed itself was stuffed thickly with feathers so that it was soft yet not too soft for its special purpose. Over it was placed a plain, thick, closely handwoven sheet of unbleached linen. The effect was to first welcome and then luxuriously ^yield to the pressure of the human body. Several firmly padded cushions lay ready on it to support and supplement the comfort of those who met here.

The chaise on which Clodia now sat was placed to one side of this comfortable and inviting article of furnishing, while on the other side, some feet away, was a thigh-high very narrow bench, also padded, though more firmly, and covered with linen, for a particular aspect of love in which Clodia especially ^lighted.

Near each corner of the main ^ebed, set on high bronze tripods, were phallic lamps, already burning with their hot little flames emitting from the end of the male organ they depicted. This was the only illumination in the chamber, which was exactly right not to be too glaring or revealing, but cast a soft warm glow over the unique proceedings from an appropriate source.

A low square table at one side of the bed held towels and flagons containing various oils and unguents, together with bowls of fine powder agreeably scented, and other appurtenances called into play, including two full-sized ebony dildoes. These exquisitely carved and polished artificial phalli, used for several purposes, were made by the foremost artisan in Rome who dealt in such articles.

A second table, on the other side, held an array of amulets of the kind that was the only present adornment of Clodia. Around her

neck, suspended on a fine gold chain, there hung, beautifully carved in lapis-lazuli, a phallus so tiny that it had to be looked at closely surely to determine its nature. Such amulets, fashioned out of various materials, were of a religious order, commonly used for many reasons, such as warding off the evil eye. Brides wore them to make them fertile, barren women to correct infertility. They were worn at purification rites, magic ceremonies, and at funerals; it was believed they chased spectres and apparitions. Their basic purpose was much the same as the cross worn by the revolutionary sect called Christians who were making so much trouble these days.

In particular were phallic amulets used to worship and ask the favor of the god Priapus. For him their variations were almost endless, with jewelers specializing in their creation, turning out nothing else. On Clodia's table was a collection of these both rare and limited to a single ~~xxxx~~ meaning. One had a properly flanged head at each end. Another had a third attached to it below, while still another had two more phalli, making four. The collection did not stop there, but went on up the scale until there was one amulet which had no less than twenty attached to it; this had once been owned by the infamous Empress, Valeria Messalina, which she wore following her nights spent as a common prostitute.

The purpose of the multiple-endowed amulets was for a woman to wear the one denoting how many times the previous night she had reached the height of love, in this way giving thanks to Priapus for his aid. Clodia^a was one of those rare but fortunate women capable of such achievement many times, repeating it successively under the controlled ministrations of her lover even though he himself did not reach any of his own summits until later, and she rose to hers also during other types of stimulation.

Sasia had bought her the amulet as a present while on a trip to Rome, but she had not yet acquired the right to wear the dissolute Empress' amulet, her record being no more summits than fifteen in a single night. Still, that was a consummation of the art of love seldom known and only to be envied by most others. It had taken many men for Messalina to have ~~amix~~ achieved the number; perhaps, as did Clodia, she had never experienced it during a single session with one man and Clodie's record was in this way the greater. Possibly Clodia's abilities were as great, or nearly, as any woman's in all history.

II

The circumstances of Clodia's life provided the opportunity for expert devotion to all the nuances of love, whose frankly enjoyable variation was her main interest and endeavor, to which she was completely dedicated. This had saved her sanity and health. Less than a year ago Clodia was married to a rich merchant, an importer of goods from the east who owned his own fleet of ships. Though considerably her senior at thirty-five, ^{le} which she was twenty-three, she loved him deeply. She had only given them her first child when a fever struck it at a week old which also descended upon her husband and a number of the household. All afflicted had died.

Afterward, Clodia also wished to die. Her lawyer, in settling her husband's affairs and disposing of his business, could not comfort her or give her further interest in life. Neither could her friends or even her physician. But it was a piece of the physician's advice that led to her salvation.

Following the birth of her child Clodia's breasts prepared themselves to give nourishment, swelling and bursting with milk. But after a short time they had no means of being relieved, so that they became cruelly painful and threatened with dangerous hardening.

The physician prescribed that Clodia be suckled by a female slave. This was done by the devoted Allius, and it had eased the pain, but Clodia found that having another woman, even a slave, apply her mouth to her in such a manner, was distasteful.

She knew, from experiments as a girl, when she found her nipples to be responsive to the touch of her fingers, that with some lifting and pressing she could reach them with her own mouth. Substituting herself for Allius, she experienced the same arousal again, sharper than before with the taste of her own milk.

The fact that she could feel desire had brought the thought and remembrance of the sculptor her husband had commissioned to create the statue of Venus in her image. Posing for it before him in the nude, she could not help but see that he failed to keep keen admiration and fierce passion from his dark eyes. He had made no move to express this further, but it was there, now recalled by Clodia, for she, too, in spite of herself, had been attracted by him. And as an added reminder, upon the deaths of her husband and child, Sasia had sent one of his slaves with a scroll of condolence. She remembered that he was approximately her own age, being only two years older.

The cup of wine to which Clodia had invited him quickly led further. Each found utter appreciation of the other in what was at first simple unabashed joy and later developed into a love more intense than Clodia had ever felt for her husband. A bizarre discovery heightened this.

During their ~~at~~ very first meeting in pleasure she learned that Sasia more than understood the difficulty of her breasts being ready for the infant's mouth no longer there. To his utter, surprised delight, when he took her nipple in his mouth, it flowed. He called her milk nectar and usually took all she had, especially because it was supposed

to be a decided aphrodisiac; mid-wives were paid for letting men suckle them before going to their wives or mistresses.

Then~~x~~ it was Sasia who relieved Clodia, and in doing so gave her delight in return. It kept her breasts fresh, with each ^oh~~o~~ping they would never dry. There was an added reason to keep them so, for it was known that a woman in that state did not readily conceive.

The sensation they found in this was furthered still more by the fact that Sasia was one of those exceptional men unafraid to discover that the male nipple has the same physical structure as the female and is equally capable of developing and erecting itself and being a source of distinct and subtle pleasure. Clodia loved to touch and caress and ~~even~~ suckle his, ^{even though dry,} as much as he did hers.

In all ways did they complement each other, even to wishing to lead their own lives, he pursuing his work, she keeping and preparing herself for love, in their own households, without the thought of merging them in marriage. In addition, they found that this separation, sometimes for days or even as much as a week, heightened their joy in each other when they did meet, which was whenever ^eeither needed the other. Then a slave was sent across the small triangular city with word, and neither had ever failed the other.

Recollection of this pleasant history was happy in Clodia as she rose from her depilation chaise to be dressed by Allius. The slave knew, from long practise, that complete clothing was not called for when Sasia was expected. First, after Clodia swung her long legs over the edge of the chaise, Allius knelt before her and slipped her feet into neat gold cothurni, binding the sandals about her slim ankles with white thongs.

Clodia stood up and now the slave covered her with a silk tunic, deep amber in color, and falling in semi-transparent folds to the gold

at her feet. The only other article of clothing she slave put on her mistress was a purple riband around the waist, abundantly wrought with threads of gold and with a clasp of interlacing gold serpents.

No color had been added to Clodia's lips or cheeks. The one had their own rich red and the other was flushed with eager anticipation of the evening to come. Apart from the amulet with its single phallus, she wore no jewelery; she needed no further artificial adornment, and knew that such only distracted attention from the natural charms of a woman. A man like Sasia did not savor glittering and costly stones of which she possessed many, but a thing of far greater value, soft glowing warm female flesh.

Allius examined her mistress critically, and found her handiwork satisfactory. With womanly affection, long established from close and intimate association between slave and mistress, she said, "All becomes your beauty."

In appreciation Clodia told her, "If it is so you have made it, Allius."

"May much and long delight be yours, Mistress, in all the manners possible between lovers."

"Thank you, Allius."

The slave withdrew from the chamber and after she had gone Clodia went to stand, on sandaled tiptoe, to assume the pose of herself in marble as Venus, with her arms outstretched toward Sasia in the guise of Priapus. Her gesture seemed to plead with him not to tarry or delay in coming to her. The ache from the milk stored in her swelled breasts and the expectant yearning for him she felt in her loins were nearly unbearable, making her slightly dizzy, so that she had to drop to her heels to balance herself.

She walked to one side of the statue, and at the extraordinary

sight, from this spot, of the virile reproduction of what Sasia would bring to her, which reached out far in front of him, she trembled so violently that she had to prevent herself, by force of will, from having, purely by mental suggestion (she had several times actually experienced this), the first of the many summits she hoped to ^{have} ~~experienced~~ that evening. She wanted to wait for the touch of Sasia.

III

With a sigh Sasia put down his wooden mallet and iron chisel. He had worked long hours today on the gigantic statue of Jupiter he was fashioning for the new temple being built outside the city on the road to Herculaneum. He was tired. All day long he had been lost in his work. Only in the back of his mind, from time to time coming forward to being an anticipatory smile to his full mouth, did the thought come to him that he had sent a slave to Clodia's house that day.

It had been nearly a week now since he had visited her. ~~But~~ ~~now~~ The Jupiter statue and its plan had kept him from her. But now its design was solved and needed only many days of expert fashioning to be carried out.

At the remembrance of the message he had sent to Clodia his tired muscles revived. The mere thought of her freshened and quickened him. He wondered if she might be as impatient as he, and knew that she was.

He rose from the stool on which he sat while he had been working on the rough outlines of Jupiter's feet, flaking away the solid marble to create the general shape he visualized. Now that his work was over, finished satisfactorily for the day, he wanted to go to Clodia immediately, without delay.

He looked down at his tunic, soiled with sweat and dribbles from ^F good he had eaten absently while contemplating the huge block of marble out of which he would wrest the great god. He tried to think if he

had instructed his slaves to heat water for bathing, and was sure he had not. Of one thing he was sure: They would not remember by themselves. This was supposed to be the golden age of the Roman Empire, but things like efficiency in most slaves was not the same as it had once been, becoming slack. Some people blamed the x sect of Christians for disturbing the state of life. The Christians gave hope to slaves, even holding that slavery was wrong. Perhaps this did tend to give them subversive ideas and serve less well and even be rebellious.

Contemplation of the state of the world, however, was not the order of the moment. That order was Clodia. And it would take less time to be cleansed at the public baths than to wait while his slaves heated water. That way he could get to Clodia a little sooner, and they would have more time for the delights of their meeting, to enjoy each other and repeated and experiment and perhaps better their already formidable record. When he had listed their statistics to some close friends a few of them were envious but most were indredulous and had not believed him.

At these thoughts Sasia strode out of his studio. In the atrium he shouted to his household that he was leaving and would not return until late night or even early morning, or perhaps not until tomorrow. He was not answered, though he knew the carptor heard him. He realized that he should return and reprimand his head slave, establish a discipline that was deteriorating, but Clodia stayed his impulse, and he continued on.

He emerged on the street where his village was located, the Strada Dell Abbondanza. This was at the southern end of the city and led into the forum, for which he now headed purposely, with long strides. He knew that as a patrician he should not set a bad example by appearing

in the streets clad in a tunic only, even though this was being done more and more as the toga became less popular. The old ways were going fast; he wondered what the world was coming to, where it was going, and into what it would develop. Wherever it was he was convinced it could not be good and wryly realized he was furthering it by lowering custom through his present public appearance. He half-thought of returning and donning a toga, but the thought again of Clodia did not even permit him to hesitate.

A short way on, at the corner of the Strada Dei Teatri, something else did stop Sasia for a moment. He did not know why, but he was impelled to slow his pace and then turn, to gaze down the long street. From here he could see Mount Vesuvius a short distance away. The volcano rose imperiously above the city and at its cone, where almost always there rose a plume of white smoke, there now appeared to be a slightly larger one than usual. Looking closer, Sasia fancied that there might even be a few dark undertones to it as well as a slightly pinkish cast as though fires below were reflected upon the cloud.

Sasia wondered if Vesuvius was about to erupt. This had been known in past centuries, before the city was built at its feet. Was it now showing added activity or was it merely his imagination? He recalled that the volcano frequently burst forth with added smoke and even fire, but these had never proved to be danger signals. Nothing more had ever happened and the mountain had become quiescent again.

He shrugged. In his loins he had his own volcano, of nearly a week's standing, to deal with. He felt far more charged than Vesuvius. His readiness was more pressing than the volcano and Clodia of much greater import.

He turned again and strode on.

The street on which he walked was paved with large heavy square and oblong brown cobbles in which two deep ruts had been worn by the wheels of chariots. One of these now approached, travelling at breakneck speed. With others on the street Sasia jumped nimbly to one side to avoid it as it rumbled past loudly, its standing driver whipping his horse. Sasia was not the only one to curve ⁵him for such reckless driving. One man, shaking his fist at the retreating chariot, cried out, "Roman reveler!"

It was known that Pompeii was frequented by wealthy Romans for their revels. The city had the reputation for being dissolute. Actually, it was no more so, if as much, as Rome. In the smaller city it was simply more in evidence, and it had become stylish to come here for dalliance. In quantity Pompeii could never compare with Rome, but was only a provincial spot. Sasia knew; he had savored both.

In all his taste of both cities, however, he had never known anything like Clodia. At the renewed thought of her he hastened his step, hurrying.

He emerged into the broad long forum. It was still busy even at this late hour in the afternoon. At the far end stood the Temple of Jupiter. Through its high wide open doors, up the marble steps and past the great columns of the portico, was the first statue of Jupiter Sasia had ever carved, the commission that had made his reputation as the foremost sculptor in Pompeii, called also one of the best in the entire Empire.

From this end of the forum he could partially glimpse the god whose image he had made. Sasia specialized in creating statues of the gods. They were good to him, especially Venus in providing him with a living version of herself in Clodia. The thought brought the conviction that life was to be lived while you had it, without a moment

wasted, and the more aware you were of its delights, and the less you were afraid of them, the more you got out of it. The question of any acts in it constituting vice -- if they harmed no other person -- was purely academic as far as Sasia was concerned. He smiled at an added thought to this, for the same held true with Clodia.

The colonnaded buildings on either side of the forum were usually of two stories, though several were as high as three. The narrow windows in the upper stories of these, some of which were glazed, all had thick outer wooden shutters to be closed at night against thieves and the poisonous air of darkness. The street level was lined with shops, while out in the open, mounted on small stands and carts, shouting their wares at the passing throng, were the purveyors of many articles ranging from fresh vegetables to precious jewels. Money changers cried their rates, lawyers and teachers discussed their affairs, the idle practised their busy trade, and senators discussed politics. Housewives, some of them carried in litters, had come to shop, and slaves purchased food for their households. A good many of the twenty-five thousand citizens of Pompeii were in evidence.

Friends called to Sasia and he greeted them in turn but he did not stop even when their manners or words invited him. The promise of Clodia was too immediate and strong. He did not stop at first when a voice behind him cried, "Master Cinna! Master Cinna!"

He thought it might be one of his slaves who had followed him with some urgent message, and he turned in his stride to see who it was. He caught sight of a small man behind a tiny cart, whose thin mouth in his wizened face, called again, "Master Cinna! I have it!"

Sasia did not comprehend at once. Then he recognized the little man for being Davus, the merchant of amulets. For many months Davus, after Sasia described a certain amulet he had heard about and wished

as a present for Clodia, had searched for it. Now, evidently, he had found it.

That was worth stopping for, wasting a few minutes away from Clodia. He strode over to the little man's cart and lectured him, "I've told you before, Davus: You're a freedman; act like one; do not call me 'Master'; that is for slaves."

"Yes, Master," the little man answered. "That is, it was so long that I was a slave that I cannot get out of the habit. It is not easy to say 'Sasia Cinna' to a patrician."

"Nevertheless, you must say it. Otherwise you remain a slave."

Davus discussed this no longer, as though it did not greatly interest or concern him. Instead, he held out his clenched hand. When he opened it, there, lying on his palm, was the singular amulet Sasia had long sought.

Tiny, yet exquisitely wrought of polished garnet, it depicted the male sex apparatus as a human face, utilizing all parts. The phallus itself represented the prominent nose, the testicles the cheeks and jewels with cleft chin, and the public hair the curly hair on top of its head, while looking out of this unusual countenance were two innocent eyes.

IV

Davus, closely watching Sasia's pleased expression at the sight of the amulet, said, "Nothing is better than this for warding off the evil eyes. It is said that Gaius Julius Caesar, before he crossed the Rubicon, carried one like this, perhaps this very -- "

Sasia interrupted, to cut off this supposition and to save time in the haggling to come, "What is your price?"

"Can a price be put on so rare an object as you hold in your hand?"

"A price can be put on it. Put it."

"I will accept your own offer, whatever you wish to --"

"That way you know I must offer more than it is worth. Your price, Davus."

"A hundred denarii."

"Your intelligence, in even mentioning such a ridiculous figure, is that of a slave," Sasia retorted.

"Yes, Master Cinna," Davus agreed.

"I will give you twenty-five."

"It cost me more than that to get it."

"A lie."

"No, no; it cost me dearly!"

"Then thirty."

"Make it forty-five."

"Thirty-five, not a denarius more. And no further talk. I am in a hurry."

Softly Davus proposed, "Will you not give five more for the added pleasure you will be awarded for it by the one you give it to?"

Sasia, half-smiling, growled, "You know too ^{we} well, Davus, how to touch vain men on their weak places." He agreed formally to the price of forty denarii by saying, "I have no money with me; come to my house tomorrow at noon."

"Much happiness to you, Master -- much pleasure, Sasia Cinna."

Sasia hurried on. Reaching the front of the great Temple of Jupiter he did not so much as look in at his statue, for his mind now was entirely on Clodia. He walked around the temple on the left, to reach the new thermae in back of it. These baths had been built only last year and were patronized mostly by nobles and patricians, for they were the most expensive and luxurious. Here Sasia kept several

changes of clothing and always left, to be washed, those in which he arrived.

In the narrow street in back of the Temple a crowd had gathered, blocking the way. Composed entirely of men, they were holding a hot discussion and from the cries and even shouts Sasia, who had to stop because of the crowd, gathered that they had been discussing religion, which had now reached the vociferent and argumentative stage. As he listened, for a moment, to gauge what he should do about getting through, one man virtually screamed to another, "So you are a Christian?"

The other, a lean ascetic-looking man, replied quietly, "I am proud to be a Christian."

"Then you are proud to be an infidel!" ~~the~~ another man screamed.

The crowd took up the cry, damning the thin man with the epithet.

Sasia, impatient at the delay, pushed his way through the crowd. He brushed the Christian as he passed and gazed, closely, for an instant, into the lean face of the man. Beyond, the sight of the face stayed in his brain, etched into his sculptor's remembrance as one worthy of being put into stone.

But he had no time for that. As he made his way on he felt sorry for Christians who, blasphemously, had given up the gods he and Clódia worshipped, such as Priapus. They had deserted him for their Christian god who seemed to have no joy in him, and no capacity for pleasure, but held, incredibly, that the rejection of pleasure was a virtue. It seemed perverse and even insane. Yet men, through history, had shown they were capable of believing anything, no matter how unnatural or outlandish.

Sasia arrived at the entrance of the baths and passed in. Here, in the spacious marble tepidarium, or lounging room, were many men, come for cleanliness, to recover from drinking or sexual excesses,

or merely to gossip. An attendant greeted Sasia deferentially and ushered him into the laconium, the vapor room. Here his soiled tunic, chiton undergarment, and sandals were taken from him and he stood naked, exactly, except for one manifestation not having asserted itself, the same as the statue in Clodia's house.

Through the heavy hot wet steam in the chamber he could make out other forms, some of them sitting on the stone benches with slaves working at them. The latter held flat, fairly sharp wooden blades with which they scraped the skins of the bathers of sweat and dirt. In a moment, after Sasia began profusely to sweat, two came to work on him, scraping every inch of his body, doing their work expertly.

This done, Sasia was ^Sexcor^ted through the steam to the bath room where a large pool held heated water into which had been poured fresh perfume. He joined others here, immersing himself to the neck, where he soaked.

A voice spoke near him on the surface of the water. "Sasia, my friend. Will you not dine with me tonight?"

Sasia turned in the water and saw Fladdius Olinthis. The elderly senator was bald except for a fringe of white hair about his crown; his great belly, beneath the surface, could not be seen.

"My thanks, Senator," ^Sasⁱa told him, "but I go to see Clodia."

"From what I hear of her," the Senator said, "you are the luckiest man in Pompeii."

"In all the Empire," said Sasia.

"If that is so," the Senator said, "then I would, if I could, which I cannot, exchange eating for the sustenance you find with ^{her.} ~~xxx~~"

"You do not know how great your sorrow is, Senator."

"She is, then, everything that is said about her?"

"Even more than that. She is two women in one; she is seven."

"And you are the man to appreciate it." The Senator nodded his approval. "But there is danger in her, Sasia."

"There is no danger in the proper worship of Priapus."

"Jupiter forbid! I do not mean that. It is Clodia who holds you here in Pompeii."

"Pompeii is my home."

"Yet the Emperor, if I have been informed correctly, has asked you to go to Rome to create certain statues for him."

"I sent word to him that others could do the work as well and perhaps better."

"And was not his word in return then a royal order for you to go to Rome?"

Sasia nodded. "His scroll arrived last week."

"Yet you do not go?"

"The Emperor does not know the attractions of Clodia."

"You did not tell him that?"

"And lose her to him?"

The Senator shook his head, rippling the water. "Men have been sent to the arena for far less than you have done, Sasia."

"To leave Clodia would be the same as sent to the lions."

The Senator nodded his understanding of that.

"As my friend and mentor," Sasia proposed, "I ask you to use your influence in Rome to get the Emperor to forget that I exist."

"Not an easy task, Sasia, once he puts his mind to something he has been told he cannot have. But I will do my best."

"My second thanks, Senator."

As Sasia began to climb the underwater steps leading out of the bath the Senator cried, "Where are you going?"

"You know that, Senator."

"But you have not soaked nearly the usual time."

"It is enough. I cannot wait."

"Priapus be with you, Sasia."

Sasia waved a hand in farewell at his friend and then made his way into the dressing-room. This room was slightly heated and here other attendants dried him with hot towels and then began to annoint his body from vials of gold and alabaster, some of them studded with gems and containing rare unguents. After a mere touch of these Sasia waved them off. He did not want to arrive at Clodia's smelling of a perfumer's. She had said she liked his male odor as he liked her female. He ordered, "My toga," as he suffered his dark ~~h~~ curls to be worked on with a wooden comb.

The toga, the one he had left here last week, was brought, together with a clean chiton, tunic, and his sandals. The fresh ^{white} toga hung from him in drapes and folds that enhanced his tall form. Sasia was a striking figure as he strode from the baths and out once again into the streets.

It was dark now, with the forum and streets dimly lighted by flaming, smoking torches that burned on each corner. Most of the trades people had left the forum, where the cries of vendors were no longer heard. Sasia circled the Temple of Jupiter and entered the street, the Strada Degli Augustali, leading to the right of it. Shortly he came to the Vico Storto.

This winding street was the favorite haunt of the debauchess^e. Here the courtesans held forth in their cell-like rooms, which had open doors to the street covered only by a flimsy drapery. Each Venus of the Crossways had her name painted above her door, at the side of which was attached a phallic ~~h~~ lamp. A line of these on each side of the street was the only illumination. The inmates who were not busy

inside called out astonishing proposals to Sasia as he passed; sometimes two and even three made a mutual offer to serve him cooperatively in any way he wished or could conceive. He smiled, but paid no other attention.

On the Vico Storto also were located the houses of prostitution. These were indicated by having, at each of their entrances, jutting out from the wall, a male pudendum set at the proper angle, sometimes as much as a yard long. They were extremely realistic and colored expertly. Occasionally a crowing rooster indicated the houses, while an additional advertisement for the establishments was having a man walking up and down outside wearing what was perhaps the most unique hat ever devised by the human imagination. Enormous, they were infested with long snake-like symbols, each a ~~phallic~~ phallic head of Minerva. The man wearing one of these shouted the name, attractions, and prices to be found at the business house employing him to advertise its wares.

Sasia glanced into one of these establishments, a symptuous place, and took in the scene of its spacious and luxuriously furnished reception room. The wine jars that fitted into holes on its stone counter were being worked busily. Large paintings were on its walls. One was of a naked woman being flagellated by a man with his extraordinarily long, whip-like penis. Another was that of a bearded ancient who had placed his vast phallus on a money changer's scales to indicate that he was still worth something. Above these, around the walls, were murals which showed the various positions of copulation, including all the deviations. The place employed both girls and boys who specialized in these. A ^scustomer indicated the particular picture he favored and an attractive, willing young partner of the correct gender for that was provided. One picture depicted a voluptuously bare black woman leaning over a white man who lay on his back, fully

ready, and she attended him with her mouth; such was currently a prime favorite.

On this street as a young man Sasia had learned the art of love. It was a proficient college, with sure, experienced teachers. No young man, after sedulously attending it, could be expected to experience any troubles in life by being ignorant.

Sasia did not tarry here now. Life on the Vico Storto was behind him. He used the knowledge he had gleaned here in a far more satisfactory way.

At the end of the street he emerged into the Strada Di Nola. He took this to the right and in a moment came out on the broad Strada Stabiana. It was on this main thoroughfare through the city, leading from the gates at one end to the other, where wealthy people and certain Roman nobles had villas, as well as Clodia.

On this Sasia turned left and as he did so, in the more open city here, he became aware again of Vesuvius. Frequently the volcano at night cast a slight glow in the sky, occasionally strong enough to send its light down into the streets. Now, this evening, it was the strongest Sasia had ever seen it. Reflected from an even larger cloud than before that hung over its cone, an eerie glow was cast over Pompeii. Sasia thought that he could even hear rumblings from the volcano, but that might have been a product of his imagination.

Ordinarily he would have stopped to regard it, and even speak of it to the few people standing about on the shuttered avenue who were looking at Vesuvius and discussing its unusual activity. But tonight Sasia had such a greater thing on his mind that he did not slow his stride. Let the superstitious read omens into the behavior of Vesuvius, with one man saying it was good, another bad.

Sasia kept on. He could see Clodia's villa now. At the sight

of it she and what lay ahead with her came to him more strongly than ever, with urgent immediacy. Sudden expectancy so charged his loins that he shot into abrupt erection, thrusting out almost violently, pushing his toga in front of him. The sensation, rare and different from the usual gradual growth, was so provocative that, if it had not been for the control he had learned from long practise, he might have experienced, prematurely (as he had once), the first of the consummations for which he was visiting Clodia.

As it was, he remained fully extended, hard and stiffly prepared, as he hurried still faster to bring their first moment that much closer. He knew he would remain that way until Clodia calmed and softened him. Fervently he thanked Priapus for the wonderful and dramatic preparation his body had automatically made to meet the delights ahead.

That part of him proceeded before him, proudly, as though to search the way and announce him.

V

The huge Nubian slave, Sallust, who guarded the arched outer entrance of Clodia's villa, took no notice of the obvious state in which Sasia arrived. If he had it would have been one only of admiration, for black men were supposed to be especially endowed and have enormous dimensions, sometimes keenly sought by debauched women.

The towering Nubian threw the heavy studded wooden doors wide for Sasia to pass in. Clodia's household knew for what he came and how impatient their mistress was for his arrival. Sasia passed into the atrium. Broad and high, with pillars all about it between which stood marble statues, it had a sizeable square opening in the roof for air and light. The rain that entered this fell into a pool below it of the same size. The atrium was lighted with torches and furnished

lavishly with heavy bronze and ebony pieces, and was draped with costly woven materials.

Here Clodia's carptor, Lucius, greeted him, "You are food and drink to us, Master Cinna, better than I will serve you later."

"You flatter me, Lucius, only that I may put in a word to your mistress for you to be freed."

The tall lean middle-aged slave, who ordered Clodia's household for her, replied gravely, "I have no great wish to be a freedman, Master Cinna; in many ways I am better off as a slave here in this good household than being a free man trying to make a living in the forum."

"Well spoken, Lucius, especially if I am to continue eating the excellent food you serve. Your mistress is ready for me?"

"More than ready, Master." The carptor commented on and looked at his state. "As you are. May Priapus be with you both."

"Thank you, Lucius."

Sasia went to Clodia's door. He did not rap, but opened it wide, passed in, and closed it after him.

Clodia stood by the side of the broad bed watching the door for his arrival. As soon as he was in the room her eyes were drawn openly to the protuberance beneath his toga, so frankly in evidence, and she gave a gasp of delight. Her gaze lifted to his face and she greeted him, "You have arrived, Sasia, in the condition I had hoped for."

"The thought of you had made this, Clodia."

"It has been nearly a week."

"Only Jupiter kept me from you."

They enjoyed the sight of each other tantalizingly, for a moment more before he strode to her and her arms went wide to receive him. They embraced closely. Their kiss at first was merely with the lips,

but soon his tongue came into play, and the feel of it investigating and then probing her mouth made her clasp him tighter^t, and when, in turn, her own tongue found his mouth, he pressed on her.

She took her mouth from his and cried, "Oh, Sasia, you are hard and great against me!"

"You are soft and warm to me."

They sank to the edge of the bed, sitting there. He took her by the shoulders, turning her to him to look at her squarely. "You are more beautiful each time I see you."

"If I am, Sasia, it is because your love has made me so." She regarded him. "And you are more handsome."

"Any looks I have are at your feet, Clodia."

They spoke no more for a moment, while he worked at the fastening of her girdle and took it from her. Then he found the attachments of her amber tunic, loosened them, and drew it off her body. He did not yet touch her beyond divesting her of her covering, but his eyes wandered over her apprecitatively. She lifted one pretty foot and then the other while he took off her sandals.

Next she carried out her part of their ritual. She took off his sandals first, then his toga, tunic, and finally his chiton. Her glance went directly and unashamed to the revealed stiff manifestation still with him, and she drew in her breath sharply at the virile sight. He was not depilated; his public hair remained intact, a fine dark masculine bush from out of which grew and rose the wondrous extension of himself.

She breathed in the emanation exuding from him, and whispered appreciatively, "you are fresh from the baths."

"As you are from yours, Clodia."

"My body exists only for yours."

"And mine for yours."

"Now you will be my god."

"And you my goddess."

They carried out what they meant by this, the second part of their ritual, she by going to stand beside the statue of Venus and he at the side of Priapus. She raised herself on her toes, as she had done before, and then Venus was duplicated, exactly, in flesh, while Priapus also acquired a living twin, precisely the same in all respects except for one difference. While the pudendum of the statue was completely rigid, that of Sasia could be seen to pulse and throb, slightly lifting and falling with vibrant life eager to create more life.

Clodia, looking at this, mummured in a choked voice, "How its heart beats."

"It beats for you," Sasia assured her, as they broke their poses and came back to the bed.

"I cannot wait," she told him.

"Wait a moment," he said. He brought forth the curious face amulet and gave it to her. She exclaimed at its beauty and execution and, unclasping the chain holding the other about her neck, replaced it with the new, saying, "He will watch and inspire us."

They sat upon the bed, at one end, half-reclining on the cushions against the headboard there. Before Allius left she had arranged the large mirror so that anyone on the bed could see himself clearly reflected a few feet away in whatever activity he chose. Sasia glanced at this preparation with approval and then up at the walls, at his frescoes there. He asked, "How shall we start tonight?"

"From the beginning," she proposed, "and go around the room. Or at least as far as we can get." By this she meant that she still hoped to equal the record of Valeria Messalina and gain the right to

wear the Empress' twenty-phalli amulet.

"Tonight," he prophesied confidently, "you will reach as far as the dildoes." This meant that if they did she would surpass her record, for previously to follow the frescoes in sequence and reach the use of the dildoes, they had to start, not at the very beginning, but several after the first.

"With the help of Priapus," prayed Clodia.

The intricate course of love they now began has been known to few people in all history, for seldom have the correct ingredients for it ever been brought together. Not many civilizations have provided a social order conducive to its practise. Notably among those that have were the early Greeks, who passed it along to their conquerers, the Romans. It is found today principally in the Far East, and in parts of Europe. In the rest of the world a sense of sin and guilt too often interferes with even a mild approach to it. Few indeed are capable of adopting such an enjoyable viewpoint toward life.

Sometimes, if there is one who does, he finds it difficult to find another, for they do not occur often. The majority of these go through life without meeting one of their kind. Most humans are content to wade only in the shallows of the sea of sensual pleasure, regarding the waters below as being depraved when they are merely deeper. Others lack the courage to explore further and live to a point of regret that they did not, in time. Still others lack the taste for it, and the discrimination. Many do not have the time or liesure, and if they did, the imagination. Some make a profitable career out of labelling it evil and in this way practise it vicariously, though, ironically, most of these are probably not aware of their hypocrisy and would be shocked to be accused of it.

Finally, there is physical danger in it if not practised with knowledge, and psychic threat if followed without true feeling or wish; therefore it is not for all. And there are those not fitted for it lest it become their dominant and sole interest in life and they slip into degeneration.

A few, however, constitute those rare individuals to be found among all peoples of all times who may be classed as genuinely capable of obtaining as much controlled physical pleasure as they possible^y can from life. Such were Clodia and Sasia, who were fortunate in living in the Roman Empire at the time they did, when the worship of Priapus was accepted and approved. In addition, they complemented each other exactly, and it is seldom that two of this kind find their way to one another.

They proceeded to exemplify this, assuming the first simple position, in which mount and phallus do not approach each other. Instead, she leaned back against him and his hands went about her from behind to place themselves upon her breasts, while she turned her head so that his lips could meet hers again and his tongue enter her mouth, working itself in and out there, pretending to duplicate a greater connection to come later.

At the same time her hand went out to him and eagerly, as though long delayed, she clasped his member. Her palm and fingers encircled it tightly, then left it and went to his scrotum below, dropped that and returned to his shaft, altern^ating between the two, both to his and her own rising pleasure.

Her arousal came almost at once, as soon as his fingers began gently to work her nipples, which rose and hardened. Her hips started to undulate. Her bare mount rose and fell as though probing the air for a lover. The lips of her cleft, already somewhat enlarged, now

swelled fully, the pink outer lips spreading open like the petals of a flower, revealing small inner ones of a deeper hue. The cleft^h itself ever so slightly opened and closed, spasmodically searching and inviting.

Her breath came faster and her body undulated more rapidly. His touch, working her nipples, began to go faster; the broad middle finger of each hand went around and around on them, encompassing the areola as well, so that not for an instant did she fail to receive its double stimulation. His tongue went in and out of her mouth still faster and her own hand at his loins grasped frantically, back and forth, at all that was there.

Her hips began to thrust at the air jerkily. She sucked in his tongue as though, unable to get him into one part of her, she would accomplish this thoroughly in another, and she pressed her breasts against his caressing fingers until finally, with a sharp moan, she reached the place where she was going and held it, her body tensely arched to receive the final, culminating touch of her lover, the air, as she experienced her first climax.

She came back from it slowly, her body lowering itself flat on the bed, gratefully relaxing. Her mouth turned from his and his hands left her breasts, but she still clung fondly to his member, though now without movement.

She sighed with deep content and then whispered, "You are the only man ever to do that to me. It is because you know what it is to have nipples of your own so that you are expert at touching them."

"It was good?" he asked.

"It was wonderful, like a sweet introduction to all that we now will have."

"You'r touch on me nearly took me with you."

"Oh, Sasia, you must last, as you can. No man has such control

as you. Most men are little good. They enter you, move a few times, expend without the thought of the woman, and believe they have conquered another province for the Empire. They make a woman a mere vessel to receive their seed and sometimes retain it for nine months, nothing more, and then are surprised when she searches for greater interest. But not you, Sasia, who sees to your partner not once, but many times."

"For our first time, tonight, I don't know how well I can do this."

"Then you are greatly charged?"

"I ache with it more than I ever have before."

"I will take your ache away, but after a time."

They lay full-length, holding each other, she continuing to grasp him as before while they rested and enjoyed the sharp flavor of their handsome nude proximity, at which they glanced with appreciation in the mirror.

VI

When he moved again to please her she said, "First slap me to show ^h how you will master me."

He reached with the flat of one hand and brought it down sharply on one of her buttocks, then the other. He slapped them both so hard it made repeated cracking sounds and her flesh showed pink. She enjoyed the pain, savoring it, until he slapped so hard that finally she cried out. Then he stopped at once and leaned over her, to lovingly and tenderly kiss each reddened buttock.

Following that he rested his head upon her upper arm, which embraced him, and he took her nipple into his mouth. One of his arms was under her and his finger adopted again the play with the tip of

her second breast. At the same time his other hand reached for her mount. His fingers played over it lightly, barely touching it, a wisp of a caress, left it to graze along the rest of her body, including the inner part of her thighs and belly, returned, departed again, teasing. One of her hands grasped his scepter which would soon rule her and the other was thrown back over her ^{head} hand turned sideways as though in supplication.

He felt her warm milk came into his mouth and, at the delicious, exciting taste, sucked harder, drinking from the rosy fount, and when she felt the sensation of this herself her mount pushed hard against his hand, asking, imploring, and insisting. At this request his finger found her cleft and he drew it slowly along the full warm lips. It made her quiver. Three times his finger traced the same course. The third time it found what it wanted; no longer was her cleft dry but ^w now supplied with natural lubrication, sharpening the sensation.

At that his finger moved along it more certainly, sliding rapidly from one end to the other, until her quiver became greater. Finally his finger stopped and then, gently investigating, it parted the lips at the upper end of her cleft and searched for something there. There was no mistaking Clodia's clitoris when he discovered it, for it was a good deal longer than that of most women, being nearly an inch when in erection as it was now, a miniature, vestigial phallus.

Sasia's caressing finger settled upon it and began to work it, at first gently, then more positively. It made her gasp and her hand, on his pudendum, began to work itself up and down along it, stroking it, rubbing the head and passing over the sensitive flange there. He took his mouth away from her breast and told her, "That feels too good for me to contain myself if you continue it."

She stopped, merely holding him tightly, while he took up

his multiple stimulation of her again, drinking from her breast, working her other nipple, and now rapidly and firmly, with a sure rhythm, rubbing her most telling point of contact, the tiny knob at the head of her clitoris, until she cried out and rose to a second orgasm while he continued all, harder than ever for a moment, and she stiffened and cried out again repeatedly.

Only when she began to relax did he stop his movements, taking his hands away from her, but leaving his lips enclosing her nipple, which he suckled softly, letting her milk flow into his mouth.

After a long moment her unoccupied hand came to the back of his head and she held him to her breast as though she had a child there. She whispered, "I, too, have an ache, two of them, and you have taken one away and will take the other."

"Your milk will make me more potent; in this way I return it to you."

His lips left her and they rested, though her hand on his rigid member did not leave him, but still clasped it as though she might lose it. She could feel the steady hot throbbing along the entire hard length of what she held so affectionately.

After a time they both glanced up at the wall frescoes. They needed no instruction for their third step but merely enjoyed seeing themselves pictured in those already accomplished and the next to come, as they did in the active reproduction of themselves in the mirror.

As her hand left him and he turned about on the bed, placing his head toward her feet, Sasia cautioned, "Remember that it has been nearly a week and that if you use your mouth too well, what is to happen later will happen now."

"I will try to remember, Sasia, but what you do to me makes me forget all else."

He bent his head to her mount. First he kissed the flower-like

pink lips there and she was so practised with them that she could flutter them slightly and in this way kiss him back with them. Then his tongue repeated what he had done with his finger before, sliding along the entire length of her receptive cleft and finally settling on her clitoris until one of her hands clutched at him, her fingers digging into him.

At the same time she kissed the end of his member and then took its head between her lips, holding it there with little movement, for she knew what would happen should she apply the techniques she knew so well that could only be used later. Finally she took his entire length into her mouth, all seven inches of it, so that it reached down into her throat. Very slowly, so gradually that there seemed to be little perceptive motion, she passed it in and out, sucking it gently.

Sasia had to exercise nearly all the control he had not to permit his body to explode. He concentrated on what he did for her rather than what she did for him, using his tongue expertly and rapidly until again, quickly this time, as she whimpered and clutched him tighter, he could feel, on his tongue, the great tenseness come to her once more and stiffen her until her body felt nearly as hard as marble, remained that way for a ~~ix~~ stirring moment and then melted into flesh again.

He took his mouth from her and lay there in that position while she retained his member between her lips, but without moving them. Her eyes were closed, their long lashes swept across her cheeks, and to Sasia she looked like a pleased child who had fallen asleep with a stick of candy in her mouth. The sight of this brought a sudden, almost uncontrollable urge to him to give her more than candy in her mouth, so that he had to look away to postpone this and prevent succumbing to it now.

It was some time before she stirred. When her eyes opened she looked at him, down the entire length of his extended member whose head she still held between her lips and in her expression was pure adoration for the one who could do to her what he had accomplished, and fervent knowledge that what had so far occurred was merely a beginning and a simple one at that.

Fondly, playfully, a little mischievously, her appreciation expressed itself by working her tongue on him for an instant in a manner that was scheduled only for later.

He pulled himself from her, jerking away, and exclaimed, "Clodia! You nearly -- !"

She giggled. "No one as strong-minded as Sasia would permit himself to do anything he did not want."

"You don't know how char^ged I am, Clodia."

"Then show me."

"You wish it now?"

"All day long, ever since your sc^voll came, I have thought of your cream spurting into me. I closed my eyes and pictured it and then I could feel it. Sometimes I did not believe I could stand it. Once I nearly climbed upon Priapus but did not, knowing that you would be here and he could not give me all I wanted."

"I have much to give you, Clodia."

"As much as the most we have known?"

"It is impossible to tell until it has been done, but I think as much."

"Perhaps more?"

"Perhaps."

"I will die with it and be happy to die. I will feel it from the first spurt and if there are twenty, your record, I will reach

ecstasy twice during it as I have done before."

"You are the only woman, Clodia, I have ever known who has done that."

She held out her arms to him, inviting him to change his position again, which he did, bringing his head back to hers.

"Sasia!" she implored. "Give me your tongue that you have given to another part of me! Let me have the taste of myself! Then go to ~~another~~ my other breast and take my milk while you replace it with your richer fluid! Give me this as only you can do it!"

He gave her his tongue, deeply, and she took it wantonly, as if she would swallow it. When they parted from this they both gasped. Then he lifted and spread her legs and beneath her buttocks placed one of the flat cushions. This raised her mount slightly so that her cleft was presented in a better, more comfortable, and far more effective position. Fondly, from half-closed eyes, she watched this practised, efficient preparation of her body.

Now he presented himself between her legs, assuming the innocent and usual position of all unimaginative lovers. His own clear lubrication had begun to flow copiously, covering the head of his erect and still pulsating member, so that when he introduced it to her no manual assistance was necessary. He found her entrance easily, waited upon the threshold for a titillating moment, and then slipped in the entire length, disappearing as though by magic.

Thus he buried himself to the bush of his hair. Finally, to celebrate this happy meeting and eager cooperation of parts made especially for each other and now at last put together for wondrous use, he moved slightly from side to side so that his hair tickled her bare sex deliciously.

She gave a low cry at this and at being so magnificently

penetrated and occupied, ~~and filled~~ all the way to the bottom; their sizes fitted each other perfectly. He held himself there for an instant without moving, filling her entirely, so that she could feel how well she was mastered. Then he withdrew himself his entire length, right out to the entrance, ^b before he plunged in again instantly. This way the complete length of his member passed over her still stiff clitoris. Especially did the decided glance just back of the head of his rock-hard shaft touch and titillate her clitoris, lifting it delicately, rubbing it, then letting it down, and repeating the process as he kept up a steady in and out rhythm.

"Oh, Sasia!" she cried. "Give it to me! Just like that, yes, like that! Give me your long solid strokes! Give them to me! Give the whole length to me, every inch! Give me all you can! Conquer me with your great weapon! Be my god and my ruler and my male all in one! Give me all you've got!"

Gladly he obeyed her. He gave his strokes strongly, and at the same time his lips went to her other breast and from its nipple he began to draw her milk. Her hands now went to his buttocks, one on each, and she pressed them, helping him into herself each time he thrust, in this way also communicating to him the pace she preferred, which was always faster.

This was not all of their sensation, for his scrotum, hanging down, every time he thrust swayed like a bell clapper and its double contents, each the size and hardness of a pullet's egg, lightly slapped at her buttocks, caressing them and whispering at another entrance there with soft warm promise that it would be visited later.

They were gladdened rather than repelled by another effect of their collaboration. When he went in and out of her the action produced a slight sound of suction. They had learned not to try to quell this but to encourage and develop it as an extra, audible

evidence of the success of their union, making it seem as if the lips of her cleft had gained the ability to speak and approve the happiness being brought to them.

And this still was not all, for by turning their gaze to one side they could see themselves in the circular mirror, so that they were stimulated the more.

Once again her body stiffened and she rose to the height of ecstasy while she worked back at him as though fearful she might lose what he was giving her so repeatedly and so strongly, for when he started out, on his backward stroke, she went after him as if he was escaping and she did not mean to let him go, catching him and bringing him back in. The quick fierce mutual movement brought a low moan from her as she climbed to her crest again, remained there for a long tense moment, and then slaked, began to go down the other side.

This time, however, he did not stop. He could not, for, overloaded, he was rapidly ascending his own summit. Now he had his own full pleasure. No longer did he think of her first, but only of himself, knowing her paroxysm would next time come from his, perhaps twice repeated for her when he expended.

He gave her harder strokes than ever, keeping them long, and setting the pace she chose, even more furious than hers. She must follow him now. And she did, meeting his every wild plunge by swallowing him eagerly, reaching up for more, working the lips of her sex to grasp him and the muscles inside her ~~vag~~ passage to squeeze him as though trying to hold him fast.

She gasped now each time he went into her. Her thighs began to quiver, out of her control, and her breathing, which had become rapid, became a pant.

Madly he kept up the welcome attack on her, pounding and riding

her, dominating and possessing her, and never neglecting to use the smooth hard knob, with its flange, at the head of his lance with the fullest effect not only on her but, additionally because of what it did to her, on himself as well and the sensation both gave to him. The suction sound became puissant, as though the lips of her mount were now calling in a louder voice in celebration of their delectable union.

Then, finally, unable to contain himself longer, Sasia gave a loud involuntary grunt as he felt something tremendous trigger deep within his loins.

An abrupt, acute convulsion took hold of his entire body, from his brain to his toes. He felt himself explode as the first great jet shot out of him like a solid projectile. He knew that of itself, free, it was capable of squirting, with incredible force, as much as several yards.

When the first hot spurt^r went into her she gave a single sharp scream. That initial spurt instantly set her off once more and she clutched his buttocks, her fingers like talons, to let him know what was happening to her.

At the same time each of their faces was contorted into grimaces that seemed to express that they were suffering acute pain rather than the greatestst joy humans can entertain and express. These expressions became even more twisted as, savagely, Sasia kept up his movement, still harder and still faster.

Continuing to use every inch of the full length of his pudendum so as not to miss any sensation, Sasia proceeded to pour his enormous supply of seed into Clodia while at the same time he extracted from her breast, in return, as much as he gave her. He took warm milk out of her and put thick hot cream back in, giving her in this way a profit.

His ^htrusts, each sending out a solid jet every time he reached all the way up into her, became so rapid that they could hardly be counted, but beyond the enveloping ecstasy, he kept count and knew that she followed suit. The count had reached sixteen when, a second time, she clutched him and gave her scream, denoting she was being transported again and that they had not failed in reaching at least her goal.

Still Sasia kept on, pumping his cream into her, though his spurts now went out of him more slowly, until they reached eighteen. Then came nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, and finally, spasmodically and as though reluctantly, the last, twenty-two. There was an added aspect to the way this final one came; it was as if in record-setting triumph.

His lips left her nipple, but he remained on top of her. Still engorged, left rigid for a time, he stayed within her, resting there between her legs. In utter relaxation, yet still dearly connected, the terrible grimaces that had come to their faces left them as though wiped away, and they both half-dozed, she gladly and doubly ravished, he wonderfully released and both momentarily fulfilled in the way only human male and female can bring to each other when in perfect, expert and unafraid harmony.

VI

They made their way together, hand in hand, toward the entrance of the luxurious baths in the next room. On the way Clodia called through the door to the atrium, to Lucius there, that they would dine in about half an hour.

They regarded each other with affection as they made their way to the bath. Sasia's glance, with love, went over her, from her chiseled face to her full pointed breasts, down along her slim waist

and swelling hips, directly to her bare, naked mount that had just given him such intense pleasure, and along her shapely legs.

Clodia's gaze went to his handsome face, his broad chest, to his narrow hips, and then, as always, with frank admiration, to his member. It had now become flaccid, barely two inches in length, withdrawn into itself and woefully wrinkled, its skin partially covering its head as though trying to hide in shame for its lacking size.

But even in this they took pleasure, for it was with sharp recollection that they knew why it had assumed such modest size and appearance. More than that, they knew its tremendous powers of recuperation and accomplishment.

They laughed together as they stepped into the bath.

Water had meanwhile been let into one of the square pools by Allius from outside. It was comfortably warm, so that, still hand in hand, they stepped down into the water almost exactly the same temperature as their bodies. From the edge of the pool each took a cut of soap and then each began, not to lave his own body, but that of the other. To do this they stood in a shallow part of the stone bath in water only to their thighs.

He covered her entire body with lather, running his hands affectionately over all parts of it, and she did the same to him, neglecting no section and delaying, with tender touches, on his shrunken phallus and scrotum.

As they worked at this they recapitulated their first meeting of the evening. With fervent appreciation Clodia told him, "Oh, Sasia, you have taken away the ache in my breasts. You are both my lover and my child." Her face fell for a moment at this reminder of her dead child.

With understanding he touched her on the shoulder. "By letting me be both you have taken away the great ache in me, too, Clodia."

She brightened. "No man ever loved a woman as you have just done to me."

"No other woman," he replied, "ever gave ~~me~~ such response as you."

"I felt it," she whispered, "each time you spurted into me. The first one burned into me so hot and hard I thought it would go through me, and all were like a gushing fountain. For a time they came so fast they seemed to be a steady stream pouring into me."

"They felt that way to me," he corroborated. "And your reaching for me and grasping me so tightly was like pulling me into you; each time it is even better than before, Clodia."

"I practise and exercise my inner muscles," she told him, "using Priapus for this purpose, so that I may give you the most pleasure I can. In this I am selfish, for the more I give you the more you give me in return. This proved itself tonight, when you set a record for yourself; I counted twenty-two."

"As did I."

"I am lucky in having you, Sasia."

"No more lucky than I in having you."

Her face fell again slightly. "I set no record myself."

"Six times you reached the height," he pointed out. "You equalled your own record during a single connection, one that few women ever achieve."

"Still, to equal the number of Valeria Messalina and gain the right to wear her amulet with twenty altogether -- "

"It will come, Clodia," he assured her. "It may even come tonight, for we have only begun."

She found solace in his words and in another thought. "I have heard that some women meet their husbands or lovers and never experience a single moment of pleasure."

"They are to be pitied. As you are not, Clodia."

"Then you do not think I am wrong in spending my life in sensual pleasure, and that I am not obsessed and abnormal with it as these Christians say?"

"You know yourself that this is not so," he scolded. "What is normal for one person may be abnormal for another, but the one cannot be held up to the other, to do so is to wrongly classify all people as being the same. There is nothing unnatural or perverted in taking all the pleasure that can be had in any way agreeable just so long as it harms no one else and public exhibition is not made of it. It is a sin against Priapus to think otherwise."

"The body will not be injured by it?"

"The body will rebel and stop before it can be harmed." He regarded her. "Do you find anything we have done distasteful?"

"No, only beautiful and lovely."

"Or anything we still have to do?"

"No, no, Sasia, you know I love every connection that is possible with you."

"Even to the use of the dildoes, both for you and myself?"

"Even to the use of the dildoes, both of them and at the same time, which is the most exciting of all."

"Then why do you question yourself?"

"Perhaps," she replied, "because I am a woman different and beyond most."

"Do you not want to be?"

She stopped soaping him and gazed at him. In a low voice she

stated, "With you I do, Sasia."

He slapped a soapy hand on the side of her hip, as though spanking and chastising her for raising any question about the pleasures they found together. Then, their arms about each other, they stepped to a deeper part of the pool, where they stood up to their necks in the water.

Here each washed off the soap on himself. That done, they floated to a corner where the water entered and came somewhat below their shoulders and remained mostly clear. She came to him and they embraced. He could feel, deliciously, the hard erect nipples of her bare wet breasts against his chest, and her smooth body below. His wand, still flaccid, lying against her soft warm round belly, reacted at once, becoming quickly erect and as hard as one of the dildoes waiting for use out on the table in the other room.

Looking up at him, Clodia's dark eyes sparkled at the sensation this gave to her. "When I feel that against me," she whispered, "I want to commit no sin against Priapus but only to worship him."

"Then I will help you in your prayers," he said.

"First will you be a boat for me with a mast and let me be the wind that drives you?"

For answers he released her and then floated on his back in the water, arms outstretched. Only his face protruded, and his member, which stuck up far above the surface; this was the mast and Clodia took it in her hand. By grasping it she did not have to exert much lifting pressure to keep him afloat, and now with it, touching him in no other place, she pulled him around in a circle of the pool. It was one of their playful conceits; they liked to believe that they were the only ones ever to think of this, or at least carry it out.

She brought him to a stop, released him, and he stood again

in the water. What they practised now was pictured in one of his frescoes painted on the wall in the other room. They had glanced at this, as a reminder, before they entered the bath.

He crouched slightly and his hand went down to his elongated scepter with which he would now rule her again in a special manner. With one of her hands she searched out her mount and then with her fingers spread its lips receptively. He found this place with his ready member. Its head entered, followed by its entire length.

Then he stood erect again while at the same time she grasped him around the shoulders. He braced his feet solidly on the bottom of the pool as hers left it and her legs came up and around his hips. He supported her by placing his strong sculptor's hands beneath her wet buttocks. Her weight was in good part held up by the buoyancy of the water, so that the little strain he experienced was lost completely in the rapture found in the singular connection.

Thus coupled, she had assumed the same position she took on his statue when he did not visit her, but with the added attraction of being impaled upon her living god.

Mated in such an exciting manner, they worked together, he thrusting, she thrusting back. Occuring under water, it gave them the extra fillip of pleasant strangeness. He had the unique sensation of feeling the water on his member each time he drew it out of her hot passage. The water, though warm, was a good deal cooler than what lay up beyond her cleft, so that the contrasting feel of both, rapidly repeated, was curiously delectable.

She enjoyed somewhat the same sensation, for when the water slightly cooled his member each time he withdrew it and then plunged it up in her again she, too, felt the difference.

They watched each other, smiling with keen pleasure in what they did. His glance caught the face amulet which still hung about

her neck; its little eyes seemed to stare at him with interest. Clodia's own eyes went down to it and she whispered, "He has been watching all we do, and what we do now."

"Then let us really do it."

She gasped and clung to him even more tightly as he worked at her harder. Now she flung her body at his, clasping him closely and burying her face in his neck. Their coupling churned the water. Her legs grasped his body in a fast grip as she met his every deep stroke with a furious motion of her own, until, with a cry, she began the final rise to her spasm which she reached violently, their avid activity sending the water in waves to the edge of the pool.

As she achieved her purpose again her mouth went to his shoulder, which she bit with her sharp white teeth, almost savagely, so hard that she drew blood which, when she tasted it, she sucked. Sasia suffered this without protest, even enjoying the pain because of the passion she needed in this way additionally to express, knowing it for an atavistic female instinct to devour her copulating male even as he served his purpose.

Sasia himself, purposely, did not expend, but merely brought another climax to her. He could have experienced mutual release with her, and consciously had to prevent it, but they preferred to use this particular meeting for her sole consumation and for the added purpose of pumping up his fluid for greater use later on. His reservoir was thus partially filled again, readying him capable of more extended play now merely postponed.

He did not withdraw immediately after her release, but held her as they were, while her head went to one side, half-resting on her own shoulder, her eyes closed. She was limp in his arms, her legs resting on his hips, her arms flung out now and floating a little

under the surface of the water.

After a few moments her eyes opened. They gazed at each other. She gave him an intimate wink. They laughed again. Then she sobered and with a low sympathetic cry of remorse her lips went to the wound on his shoulder, where her teeth-marks clearly showed, and she licked away the remaining blood there, finally kissing the place tenderly.

They left the pool and picked up large towels and dried each other, briskly rubbing all parts of their bodies except for his still extended member, which she patted dry gently.

Sasia declared, "As usual, it has made me hungry."

"I am ravenous," Clodia said.

VII

Clodia and Sasia lay on padded bronze couches before a long low table in the atrium of her house. They were clad as they had been before, she in her amber silk tunic, he in his white toga. The only difference was that the face amulet had been removed from Clodia's neck and replaced, proudly, with one that had seven phalli on it, a sight that had not gone unnoticed by her slaves, in particular by Lucius, who served them, and Allius, who hurried into the room of love to attend to anything necessary there.

The awning for the roof aperture of the atrium, sometimes drawn over it to keep out sun, rain, or cold, remained pulled back. Through the opening, shining down into the atrium to aid the torches in lighting it, shone the glow from Vesuvius. It was the bright^{est}est they had ever seen it, so vivid that it was a little frightening.

Sasia questioned Lucius about it as the carptor, while two other slaves attended behind the couches, served them their first course of tender raw mussels in their black shells, believed to be

an aphrodisiac. "It has been growing in strength," Lucius reported.

"Do you think there is danger from the volcano?" asked Clodia.

"One does not know the ways of the gods," the carptor replied.

"Well answered," ^{S/}Sasia approved. "But what is your own feeling from observing it?"

Lucius glanced at the reddish glow in the sky seen through the roof opening. He shifted the platter he held in his hands. "I cannot think Vesuvius means any harm to the city."

"Very well, Lucius," Clodia told him. "You may serve the second course and the wine." She clapped her hands three times, not for the benefit of the carptor, but for that of Sallust at the front door, this being the signal for him to come.

He strode in through the vestibulum at once and stood, a huge black figure towering over them as they reclined upon the couches. To him Clodia ordered, "Go out into the city and obtain information about what is happening to the volcano."

Sallust replied, "I have already been, Mistress."

"What did you learn?" asked Sasia.

"There is a large cloud over the volcano," Sallust reported. "The largest and highest ever seen by anyone in memory. The light from it is the strongest, too."

"On my way here," Sasia said, "I thought I could hear rumblings from it, but I could not be sure."

"I could hear nothing," Sallust reported.

Clodia turned to Sasia. "Then all is well?"

"It is said there is no danger unless there are rumblings."

Sasia turned to Sallust again. "How are the people taking it?"

"Some are excited, but most merely watch. A few are leaving the city. Others make fun of them, saying they will return tomorrow."

Those who leave are mostly Christians who say that the sins to be found in Pompeii now will be punished."

"I expect," Sasia commented, "that there will always be fanatics."

"What is your feeling about it, Sallust?" Clodia asked.

The giant Nubian answered, "Perhaps it is only a good omen for the meeting of the Mistress and Master tonight."

At that Sasia and Clodia smiled fondly at each other, pleased with the answer. Clodia dismissed Sallust, who went to take up his vigil at the door, and they went on with their meal.

They assuaged the sharp hunger that their first session of love brought to them, eating and drinking of the delicacies put before them. These included broiled wild boar, roasted breast of peacock, thristle on asparagus, and a delicious patty of sea-bream liver. With these went a rich red wine made from grapes grown on the slopes of Vesuvius that had been named by its Christian vintner, "Tears of Christ."

Clodia and Sasia ate well but did not gorge themselves and they drank little of the wine. They knew that the processes of digestion of a heavy meal would only make them sleep and indolent and take away the keenest and best edges of desire and appreciation of the joys of the flesh. They wished to indulge these more than they desired food, however appetising. And they knew that a little wine sharpened the nuances of love but that more than a little deadened them.

Lucius and the two slaves acting as his assistants were pleased when Clodia and Sasia partook a little of each dish placed before them, and consumed a single goblet of the wine. Offered for dessert was an assortment of fruits, nuts, sweetmeats, tarts, and confectionary. They made their modest choices, ate them while draining off the last

of their wine, and then bowls of scented water were placed before them. Into these they dipped their fingers which, then held up, were dried with napkins by the slaves attending them.

Toward the last of their meal Sasia and Clodia had been eying each other with more on their minds than the food and drink they consumed. They paid no further attention to the volcano's light coming through the roof opening, but only to themselves. If any danger existed from the activity of Vesuvius it was forgotten in the anticipation of what was to come now between them.

They wasted no more time at their meal. When first they had become lovers they took long at dinner, often resting following its consump^yon, obtaining full recuperation from their previous efforts. But experience of each other, together with the stimulation of knowing what their delights could be, had taught them that little time was necessary. They were so sharply drawn that they could hardly wait to get at each other.

They rose and went back to the chamber of love. Here the phallic lamps on their tripods still burned as before. The thick linen sheet on the bed, which had been stained, was now replaced with a fresh one. They closed the door and, divesting themselves of tunic, toga, chiton, and cothurni, took up their assiduous worship of Priapus again.

VIII

This time they practised some of the more exotic acts of love. First they assumed the ~~vary~~ original position they had adopted, except that they reversed roles. Sasia, sitting at one end of the bed with her, while she rested against its back, went into Clodia's arms, leaning against her with his head thrown back on her soft bare shoulder. Her hands came about his body and then her fingers searched out his nipples.

She touched them lightly at first, finding them flat. But soon, under her delicate touch, they rose, becoming erect and hard just as hers had done under his like ministrations. He closed his eyes with the pleasure her caress brought to him, feeling it tingle all through his body. He opened them when he felt another ^sensation, and watched with her the always miraculous sight of erection.

Slowly this time his member, ^herunken again, came to life. It stirred. The wrinkled skin ~~and~~ enclosing its flange drew back as the head began to rise and look about. Gradually it extended itself until it had grown to full length, and then it stood up all the way. It held itself, throbbing, at an angle that pointed its head straight at Clodia as though it singled her out for what it wanted.

She continued to work his nipples, following the same technique he used on her, rubbing each of her middle fingers around and around on them, encompassing the areola, sensitive on him as well. Sasia sighed with the exquisite pleasure it gave him and, as though in gratitude, turned his head on her shoulder. She met his mouth with hers and inserted her tongue between his lips, full into his mouth. He exchanged hers for his and then received hers again, which she worked in and out, simulating the act of copulation.

At that his hips rose, as hers had done under the same caresses, and his body undulated, his member searching the air and finding it empty, yet demanding further attention.

This~~x~~ was not forthcoming, and Clodia, to give him still more rapturous torture, changed her tactics. Her mouth left his and she shifted her position. One hand remained at one of his nipples and her lips went to the other, which she took between them, suckling it and licking it with her tongue. She alternated between the two.

They had heard of men whose breasts, slightly enlarged, actually

produced milk, and once Clodia said, "I wished you did, Sasia," but then quickly amended, "Though I would like the taste and sensation, in another way I am glad you cannot, for you would not seem entirely a man."

Her present caresses, with lips and finger, so intensified Sasia's feeling that his body arched still farther into the air, his staff standing high up, waving from side to side, and yearning to be attended. "Take me in your hand, Clodia," he pleaded. "Touch me, for I cannot stand it any more without."

She murmured in negation of his request.

"If you do not," he said in a choked voice, "then I must myself."

She made no move to touch his erect, pulsating and searching staff.

Abruptly he was driven to reach for it himself, grasping his own member, forced, for want of another touch, to enclose it in his hand and work it up and down.

This was the planned course of their first act, introducing ^{the}ther period of self-stimulation. They never wholly understood why they liked to see each other in the process, but they did. They enjoyed every combination of it possible. Now when Sasia caressed himself they both appreciated it in many ways, he in the touch and practising it in her presence and with her participation, she in the sight of it and being a part of it.

The next step came when Clodia playfully slapped his hand away, mocking their own enjoyment of their activity. They shifted position. He lay flat, she sat beside him and took his hands and carried them to his own nipples, which he proceeded to work while she took up a greater activity.

With one hand she took his member and began to run her fingers up and down it lovingly, enclosing the head in the circle of her

fingers which passed over it repeatedly, pressing upon the flange during her journey, and descending all the way to the root of his splendid manifestation, going faster with each stroke. With her other hand she grasped his scrotum, squeezing it, dangling it, pulling it, twisting it, then jiggling it again, feeling each part of its hard contents and even rubbing these together.

Sasia lay with his head rolled to one side, his eyes closed, while he gave himself to complete enjoyment of the work they both did on his body.

Finally her hand left his member, went to one of his and carried it back to where she had been working. She placed it upon him and started his hand again on himself. Her other hand, after a final affectionate squeeze, dropped his scrotum. She lay beside him on the bed and then her hand went to her own mount where she searched out the sensitive spot there and began to work it, while her second hand went to one of her nipples.

They both had a special technique for stimulating their own bodies. His hand, going up and down the entire seven inches of his member, snapped the head back when it neared the top, making a steady slapping sound. Her finger, working rapidly, produced a jiggling effect, achieving a double purpose; it went over her clitoris, rubbing it, and by penetrating a little farther it simulated the male organ passing in and out. They were expert at these ^utoches, and while they made them they smiled affectionately, glad to see the rapture the other was taking and obtaining more because of the sight.

They lay there ~~xxx~~ for some time, each thus caressing himself, the hand at their nipples going from one to the other on themselves. Twice she pressed one of her breasts, alternating them, so high that, by bending, she took its nipple into her own mouth and sucked it.

The sight of this, also repeated in the mirror, particularly aroused Sasia, for he had left a little milk for her to drink herself and knew she now tasted it; the realization made him draw in his breath sharply, taking delight in the delight he knew she obtained from this.

Following that they varied their procedure by his hand going to one of her breasts and hers to one of his, continuing that for a time. They sought out and found every manner in which their hands could be applied. From time to time they looked into the mirror to see the changes and appreciate them doubly.

"Sasia!" she cried. "I love to see you touching yourself."

"And I, you."

"You have so much more than I to touch."

"The sensation is the same."

"But there is more to see. Look at you, oh, look at the size of you, Sasia! When I see it like that, so long and big and thick, I do not understand how I can have room for it."

"I have never found your receptacle wanting."

"And I have never found you too small to occupy it. I envy you every inch of it. If I were a man I would keep myself hard all the time. I would not waste a minute of life when it could be done, alone or with a partner."

Even her words were a caress. He continued to work himself when his finger went to her clitoris, taking over both parts while her hands touched a nipple on each of them. Then in turn she took over both their pudendums while he undertook the nipple caress, varying it until both his fingers were on hers. At that point they brought this particular episode to a close when his hands remained on her breasts and she worked them both below, going faster.

She was able, from long practise, to snap the head of his member

back at the top of the pull, reproducing the slapping sound. Their mouths came together then and he gave her what hers wanted, his tongue

She, glancing over his cheek, was the only one able to see their reflection in the mirror, and the sight, with added effort on both their parts, took her to the top of her peak so that she made a little animal sound and her hand on his member stopped moving, to grasp it tightly, hanging on as though to save herself, while her finger at cleft moved like lightning for a moment and then slowed and stopped.

They rested, holding each other closely. After an interval Clodia glanced up at the frescoes. She did not need to consult them for what came next, for it was one of her favorites.

They rose from the bed. Sasia moved the mirror over to the narrow, thigh-high bench, so that anyone occupying it could see himself plainly. He proceeded to lie on his back on the bench, with his staff sticking straight up into the air. Clodia, with a little cry of anticipation, told him, "Now I will ride you, as you ride me."

"I hope you will not forget what comes first," he said.

"That is something I could never forget," she whispered.

To introduce this she bent over him, with one hand grasping his staff and the other her breast, holding out her erect nipple. Her fingers parted the small aperture at the end of his member and into this she inserted her nipple. She rubbed the two together until he murmured with the delight it brought to him, and then she did the same with her other nipple. Sometimes they used this variety of stimulation to make her breast flow and when he felt that inside himself his cream was mixed with her milk to give them an indescribable sensation when his seed sprayed over her.

Leaving that, purposely without culmination this time, Clodia

lifted one leg over him on the bench and then stood astride him. Now, of the three things on her body capable of erection, she used the greatest for the same purpose. This time Sasia himself held open his own orifice, which in this way was made to look like a tiny female cleft. Clodia spread her real cleft wide, baring her clitoris, which resembled a miniature male organ. She lowered this onto the other, and in this way they came together, her part entering his like a coupling within a coupling.

She worked herself in him as though she had assumed the part of the man and he lifted himself back at her, taking that of the woman. She had almost a full inch to go, thrust up into his canal. Though the knob of her clitoris was hardly perceptible, Sasia was sensitive enough to feel it. He lay back to enjoy it, his head turned so that he could watch in the mirror.

In and out she went, her own head thrown back, her eyes closed, while she indulged the phantasy that she was actually the man and her member was not nearly an inch in length but seven full inches, and where it was entered it worked not the orifice at the end of Sasia's member but a larger and deeper female entrance. With that Clodia reached a quick, special height, so intense she did not think she could stand it, but gratefully did.

She stood again, trembling, though still astride him. He looked up at her and inquired softly, "You became a man for a moment?"

"Long enough to wish that I could really be one and have what you have, Sasia."

"You have enough," he assured her. "It felt far into me. I have never seen or felt greater on any woman, nor would I wish greater, for I do not think I could take more."

With a cry of pleasure she flung herself on him in earnest.

Now she was not content merely to use her tiny appendage on him. She dropped completely over him, taking his staff entirely up into her, and began to ride him as though actually she might be astride a horse. He could not move, or but little, but she made up for both of them. Now she watched her ride in the mirror, and she sucked in her breath sharply when his hands came up to her breasts which dropped over him, hanging far down. He grasped them, weighing them. He pulled them. He put the flat of his hands against them and worked them back and forth, rubbing her nipples in a new way, across his palms.

Clodia enjoyed her ride for as long as she could stand it before she arrived at her destination, her tenth climax, which she took in full. She grasped him by the shoulders, as if hanging on during a wild runaway ride in a chariot, as she came fiercely, so spasmodically that at the end, still impaled on him, she wank^s over him, exhausted.

He let her lie upon him in this manner for some time, for he knew that she needed that wonderful relaxed rest following such fruitful exaltation. Then he stirred, indicating that it was time to follow the example depicted in the next fresco.

For this they parted and Sasia moved the mirror back when they returned to the bed. There, kneeling upon it for a moment, they put their arms about each other and kissed simply, having a moment of pure, comparatively sexless affection. It was recognition that their love was like a wanton flame, lambently carnal, and not only without shame but with pride in its strength. They looked at each other with sparkling grateful eyes that they could bring so much joy to each other, and proceeded to bring even more.

Now they made the connection seldom visualized by lovers and rarely attempted by those who know of it. There is probably no more

exquisite one in the entire repertoire possible to the human body. One part of it, that carried out by Clodia, was better known than that adopted by Sasia. Again she took his erect staff, ~~from~~ fresh from her cleft, into her mouth, but this time with an improvement. She had supplied things to put into its orifice before, and now she brought to it an even more active and better controlled instrument, her tongue. It went in, plunged up as far as it would go, spreading the entrance, and finding there his lubricating fluid that enhanced the sensation for them both. She proceeded to simulate copulation in this manner.

He, at the same time, inserted his tongue again in her cleft, but now with a vast difference. The tip of his tongue found in her the equivalent opening she had discovered at the end of his pudendum, the tiny opening of her urethra slightly up past the inner lips and below her clitoris, and when it did, inserting itself, her entire body vibrated as though some delicious shock went through it repeatedly.

~~He~~ worked his tongue in and out, and rolled it about, pushing it in until it could go no farther, and then settled down to a steady quick copulative movement that soon had her thighs jerking, totally out of control. Their intimate caress carried them to a tingling, tight, singing, tense pitch of feeling, far greater than any they had yet experienced. As she rose to climax she ran her own tongue even more rapidly in and out of the opening of his member, telling him the rhythm she wished him to use, which he followed.

This time, right after she came, she took her mouth away from him and uttered a moaning prayer, "Oh, Priapus!"

Then, as though loath to leave the taste of him even long enough to exclaim that, her lips and tongue went back to their work. At

that he took up his again, which he had stopped, now knowing she wished no further hiatus before the final act.

This was a repetition of the first. Alone, that would have been enough to repeat, but with the knowledge that this time he would expend, it had an added effect. Slowly they began their tongue work. It was delicately done this time, a bare tickling touch being all that was necessary. It was the more exciting because it was so feathery.

In this way it could be continued for minutes⁵ on end, creating a delicious intensity of feeling to be found in no other manner. Each held back now, with her control being called upon to be greater than his. The mutual stimulation of the exact same inner part of each was so exquisite that it could barely be borne. And finally Sasia could no longer stand it.

It was no volition of his own that triggered him this time. His body, tortured with pleasure beyond his ability to stem it, took complete contrbl. Now he was about to quench the fire in her by first making it more intense. He let her know what was coming by pressing his hands, which were on her hips, hard into her flesh. At the same time he increased the pace of his tongue working in and out of her urethra.

At that signal her tongue went deep into his orifice, plugging it, and holding itself there.

His first great spurt was stopped, momentarily, giving him a sensation that he felt would tear him apart. When it was followed by the second, nothing could stop the pressure of his seed to get out of his body. It swept past her tongue, so that now she removed it and took his member deeper into her mouth, sucking it and receiving his thick milky fluid as it poured into her, swallowing it, and then using her mouth to suck more.

At the same time she experienced another height, brought to it by what was happening in her mouth and what he did at her inner orifice. At both she murmured, making her whimpering sound again, as she continued to receive his viscid seed, eagerly taking every drop as he pumped it into her mouth, swallowing it and counting his jets, this time sixteen. She wasted not a precious drop, for she loved the slightly salty taste of his semen, consuming it with relish for another reason: Physicians held that it was the most efficacious and quick-acting aphrodisiac of all.

In this way not only her milk but his rich seed was used to nourish their gratification. She could not get enough of his hot cream. She was still injesting it, sucking him, asking for more, after her climax came and went, and his last spurt had come out of him.

Only then did she stop. Switching about on the bed, she came up to his head. She kissed him, running her tongue in his mouth to give him a taste of his own fluid, which he expected and savored. Now to the natural perfumes of their bodies, which all along they had enjoyed, was added another, like pungent, freshly cut wet grass.

Her last act, before she lay beside Sasia to rest prior to their third session, was to take off the amulet with seven phalli on it she wore and replace it with the one that had twelve. As she did so her glance caught the twentieth-phalli amulet of Valeria Messalina. She wondered if she would ever earn the right to wear it. In their second connection she had achieved one extra time above her previous record, which was promising, but no more than that. In their final meeting it would mean she had to achieve eight, a thing she had never done.

Gazing at the amulet she had yet to wear, she gave a sigh of envy.

IX

If the rites of their first session had been simple compared with those of the second, then those of the second were comparatively innocent as contrasted with those of the third.

Many lovers would stop with the procedures of their first meeting. A few would have the courage to go on to at least some of the variations of their second. Still fewer, unwilling to miss the full delights of Venus accepting Priapus as her lover without reservation, would continue to the third. The rule here was simple:

No act between lovers was to be condemned, and as any pleasure was acceptable and mutually sought by the participants, it was to be welcomed by those capable of enjoying such extra refinements. And those indulging them had no more right to criticize those who did not than those who did not had in censoring those who practised them. The ultimate privacy was what occurred in the sanctuary^a of the bedroom, and it was also the utter secrecy, to be respected by others if only with silence.

Before they began Sasia pointed out, "You are one ahead of our regular schedule."

"I will never reach the goal," she said.

"Do not try too hard," he advised. "That way you will become tense and interfere with your feeling. Let the deed set the pleasure naturally and some time, today, or later, you will equal Valeria Messalina and perhaps even better her by at least one."

Clodia smiled. "There is no amulet to make^{rk} that point beynd^o her."

"You can add another to hers," he said. "Perhaps the new one I brought you tonight." He smiled back at her. "And if you achieve this I will go to Rome and have another made with twenty-one."

She hugged him in appreciation of his complete understanding of ^{her} him as her lover.

When they began again it seemed as though they went back almost to the very beginning, for a second time he placed the firm flat cushion under her buttocks, raising her mouthⁿ so that it presented itself more availably. Then again he lifted and bent her legs, spreading them for the most elementary position, face-to-face, the conceit adopted by man when he believed he had risen above being a mere animal.

When Sasia presented himself to her this time his member was again flaccid, withdrawn, and unpromising. It looked completely useless and totally incapable of functioning further, its extended previous efforts having taken the starch out of it entirely. Sometimes, when Clodia saw it at this time she feared that its lacking conditionⁿ was irretrievable, and that it could do nothing further for her.

But she knew, beyond the fright the sight brought to her, that this was not true, and that they used its fearful condition to obtain a peculiarly^e bizarre sensation. Most women enjoy sensing or seeing the erection of their men, knowing that they inspire it, and they feel a satisfactory sense of accomplishment and even flattery in being responsible for it. Envy the male possession and ability, they can at least have it in such vicarious manner.

Clodia and Sasia added a dimension to the phenomenon. He brought his small, lacking member to the lips of her cleft, which she spread, ready to receive its dear gift. But he did not have sufficient stiffness to penetrate her, and he had consciously kept down all urge to possess this in favor of what happened now. The head of his member rested just within the warm vestibule of her cleft when she let its lips close over it.

Thus tentatively connected, they smiled fondly at each other in anticipation of what was to come. While he held himself above her with his outstretched arms resting on the bed beside her shoulders, her hands came up to his nipples. Delicately, with the barest of tender touches, she began to work them. Neither moved any other part of their bodies, but merely held them together.

His response was immediate. The head of his member, occupying the doorway of her mount, swelled so that she could perceive it. At the same time his entire pudendumⁿ began to extend itself. In this way she experienced his erection growing into her and he felt himself entering her in the act of erection without compulative movement. It gave them an uncanny sensation that brought a broader smile to their faces for each other.

He remained in her, fully penetrating, filling and occupying her, still without movement, while she continued to work his nipples with a more certain touch. He could feel his knob touch and tickle another far up inside her, the cervix^x at the mouth of her womb. All brought to him an ecstasy of sensation that made him throw his head back and close his eyes so that nothing could distract from his utter enjoyment.

She, in turn, was stirred by the pressure of him on her cervix, and she uttered little stuttering cries. She had never climaxed during this simple part of the process and did not now, though on occasion, when it was carried a step further and she brought him to expend in this manner, without movement on either of their parts, the nuance did bring her to completion. They refrained from this now, letting the procedure merely provide them with what they needed for another.

When there was danger of his not being able to contain himself

longer, Sasia withdrew. They gazed at what, on him, they had accomplished, and were well content with it. He was charged again, as full in size as before and pulsating as steadily.

They glanced once at the frescoes on the wall they would now duplicate. They were to return to man's original method of mating which had been superseded by one thought to be more natural than the first established. They were well prepared for it because his lubricating fluid had begun to flow again, leaving the same entrance to which he was now to return from another direction.

First they gave what amounted to a demonstration of this as if to show it to themselves. He sat on the edge of the bed before the mirror and she rose to stand on the floor in front of him, with her back to him, presenting her pinkish-white round buttocks. He held his staff with one hand and with the other on her rounded hip steered her when she lowered herself on it, spreading her cleft so that it could readily enter.

She came down all the way, sitting on his lap. She spread her legs slightly so that, when they looked into the mirror close by they could see his member penetrating her. It went completely into her, parting the lips of her ripe sex, disappearing there, while his scrotum hung down below.

This was exciting to see, and they sat there for a little while enjoying the sight. Sometimes she completed her sweet journey in this position by means of his working her breasts and she caressing herself, but on the whole, because so little actual movement was possible, and because of the strain of the position, it was not entirely satisfactory.

They broke the attitude and repeated it in a better way. She knelt on the bed, resting on her forearms, raising her beautiful

buttocks into the air and presenting them to him with enticing invitation. He accepted with alacrity. He needed her help ^a again to find her warm channel, and she gave it while he buried himself in this manner. He remained for an instant like that, his belly pushed tightly up against her warm posterior, savoring the connection, which was the one that gave him more delight than any other.

Then, with his hands resting upon the breadth of her hips, he began to move. At the same time each turned so that they could see it in the mirror. The sight made Clodia cry out, "Oh, Sasia, look at you going in and out of me! Look at it!"

Sasia did not need to be opportuned to watch. In a voice choked with the emotion gripping him he exclaimed, "It is good to be long and reach into the heaven you provide!"

"You like this way as much as I!"

"It is like being on the heights of the gods!"

He worked himself harder and faster into her, slapping his belly against the twin mounds of her buttocks until she began to gasp at the feeling and the sight. The position allowed the entire length of his member, this time upside down, to pass over her clitoris, giving it a new touch~~ed~~ with the under part of ^{his} splendid organ, his frenum. She cried out at what this did to her and her climax this time was quick and fast.

When it was over he rested where he was, but it was not long before she indicated that she was ready again. She did this by reaching for his scrotum, which hung down between her legs, and grasping it firmly for a moment, giving it a last jiggle before her hand went on to another activity. This was her own most sensitive place of stimulation, which she rubbed while he attacked ^a again. At the same time Sasia leaned forward, resting on her naked back, and

reaching around, obtained her breasts, which hung from her. He began his expert touch on their hard points while they continued all the rest and again observed everything in the mirror.

This time, when she rose to her summit, her thighs began to quiver so violently that she threatened to collapse, but they held while she achieved her goal for the fourteenth time. Afterward, after he left her, she sank to her side on the bed, her legs drawn up.

X

While she rested Sasia prepared the materials to carry out the culminating steps of worship of their favorite god. Although his member was covered with the copious lubrication they had both provided in their recent efforts, he took up a flagon of oil from the table and annointed himself heavily with it. Then he picked up one of the dildoes and did the same with that, as though repeating it on himself, for it was an almost exact reproduction of his member in size and shape except that it was black, like that of a Nubian. This he laid aside, near the other dildo, for a moment, while he presented himself to Clodia at an entirely different place.

She remained on her side, the correct one for him now to adopt the final entry he made into her body. He spread her buttocks slightly and brought his member to the third orifice she possessed. He needed to be hard and stiff and well lubricated to enter this, which he did firmly but gently and slowly. Inch by inch he gained into the tight aperture, and with each gain she gave a little cry of encouragement.

He stabbed her with his ready lance until finally he was buried to the hilt, pedicating her completely. He knew that she liked to feel his pubic hair against her when this point had been reached, and he

rubbed it at her buttocks, moving his member slightly from side to side inside her, adding to the sensation for them both until one of her hands came between her legs to his scrotum, clutching it to show her added delight.

Each of them was one of those fortunate and enlightened persons who appreciated the fact that, just as the pudendum was ambivalent and served two purposes -- that for the passage of waste fluid from the body and sensual joys -- so it is with the anus. Few realized this because of exaggerated prudery. Most had to develop a taste for the pleasure, but once cultivated the dividends were found to be so great that the years spent without it became a source of acute regret.

Clodia was so keenly attuned to this type of penetration, and Sasia had become so adept at giving it to her, that it required little application of it to make her rise to the summit. He had hardly begun to move back and forth in her in this new place before achievement came, causing her to gasp sharply.

Now she had equalled her record of fifteen and there was still a sure way to go for at least several more achievements. Each being conscious of this, they did not delay in going on, for fear that if he lost his erection he might not gain it again.

Without breaking their connection, he reached and gave her the dildo he had not prepared. This was for her use. She took the dark phallus and after raising one leg slightly she proceeded to insert it in her cleft. Now she was penetrated in two places, and with Sasia operating his live and real phallus and she the dildo, they both began to work simultaneously. When Sasia had asked her what this felt like she could never tell him beyond saying that if he had two phalli and could use both of them at once, or if she had two men at once (as some depraved women invited), it would probably be like that.

The one at her rear was good because it was Sasia's and the one at her front was good also because she could control it entirely, like being able to operate that of a man according to her exact needs. Her breath ~~was~~ became a pant as the two sent her rapidly to her height.

Afterward Sasia remained in position and she retained the dildo, for this was only the first step of its work. While they rested he told her, "You have broken your record."

"It is wonderful to do so," she said. "And now to continue even beyond that."

This meant that she wished to hurry on. The first part of this consisted of his using his oil-annointed dildo on himself. He introduced it in the proper place at his own buttocks, working it in gradually until it was fully inserted and pressing at the back of his new reservoir of seed. Now it was he who gave a gasp of pure sensuous delight in thus being pedicated himself while he filled her in the same place.

She reached around in back of him and took the dildo to operate it, while her other hand kept on the first dildo applied to herself. His hands settled upon her nipples and began to work them, while they watched everything in the mirror.

They were silent while they applied this intricate technique. Their sensations took up all their energy and ^tinterest. She plunged the dildo in him, which helped to thrust his member far up into her buttocks. This movement in turn pushed her onto the dildo held firmly in her second hand. All constituted a sequence of stimulation that sent fire to their whole bodies, especially by being ~~g~~ graphically reproduced in the mirror only a few feet away.

It brought climax to her and when it did nearly brought it to him also, so that he had to partially withdraw to keep himself from expending.

During their brief rest he counted, "Seventeen."

"Yes, Sasia, yes. But can you last through the next step, through three more?"

"I don't know," he admitted.

"We will leave out nothing."

"Nothing," he agreed.

They resumed the same highly stimulating^a work with the dildoes, except that two things were added. One of his hands left her nipple, turning them both over to the other hand to be worked alternately. His finger went down to her clitoris, working there above the dildo which he could feel sliding in and out of her. And she twisted her head so that he could reach her mouth with his.

When he gave her his tongue Clodia was penetrated in all three responsive openings of her body, his pudendum in her buttocks, the dildo and his finger being inserted in her cleft, and his tongue in her mouth. She kept up her work with the dildo that was inserted in his body, starting the sequence there. Now none of their movements was quick or hard, but made slowly and delicately. In this way it was more exquisitely drawn out. Also, it might permit Sasia to have enough control to last through its first stage and go on to other summits for her.

For long delicious minutes they continued the complex connection. Each rose and sustained a height of bliss far above anything they had ever felt before. She gloried in eight points of stimulation, her buttocks, the dildo in her cleft, his finger on her clitoris, the feel of the dildo she worked in him, his other finger going back and forth between her nipples, his tongue in her mouth, and the sight of all this in the mirror. It was the ultimate sensual situation that could be brought about between two persons.

Sasia's sources of stimulation might not be so great in numbers, but they equalled hers in effect. The mere sight of their delight made him tingle from head to foot. The feel of her tight, hot rear orifice as he worked his member in and out of it, nearly made him explode. On top of that the long hard dildo she ran in and out of him, each time it reached the full depth of its penetration, pressed harder against his swelling reservoir of seed. He knew that she was feeling exactly the same sensation that came to him, which was one of his body consisting only of parts lost in sublime sexual rapture, with the rest having no feeling whatsoever, seeming not even to exist.

He wanted it to go on forever. Beyond that he wanted her to reach another climax so that she could continue and achieve the record of Valeria Messalina. And even beyond that he wished to be able to last so that he could help her to do this.

But her repeated scaling of the heights kept her now from easily and quickl^y~~ing~~^h reaching another. And his body could stand no more without seeking release.

Again it took command. With no slightest volition of his own, far beyond any power of control he retained, it had its own way, suddenly shooting out his first great stream, to be followed by rapid spurts, one after the other, until twelve had gone out of him.

She did not begin to spasm this time until the fifth jet burned into her, but then she did, taking her mouth from his and screaming with the hot feel of it and all they continued to do while they mutually expended in a long, deliriously excruciating journey of pure ravishment.

Their efforts were so great in climbing to this extreme height that when it was over and they descended, abruptly, they both collapsed. He parted from her and the dildoes were withdrawn and discarded. She

was only half-conscious and he was nearly in a like state.

They rested and it was a long time before either spoke. Then he said, "I am sorry I could not hold it longer."

"It was not your fault, Sasia; no other man could last as long as you did. And I could not reach another fast enough so that there might be more."

"You have reached eighteen altogether." He spoke with adoring admiration.

"It is not twenty," she said.

"It is enough. Also it shows that one day you will accomplish your ambition." As if to prove his contentions he took the amulet that hung about her neck with twelve ~~xxx~~ phalli on it and replaced it with one that had eighteen.

She gazed at Valeria Messalina's, which remained untouched. "Perhaps tonight," she pleaded, "we can try more."

He shook his head and stated, "It would be too much for both of us."

She accepted his dictum. She sighed and told him, "We each reached a new record. Fifty times altogether you spurted, Sasia, when before the most you ever did was forty-four. I felt each of them as they came into me. I wish only that I could have tasted them all. Often I wonder how much, in all, you have expended into the three places in my body since the first time. I think so far it must be at least a full amphora." They glanced at one of the huge jars that stood in a corner of the room, its bottom a point that rested in a bronze cradle.

"My body is only an instrument to make more of it for you."

"I want many amphorae full, Sasia, as many as you can furnish."

"Because you do, and demand and receive me in all your places,"

he told her fervently, "you are the most wonderful lover any man ever had in all history."

"No, Sasia," she murmured, "that is you because you give yourself so magnificently."

Completely ^erelaxed, satiated, spent, and empty, their passionate devotion expressed fully and happily again, now they dozed and finally slept in earnest while the mirror still reflected their handsome naked bodies and the phallic lamps burned faithfully at the four corners of the bed on their tripods.

XI

A good time later in the night Sasia and Clodia were rudely awakened by a great crashing rumble so loud that it sounded like a gigantic explosion. At the same time there was a terrifying grinding noise, as though the bowels of the earth were moving and rubbing against each other. The bed on which they lay swayed, first this way and then that. Heavy flat blocks of the stone ceiling came tumbling down, several of them narrowly missing the bed, to crash on the marble floor and split into a dozen pieces. The floor itself began to heave and undulating waves appeared in it that could have been in the sea. It split and cracked, at one point leaving a small chasm in the earth.

Startled, not knowing what was happening, Clodia sprang up, leaping from the bed, to stand on the swaying floor beside it, crying with fear.

Sasia jumped to stand beside her, and put his arms about her in protection while they cringed and watched and listened to stone grinding upon stone and great booming sounds that came from a distance. The two statues swayed alarmingly. Sasia wanted to go to them, to brace them, but he could not decide which to save and he could not

leave Clodia, who shook in his arms with terror.

They watched, in horrified dismay, as Venus cracked at the ankles and then fell, flat on her face, which was smashed, while her arms, broken off, rolled to one side as though still animate and moving.

Priapus suffered an even worse fate. He toppled backward onto the heaving marble floor, and when he crashed down he lost not only his arms but his head as well. But his erect organ remained intact and now pointed upward, at the cracking ceiling.

Sasia and Clodia ducked as more of the ceiling came down. He pulled her to one side, jerking her, to avoid a jagged piece of hanging stone that crashed to the floor where they had been an instant before.

At that Sasia propelled her toward the door. When they reached it he pulled it open, with difficulty, for it had been rudely warped. The sight that met their eyes here made Clodia scream. The doorway was completely blocked by huge pieces of the heavy roof of the atrium having fallen in upon it. A great mass of stone wreckage filled it, some of it falling into the room.

There was no other way out of the apartment. There were no windows in the main chamber or in the baths. Unless the walls themselves collapsed, providing an opening large enough for them to escape, they were trapped.

The walls showed only hair-line cracks, none large enough for a man to get through, and now the promise of them falling seemed to be eliminated, for the earthquake subsided as suddenly as it had started. The walls and floor stopped moving and remained still in their state of destruction. The booming sounds of explosion still came from a distance.

Clodia stopped screaming and, tensely frightened, they listened. Beyond the wall, out in what was left of the atrium and the rest of the villa, through the solidly blocked doorway, they could hear the voices of the slaves. One, a woman, was screaming as Clodia had done. A man shouted at her and she stopped.

Then, through the debris in the doorway, they could hear, faintly, the voice of Lucius. With concern and alarm he called in to them.

"Lucius!" Sasia shouted back. "We are alive! What has happened?"

Clodia cried at the carptor, "Is it Vesuvius?"

Lucius called back, "It is the volcano! It has erupted! It is still erupting!"

Clodia wanted to know, "Are any of you hurt?"

The carptor reported, "Yes, Mistress."

"Who?" asked Sasia.

As though reluctantly, Lucius called back, "Sallust is dead! The outer doorway fell onto him and crushed him. One of the cooks died when the roof of the kitchen fell in. A few are hurt. Allius has a cut on her arm, another's arm is broken."

"Are you all right?" asked Clodia.

"I am unhurt, Mistress. What of you both?"

"We are not touched!" Sasia informed him. "How much is piled before the door?"

In a voice that sounded hesitant Lucius told him, "I cannot even see the door, Master. Great blocks are before it, all covered by rubble."

"Can you and the other slaves remove it?"

"It is impossible, Master. It would take many men using

strong fulcrums to do it."

Clodia looked at Sasia and became more frightened. Sasia thought, studying the situation from their side of the heavily blocked doorway. They gave no thought to their standing naked in the destroyed room.

Sasia shouted again to the carptor. "Lucius! Listen to me!"

"Yes, Master!"

Sasia called out the name of a marble cutter and his address, with the instruction, "Go to him yourself, Lucius, and have him bring his men and his fulcrums and levers and ropes. Go quickly before the earthquake may come again and ^{kill} us!"

"Yes, Master! I am on my way now!"

They could not hear him leave, but his voice stopped calling through, so they knew he had gone.

Another voice was heard, though barely, through the thick rubble. It was that of Allius. Clodia answered her and asked about her arm, which Allius reported was not bad and that it had been attended to. She asked after her Mistress and could be heard to weep at Clodia's predicament. The concern and tears of the slave touched Clodia and made her give Allius assurance. It helped Clodia to recover from her own first fright.

They still did not think to cover their nakedness, nor was there any need to do so. They surveyed the damage in the apartment. The floor was so disrupted that it was difficult to walk on it. Most of the frescoes were cracked, some totally destroyed. The baths, when they entered them, were to be seen to have been so sundered that they would never again hold water until entirely rebuilt.

They came out into the main chamber again to view what effected them most of all, the destruction of their own statues in the guises of Venus and Priapus.

"Oh, Sasia!" Clodia lamented. "Your beautiful statues!"

"I can fashion others."

They noticed that the burnished metal mirror, which had so faithfully reflected their acts of love, had been toppled over and lay on its back. The thigh-high bench had also fallen to its side.

Absently, Sasia picked up the mirror and put the bench on its feet again. Clodia brushed debris off the bed where it had fallen, and from the Roman chaise. Upon this she sat, to wait, while Sasia reclined on the bed. His calm further quieted Clodia, who asked, "Is there nothing we can do?"

"The best thing we can do," he answered, "is not to panic. There is little else."

She glanced at the ceiling. "If the earthquake comes again -- "

"Perhaps it will not. It came at first when Vesuvius erupted and now it may not shake the earth again." He smiled at her. "I can understand the volcano's process, for it is like a man who has gone too many days without his woman; when he sleeps, as Vesuvius has done for long, nature takes over to give the man a dream to relieve him. You have had such dreams yourself, for a woman can do the same."

She nodded and smiled back. "But the explosions -- "

"Vesuvius is only expending during his dream."

The deep rumbling continued, and seemed to intensify. They shook the earth, but not in the way the quake had done. A few small pieces of plaster dropped from time to time, but the walls did not rock again or the floor wave like water.

XII

Soon, however, another sound was heard. Against the outer roof and walls there began a bombardment, as though heavy stones and rocks

were being thrown.

Clodia looked to Sasia for an explanation of this.

"Vesuvius is throwing his seeds at us," he told her. "They are larger than mine."

Allius called through that cinder rocks were flying through the air and hitting the house.

Clodia told Sasis, "The Christians will say that we are being punished for our sins."

"They said this before, but their saying it does not make it true. They, who profess not to sin, will be destroyed along with us, making their argument illogical."

Another evidence of the eruption now reached them. Through the cracks in the debris there wafted sulphurous fumes. It was not strong, but it was definite. Again Clodia looked at Sasia.

"Now he is blowing his hot breath at us."

"I hope it will not become hot enough to choke us."

Sasia did not answer. Though he said nothing more he seemed to be thinking of some prospect. Clodia did not ask him what he contemplated, for fear of learning what it was.

The bombardment continued, also growing in intensity. At intervals, nearby, a tremendous boulder could be heard to land with a thudding crash. "I pray to Jupiter," Clodia said fervently, "that one of those does not land on us."

They heard again the voice of Lucius calling from outside. The carptor sounded more excited and alarmed than they had ever thought possible from his usually calm manner.

"Mistress!" he shouted. He coughed, showing the fumes outside were worse than here. "Master! The mangle cutter cannot be found! He is not at his house, which has been destroyed! I asked for others,

but no one even replied to me! The city is in panic!"

Sasia did not glance at Clodia. Calmly, gravely, he instructed Lucius, "Tell me exactly how it is."

"Many buildings fell in the earthquake," the carptor reported. "It is difficult to talk in the streets. The large boulders being thrown by the volcano are destroying more. Vesuvius has the greatest cloud over it ever seen; it is like a huge pine tree; I cannot describe its size. Great blasts of fire and molten lava, burning red, drip down its sides." He coughed again. "It belches fumes that stick in the throat! And now a heavy rain of ash is beginning to fall like snow in the mountains. It is starting to make it dark and blanket out the sight of the volcano itself!"

"Tell us more about what the people are doing," Sasia requested.

"Many have been killed. Many more are hurt." Lucius choked and gagged before he could go on. "Those that can are running from the city to save themselves. Others are trapped in wreckage and call out pitiously like animals, even as..."

He did not finish, for he meant to compare these with the plight of Clodia and Sasia.

Sasia called, "There is no hope to dig us out?"

The carptor now sobbed his reply. "None! None, Master! We have tried to pull some of the rock away, but it is useless! Soon no one could even try."

They could hear him and the other slaves coughing and choking.

Clodia asked Sasia, "He means they will die?"

He nodded.

Clodia thought for a moment and then rose from the chaise and made her way over ~~to~~ the broken floor to stand before the blocked doorway. "Lucius!" she cried. "Allius! All the others!"

From outside came the reply of the captor to say that they attended their mistress.

"You must save yourselves," she told them. "All of you must go!"

Lucius protested, "We cannot leave you here!"

"Go!" she instructed them. "Leave the city! Run!"

Allius, coughing from the fumes which now were becoming stronger even inside the chamber, cried, "We cannot leave you to die, Mistress!"

"You have been faithful," Clodia told her. "All of you. But now I want to give you your freedom. It is yours. You are declared Freedmen, all of you. But it will do you no good unless you leave, at once!"

Choking thanks and more protestations, with sobs and weeping sounds, were heard on the other side of the barricade. The slaves ululated in lament.

Sasia had left the bed to stand near Clodia. Now, as the earth trembled at a deeper rumbling from the volcano and the house shook from a boulder hitting it, he called, "Do as your mistress says! Take your freedom and go before it is too late!"

Finally, and reluctantly, coughing their words, they agreed, saying they would return if the eruption stopped in time. Allius wept when she called, "Goodbye, Mistress!"

"Goodbye, Allius!" Clodia told her. Tears streamed down her face.

"Vale, Mistress!" Lucius called. "Vale, Master!"

Each called to him, "Goodbye, Lucius!"

The others called their farewells and received their replies. The last heard of them were their coughs as they ran to save their lives.

Then there was silence except for the great growls and

tremendous explosions coming from the volcano, and the grinding trembling of the earth and the continued, still more intensified bombardment.

Clodia turned to Sasia. They regarded each other, she through her still brimming eyes, he somberly. They said nothing, but each knew what faced them.

Clodia walked slowly to the bed. From one of the tables at its side she picked up a cloth and dried her eyes and cheeks. Sasia had followed her and to him she said quietly, "We are entombed."

"I do not mind it so much with you, Clodia."

"I could not stand it without you."

He stepped to her and took her in his arms, holding her closely. She coughed slightly, trying not to. They knew that it would not be long before the acrid, sulphurous fumes, now creeping in more strongly, made it impossible for them to breathe. Sasia added a thought of his own to that. He reflected that Davus would never collect payment for the face amulet; perhaps he had even been killed in the first part of the disaster.

Clodia drew her head back and regarded Sasia. "I know what you have said before about going on," she murmured. "And if it were not for what has happened, I would not question it. But this is our last time."

"The eruption may stop before --"X

"You know it is not going to, Sasia."

He did not reply to that.

"I know also," she continued, "that your achievement tonight has been great, and that it is perhaps too much to ask that it be greater." Her glance went to the amulet of Valeria Messalina on the square table beside the bed.

"We have nothing else left," he agreed.

"Then we shall try?"

Readily Sasia acquiesced. "We shall see if fear will permit us."

"We shall be above fear."

"The spur of threatened death can act in strange ways, and perhaps it will come to our aid."

"Priapus remains intact in his most important part to aid us."

They gazed at the fallen statue of the god, whose member remained in magnificent erection.

Vesuvius gave an extra loud rumble, as if warning them not to delay further. They clasped each other. He felt her erect nipples against his chest again and her probing tongue in his mouth, her soft warm belly against his, while her hand slipped down between their bodies to his loins, to grasp him there.

At the thought that this was the last time he would ever feel her dear body against him, and have her touch, Sasia's member showed that it would not fail the moment but would fulfill its part. It grew hard and certain and long in her hand so that she had to shift her grasp to contain it, working her fingers on it with eager ^encouragement.

She kept her hold on it, both lovingly and as something to which to cling in extremity, as they sank down on the bed together.

Outside, the volcanic ash ^h fell still more heavily on the city and the poisonous fumes crept in steadily.

XIII

Seventeen centuries later the buried and forgotten city of Pompeii began to be excavated. It was discovered that a most curious thing, of a chemical nature, had happened in it.

Through the centuries the bodies of the dead completely disintegrated. In some cases the places they had occupied were left intact in the form of perfect molds left in the lower layer of the volcanic ash. At a few of these which did not ultimately collapse, the volcanic ash above them, acted upon by water from accumulating rains to form a clay-like plaster, found an opening and poured into these molds, filling them and taking the exact same form of the bodies that once occupied them in the very positions in which they died.

One of these, unearthed in the ruins of a village on the Strada Stabiana, was that of a man and a woman together. When taken out of the earth it was to be seen that they had died in a happy manner indeed. The man was placed lovingly between the woman's legs, which held him closely, while their arms clasped each other tightly. And though their faces could not clearly be discerned, because they were pressed together, it was plain that they had been kissing.

For seventeen hundred years they had practised their act of love, and still continued.

Another odd thing was found with them. Attached to the bottom of their cast, one stuck to her rounded buttock and the other to his knee, giving evidence that they had been worn at the time of death and had dropped eventually to the bottom of the form, were two amulets. One, the largest, had no less than twenty phalli attached to it. The other, exquisitely wrought in polished garnet, was just as astonishing, for it depicted the male sex apparatus as a human face, utilizing all its parts. The phallus itself represented the prominent nose, the testicles the cheeks and jowls, and the pubic hair the curly hair on the top of its head, while looking out of this unusual countenance were two innocent eyes.

All through the centuries it had kept careful and faithful watch.