

All right, let's go the limit for a good time, though I'm afraid these scholars will laugh at me, but I'll tell my tale and they can go as far as they like. For what the hell do I care who laughs? It's better to be laughed at than laughed down... We lived in a narrow street in the house Gavilla now owns, when I was a slave. There, by the will of the gods, I fell in love with the wife of Terentius, the innkeeper; you knew Melissa of Tarentum, that pretty round-checked little wench. It was no carnal passion, so hear me, Hercules, it wasn't; I was not in love with her physical charms. No, it was because she was such a good sport. I never asked her for a thing and had her deny me; if she had an as, I had half. I trusted her with everything I had and never was done out of anything. Her husband up and died on the place, one day, so I tried every way I could to get to her, for you know friends ought to show up when anyone's in a pinch. It so happened that our master had gone to Capua to attend to some odds and ends of business and I seized the opportunity, and persuaded a guest of the house to accompany me as far as the fifth mile-stone. He was a soldier, and as brave as the very devil. We set out about cock-crow, the moon was shining as bright as midday, and came to where the tombstones are. My man stepped aside amongst them, but I sat down, singing, and commenced to count them up. When I looked around for my companion, he had stripped himself and piled his clothes by the side of the road. My heart was in my mouth, and I sat there while he pissed a ring around them and was suddenly turned into a wolf! Now don't think I'm joking, I wouldn't lie for any amount of money, but as I was saying, he commenced to howl after he was turned into a wolf, and ran away into the forest. I didn't know where I was for a minute or two, then I went to his clothes, to pick them up, and damned if they hadn't turned to stone! Was ever anyone nearer dead from fright than me? Then I whipped out my sword and cut every shadow along the road to bits, till I came to the house of my mistress. I looked like a ghost when I went in, and I nearly slipped my wind. The sweat was pouring down my crotch, my eyes were staring, and I could hardly be brought around. My Melissa wondered why I was out so late. 'Oh, if you'd only come sooner," she said, 'you could have helped us: a wolf broke into the folds and attacked the sheep, bleeding them like a butcher. But he didn't get the laugh on me, even if he did get away, for one of the slaves ran his neck through with a spear!' I couldn't keep my eyes shut any longer when I heard that, and as soon as it grew light, I rushed back to our Gaius' house like an innkeeper beaten out of his bill, and when I came to the place where the clothes had been turned into stone, there was nothing but a pool of blood! And moreover, when I got home, my soldier was lying in bed, like an ox, and a doctor was dressing his neck! I knew then that he was a werewolf, and after that, I couldn't have eaten a crumb of bread with him, no, not if you had killed me. Others can think what they please about this, but as for me, I hope your geniuses will all get after me if I lie.'

'Omne me, inquit, lucrum transeat, nisi iam dudum gaudimonio dissilio, quod te talem video. Itaque hilaria mera sint, etsi timeo istos scolasticos ne me rideant... Cum adhuc servirem, habitabamus in vico angusto; nunc Gavillae domus est. Ibi, quomodo dii volunt, amare coepi uxorem Terentii coponis: noveratis Melissam Tarentinam, pulcherrimum bacciballum. Sed ego non mehercules corporaliter aut propter res venerias curavi, sed magis quod benemoria fuit. Si quid ab illa petii, nunquam mihi negatum; fecit assem, semissem habui; in illius sinum demandavi, nec unquam fefellit sum. Huius contubernalis ad villam supremum diem obiit. Itaque per scutum per ocream egi aginavi, quemadmodum ad illam pervenirem: nam, ut aiunt, in angustiis amici apparent. Forte dominus Capuae exierat ad scruta scita expedienda. Nactus ego occasionem persuadeo hospitem nostrum, ut mecum ad quintum miliarium veniat. Erat autem miles, fortis tanquam Orcus. Apoculamur nos circa gallicinia; luna lucebat tanquam meridie. Venimus inter monumenta: homo meus coepit ad stelas facere; sedeo ego cantabundus et stelas numero. Deinde ut respexi ad comitem, ille exiit se et omnia vestimenta secundum viam posuit. Mihi anima in naso esse; stabam tanquam mortuus. At ille circumminxit vestimenta sua, et subito lupus factus est. Nolite me iocari putare; ut mentiar, nullius patrimonium tanti facio. Sed, quod coeperam dicere, postquam lupus factus est, ululare coepit et in silvas fugit. Ego primitus nesciebam ubi essem; deinde accessi, ut vestimenta eius tollerem: illa autem lapidea facta sunt. Qui mori timore nisi ego? Gladium tamen strinxi et <in tota via> umbras cecidi, donec ad villam amicae meae pervenirem. In larvam intravi, paene animam ebullivi, sudor mihi per bifurcum volabat, oculi mortui; vix unquam reffectus sum. Melissa mea mirari coepit, quod tam sero ambularem, et: 'Si ante, inquit, venisses, saltem

nobis adiutasses; lupo enim villam intravit et omnia pecora tanquam lanius sanguinem illis misit. Nec tamen derisit, etiamsi fugit; senius enim noster lancea collum eius traiecit'. Haec ut audivi, operire oculos amplius non potui, sed luce clara Gai nostri domum fugi tanquam copo compilatus; et postquam veni in illum locum, in quo lapidea vestimenta erant facta, nihil inveni nisi sanguinem. Vt vero domum veni, iacebat miles meus in lecto tanquam bovis, et collum illius medicus curabat. Intellexi illum versipellem esse, nec postea cum illo panem gustare potui, non si me occidisses. Viderint quid de hoc alii exopinissent; ego si mentior, genios vestros iratos habeam.'