

CLYTIE
To L. K—

I STRAIN mine eyes across the surge; the spindrift cuts me
like a whip;
The wet wind wails a wolfish dirge for its slain paramour
the ship.

The ship, the ship that brings me home more than all
hoarded galleons
Brought through that sunset-blooded foam, with hulls of
teak and beaks of bronze!

More than all store of gold or spice, ivory, slaves or sandal-
wood
Art thou, O marvel beyond price, O bee-hive of beatitude!

Is not each cell that builds thee up a well of honey-scented
sips?
Is not thy soul one fragrant cup of nectar at my thirsty
lips?

Thou bearest in thine hollow staff the primal fire, the
flower's fume,
Quintessence—now may Zeus engraff its pollen in my
wintry womb!

But where's the ship the kicking mast, the plunging bow,
the reeling hull
Aching beneath the bacchant blast, malevolent and beauti-
ful?

Ai! Ai! then where's my man, my man? I am a witch's
sieve to-night,

Parched as the lusty Lesbian was for her savage lord, the
light!

Ah! couldst thou slay me and appease—though naught
but slaughter serve my turn,
I, in an hour that bring thee ease, fret the night's silk and
ache and burn.

But now—my whole life stings in me; a viper violates my
veins;
Locusta laughs at Lalage! a ghoul that sucks at her own
brains!

Where is the ship? Where is the ship? Where is my man,
my man, my man?
—Who gave thee power to rend and rip the hearty out from a
courtezan?

I roved from town to town: I played the whore in every
slimy stews.
God! I am like a moon-struck maid, easing her drought
on sister dews.

I throw myself upon the grass; I wail, a lone wolf, to the
moon;
Huddled and hunched, a moaning mass—How near God
was those nights of June!

Death! the mere thought of it! For now—where is the
ship? where is my man?
The blood is bursting from my brow; my choked shrieks
prostitute to Pan!

Great Pan it is that thrusts his sword into my throat and
strangles me!

Great Pan that clubs me on the sward with his robust
brutality!

Ah no! ah no! Let me go blind rather than let that face of
fear
Swollen, its black indenture signed with blood, most
maculate, appear!

Come then, O ship, the dream is past! Could not I watch
and wait an hour?
Nay, by the Gods, what gallant mast cuts yon horizon like
a tower?

He comes, he comes, he comes. Oh hither, mine hand-
maids, bind me neck to knee,
Lest I should fling my body thither—where my soul
stands—across the sea.

Hold me! he must not think I yearned—he is too master-
ful—beware!
Oh, should he guess this body burned, shame, shame—how
should a maiden fare?

Nay, girls, I know. But Pan hath wrought this marvel on
my wanton's will,
Filling it with one virgin thought, as strong as summer,
and as still.

Ah hold! my body breaks away maugre your weakling
struggles. Hold!
Nay! my soul faints; the stinging spray lures like his
kisses did of old.

Free! Now stand back! How good it is—how good it is to
be alive!

How good to swim for the first kiss! How good to dip
oneself and dive!

Gods! Let him get me wholly now naked and radiant as
the moon

Clambering on his plunging prow those nights of June—those
nights of June!