

## Sappho

### 1 *Abandoned* (Edm 83, 216, 96D)

I want to die  
honestly  
rather than be abandoned  
tearfully

Well, I was told all sorts of things  
such as,  
“Oh, dear, dear Sappho, what awful things we must  
endure!  
Truly,  
I’m leaving you against my will.”

To which I replied,  
“All right, then, go ahead, abandon me  
be happy!  
But  
remember me because I cared for no one else.

Because if you forget,  
I’ll remind you  
of the good things we lived through  
together.

Remember the many garlands of violets  
and roses I placed next to you  
and  
the many flower necklaces I weaved around  
your soft  
skin

and spread bountiful myrrh  
[.....]\* fit for a queen

and upon the gentle mattress,  
[.....]\* the passion you exuded

and neither the [.....]\*  
nor the singly sacred [.....]\*  
did we weave [.....]\*  
from which we stayed away.

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**2** *And as for me* (Edm.118a)

And as for me, listen to this, I love luxury: the  
bright love, the sun and beauty are of one lot.

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**3** *But I sleep Alone* (Edm. 62)

Midnight!  
And like the hour,  
The moon and the  
Pleiades have gone

And I,  
I sleep alone.

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4 *It Seems to me* (Edm 2)

It seems to me he's equal to the gods, the  
man who sits within the scope of your sweet voice  
and  
of your laughter, which stirs the heart within my breast

Seeing you like this,  
even for a second,  
stops the sighs  
within me.

Yet my tongue  
freezes  
and  
beneath my skin a fire rages  
and...  
my eyes are empty but  
my ears are full.

A torrent of sweat  
and  
a wild tremor  
overwhelm me  
and,

I've turned the colour of drying grass  
just before death.

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5 Eros again! (204, 42B, 50D)

Eros again!  
He shook my mind  
Like the mountain winds shake  
The Oaks!

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6 *Ode to Aphrodite*(Edm. 1)

Immortal Aphrodite of the splendid throne  
Daughter of Zeus, weaver of snares,  
Great Woman, grant me this:  
Let not my spirit be harnessed by this anguish,  
This affliction  
But come here, to me, as you did once before.

On that day,  
you heard my distant voice and, nodding,  
you left your father's golden chambers and yoked your  
two swift companion birds to your glittering chariot.

They fluttered through the spreading sky and  
brought you hurriedly down here,  
next to me,  
here, upon the black soil.

Great woman!  
With a smile on your immortal face you had asked me then  
about my sighs, what was it that made me call you  
yet again?

What was it that my despairing heart wanted you to do  
this time?

You asked,  
"Who is it this time, Sappho? Whom do you want me  
to bring to you? Who, Sappho is hurting you now?"

And,  
at that time, you offered, "Tell me  
Sappho who she is and if she turns from you now,  
soon,  
by my urgings,  
she'll be turning towards you;  
and if she's not close to you now,  
soon,  
by my urgings, she will be -  
willingly or not!"

Come to me again now,  
Great Woman  
and release me from this great woe;  
grant me this, my heart's greatest desire!  
Against all these pains,  
Great Woman, be my ally.

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*7 To Her Lyre (Ed80)*

Come to me, my Lyre,  
Sing  
Loudly!  
Sing  
Divinely!

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*8 On Eros (238, 40-41B, 137D)*

a)  
Again it is Eros! He, the  
sweet and  
bitter God who unfastens the limbs!

Again, omnipotent Eros,  
shakes me like a snake,

b)  
And you, Atthis, you've learnt to  
hate me and run off  
to Andromeda

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9 *The stars around the moon* (Edm 3)

And again when  
the moon  
casts her brilliance all over earth  
The stars  
soften the blaze of their  
beauty

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10 *Sweet Apple* (B93,B94)

I  
You're  
Just like the sweet apple reddening at the highest  
branch, missed by the apple pickers -  
No,  
They did not miss you!  
They just couldn't reach so  
high.

II  
And  
You're just like the mountain  
Hyacinth,  
trodden by the shepherds  
next to the purple  
blossoms

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11 *A company of soldiers* (27aD, 195P)

Some say that the most beautiful sight upon earth's  
Dark soil  
Is a company of soldiers on horse.  
Others think that this honour belongs to  
A line of soldiers on foot.  
And still others to a fleet of ships.  
Ah, but for me  
This honour belongs to whoever one loves.

It's easy to see why.  
Look!  
The most gorgeous woman on earth,  
Helen,  
Abandoned her man,  
Most excellent of all men!  
And made sails for Troy!

Not a thought for her daughter  
Nor her dear parents.

That was Cypris' fault!  
Aphrodite!  
It was this goddess who had led her so far astray.  
So suddenly.  
So easily.  
So gently.

Ah!  
This reminds me of Anactoria who is very far away.  
How I'd much rather look upon her charming step  
And  
Upon the dazzling beauty of her face  
Than  
Upon all the glittering chariots of the Lydia  
And all of her foot soldiers  
Clad in their weighty armour!

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**12** *The Handsome and the Pure* (49D, 207P)

The handsome man is handsome only  
In looks.  
The Pure man pure as well as  
Handsome

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**13** *You shall die!* (58D, 211P)

You shall die  
And you shall lie there!  
You shall lie there  
And no one will remember you  
Nor  
Long for you  
Because you have none  
Of the roses  
Of the Muses  
Of Pieria  
And you shall wander  
Among the shadows of the dead  
In the Halls of Hades  
Ignored.

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**14** *Atthis* (L 96, V 96, D 98))

Oh, Atthis!  
Once she saw you as a famous goddess  
And  
Loved the sound of your voice!

But now!  
Look at her, now!  
Now she's matchless among the Lydian women!

She is the rosy-fingered moon after the sun has set!

Supreme among the stars!  
A light that shines equally over the salty sea  
And,  
Over the flower-covered fields!

And so,  
The gorgeous dew falls  
And  
The roses bloom  
And so does  
The tender chervil  
And the flowering honey clover.

And  
She takes these walks –  
This way and that-  
And  
With longing in her heart,  
She remembers our gentle Atthis.

And  
Her soul!  
Her soul is consumed by this longing!

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**15** *Gongyla* (217, L95, D 97)

"And so"  
Gongyla asked me,  
"How can you be so sure? Have you seen some sign of it?"  
And I replied,  
"Well, let me tell you, Gongyla.  
I saw Hermes in my dream and I said to him,  
'Lord,' I said, 'Lord, I am lost!  
I am lost and, I swear to you, Lord!  
In the name of the blessed goddess,  
I swear, I no longer care for wealth and riches!  
I just want to die!  
I want to die and I want to see the dew-covered lotus  
On the banks of the Acheron!"

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**16** *Hesperus* (trans. "Evening") (223, 95B, 120D)

Hesperus!  
You always bring back all those things which  
The brilliant Dawn has scattered!

You bring back  
The sheep,  
The goats

And  
The child, back to its mother!

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**17** *To Dika* (80D)

Come, Dika!  
With your gentle fingers weave  
For your lovely hair  
A  
Garland of anise.

The blessed Graces prefer-  
By far-  
To gaze upon a garlanded head  
Than one bereft of flowers, from which  
They turn away.

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**18** *Sweet Mother* (L102, D114, B90)

Sweet mother!  
How can I weave my web now?  
Dazzling Aphrodite tamed my desire  
For a boy!

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**19** *Leave Crete* (192, 4-5B, Suppl. p 30D)

Leave Crete  
And  
Come here!  
Come to this pure temple,  
To this charming apple grove  
And  
To these altars scented with

Burned frankincense.

Icy water sings through the branches of the  
Apple trees  
And  
The shadows of roses cover the ground  
And  
Up from the trembling leaves flows down  
Sweet sleep.

And  
On this horse-nurturing valley  
The flowers of Spring bloom  
And  
The gentle breezes sigh sweetly

Come Kypris!  
Gracefully pour nectar  
Into these golden wine cups  
And  
Make it one with our festivities.

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**20** *To Hera (196 28D)*

To Hera

Come,  
Blessed Hera, when I pray for your  
Charming form to appear.  
Come beside me!

Yours is the form to which  
The sons of Atreus, kings both,  
Also prayed.

They accomplished many great deeds  
First at Troy  
And then on the seas  
But were lost and couldn't make their way here  
Until they called on you, Hera  
And on Zeus  
And on Thyoni's charming boy,  
Dionysus.

Come then goddess  
And help me as you've done in the past.

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**21** Virginitv! (230, 109B, 131 D)

Virginitv you've abandoned me! Where have you gone?  
*I'll never return to you, no, I never shall!*

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**22** Kleis, My Daughter (239, 85B, 152 D)

I have a daughter,  
Gorgeous like a golden flower  
And  
I love her more than all of Lydia  
More even than...

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**23** Honey or Bee (146)

I need neither  
The  
Honey nor  
The  
Bee

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**24** I was in love with you Atthis (206, 33-34B, 40-41D)

I was in love with you  
Atthis,  
Once, a long time ago!  
I used to think you were a clumsy  
Little child.

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**25** The sky (209, 37B, 47D)

I don't think I can touch the sky with my hands.

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**26** Wealth (249, 80B, 92D)

Wealth without virtue is not an innocent neighbour  
But, mix them together and you have the very best of fortunes!

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