

## Introduction:

The traditional marriage rite of Demeter's priest complete, and you two alone, I propose a word for you both which fits the wedding song and custom – one that will fit your need. (In music, a common song for the flute called "Horse Rampant" was played to awaken ardor at mating time.)

Now, marriage must not be overlooked among the many excellent matters philosophy may consider. For philosophy can cast a spell upon the life of fellowship, rendering you two gentle, even tame for one-another.

Therefore, since you have been brought up in the points of philosophy, I am sending you this gift. I have ordered my points as short similes, so that they may be easily remembered. I pray that the Muses may be present and work together with Aphrodite – since, neither a lute nor harp should be more in harmony and tune than a marriage and home – which come by reason, harmony and philosophy. Our ancestors would cause Hermes to sit by Aphrodite, because the pleasure of marriage stands in need of Reason—and Persuasion, and the Graces, so that by persuasion you may obtain those things you desire – rather than by fighting and seeking to conquer.

### Section 1: *Eat an apple.*

Solon directs that a bride should eat an apple. She should do this for her husband, *before* they lie down together. It seems he speaks in riddles. The answer? Charm from the first should fall from her lips and voice: harmony and pleasure!

### Section 2: *Wear an asparagus crown.*

In Boeotia, they crown the veiled bride with asparagus: for the sweetest fruit grows from amongst the sharpest thorns. Now the husband who does not run away or get crazy at his wife's first fit or displeasure, will later gain a gentle and sweet life together. Those men who don't put up with the first trouble are like men who taste an unripe grape but leave the sweetest grapes to someone who comes along later. It's the same for brides: should they become annoyed at their husband's first failings, they suffer the honeybee's sting but leave the honeycomb to someone else.

### **Section 3: *Be patient.***

In the beginning, it is particularly important to protect the couple from differences or disputes, for their first harmony will be broken by even slight troubles – but, after the joints are fit together, one could scarcely break the whole with fire or iron.

### **Section 4: *Understand fire.***

When fire takes hold, it recklessly burns through chaff, straw – even rabbit hair! But, if there is not something for it to grab and eat, the fire quickly goes out. The same thing happens with sexual desire. When you are first married, the beauty of the body stabs you with passion – but don't suppose that flare-up will last forever – better and lasting is the way of thinking that becomes habit, a living disposition which takes hold of the soul.

### **Section 5: *You put a spell on me.***

It's quick and easy to catch fish with poison – but then you'll have nasty, poisonous fish. And women who use charms or spells to entangle a man, controlling him through pleasure, will live with stupid, mindless, ruined men. It's like Circe: She couldn't enjoy the men she'd bewitched: she

couldn't even use the men she'd turned to pigs and donkeys. – But Odysseus! The one who kept his wits and could still think: She was crazy in love for him.

**Section 6: *Ruling morons.***

Women who'd rather rule morons than hear sensible men are like those who'd rather drag about a blind man than follow those who can think and see.

**Section 7: *She fell in love with a cow.***

Even women who do not believe that a king's wife – Pasiphae – fell madly in love with a cow – find careful, wise men boring. Here's the irony: they'd rather mix it up with insane men who love only "pleasure" – in the end, these women are themselves little better than a dog or a goat that only lives for "pleasure".

**Section 8: *Don't be a tyrant.***

Some men, because they are sick or soft, teach their horses to crouch so they can climb them. Some men who have married a rich, well-born wife won't make themselves better: instead, they cut their wife down – just like tyrants who humiliate their subjects.

It's best to fit the bridle to the measure of the horse – and to the worth of the woman.

**Section 9: *The sun and moon.***

The moon, when far from the sun, shines brightly – and we see it. But it runs and hides when the sun comes near. Not so the wise wife. She must be seen most especially when her husband is near. But, when he is gone, she should care for the house and keep to herself.

**Section 10: *The modesty of a wife.***

Herodotus got it wrong when he said, "A wife strips off her modesty, when she takes off her clothes."

No, the thoughtful wife puts on modesty, in place of her clothes. You see, her modesty is a special token of love which she shows to her husband.

**Section 11: *Harmony in marriage.***

When two notes sound in harmony, the lower note carries the tone. Even so, in every well managed home, there is harmony between the husband and wife – which shows the government and decision of the husband.

**Section 12: *Persuade her.***

The sun beat the wind.

When the man was whipped by the wind – because the wind was trying to force him to put off his coat by blowing hard – the man simply wrapped himself tight.

Now, afterward, the sun warmed him, becoming hot, then scorching. So, the man took off his coat – and his shirt.

Women are like this. When their husbands take away their trifles and luxuries by force, the women fight and become bitter. But if she is persuaded by words, she will meekly put them away and behave.

**Section 13: *Protect your privacy.***

Cato threw a man out of the senate just because the man's daughter saw him kiss his wife. This may have been a bit excessive. But if it is

disgraceful (and it is) to "greet" and kiss and wrap yourselves about each other when someone is watching – how much worse is it to fight and abuse one-another when someone else is around.

What of secret questions and intimacies with your wife? Not to mention correcting and complaining and speaking your mind in the open – letting it fly, as some might say.

#### **Section 14: *A worthless mirror.***

Now a mirror is worthless—even if it is covered in gold and gems—if it does not show a true likeness. In the same way, a rich wife yields no profit if she does not produce a manner of life like her husband and show harmony of manner.

If a mirror portrays a gracious man as sullen; or a vexed, peevish man as cheerful and laughing; the mirror's broken: throw it away.

It's the same with a wife. It doesn't help; it's ...unfitting for her to be grumbly when her husband starts to laugh and sport; or, when her husband has a matter of serious contemplation she starts joking and laughing. For the first smacks of disgust and the second of disregard.

This is important: It's like when mathematicians say that lines and surfaces do not move by themselves, but only move with some other body. In same way, a wife shouldn't fall into a solo passion but rather she should have a common heart with her husband: whether he is serious or playful, contemplative or laughing.

#### **Section 15: *Enjoy your wife.***

Men who are not willing to see their wives eat, teach their wives to gorge themselves, alone. It's like this: Those who won't be cheerful around their wives, who won't sport and laugh and with their wives are teaching their wives: go seek your pleasures, *alone*.

**Section 16:** *Don't try this.*

The legitimate wives would sit, eat and entertain the Persian Kings. Yet, when the kings desired to play and get drunk, they'd send their wives away – only to call over their music-girls and concubines. This happens because they do not wish to contaminate their wives with drunken, sexual ... failings.

And so, it is important that the wife not become angry or violent with her husband's lack of self-control and "failings" with his girl-friends and servants. Instead, she should realize he is being a drunk, predatory jerk with someone else –not her.

**Plutarch 17:** *A man who loves the good and beautiful.*

Kings who love music make musicians:

word-lovers, wordsmiths;

sports-lovers, athletes.

In the same way, a man who loves physical appearance,

makes his woman something to see;

pleasure-lovers: sluts and whores –

but

the one who loves the good and beautiful ...

wise and right.

**Section 18:** *Advice from a Spartan wife.*

A Spartan woman was asked if her husband "approached her". "Well, I haven't," she said, "but he did." I suppose this is the way of a woman who runs her home. On one hand, she doesn't get angry and run away when her husband comes for such reasons. On the other hand, she doesn't start anything. If she does the latter, she looks like a sex-fiend. If she goes with the first, she's arrogant and unnatural.

**Section 19:** *Choose your husband's gods.*

It's appropriate for a wife not to choose personal friends, but rather she should look to her husband's friends—particularly his gods, who are the first and most important friends. Therefore, whichever gods the husband determines to reverence for the marriage—these alone the wife should approach. When it comes to strange cults and foreign superstitions, she must close the gate tight.

And besides, what gods would receive sacred rites from a wife who performs them by deceiving and hiding from her husband?

**Section 20:** *No Need for a Prenup*

Plato says that in a prosperous and blessed city, people rarely hear "mine" or "not mine"—especially when it comes to those things most needful for the good of the whole. Even more so should such expressions be refused in the state of marriage.

It's like when physicians say that a wound to the left side is felt on the right. It is beautiful when a wife sympathizes with her husband, and a husband with his wife.

Or, it's like this: When the strands of a rope are interwoven, each strand gains strength from the other. When goodwill is given one-to-another the whole is preserved through the union.

Nature unites our bodies in order that from each a measure is received and mixed and something of fellowship is received by both, so that neither can limit or distinguish oneself or the other.

This is most especially important when it comes to property in marriage: there should be just one common fund, poured together and deeply intertwined so that one can no longer tell what is mine and what is yours.

It's like when we call wine mixed with water "wine" – even if it is mostly water: it is very important to call the entire household property the "husband's" even if his wife contributed the greater share.

### **Section 21: *An Iliad of Evils***

Helen loved money –  
Paris loved pleasure.

Odysseus was thoughtful,  
Penelope was prudent.

The second of these marriages was blessed – one to be envied. But the first marriage wrote an Iliad of Evils for the Greeks and for the Barbarians.

### Section 22: *No One Knows Where it Pinches Me*

When his friends rebuked the Roman for sending away his wise and wealthy and beautiful wife, he showed them his shoe. "No one knows where it pinches me."

You see it is needful for a wife not to trust in her dowry, her pedigree, or her beauty. Instead, she should use those things which a husband most takes hold of, conversation, conduct, and companionship. She must not render these things in a harsh or grievous manner, but rather with harmony, not with trouble but with kindness.

Physicians fear those fevers which come from uncertain and slight causes more than those which have apparent and powerful reasons. Likewise it is secret, slight and constant, even daily, insults between wife and husband which disrupt and spoil their life together.

### Section 23: *The Magic in a Woman*

Now King Philip fell passionately for a Thessalian woman – apparently due to her witchcraft. So Olympias made haste to bring this woman under her power. But when the woman came into sight and Olympias saw her beautiful appearance and then discoursed with her, Olympias commanded, "Make the slanderers leave! This woman's magic is all in herself."

So a lawfully wedded wife will become an irresistible thing when she has all things in herself, her dowry and birth and magic – even the belt of magic – for character and virtue will win a husband's love.

### Section 24: *Marriage Without Thought*

On another occasion, Olympias spoke concerning a certain young man at court who had married a beautiful woman – with a bad reputation. "He has no sense at all. One ought not marry based on appearance, by what the eyes see or the fingers count – you know, the man who thinks how much he'll receive without thinking about how they'll live together."

### Section 25: *A Plain Wife*

Socrates used to instruct the mirror-gazing young men: if ugly, fix your looks with virtue; if handsome, don't mar your face with shame.

In the same way, it is beautiful for the woman of the house, when she takes her mirror in hand to speak with herself, thus: If she is plain, "What if I were not prudent?" And for the pretty, "What if I were also prudent?" For the plain wife is better loved for her character than her face.

### Section 26: *Beauty is Not What One Wears*

When the tyrant of Sicily sent expensive clothes and jewelry to Lysander's daughter, Lysander rejected the gift saying, "These things will shame rather than adorn my daughters!"

Even before that, Sophocles wrote

*Not adornment, you wretch, but disorder  
Shows itself in your mad desires*

For adornments is, as Crates said, that which adorns. And that which adorns a woman makes her more beautiful. What does so? Not gold or

stones or scarlet-- but dignity, a well-ordered life, modesty when present does so.

### *Section 27: Be Like Wine*

Those at the wedding who sacrifice to Hera, don't offer the gall with the rest of the sacrifice; instead they tear it out and cast it to the side of the altar. This custom is a parable: Neither bitterness nor anger should be present in a marriage. The lady of the house must be like wine, where even the sharp edge is pleasant – not like aloes or poison.

### *Section 28: Sacrifice to the Graces*

Plato instructed Xenocrates – who was harsh, but otherwise honorable and good – to sacrifice to the Graces.

Now, I think that for the wise wife, it is best to be gracious with her husband – in order that, as Metrodorus said, "She makes life together pleasant – not rancorous—because she is wise." – It is very important that the thrifty wife not neglect cleanliness nor the loving wife neglect cheerfulness; for a wife's austerity makes even her correct life unpleasant – just like a jumble ruins simplicity.

### *Section 29: It's Best to Think Well of Her*

The woman who fears to laugh and sport with her husband – lest she seem too forward and unrestrained – is no different than a woman who won't use oil on her head lest someone think she has used perfume, or a woman who won't wash her face lest someone think she has used rouge.

Now we know poets and speakers who flee everything popular, unfitting, and ugly; who by their practice and economy and custom seek to lead and move those who love the art.

Likewise, it is best for the lady of the house, in order to do well, flee and avoid an excess of seduction and pageantry; rather, she shows her love

of the art by fine morals and a graceful manner of life with her husband; in this good way she lives in pleasure with her husband.

If there is a wife who by nature is chaste and reserved – even without pleasure – it is best for her husband to think well of her. It's like when Phokion replied to Antipater – when Antipater had commanded him to do something which was not good or fitting - "I am not able to be both your friend and your flatterer." In the same way, a husband should understand his prudent and chaste wife when she is not able to be both a wife and a party girl.

### *Section 30: How to Keep Your Wife Inside*

Among Egyptian women, it was the custom that they not wear shoes: this kept them in the house all day. It's the same among most women: if you take-away their gold-embroidered shoes and their bracelets and anklets and purple and pearls ... they'll just stay inside.

### *Section 31: Be Modest*

When Theano showed her arm while putting on her cloak, some guy said, "Nice arm!" "But not for the public," she said.

A wise wife, not only protects her body but also her words. For her voice discloses her, and so she must be modest and guard her words with those outside. For in her speaking, she discloses her passions and customs and disposition.

### *Section 32: Stepping on a Tortoise*

Pheidias represented Aphrodite of the Eleans stepping on a tortoise as a symbol for wives: they should work at home and remain quiet.

It's best for wives to either speak to their husbands or through their husbands. And, she should not be peeved at speaking through

another's tongue; it is just like a flute player who makes more beautiful sounds through a flute.

### *Section 33: How to Rule a Wife*

When the wealthy or rulers give honor to philosophers, they at the same time honor themselves. But when philosophers pay homage to the rich; they do not give themselves any glory, but rather dishonor themselves.

It's the same with wives.

Those wives who willingly give deference to their husbands make themselves praiseworthy. But if they determine to be in charge rather than to be directed, they bring disgrace upon themselves.

Now husbands, do not rule your wife as if she were property; rather, treat her as the soul does the body, in sympathy, growing together in goodwill – that is best. Just as the body is cared for without being enslaved to the body's desires & passions; even so, wives should be governed in joy and grace.

### *Section 34: Belonging to Both*

When philosophers speak concerning physical bodies, they distinguish those which are like armaments or army camps, those which are drawn together like a house or ship, finally those which unified in a single nature like living animals.

This patterns shows itself in marriages, for there are those unified by love and a sympathy of nature, and those who at most sleep together but are separated, and those who even though share a house one couldn't suppose they "live together."

Here's what's best: Naturalists say that fluids blend thoroughly in and through one-another. Marriages should be so: bodies, property, friends, households should thoroughly course through one-another. That is why the Roman lawgiver forbade married couples to give or receive gifts from one-another: not because he didn't want them to share, but rather because they should consider everything they have as belonging to both.

### *Section 35: Mother Issues*

In the Libyan city of Leptis, they have a custom handed-down by from the fathers: On the very day after the wedding, the bride sends to the bridegroom's mother and asks for a pot. The mother won't send one and won't even say she has one. Here is the purpose of the custom: The mother-in-law acts like a step-mother, so that if, in the future, the mother-in-law acts even worse, the wife will neither be irritated nor annoyed. This will also set the wife to heal the cause, a mother's jealousy for her son's attention. The remedy is for the wife to create a passionate affection of her husband for her – while, not seeking to cause his care for his mother to be degraded of or even lessened.

### *Section 36: In-Laws*

Mothers seems to especially love their sons, because mothers think they are able to help them: fathers their daughters, because they are bound to help them.

So, perhaps, in life together, one desires to show honor to the other, by welcoming and loving. And while this may be a small thing, it is beautiful – if a wife to show honor to her husband's parents brings troubles to them, rather than to her own parents. For it is apparent that to be trusted, one must trust: and to be loved, one must love.

### Section 37: *How to Win a Fight*

The generals gave orders to the Greek soldiers with Cyrus: If the enemy is shouting, take them in silence. But if the enemy approaches by stealth, storm them with shouts.

Now a wife with any sense, when her husband is in a howling rage, will calm him down. But if he is sullen, she will speak to him comforting words and so win him.

### Section 38: *Passions and Pleasures*

Euripides was right to correct those who add the lyre to wine. It's best to call for music when someone is in a passion or depression, not merely as an added pleasure to pleasures.

You should consider it a fault for two to lie down together solely for pleasure and then live apart just because one of them is angry.

Especially at such times they shall call upon Aphrodite; she is the best the physician for their trouble. Doesn't even the Poet write of Hera

*I will free them from their angry quarrel  
And lead them in love to their marriage bed.*

### Section 39: *Protect the Bed*

At every time and in every place a wife must flee fighting with her husband – she needs to be especially careful of contention when they're alone in bed and supposedly resting.

It's like the woman who, when being forced to bed, asked, "How will my bed heal the troubles which came upon me when I was in bed?" For when contention and name-calling and angry passions spring up from the bed, they will not be easily fixed in another place or at another time.

#### **Section 40: *Don't Listen to Slanderers***

Hermione seems to speak the truth when she says,

*My destruction came through evil women*

Yet, it does not come about quite this simply. It happens when fights and jealousies with her husband opens her door – and not only her door, but her ears to such women. It is then – especially when things are difficult – that the wife must close up her ears and guard against these whisperers: otherwise, fire will be heaped upon fire. Before this happens, she needs to remember a saying of Philip: For when his friends were provoking him against the Greeks on the ground that he was good them but they were speaking evil of him, he said, "What would happen if I were to do them evil?"

Thus, when the slanderers say to a wife, "Your husband is hurting such a loving and virtuous wife!" she should return, "What would happen if I were to begin to hate and mistreat him?"

#### **Section 41: *What Better Place!***

A master, upon seeing the runaway slave which he had been pursuing, go ahead to hide in the mill, said – when he caught him, "What better place could I have found you than here!"

In the same way, a wife who is in a rage and suing out a bill of divorce on account of jealousy for her husband, should say to herself, "What better place could that woman find me, than doing this and burning against

my husband and in a public war with him; leaving my own house and my very own bedroom!"

### **Section 42: *Be Careful Where You Plow***

The Athenians observe three sacred ploughings. First in Scium: this is a memorial of the oldest sowing. The second in Raria, the third near the city called ox-yoking. Of these, the most sacred is marriage sowing and the ploughing to bear children.

Sophocles put it beautifully when he called Aphrodite, "The fruitful Cutherea."

It is of great importance for the husband and wife to use this with reverence; to keep off from unholy and unlawful involvement with others – especially to not sow where they do not desire to yield, which, if there is "fruit" they are ashamed & hide it.

### **Section 43: *First, Unity***

While Gorgias the orator was reading a speech on unity, Melanthius quipped, "This fellow tells us about unity, when he can't convince even his household of three (himself, his wife and his female slave) to have unity." For it seems that a matter arose involving Gorgias' desire and his wife's jealousy for that slave girl.

So, it is best for a man's own house to be in harmony if he seeks to bring harmony to the city and market and friends.

It seems that the crowd forgets the wrongs of a woman before they forget the wrongs done to a woman.

#### **Section 44: *What They Say About Cats***

If what they say about cats is true, that perfume will tear them apart and drive them mad; it is also true for some woman who become furious and lose their mind for scents. It would be crazy for a husband to torment his wife just so he could have the brief pleasure of wearing cologne.

Now, wives don't suffer because their husbands use cologne, but rather because they are around other women. It's not right to use trivial pleasure to cause pain and confusion to your wife.

They say that bees grow cross and attack those who have been around women. In the same way, husbands should be pure and even cleansed from other women before they approach their wives.

#### **Section 45: *When Approaching an Elephant***

Those who approach elephants don't wear flashy clothes, nor red those who approach bulls; because these colors drive the animals absolutely insane. They say that tigers go completely berserk and tear themselves apart when surrounded with drums.

Some husbands become quite vexed seeing red or purple clothes, others are weighed down by the drums and cymbals<sup>1</sup>.

Really, how hard would it be for their wives to simply abstain and not to do such things and not provoke their husbands? Rather, shouldn't they live with them in quiet and gentleness?

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<sup>1</sup> Babbitt has this footnote for this clause, "An indication that the wife was interested in some foreign religion like the worship of Cybele." If accurate, then this may provide the background for Peter's instructions to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6 for wives to be careful about noise & dress.

### Section 46: *She Should Shine*

While Philip was dragging off a woman, she was heard to say, "Let me go! Every girl is the same when the lights are out!" Now, this might be true of adulterers and slatterns, but not wives. When the light is out and her body is not seen, she should shine with wisdom for her own husband, and devotion & sweet affection.

### Section 47: *Practice What You Preach*

Plato advised elderly men to show a sense of shame before the younger men, so that the younger men might have respect for them. "Where the old men are shameless, none of the young men will show honor or respect."

This is something husbands should remember. The husband must show no one greater respect than he does his wife. Her room will be the instructor for every good order or licentiousness. If he throws himself into the same pleasures from he tries to turn her away, he doesn't differ from one who calls enemies to come battle his wife - while he, himself has already surrendered to them.

### Section 48: *Learn and Live*

Eurydice, when it comes to love for decorations, I implore you to read and remember what Aristylla wrote by Gimoxena.

And as for you, Pollianus, don't dare suppose that your wife will leave off with needless luxuries unless she should see you despising these things in others; this will be especially the case if you are seen rejoicing in gold-

covered cups and wall murals and trappings for mules or necklaces for horses. No, she won't reject excess in her rooms if she sees that excess has taken over your rooms.

You have already demonstrated that you are prepared to engage with philosophy, so adorn your character by receiving and considering profitable ideas. Like a honeybee, look everywhere and bring to your wife whatever would be useful. Show her the best things and explain them to her in such a way a will be pleasing and understandable.

*A father you are to her, and a dear mother  
Even a brother*

It does not lessen your dignity for your wife to say

*A husband  
You, now are to me*

a guide, philosopher, teacher of the best and divine.

When women learn such things first, they will reject the needless. A wife would be ashamed to be a dancer when she has learned geometry. She won't buy into magic spells made from the words of Plato or Xenophon.

When she hears someone promise to bring down the moon, she'll laugh at the ignorance and silliness of such stories which have tricked so many other women: She has not unwillingly learned astronomy – and knows about Aglaonice the daughter of Negetor of Thessaly, who had thorough knowledge of eclipses and everything concerning the moon and knew before the time in which moon would be caught in the earth's

shadow, deceived and took-in all the women with the idea that she herself pulled down the moon.

Now they say that no woman ever conceived a child without the cooperation of a man, yet there are deformed embryos, fleshy and solid which spring from corruption: these are called "moles". Thus, care should be taken to guard against this happening with women's minds. For if they do not receive the seed of useful words and do not undertake education with their husband, but rather are left to themselves, they will end up with rotten ideas and pathetic conceits.

Yet, you, Eurydice, I sincerely urge to be conversant with the saying of the wise and the good—that voice always have ready, which you have known since you a young girl with us. This will bring joy to your husband and the respect of other women, since you will be adorned with that which is precious and respectable—and nothing else.

For you will not get the expensive pearls of that woman or the rare rubies of another unless you pay the exacting price. But the adornments of Theano, Cleobulina, Gorgo, the wife of Leonidas, Timocleia, the sister of Theagenes, Claudia of old, Cornelia, daughter of Scipio, as many as have become admired and acclaimed, these things are rightfully laid about as a gift, adorning them gloriously in both life and happiness.

For if Sappho thought well of her of elegantly written verses for a certain rich woman:

*Death, you lie there: no memory of you*

*There shall be: for you do not share in the roses  
From Piera*

Why then should you not allow yourself to think great-brilliant thoughts of yourself? For you do not only share in the roses but even share the fruits the Muses graciously bear to those who wonder at education and philosophy.