Hymn and Invocation of Aphrodite

by
Apollonius Sophistes

Oh Muse! With visions Thou hast filled my soul,
        With visions overpowering, for Thou
        Hast shown me Golden Aphrodite; now
The blaze emboldens me; like coal
        To brighter burning fanned by Breath Divine,
The Cyprian enflameth me with words,
        Seductive sounds, which swiftly would entwine
My soul, as lime-twigs trap unwary birds.

An Ancient Poet[1] spake the truth; he said
When Cypris cometh swift, high-spirited
Just like a Hero — irresistible
Her onslaught, nor may anyone annul
Her summons; flouting Her is arrogance,
A failure to respect the difference
'Tween Gods and Mortals; nor can even They
Resist Her Power. She is held at bay
By only three: Athena, Bright-Eyed Maid,
And Artemis, who haunts both wood and glade,
And Hestia reject the Paphian's Dove,
For They alone deny delights of Love.
The Cyprian's summons is a challenge. Be
Thou brave and answer it, for verily
A God hath willed it; surely stinging grief
Will be refusal's price, so seek relief,
Conforming to the Paphian's Will.
So spake the Poet Truths he would instill.

Far-shining Aphrodite, hear our prayer!
        Thou Laughter-loving Lady, Paphian,
        Well-girded, Golden, Sea-born, Cyprian,
Companion, Tender-hearted, or howe'er
It pleaseth Thee to be addressed, attend,
We ask, our words of praise, and send
Thy Grace, because Thou art the source of all

[1] Euripedes, *Hippolytus*: 443, 474.

That’s charming, graceful, all that doth enthrall
In word or deed, in action, figure, face.
For Thine is the allure that doth enlace
Our hearts as one, for as the charmed is bound,
So also is the charmer quickly found
Surrendering, with yearning undisguised,
The compromiser gladly compromised!
But irresistible is even this,
Seducer falling to seduction; bliss
Repaid is twofold bliss, drawing tight
The bonds about them both, in shared delight.

♡ ♡ ♡

Now I call in ancient sounds:
’Αφροδίτη Χρυσοστέφανε Γλυκυμείλιχ’ Ὦ ἦ
Καλλίγλουτε Θεὰ Πάνδημε Ἑταίρα σὺ Μορφώ,[2]

♡ ♡ ♡

Or whatever name doth please Thee,
Hear! If ever I’ve appeased Thee,
Now attend my prayer beseeching,
See my hands toward Thee reaching,
Know my love is everlasting!
Lady, grant the gift I’m asking
And appear before us, whether
Now sojourning deep in Nether
Regions with the Queen of Hades,
Or in Heaven with Thy Ladies,
Founts of all allure, the Graces,
Fair Their form and fair Their faces!

I request Thee, leave Thy station!

[2]That is, *Aphroditē Khrusostephane Glukumeilikh’ Ō hē / Kalligloute Thea Pandēme Hetaira su Morphō*, which means, “Aphrodite Gold-crowned Sweetly-winning O (Thou) the / Beautiful-butt Goddess Of-all-people Courtesan Thou Shapely-one” — all ancient epithets of Aphrodite.

Ancient Greek pronunciation guidelines: If unaccented syllables are the tonic (say, C), then the acute accent is a rising fifth (C–G), the grave accent is a falling third (G–E), and the circumflex is a rising-falling fifth (C–G–C). These intervals are approximate, and would be less in everyday speech. The letters χ, ϕ and θ should be pronounced as aspirated k, p and t, respectively. Trill the ρs.

Grant to us a visitation!
Show to us Thy face delightful!
Let us worship Thee as rightful,
Shapely form that's Thine adoring!
Hear our voices now upsoaring
To the Heavens from our chorus!
Please, we ask Thee, stand before us!

Queen of Twilight, Queen of Morning!
Deeds just done or now aborning
Are Thy favorites; prized the clever
Warrior of the bold endeavor!
Dear to Thee the Sun that's rising,
Thou reward for enterprising
Souls, Thou prize of tasks completed,
Thou in rivalry entreated
To bestow Thy grace, advising,
Bold advances galvanizing!
Such Thy gift and such Thy favor,
Bounty for the bolder, braver!

Source of charm in words and faces,
Propagating species, races,
With desire their hearts entwining,
Thou in starry splendor shining,
Aphrodite, hear us calling!
Show to us Thy Form enthralling!

Golden Goddess, we beseech Thee,
Stretch our arms, and long to reach Thee!
Shining Star of Heaven, hear us!
We implore Thee, come Thou near us!

Hear our holy hymn rejoicing
And Thy praises loudly voicing!
Shining Star of Heaven, hear us!
We beseech Thee, come Thou near us!

See our faces toward Thee turning!
Feel the flames within us burning!
Shining Star of Heaven, hear us!

We beseech Thee, come Thou near us!

Show Thy features! Hold us Spellbound!
Come Thou Lady, Goddess, Gold-crowned,
Merciful and Mighty,
Laughter-loving Aphrodite!

♡ ♡ ♡

A shining star! It's streaking through the skies,
Descending earthward, dazzling to my eyes.
A vision riseth, showing through the glare,
A scene of beauty, overwhelming, rare.
I see Her temple standing by the shore
Of Cypris, glistening marble walls and floor
Reflected in the rippling water, stark
Against the sacred grove's deep green, and dark
The columns flanking there the open door,
Through which, in the serene interior,
I see Her Holy Harlots, standing there,
Devoted to their Goddess, eagerly to share
The Gifts of Aphrodite; there's no shame
To sharing Love's embraces in Her name.

Below the sea appeareth now a light
That gloweth green, as when a candle bright
Behind an emerald burns. The sea is churned
With froth and foam; a figure is discerned
Arising from the depths, a Form Divine,
The Cyprian, approaching on the brine.
She cometh quickly, skimming over wave
And water; such a scene we would engrave
Upon our hearts forever. Steppeth She
From off the cockle shell; our earnest plea
Was heard. Now look upon the Golden One,
Attractiveness without comparison
Is Hers; embodied beauty is Her gift,
Whatever form doth most the heart uplift.

O gracious Muse, bestow on me, I pray,
The words to do Her justice, nor betray
The Goddess of all Beauty, Charm and Grace,

Whate'er attracts in action, word or face!

Before us, confident in Her control,
She standeth proudly, bright eyes piercing, soul
Enflaming, nor denying Her allure,
In Works of Love unbashful and secure.
Our admiration's obvious; a smile
Doth part Her lips, and turneth She awhile
Before our gaze — but slippeth now Her gown,
The strap upon Her shoulder falling down
So naked now from nape to arm we see
The swelling of Her chest, that like the sea
Doth rise and fall in measured rate,
And both the heart and eyes doth captivate.

As She approacheth with a careful stride
I see a tremor that doth coincide
With ev'ry step, beneath Her gossamer
Attire, a motion unmistakable,
A lure She knows is inescapable.

The Paphian, stopping in our steady gaze,
With insolent eyes accepteth all our praise.
Her hip out-thrust, She standeth there,
Her brazen posture an unspoken dare
To us. I watch Her naked arm draw back
The folds, exposing bare Her side, no lack
Of satin skin to see, so taut around
Her hip; transfixed by this, I'm held spell-bound.

Far more than mortal eyes can comprehend
Are sights like these I see. A friend
Indeed is Aphrodite, showing us
Embodied beauty, a gift most generous.

A drifting cloud now comes across the scene;
        The vision fades, dissolving into mist.
But though the Goddess can't be seen,
        We feel Her presence; having once been kissed
By Her and gazed in rapture at Her face,
We know the worth of Elegance and Grace,

Nor ever will forget it; t'ward Beauty too
We're urged, and Joy that doth the Soul renew.

We thank Thee Goddess for Thy welcome gifts,
For pleasures and delights, all that lifts
Us up to Ecstasy, for they are Thine.
We pray Thy liberal Love may always shine
On us, may always rouse our spirits, spur
Us on to seek whatever's lovelier.

And if my poem hath appealed to Thee,
I pray that kindly would Thou look on me.

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