

***THE GOLDEN
ASSE***

BOOK IV

By

Lucius

Apuleius "*Africanus*"

THE FOURTH BOOK

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

How Apuleius thinking to eat Roses, was cruelly beaten by a Gardener, and chased by dogs.

When noone was come, that the broyling heate of the sunne had most power, we turned into a village to certaine of the theeves acquaintance and friends, for verily their meeting and embracing together did give me, poore asse, cause to deeme the same, and they tooke the trusse from my backe, and gave them part of the Treasure which was in it, and they seemed to whisper and tell them that it was stollen goods, and after that we were unladen of our burthens, they let us loose in a medow to pasture, but myne own horse and Miloes Asse would not suffer me to feed there with them, but I must seeke my dinner in some other place.

Wherefore I leaped into a garden which was behinde the stable, and being well nigh perished with hunger, although I could find nothing there but raw and green fallets, yet I filled my hungry guts therewithall abundantly, and praying unto all the gods, I looked about in every place if I could espy any red roses in the gardens by, and my solitary being alone did put me in good hope, that if I could find any remedy, I should presently of an Asse be changed into Lucius out of every mans sight. And while I considered these things, I loked about, and behold I saw a farre off a shadowed valley adjoyning nigh unto a wood, where amongst divers other hearbes and pleasant verdures, me thought I saw bright flourishing Roses of bright damaske colour; and said within my bestaill minde, Verily that place is the place of Venus and the Graces, where secretly glistereth the royall hew, of so lively and delectable a floure. Then I desiring the help of the guide of my good fortune, ranne lustily towards the wood, insomuch that I felt myself that I was no more an Asse, but a swift coursing horse: but my agility and quicknes could not prevent the cruelty of my fortune, for when I came to the place I perceived that they were no roses, neither tender nor pleasant, neither moystened with the heavenly drops of dew, nor celestial liquor, which grew out of the thicket and thornes there. Neither did I perceive that there was any valley at all, but onely the bank of the river, environed with great thick trees, which had long branches like

unto lawrell, and bearing a flour without any manner of sent, and the common people call them by the name of Lawrel roses, which be very poyson to all manner of beasts. Then was I so intangled with unhappy fortune that I little esteemed mine own danger, and went willingly to eat of these roses, though I knew them to be present poyson: and as I drew neere I saw a yong man that seemed to be the gardener, come upon mee, and when he perceived that I had devoured all his hearbes in the garden, he came swearing with a great staffe in his hand, and laid upon me in such sort, that I was well nigh dead, but I speedily devised some remedy my self, for I lift up my legs and kicked him with my hinder heels, that I left him lying at the hill foot wel nigh slain, and so I ran away. Incontinently came out his wife, who seeing her husband halfe dead, cried and howled in pittifull sort, and went toward her husband, to the intent that by her lowd cries shee might purchase to me present destruction. Then all the persons of the town, moved by her noise came forth, and cried for dogs to teare me down. Out came a great company of Bandogs and mastifes, more fit to pul down bears and lions than me, whom when I beheld I thought verily I should presently die: but I turned myself about, and ranne as fast as ever I might to the stable from whence I came. Then the men of the towne called in their dogs, and took me and bound mee to the staple of a post, and scourged me with a great knotted whip till I was well nigh dead, and they would undoubtedly have slaine me, had it not come to passe, that what with the paine of their beating, and the greene hearbes that lay in my guts, I caught such a laske that I all besprinkled their faces with my liquid dung, and enforced them to leave off.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER

How Apuleius was prevented of his purpose, and how the Theeves came to their den.

Not long after, the theeves laded us againe, but especially me, and brought us forth of the stable, and when wee had gone a good part of our journey what with the long way, my great burthen, the beating of staves, and my worne hooves, I was so weary that I could scantly go. Then I saw a little before mee a river running with fair water, and I said to myself, Behold, now I have found a good occasion: for I will fall down when I come yonder, and surely I will not rise againe, neither with scourging nor with beating, for I had rather be slaine there presently, than goe any further.

And the cause why I had determined so to doe was this, I thought that the theeves when they did see me so feeble and weake that I could not travell, to the intent they would not stay in their journey, they would take the burthen from my backe and put it on my fellowes, and so for my further punishment to leave me as a prey to the wolves and ravening beasts. But evill fortune prevented so good a consideration; for the other Asse being of the same purpose that I was of, by feigned and coloured wearinesse fell downe first, with all his burthen on the ground as though hee were dead, and he would not rise neither with beating nor with pricking, nor stand upon his legs, though they pulled him by the tail, by his legs, and by his eares: which when the theeves beheld, as without all hope they said one unto another, What should we stand here so long about a dead or rather a stony asse? let us bee gone: and so they tooke his burthen, and divided some to mee, and some to my horse. And then they drew out their swords and cut off his legs, and threw his body from the point of a hill down into a great valley. Then I considering with my selfe of the evill fortune of my poore companion, and purposed now to forget all subtilty and deceit, and to play the good Asse to get my masters favour, for I perceived by their talke that we were come home well nigh at our journeys end. And after that wee had passed over a little hill, we came to our appointed place, and when we were unladen of our burthens, and all things carried in, I tumbled and wallowed in the dust, to refresh my selfe in stead of water. The thing and the time compelleth me to make description of

the places, and especially of the den where the theeves did inhabit, I will prove my wit in what I can doe, and the consider you whether I was an Asse in judgement and sence, or no. For first there was an exceeding great hill compassed about with big trees very high, with many turning bottoms full of sharp stones, whereby it was inaccessible. There was many winding and hollow vallies, environed with thickets and thornes, and naturally fortressed round about. From the top of the hill ranne a running water as cleare as silver, that watered all the valleyes below, that it seemed like unto a sea inclosed, or a standing flood. Before the denne where was no hill stood an high tower, and at the foot thereof were sheep-coats fenced and walled with clay. Before the gate of the house were pathes made in stead of wals, in such sort that you could easily judge it to be a very den for theeves, and there was nothing else except a little coat covered with thatch, wherein the theeves did nightly accustome to watch by order, as I after perceived. And when they were all crept into the house, and we were all tied fast with halters at the dore, they began to chide with an old woman there, crooked with age, who had the government and rule of all the house, and said, How is it old witch, old trot, and strumpet, that thou sittest idley all day at home, and having no regard to our perillous labours, hast provided nothing for our suppers, but sittest eating and swilling thyself from morning till night? Then the old woman trembled, and scantly able to speak gan say, Behold my puissant and faithfull masters, you shall have meat and pottage enough by and by: here is first store of bread, wine plenty, filled in cleane rinsed pots, likewise here is hot water prepared to bathe you.

Which when she had said, they put off all their garments and refreshed themselves by the fire. And after they were washed and noynted with oyle, they sate downe at the table garnished with all kind of dainty meats. They were no sooner sate downe, but in came another company of yong men more in number than was before, who seemed likewise to bee Theeves, for they brought in their preyes of gold and silver, Plate, jewels, and rich robes, and when they had likewise washed, they sate among the rest, and served one another by order. Then they drank and eat exceedingly, laughing, crying and making much noyse, that I thought that I was among the tyrannous and wilde Lapithes, Thebans, and Centaures. At length one of them more valiant than the rest, spake in this sort, We verily

have manfully conquered the house of Milo of Hippata, and beside all the riches and treasure which by force we have brought away, we are all come home safe, and are increased the more by this horse and this Asse. But you that have roved about in the country of Boetia, have lost your valiante captaine Lamathus, whose life I more regarded than all the treasure which you have brought: and therefore the memory of him shall bee renowned for ever amongst the most noble kings and valiant captains: but you accustome when you goe abroad, like men with ganders hearts to creepe through every corner and hole for every trifle. Then one of them that came last answered, Why are you only ignorant, that the greater the number is, the sooner they may rob and spoyle the house? And although the family be dispersed in divers lodgings, yet every man had rather to defend his own life, than to save the riches of his master: but when there be but a few theeves, then will they not only rather regard themselves, but also their substance, how little or great soever it be. And to the intent you may beleieve me I will shew you an example: wee were come nothing nigh to Thebes, where is the fountain of our art and science, but we learned where a rich Chuffe called Chriseros did dwell, who for fear of offices in the publique wel dissembled his estate, and lived sole and solitary in a small coat, howbeit replenished with abundance of treasure, and went daily in ragged and torn apparel. Wherefore wee devised with our selves to go to his house and spoyle him of all his riches. And when night came we drew towards the dore, which was so strongly closed, that we could neither move it, nor lift it out of the hooks, and we thought it best not to break it open lest by the noyse we should raise up to our harm the neighbours by. Then our strong and valiant captaine Lamathus trusting in his own strength and force, thrust in his had through a hole in the dore, and thought to pull back the bolt: but the covetous caitif Chriseros being awake, and making no noise came softly to the dore and caught his hand and with a great naile nailed it fast to the post: which when he had done, he ran up to the high chamber and called every one of his neighbours by name, desiring them to succour him with all possible speed, for his own house was on fire. Then every one for fear of his owne danger came running out to aid him, wherewith we fearing our present peril, knew not what was best to be don, whether wee should leave our companion there, or yeeld ourselves to die with him: but we by his consent devised a better way, for we cut off his arm by the elbow and so let

it hang there: then wee bound his wound with clouts, lest we should be traced by the drops of blood: which don we took Lamathus and led him away, for fear we would be taken: but being so nigh pursued that we were in present danger, and that Lamathus could not keepe our company by reason of faintnesse; and on the other side perceiving that it was not for his profit to linger behinde, he spake unto us as a man of singular courage and vertue, desiring us by much entreaty and prayer and by the puissance of the god Mars, and the faith of our confederacy, to deliver his body from torment and miserable captivity: and further he said, How is it possible that so courageous a Captaine can live without his hand, wherewith he could sometime rob and slay so many people? I would thinke myself sufficiently happy if I could be slaine by one of you. But when he saw that we all refused to commit any such fact, he drew out his sword with his other hand, and after that he had often kissed it, he drove it clean through his body. Then we honoured the corps of so puissant a man, and wrapped it in linnen cloathes and threw it into the sea. So lieth our master Lamathus, buried and did in the grave of water, and ended his life as I have declared. But Alcinus, though he were a man of great enterprise, yet could he not beware by Lamathus, nor voide himselfe from evill fortune, for on a day when he had entred into an old womans house to rob her, he went up into a high chamber, where hee should first have strangled her: but he had more regard to throw down the bags of mony and gold out at a window, to us that stood under; and when he was so greedy that he would leave nothing behinde, he went into the old womans bed where she lay asleep, and would have taken off the coverlet to have thrown downe likewise, but shee awaked, and kneeling on her knees, desired him in this manner: O sir I pray you cast not away such torn and ragged clouts into my neighbours houses, for they are rich enough, and need no such things. Then Alcinus thinking her words to be true, was brought in beleefe, that such things as he had throwne out already, and such things as hee should throw out after, was not fallen downe to his fellowes, but to other mens houses, wherefore hee went to the window to see, and as hee thought to behold the places round about, thrusting his body out of the window, the old woman marked him wel, and came behind him softly, and though shee had but small strength, yet with sudden force she tooke him by the heeles and thrust him out headlong, and so he fell upon a marvellous great stone and burst his ribs, wherby

he vomited and spewed great flakes of blood, and presently died. Then wee threw him to the river likewise, as we had done Lamathus before.

When we had thus lost two of our companions, we liked not Thebes, but marched towards the next city called Platea, where we found a man of great fame called Demochares, that purposed to set forth a great game, where should be a triall of all kind of weapons: hee was come of a good house, marvellous rich, liberall, and wel deserved that which he had and had prepared many showes and pleasures for the Common people, insomuch that there is no man can either by wit or eloquence shew in words his worthy preparations: for first he had provided all sorts of armes, hee greatly delighted in hunting and chasing, he ordained great towers and Tables to move hither and thither: hee made many places to chase and encounter in: he had ready a great number of men and wilde beasts, and many condemned persons were brought from the Judgement place, to try and fight with those beasts. But amongst so great preparations of noble price, he bestowed the most part of his patrimony in buying of Beares, which he nourished to his great cost, and esteemed more than all the other beasts, which either by chasing hee caught himself, or which he dearely bought, or which were given him from divers of his friends.

Howbeit for all his sumptuous cost, hee could not be free from the malitious eyes of envy, for some of them were well nigh dead with too long tying up, some meagre with the broyling heat of the sunne, some languished with lying, but all having sundry diseases, were so afflicted that they died one after another, and there was well nigh none left, in such sort that you might see them lying in the streets pittiously dead. And the common people having no other meat to feed on, little regarding any curiosity, would come forth and fill their bellies with the flesh of the beares. Then by and by Babulus and I devised a pretty sport, wee drew one of the greatest of the Beares to our lodging, as though wee would prepare to eat thereof, where wee flayed of his skinne, and kept his ungles whole, but we medled not with the head, but cut it off by the necke, and so let it hang to the skinne. Then we rased off the flesh from the necke, and cast dust thereon, and set it in the sun to dry.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER

How Thrasileon was disguised in a Beares skin, and how he was handled.

When the skin was a drying we made merry with the flesh, and then we devised with our selves, that one of us being more valiant than the rest both in body and courage (so that he would consent thereto) should put on the skin, and feigning that he were a Beare, should be led to Demochares house in the night, by which means we thought to be received and let in. Many were desirous to play the Beare, but especially one Thrasileon of a couragious minde would take this enterprise in hand. Then wee put in into the Beares skin, which him finely in every point, wee buckled it fast under his belly, and covered the seam with the haire, that it might not be seen. After this we made little holes through the bears head, and through his nostrils and eyes, for Thrasileon to see out and take wind at, in such sort that he seemed a very lively and natural beast: when this was don we went into a cave which we hired for the purpose, and he crept in after like a bear with a good courage. Thus we began our subtilty, and then wee imagined thus, wee feigned letters as though they came from one Nicanor which dwelt in the Country of Thracia, which was of great acquaintance with this Demochares, wherein we wrote, that hee had sent him being his friend, the first fruits of his coursing and hunting. When night was come, which was a meet time for our purpose, we brought Thrasileon and our forged letters and presented them to Demochares. When Demochares beheld this mighty Beare, and saw the liberality of Nicanor his friend, hee commanded his servants to deliver unto us x. crowns, having great store in his coffers. Then (as the novelty of a thing doth accustom to stir mens minds to behold the same) many persons came on every side to see this bear: but Thrasileon, lest they should by curious viewing and prying perceive the truth, ran upon them to put them in feare that they durst not come nigh. The people said, Verily Demochares is right happy, in that after the death of so many beasts, hee hath gotten maugre fortunes head, so goodly a bear. Then Demochares commanded him with all care to be put in the park with all the other beasts: but immediately I spake unto him and said, Sir I pray you take heed how you put a beast tired with the heat of the sun and with long travell, among others which as I hear say

have divers maladies and diseases, let him rather lie in some open place in your house neer some water, where he may take air and ease himself, for doe you not know that such kind of beasts do greatly delight to couch under the shadow of trees and hillocks neer pleasant wells and waters? Hereby Demochares admonished, and remembring how many he had before that perished, was contented that we should put the bear where we would. Moreover we said unto him, that we ourselves were determined to lie all night neer the Bear, to look unto him, and to give him meat and drink at his due houre.

Then he answered, Verily masters you need not put yourselves to such paines, for I have men that serve for nothing but that purpose. So wee tooke leave of him and departed: and when we were come without the gates of the town, we perceived before us a great sepulchre standing out of the highway in a privy and secret place, and thither we went and opened the mouth thereof, whereas we found the sides covered with the corruption of man, and the ashes and dust of his long buried body, wherein we got ourselves to bring our purpose to passe, and having respect to the dark time of night, according to our custome, when we thought that every one was asleepe, we went with our weapons and besieged the house of Demochares round about. Then Thrasileon was ready at hand, and leaped out of the caverne, and went to kill all such as he found asleepe: but when he came to the Porter, he opened the gates and let us in, and then he shewed us a large Counter, wherein we saw the night before a great aboundance of treasure: which when by violence we had broke open, I bid every one of my fellows take as much gold and silver as they could carry away: and beare it to the sepulchre, and still as they carried away I stood at the gate, watching diligently when they would returne. The Beare running about the house, to make such of the family afeared as fortun'd to wake and come out. For who is he that is so puissant and couragious, that at the ougly sight of so great a monster will not quayle and keep his chamber especially in the night? But when wee had brought this matter to so good a point, there chanced a pittifull case, for as I looked for my companions that should come from the sepulchre, behold there was a Boy of the house that fortun'd to looke out of a window, and espied the Bear running about, and he went and told all the servants of the house. Whereupon

incontinently they came forth with Torches, Lanthornes, and other lights, that they might see all the yard over: they came with clubs, speares, naked swords, Greyhounds, and Mastifes to slay the poore beast. Then I during this broyle thought to run away, but because I would see Thrasileon fight with the Dogs, I lay behinde the gate to behold him. And although I might perceive that he was well nigh dead, yet remembred he his owne faithfulness and ours, and valiantly resisted the gaping and ravenous mouths of the hell hounds, so tooke hee in gree the pagiant which willingly he tooke in hand himself, and with much adoe tumbled at length out of the house: but when hee was at liberty abroad yet could he not save himself, for all the dogs of the Streete joynd themselves to the greyhounds and mastifes of the house, and came upon him.

Alas what a pittifull sight it was to see our poore Thrasileon thus environed and compassed with so many dogs that tare and rent him miserably. Then I impatient of so great a misery, ranne in among the prease of people, and ayding him with my words as much as I might, exhorted them all in this manner: O great and extreame mischance, what a pretious and excellent beast have we lost. But my words did nothing prevaile, for there came out a tall man with a speare in his hand, that thrust him cleane through, and afterwards many that stood by drew out their swords, and so they killed him. But verily our good Captaine Thrasileon, the honour of our comfort, received his death so patiently, that he would not bewray the league betweene us, either by crying, howling, or any other meanes, but being torn with dogs and wounded with weapons, did yeeld forth a dolefull cry, more like unto a beast than a man. And taking his present fortune in good part, with courage and glory enough did finish his life, with such a terror unto the assembly, that no person was hardy until it was day, as to touch him, though hee were starke dead: but at last there came a Butcher more valiant than the rest, who opening the panch of the beast, slit out an hardy and ventrous theefe.

In this manner we lost our Captain Thrasileon, but he left not his fame and honour.

When this was done wee packed up our treasure, which we committed to the sepulchre to keepe, and got out of the bounds of

Platea, thus thinking with our selves, that there was more fidelity amongst the dead than amongst the living, by reason that our preyes were so surely kept in the sepulchre. So being wearied with the weight of our burthens, and well nigh tyred with long travell, having lost three of our soldiers, we are come home with these present cheats.

Thus when they had spoken in memory of their slaine companions, they tooke cups of gold, and sung hymns unto the god mars, and layd them downe to sleep. Then the old woman gave us fresh barley without measure, insomuch that my horse fed so abundantly that he might well thinke hee was at some banquet that day. But I that was accustomed to eat bran and flower, thought that but a sower kinde of meate. Wherefore espying a corner where lay loaves of bread for all the house I got me thither and filled my hungry guts therewith.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

How the Theeves stole away a Gentlewoman, and brought her to their den.

When night was come the Theeves awaked and rose up, and when they had buckled on their weapons, and disguised their faces with visards, they departed. And yet for all the great sleep that came upon me, I could in no wise leave eating: and whereas when I was a man I could be contented with one or two loaves at the most, now my huts were so greedy that three panniers full would scantily serve me, and while I considered these things the morning came, and being led to a river, notwithstanding my Assie shamefastnesse I quencht my thirst. And suddenly after, the Theeves returned home carefull and heavy, bringing no burthens with them, no not so much as traffe or baggage, save only a maiden, that seemed by her habit to be some gentlewoman borne, and the daughter of some worthy matron of that country, who was so fair and beautiful, that though I were an Asse, yet I had a great affection for her. The virgin lamented and tare her hair, and rent her garments, for the great sorrow she was in; but the theeves brought her within the cave, and assisted her to comfort in this sort, Weep not fair gentlewoman we pray you, for be you assured we wil do no outrage or violence to your person: but take patience a while for our profit, for necessity and poore estate hath compelled us to do this enterprise: we warrant you that your parents, although they bee covetous, will be contented to give us a great quantity of mony to redeeme and ransome you from our hands.

With such and like flattering words they endeavoured to appease the gentlewoman, howbeit shee would in no case be comforted, but put her head betwixt her knees, and cried pittiously. Then they called the old woman, and commaunded her to sit by the maiden, and pacify her dolor as much as shee might. And they departed away to rob, as they were accustomed to doe, but the virgin would not assuage her griefes, nor mitigate her sorrow by any entreaty of the old woman, but howled and sobbed in such sort, that she made me poore Asse likewise to weepe, and thus she said, Alas can I poore wench live any longer, that am come of so good a house, forsaken of my parents, friends, and family, made a rapine and

prey, closed servilely in this stony prison, deprived of all pleasure, wherein I have been brought up, thrown in danger, ready to be rent in pieces among so many sturdy theeves and dreadful robbers, can I (I say) cease from weeping, and live any longer? Thus she cried and lamented, and after she had wearied herself with sorrow and blubbered her face with teares, she closed the windowes of her hollow eyes, and laid her downe to sleepe. And after that she had slept, she rose again like a furious and mad woman, and beat her breast and comely face more that she did before.

Then the old woman enquired the causes of her new and sudden lamentation. To whom sighing in pittifull sort she answered, Alas now I am utterly undone, now am I out of all hope, O give me a knife to kill me, or a halter to hang me. Whereat the old [woman] was more angry, and severely commanded her to tell her the cause of her sorrow, and why after her sleep, she should renew her dolour and miserable weeping. What, thinke you (quoth she) to deprive our young men of the price of your ransome? No, no therefore cease your crying, for the Theeves doe little esteeme your howling, and if you do not, I will surely burn you alive. Hereat the maiden was greatly feared, and kissed her hand and said, O mother take pittie upon me and my wretched fortune, and give me license a while to speake, for I think I shall not long live, let there be mercy ripe and franke in thy venerable hoare head, and hear the sum of my calamity.

There was a comely young man, who for his bounty and grace was beloved entirely of all the towne, my cousine Germane, and but three years older than I; we two were nourished and brought up in one house, lay under one rooffe, and in one chamber, and at length by promise of marriage, and by consent of our parents we were contracted together. The marriage day was come, the house was garnished with lawrel, and torches were set in every place in the honour of Hymeneus, my espouse was accompanied by his parents, kinsfolke, and friends, and made sacrifices in the temples and publique places. And when my unhappy mother pampered me in her lap, and decked me like a bride, kissing me sweetly, and making me a parent for Children, behold there came in a great multitude of theeves armed like men of warre, with naked swords in their hands, who went not about to doe any harme, neither to take any thing

away, but brake into the chamber where I was, and violently tooke me out of my mothers armes, when none of our family would resist for feare.

In this sort was our marriage disturbed, like the marriage of Hyppodame and Perithous. But behold my good mother, now my unhappy fortune is renewed and encreased: For I dreamed in my sleepe, that I was pulled out of our house, out of our chamber, and out of my bed, and that I removed about in solitary and unknowne places, calling upon the name of my unfortunate husband, and how that he, as soone as he perceived that he was taken away, even smelling with perfumes and crowned with garlands, did trace me by the steppes, desiring the aid of the people to assist him, in that his wife was violently stollen away, and as he went crying up and down, one of the theeves mooved with indignation, by reason of his pursuit, took up a stone that lay at his feet, and threw it at my husband and killed him. By the terror of which sight, and the feare of so dreadfull a dreame, I awaked.

Then the old woman rendring out like sighes, began to speake in this sort: My daughter take a good heart unto you, and bee not afeared at feigned and strange visions and dreams, for as the visions of the day are accounted false and untrue, so the visions of the night doe often change contrary. And to dream of weeping, beating, and killing, is a token of good luck and prosperous change. Whereas contrary to dreame of laughing, carnal dalliance, and good cheere, is a signe of sadnesse, sicknesse, loss of substance, and displeasure. But I will tell thee a pleasant tale, to put away all thy sorrow, and to revive thy spirits. And so shee began in this manner.

Freeditorial 