

I don't know why it occurred to her to call out to me:

'You always sing like that! I've never once heard you play a pipe... a shepherd without a pipe... that seems pretty odd to me!'

I did have a pipe (a sort of flute), but I didn't have enough courage to play it when I knew she could hear me. This time I felt emboldened to play for her sake, although I do not know if she was impressed by my art as a piper. I only knew she sent me some dried figs and a jar of home-made grape syrup as a reward.

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One evening when I had brought my goats down to the shore, among the rocks where the sea formed thousands of niches, where the rocks were hunched, here into jutting headlands, there into caves, amongst the labyrinth of the murmuring water that danced with unruly splashing and foam, like a babbling infant in its cradle who jumps up and down, longing to be picked up and dance in the familiar arms of its mother — when I had brought my goats down, as I was saying, to taste 'a lick of salt' from the sea, as I often did, I saw the sea, joyous and enchanting. I was 'ravished' and longed to leap in and swim. It was August.

I drove my flock a little higher above the rocks, on a path marked along a ridge between two cliffs. I had never come down that path, and I intended to return to my mountain shelter that night by the same route. I left my goats to graze on capers and salt-weed, although they were not hungry any more. I whistled softly at them so they would stay calm and wait for me. They heard me and lay quietly. Seven or eight of the billy goats wore bells and I could hear them from a long way off should they suddenly grow restless.

I made my way back down the cliff and reached the sea. The sun had just set and the moon, almost full, began to shine low in the sky, just a few feet above the mountains of the island opposite. The rock I stood on extended northwards, and beyond the other promontory to the west I could see the crimson robe of the sun,

which had just set. It was the tail of his crimson robe trailing behind, or perhaps the carpet spread for him by his mother, as they say, to sit on and take his supper.

To the right of my large curved rock, a small sea cave had formed, strewn with white, crystalline shells and shiny pebbles of every colour, looking as if it had been tidied and decorated by sea nymphs. From the cave, a narrow path led up the side of the sheer cliff and emerged at the lower gate of *Kyr-Moschos's* surrounding wall, one side of which ran alongside the sea for several hundred yards.

I quickly pulled off my shirt and pants and leapt into the sea. I washed my body and my hair, then swam for a few minutes. I felt a sweet, inexpressible enchantment. I imagined myself to be at one with the sea, sharing its nature: liquid, salty, refreshing. If it hadn't been for my concern about my flock, I would never have had the resolve to get out of the water, never have tired of swimming. Obedient as the goats were, ready to sit quietly when they heard my voice, they were still goats, and as untrustworthy and unruly as small children. I was worried in case some of them should desert me and run away; then I should be obliged to run and hunt for them in the dark among the bushes and in the mountains, guided only by the billy goats' bells. As for *Moschoula*, I had made sure that she would not get away from me again, as she had done that other time, when that unknown, foolish thief (if only I could lay hands on him!) had stolen the gilt bell with its red ribbon that she wore around her neck. This time I took care to tie her with a rope to the roots of a bush above the rock where I had left my clothes before diving into the sea.

I quickly leapt out, put on my shirt and trousers, and took a step up the path. At the top of the rock, the base of which was washed by the sea, I would untie *Moschoula*, my little goat, and rejoin the rest of my flock two hundred or so paces on. The short climb up the slippery cliff was only a game to me, like the contests the neighbourhood children have as they jump from the lower to the higher steps of a marble staircase.

At that moment, as I took my first step, I heard a loud splash,

like the sound of a body falling into the water. The sound came from the right, from the direction of the shell-strewn cave decorated by sea nymphs where I knew that Moschoula, *Kyr-Moschos's* niece, sometimes came to bathe in the sea. Mountain satyr that I was, I would not have risked coming so close to her boundary had I known she was in the habit of bathing at night by the light of the moon. All I knew was that she usually bathed just at sunrise.

I took a few steps up the slope without making a sound, then leaned very cautiously in the direction of the cave, protected from behind by a clump of rushes and covered by the tip of the rock. I saw that Moschoula had indeed just dived naked into the sea and was swimming...

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I recognized her at once in the pale light of the moon that turned the boundless calm sheet of the sea to silver, making the waves dance with a phosphorescent glow. She had dived under as soon as she entered the sea, wetting her hair, and when she rose to the surface, the water ran from her locks like a stream of pearls. She happened to be facing right in my direction as she played and floated in the water. I could see she was a good swimmer.

In order to leave, I would have to stand upright for a moment on the top of the rock, then bend down behind a bush and untie my goat. After that I could disappear, holding my breath, without the slightest sound. But the moment when I reached the top of the rock would be sufficient for Moschoula to see me. It was impossible, with her looking in my direction, for me to escape unseen. My silhouette would be outlined, tall and clear in the moonlight, on the summit of the rock. Facing me as she was, the girl would see me there. Oh, how startled she would be! She would be terribly afraid, she would call out, she would accuse me of illicit intentions, and then woe to the young shepherd!

My first thought was to cough, to give her some sign as a warning, then to call out:

'I just happened to be here. I didn't know... don't be afraid! I'm leaving right away, Miss!'

And yet, for some reason, I was awkward and irresolute. No one had taught me social graces in the mountains. I withdrew, came back down again to the base of the rock and waited.

'She won't be long,' I said to myself. 'Now she'll have a swim, get dressed and leave... she'll take the path, and I'll take mine, along the cliff...'

And then I remembered Sisoës and Father Grigoris, the confessor of the monastery, who had often advised me to avoid the temptation of women forever.

Apart from the idea of waiting, there was no other means of escape except to make up my mind to dive into the sea fully clad as I was and swim out to the open sea, heading due west from where I found myself, away from the spot where the young girl was bathing. This would mean swimming all the way to the sandy beach of the main bay, because the whole of the coastline in between, a distance of about half a mile, was rugged and inaccessible, all rocks and cliffs. Only in the place where I stood had the sea formed a cradle between caves and rocks.

I would have to abandon my goat, Moschoula, tethered as she was, high on the rock, to her fate. And if I managed to reach the beach in my sodden clothes (because of the necessity of swimming fully clothed), dripping salt water and foam, I would have to walk thousands of steps back by another path to reach my flock again. Then I would make my way back again to untie my Moschoula. By then *Kyr-Moschos's* niece would certainly have gone away without leaving a single trace on the shore. If I were to carry out this plan it would require a lot of effort — a real feat. It would also take more than an hour to complete. Nor was I completely sure about the safety of my flock.

There was no other choice, it seemed, but to wait. I would hold my breath. The girl did not suspect my presence. In any case, my conscience was clear.

However innocent I might be, I still did not lack curiosity. I climbed slowly back towards the top of the rock and hidden behind some bushes, I leaned over to watch the young swimmer.

She was a delight, a dream, a wonder! She had moved about five yards away from the cave and was facing east now, floating on the surface with her back to me. I could see her hair, black but softly shimmering. Her shapely neck, her milk-white shoulders, her rounded arms, all merging together, pale and dreamlike in the moonlight. I caught glimpses of her supple back, her hips, her legs, her feet, half in shade, half in light, baptized by the waves. I could imagine her bosom, her smooth breasts thrusting forward, greeting the gentle gusts of the wind and the divine scent of the sea. She was a breathtaking, unimaginable illusion, a dream floating on the waves; she was a nereid, a siren, sailing like a magic ship, a ship of dreams... \*

It did not even occur to me that if I were to step over the rock and leave, either stooped or upright, it was almost certain that the girl would not see me and I could safely make my escape. She was facing east and I was behind her to the west. Not even my shadow would disturb her. With the moon in the east, it would fall to the west behind my rock and beyond the cave.

I stood there, gaping in ecstasy, and thought no more of earthly things.

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I haven't the courage to tell you what wicked, and yet childish, foolish notions came to me, evil wishes in the guise of good. If only she were in danger suddenly! If only she were to cry out! If she were to see an eddy below the water and think it was a monster, a shark, and call out for help!...

The truth is that I could not have enough of gazing at the dream, the one floating in the water. At the last moment, for some odd reason, my first idea came back to me... to plunge into the waves and heading back in the opposite direction, swim the whole distance to the beach, to escape, to flee from temptation!