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care of every detail. To cut a long story short, it guaranteed that we were greeted and treated like sheiks, even though we looked more like philosophers in our drab clothes.<sup>13</sup> Nor did this providence overlook any of my friends or father's friends along the way. There was always someone to escort us both into and out the countryside.<sup>14</sup> We always found a slave, either one who met us by chance travelling along the same way, or one who happened to be busy ploughing along the roadside, to announce us to his master. In a word, everyone who saw us treated us hospitably.<sup>15</sup> Not that I need to spell out all the details of those lavish and delicious meals; I've already told you, they were positively oriental.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, my good friend, you will appreciate from the simple facts of the matter what sort of universal providence it is that provides the pleasures of life appropriate to those who have chosen the philosopher's *métier*. For though we hadn't stopped to think how we should eat after leaving home and had packed no food or drink,<sup>17</sup> we lacked for no comfort from the very first taste of hospitality. That's how it went on the outward journey, everything safe and sound. But it was a painfully different matter coming back, an absolute gothic horror story.<sup>18</sup>

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include such choice details as the crow that flew down at me, or the stone that dashed against the horses' hooves, or the bramble bush by the roadside that entangled us.

Well, we went down<sup>21</sup> to the world-famous<sup>22</sup> city of Thessalonica<sup>23</sup> before the beginning of the festival of St Demetrius the Martyr.<sup>24</sup> We were in high spirits<sup>25</sup> and fine fettle. We had some time to spare, thanks to not having to slave over our studies, and since idleness is to us what eating pork is to the Jews,<sup>26</sup> we went to the Axios River to hunt.<sup>27</sup>

This is the biggest river in Macedonia.<sup>28</sup> Originating in the Bulgarian mountains, it flows first in small and separate streams, then, contracting into a single basin for its descent, "bravely and well" as Homer<sup>29</sup> would say, it runs down towards old Macedonia and Pella<sup>30</sup> and empties itself immediately at the nearest shore. This area deserves quite a detailed description.<sup>31</sup> It has rich soil in which farmers can grow all sorts of crops. It is a good spot for cavalrymen to ride in, and an even better one for generals to practise battle manoeuvres in, being ideal for troop deployments since the phalanx is not broken up at all, thanks to the area being so entirely flat and free of stones and bushes. As to hunting, you could say that it is a place where Euripides' Phaedra, even if not madly in love with Hippolytus, might ride at her leisure and call to the hunting dogs and dart close to dappled deers.<sup>32</sup>

That's what the district around the Axios is like. And so I pleasantly whiled away the time before the festival hunting with my own friends and my father's. When the festival began, we went back<sup>33</sup> to the city. After we had visited the most sacred and holy places, where we paid the appropriate respects, we spent some time at the fair that was set up outside the city gates. It begins six days before the festival and ends promptly on the following Monday.<sup>34</sup>

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KYDION. Our friend Timarion strikes again. He's back to his old form, even without realising it. His stories tend to have a beginning and an end but no middle.<sup>35</sup> And that's exactly what is happening right now. Just as though he's forgotten my request and his own promise, he looks as though he is going to bring his

story to an end already by merely jumping from A to Z without giving us any details about the fair itself, its size and its splendour, or about all the people and the riches and all the things there were for sale. But, in the words of the bard,<sup>36</sup> "You don't get away from me, Menelaus, son of Atreus, whom the war god loves."

TIMARION. My dear Kydion, I'm afraid we shall have to spend the whole night here if I tell you everything you want to know. But what can I do? Friends' requests of this sort are tantamount to royal commands. One<sup>37</sup> can't get out of it, whatever it may be. So here goes, right back to the beginning.

5 The Demetria are a festival, just as the Panathenaia were in Athens and the Panionia amongst the Milesians.<sup>38</sup> And the fair is the most important held in Macedonia. Not only does the native and indigenous throng pour in but also men of every conceivable race and country. Greeks from wherever they happen to live, the entire motley crew of Mysians<sup>39</sup> who are our neighbours as far as the Danube and Scythia, Campanians, Italians in general, Iberians, Lusitanians, and Transalpine Celts.<sup>40</sup> In short, the shores of the ocean send pilgrims and sightseers to the martyr, so famous is he in Europe.

I myself, being just a Cappadocian<sup>41</sup> tourist from abroad, never having been to the fair before but only having heard about it, wanted to see everything there was to see at the same time, to make sure I didn't miss a thing. So I climbed up a hill<sup>42</sup> overlooking the fair where I could sit down and observe everything at leisure. And this is what there was. There were merchants' booths facing each other, set up in parallel rows. These rows extended for a long way and were far enough apart to form a walkway in the middle that was wide enough to allow space to move for the teeming crowd. Looking at the closeness of the booths and the evenness of their positioning, you could compare them to lines drawn over a long distance from two opposite points. At various points at an angle to the rows, other booths were set up. They were in rows as well, not long ones, but like the tiny feet that grow alongside reptiles'

coils.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, although there were in fact two rows, the closeness and regularity of the booths created a quite remarkable illusion of a single living thing. One had the impression of a coil of booths, with the crossrows at the sides looking like the feet that supported it. In fact, as I love you,<sup>44</sup> when I contemplated the ground plan of all the booths from my vantage point, I couldn't help but compare it to a centipede with a very long body showing innumerable little feet under its belly.<sup>45</sup>

And, my curious Kydion, if you must know what I saw inside after I had come down from the hill, there were all kinds of men's and women's clothes both woven and spun,<sup>46</sup> everything that comes from Boeotia and the Peloponnese, and all the things that merchant ships bring from Italy and Greece. Phoenicia also supplies many goods, as do Egypt, Spain, and the Pillars of Hercules, where the finest altar cloths are made. These items the merchants export directly from their respective countries to old Macedonia and Thessalonica. The Black Sea also contributes to the fair by sending across its own products to Constantinople, from where they are conveyed by large numbers of horses and mules.

I had a good close look through all these things after coming down. But whilst I was still sitting up on the hill, I was astonished at the number and types of the animals, and at their loud and confused noise which violently assaulted my ears. Whinnying horses, lowing cattle, bleating sheep, grunting pigs, and barking dogs following their masters as a defence against wolves and thieves.<sup>47</sup>

When I had had a good long look at all of this, long enough to satisfy my curiosity, I went back to the city very keen to see other things, above all the sacred gathering. This service is celebrated over three all-night vigils, with many priests and monks divided into two choirs constantly chanting the hymn in honour of the saint. The archbishop presides over these men as though he were the leader of an old-fashioned<sup>48</sup> embassy, supervising the festival and making sure that what should be

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done is done. These rites are performed throughout the night with the aid of torchlight.

"But when the early rising, rosy-fingered Dawn appears," to quote Homer,<sup>49</sup> the governor<sup>50</sup> of the land arrived at the church, advancing with a great and brilliant bodyguard, leading a procession of many cavalry and not a few infantry.<sup>51</sup>

7 As (in the words of Thucydides<sup>52</sup>) the populace stood agog in front of the entrance, eagerly awaiting his imminent presence, I went along with some rubberneckerers from the crowd and met the procession at about one stade's (i.e. one-eighth of a mile) distance. It was a spectacle that gave me no ordinary delight. As to the motley crowd that was following it, both from the countryside and the city, I won't do more than mention its size. The chosen leaders, however—some might call them a veritable flotilla of clients—made the procession a marvellous sight, being men all in their prime, all glowing with health, all in fact the pupils and initiates of Enyalian Ares the war god, resplendent in their silk and studded garments, their hair thick and gold.<sup>53</sup> In fact, if you concentrated on their hair, you would be inclined to quote Homer<sup>54</sup> and say, "Their nature came from their heads" and "He let fall his thick locks that were like the hyacinth flower."

Beneath<sup>55</sup> them their Arabian horses pranced along, pawing the air and rearing up as though to leave the ground and fly.<sup>56</sup> They appeared to blend in with the surrounding splendour with all the gold and silver gleaming on their reins; as they kept arching their necks as though to display their glittering harnesses, it seemed as if they were enjoying<sup>57</sup> the gorgeousness of their trappings. That's how they looked as they advanced, making their way forward in orderly tempo and at military pace. After them there was a small interval before the governor rode up in an unhurried<sup>58</sup> style. Cupids, Muses, and Graces were scampering before him and under him.<sup>59</sup> Ah, my dear, dear Kydion, how could I ever describe to you the joy that entered my soul and the depth of my exaltation as I gazed upon him?

KYDION. Well, my dear Timarion, do try at least to tell me who this man was, who his parents were, and how he appeared to your gaze as he came down the road. Tell me this, and everything else, in detail, remembering my original request that you do just that.

TIMARION. His pedigree, as I found out by asking<sup>60</sup> those who knew, is heroic and fortunate on both parents' sides. His paternal grandfather was greatest of the great<sup>61</sup> in Great Phrygia, a man proudly wealthy and exalted in glory.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the stories of old that were retailed either by himself or about him added a very old<sup>63</sup> title to his regular names. His father<sup>64</sup> was not only a man who knew many an ancient thing, as Homer<sup>65</sup> says, but one whose nobility came from his own achievements and whose great fame from his generalship. It was this very quality of leadership that brought him as his reward his beautiful wife, a lady who is in her own right greatest of the great, being of royal blood and descended from the famous Doukai family, a family whose fame, as you know, has been spread by the lips of many<sup>66</sup> across the sea from Italy and the race of Aeneas<sup>67</sup> to Constantinople itself. What man does not know of her father<sup>68</sup> of all men, distinguished as he is by his high offices of state, tested in the most important military commands, conferring<sup>69</sup> in every way an incomparable nobility upon his daughter? This is what I learned from the bystanders who knew his personal history, though it may well be that there was only time for them to tell me a few details out of many, a small part of a great story.<sup>70</sup> But let's pick up the thread of my story and get back to the procession.

9 So, as I was saying before, the flotilla of chosen men led the way. But then the continuity of the procession was broken like the snapping of a rope, and the great man was upon us in his full glory. In the words of Aristotle,<sup>71</sup> neither West nor East is so astonishing as was his epiphany. His<sup>72</sup> eyes sparkled like wine, his teeth were as white as milk. He was well-knit in body, tall, so beautifully proportioned in all his limbs that he lived up to what everyone said about him, namely, that there was no detail you would want to add or take away. His body,

which was as tall and straight as a cypress tree, bent both upwards and downwards at the neck, as though Nature herself was keeping the curvature from irregularity and was keeping him nimble in every part. This, at any rate, was my first impression of him from a distance.

But when he had drawn close to us, and when we had made the formal recognition of his presence<sup>73</sup> that protocol demands, he resembled a veritable chameleon, completely incomparable. For like a potion that Homer<sup>74</sup> describes as containing many good ingredients and many bad, his appearance became variegated, at one moment projecting the grace of Aphrodite,<sup>75</sup> then, if you looked closely,<sup>76</sup> the vigour of Ares darted from his eyes, whilst a moment after that he gave off the great majesty of Zeus. In his eyes he resembled Hermes with his sharp and quick-changing glances, always keeping his gaze high up and ready to take in anything that came his way. He spoke in a style that was designed to be lucid<sup>77</sup> and persuasive. This was the full and true quality of his character as I saw it at close range. His hair was neither completely dark nor completely fair. The extremes of these two colours had been held in check, with the result that an entirely different hue gave his hair a marvellous tinge. For jet black is rough and unlovable, whilst pure blonde is womanly and effeminate, whereas the two together produce manliness and lovability.<sup>78</sup> A Sappho<sup>79</sup> must have contrived his speech to be full of its persuasion, grace, and musical cadence. You would have been dumbfounded, and would have come out with this classic Laconic<sup>80</sup> line, "Ye Gods,<sup>81</sup> a godlike man." And you would have given anything to hear him speak.

As this noble figure arrived at the holy sanctuary and offered the invocation to the martyr, cheering arose from the crowd as it made its customary act of devotion to the governor. Then he stood at the prescribed spot and bade the archbishop appear, a ritual that I suppose is also prescribed or customary.<sup>82</sup>

Then from those who had specially practiced<sup>83</sup> the rituals of the festival—what a congregation they had there—there was heard a most divine psalmody, most gracefully varied in its

rhythm, order, and artistic alternations. For it was not only men who were singing; the holy nuns in the left wing<sup>84</sup> of the church, divided into two antiphonal choirs, also offered up the Holy of Holies to the martyr.<sup>85</sup> And when every part of the spectacle and service had been properly concluded, we too invoked the saint in the customary way, praying to the martyr for a safe return, after which we came out of the church along with the populace and the governor.

We went back to our lodgings. Ah, Kydion, what a gift of tongues I would need to describe to you the dreadful things that befell me after that. Look, I am quite beside myself in the mere telling of them, so how great do you imagine was the pain that actually afflicted me, transfixed as I was by such painful and baneful<sup>86</sup> diseases?

KYDION. Just stick to our agreement, my dear Timarion, and tell me everything that happened to you, since you have at last managed to give me a decent account of everything else.

TIMARION. Very well. After we had returned from the festival to our usual lodgings, a violent fever<sup>87</sup> hit me. It lasted all night, leaving me half-dead and bedridden, eager though I was to begin my journey home. This, my dear Kydion, was the reason for my slowness that you questioned me about at the start of my story. For the best policy was to wait for the illness to run its normal course, along with applying the medications appropriate to each symptom.<sup>88</sup> Well, I got through that day all right by sticking to a diet of vegetables and vinegar.<sup>89</sup> But the next day, the third after it began, the fever hit me again, and by diagnosing it according to the strict principles of medical knowledge, I recognised it to be a genuine case of the tertian fever. So, making light of the sickness of which I expected to be quite cured by the time it got through its fifth cycle, which is the normal duration of this type of fever, I set out confidently for Constantinople, expecting to shake it off in a short while and arrive home safely.<sup>90</sup> Some hopes. The end of that fever turned out to be the beginning of my real agonies and the start of my death-like condition. For no sooner had

the fever let up when I was attacked by an inflammation of the liver and the most appalling dysentery, causing me to vomit up my elemental bile along with pure blood, as well as ravaging my flesh and biting into my stomach like a viper.<sup>91</sup>

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It<sup>92</sup> was a case of many terrible woes combining against a single body. Travel fatigue in itself is no less capable than any disease of exhausting even the most robust constitution. The inflammation of the liver was like a furnace, the diarrhea was as bad as death itself. The acidity deep inside my gut was like iron nails digging in. On top of all that, there was my long period without food,<sup>93</sup> a sure route to death. So, my dear Kydion, transfixed as I was by all these woes, one of the pack horses carried me towards Constantinople strapped across its back like a parcel. For a long way, in fact for the greater part of the journey, my poor, wretched drained-out body managed to hold on. But when we got to the river Hebrus, which is the most famous river in Thrace, then I rested, not only from the journey, but from life itself. For I had come to the end of life's journey. Sleep, the father of death as they say, laid hold on me and took me down to Hades<sup>94</sup>—exactly how, I don't know. But I do know this, fear and trembling are coming over me as I recollect what happened, and my vocal cords are seizing up out of fear.

KYDION. They may be seizing up, Timarion, but you won't manage to dissolve this assembly of ours without telling me what precisely did happen to you on this trip to Hades.

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TIMARION. Very well, my dear Kydion. Since my poor body was completely worn out by the dysentery, and even more so by going twenty<sup>95</sup> full days without food, I began, so it seemed, to sleep the last sleep. Now, there are in the universe certain avenging spirits, as they have been called, who are appointed by divine providence to punish those who transgress against the laws of God. There are also benevolent spirits who reward the good. In addition to these, there are conductors of souls<sup>96</sup> whose mission it is to bring down by whatever way they can the souls that have already<sup>97</sup> left their bodies to Pluto,

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Aeacus, and Minos<sup>98</sup> so that they may undergo examination according to the customs and laws of the dead before being allotted their destiny and destination.

This is precisely what happened to me. Just before midnight, some shadowy, dusty-looking creatures came flying through the air and landed on my bed where I was stretched out trying to sleep.<sup>99</sup> As soon as I saw them, I froze at the weirdness of the sight. I did my best to scream, but my voice was paralysed and my powers of speech wouldn't work. Was it a dream, or did it really happen? That I cannot say, since terror had also robbed me of my faculty of judgement. Whatever it was, it was so clear, so awfully clear. Indeed, it seems even now to be right in front of my eyes, so frightful was it what happened to me then.<sup>100</sup> For having placed, as it were, an unbreakable gag over my tongue, either by the awfulness of the sight or by some mysterious spell, they stood over me and began to whisper to each other, saying, "This is the man who lost the fourth of his constituent elements by vomiting up all his bile. He cannot be allowed to go on living on the strength of the remaining three. Aesculapius<sup>101</sup> and Hippocrates have said as much in the decree they wrote down and posted up in Hades whereby no man, even if his body be in good shape, shall go on living if he has been deprived of one of his four elements." "So," they went on in harsher tones, "follow us, you poor devil, and join the ranks of your fellow dead,<sup>102</sup> since that is what you now are yourself."

I had to follow them. I didn't want to, of course, but having no help I had no choice. I was transported through the air the same as they were; I became light, nimble, weightless, my legs unimpeded<sup>103</sup> so that I went forward lightly and without any problems, like ships that run before the wind.<sup>104</sup> You could hear a light rushing sound as I zoomed along, similar to the whizzing noise that arrows make when they are shot from bows. When we had crossed that river we hear about, without getting wet, and also the Acherusian Lake<sup>105</sup>—a name, incidentally, which my guides also used—we approached a subterranean opening, much larger than the one wells have. The

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darkness that was visible from the mouth was foul and horrible.<sup>106</sup> I didn't want to go down there, but my guides separated and sandwiched me between them until one of them went headfirst down the opening and dragged me after him with a fierce look. I resisted as best I could, clinging to the mouth with hands and feet until the other guide who was following behind hit me across the cheeks with his knuckles and beat me over the back as well, thus forcing me with both his hands down that dark pit.

Once inside, we journeyed a long way in darkness and solitude<sup>107</sup> until we came at last to the iron gate<sup>108</sup> by which the realm of Hades is closed off. It is quite impossible for anyone who has once entered to escape from it. That gate is a truly terrifying thing in its size and weight and massive wrought iron. The whole thing is made out of unbreakable iron, with no wood at all, and it is reinforced throughout by iron bars that are themselves unbelievable in their size and weight and thickness of circumference.

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On guard outside it were dragons<sup>109</sup> with fiery eyes and a dog with very sharp teeth whom the Greeks of old used to call Cerberus,<sup>110</sup> a very fierce and terrifying animal. Inside it were the doorkeepers, gloomy and unsmiling men, darting forth looks of pure hatred, looking rough and weather-beaten as though they had just come down from a life of banditry in the mountains. But for all their fierce expressions, they opened the gates with alacrity on seeing the conductors of the dead. Cerberus, wagging his tail this way and that, fawned and rubbed himself against them, whilst the dragons hissed gently as my guides led me forward quite unresisting. For, as I said before,<sup>111</sup> having no help I had no choice, especially now that I had been brought into such a strange and terrifying world. When I had been brought forward, the doorkeepers looked keenly at me and said, "This is the man Aeacus and Minos were talking about yesterday, the very man who had lost his fourth element and who was trying to keep on living on the strength of the other three, without his bile, in defiance of the prescription of Hippocrates and Aesculapius and the rest of

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the medical profession. Bring in this wretch, whatever his own theories about the composition of the body may be. For how can it be all right for a man to carry on living in the upper world along with normal men if he hasn't got all four elementary humours?"

KYDION. This is all very creepy, my dear Timarion, and just hearing about it makes me shiver. But I have two questions. How on earth were you able to see the doorkeepers' faces if the darkness was so thick,<sup>112</sup> and how did you find out all the other things that you seem to have?

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TIMARION. It is true, my dear Kydion, that everything in Hades is dark and sunless. The answer is, the people down there have artificial lights.<sup>113</sup> The common vulgar masses<sup>114</sup> use wood and coal fires and torches, whereas those who were men of quality on earth have lamps and live their lives under brilliant illumination. Indeed, I recognised a lot of them as I walked by their abodes and sampled their infernal hospitality.

KYDION. I see. But carry on, my friend, and bring the rest of your story back into proper sequence.<sup>115</sup>

TIMARION. Well, once I had been brought inside the iron gate, we were no longer transported through the air as before, nor did we carry on roaring and zooming as we had done through the upper world as though it had been enemy territory. No, we now began to walk, taking it easy, partly because of fatigue from the fast trip down but maybe also because my guides, pitiless though they were, felt sorry for me. As we journeyed along, we passed by many poor and humble habitations, and everyone everywhere came out to meet<sup>116</sup> the conductors of the dead or stood up in respect, like schoolboys for their masters.<sup>117</sup>

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Next we came upon a lodging place bright with light. Beside it was lying some old man with a beard that wasn't all that long. He was reclining on his left elbow and was propping up the side of his face with his left hand. Alongside him reposed a large bronze pot full of salt pork and Phrygian cabbage, all drenched with fat.<sup>118</sup> The old man kept slowly inserting his

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right hand into the pot, not using just two or three fingers but plucking the food out with his entire hand and guzzling it down greedily to the point of licking up what was running down his chin. He seemed by his expression to be a decent and congenial sort of person. Indeed, he was, for as we came close, he gave us a friendly and cheerful look, gazed at me quite calmly without turning a hair, and said, "Come and sit down beside me, stranger, dip in and make the most of a dead man's feast."

I declined, both because I had lost my various faculties thanks to the change of life I had undergone<sup>119</sup> and because I was afraid that my guides would give me a rival meal of knuckle sandwich. But they, in fact, were exchanging greetings with the dead as though back from a long journey and were quite engrossed in their friendly conversations, which gave me the opportunity to see what life among the dead was like. Whilst I was looking at this old man, somebody from the crowd, one of the great unwashed but quite respectable-looking in spite of that, accosted me and asked some very basic questions, such as who was I, where was I from, and by what sort of death had I been brought down to Hades? My answers were equally to the point, though truthful.

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Since I was tied up with this character, I asked him who the old man was and what was his name. He had by now become quite affable towards me, and replied, "Ah, my new-found friend, don't ask what his name is. It's not safe for you to ask or me to answer because Aeacus and Minos have issued a very strict law against anyone who asks or discloses the old man's actual name. Under this legal constraint, that subject has fallen into the category of unmentionables. However, I will tell you everything that can legally be told about him. He comes from Great Phrygia,<sup>120</sup> so they say, of a noble and famous family. He lived a good life on earth, died in the richness of old age, and now, as you can see, lives in Hades on the fat of the land."<sup>121</sup>

That was his story. It made me roll my eyes, and, as I did so, I caught sight of two mice, big and fat and smooth, just like the pigs men rear at home<sup>122</sup> and feed on flour and bran. Gasping for breath at the strangeness of this sight, I turned to my com-

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panion and said, "My dear, good, friend, everything in Hades seems well and truly hateful and abominable, the sorts of things that in life particularly lend themselves to be cursed.<sup>123</sup> And these mice that you have here I find the most unbearable thing of all. To someone like me who loathes these creatures more than every other loathsome thing,<sup>124</sup> it seemed some sort of consolation to come down here, in that I would at least be rid of their troublesomeness.<sup>125</sup> But if I have to fight against them here as well, then I demand another death and another descent to a different Hades."

After a pause, my kind informant replied, "My friend, I am amazed at your ingenuousness and manifest ignorance of what is what. Don't you realise that all mice are earthborn and that they spring up from small cracks in the earth that occur in times of drought? Hence it is more logical that they should live underground and multiply in Hades, rather than up on earth in the land of the living. They don't come down to us from up there, they go up to the surface of the earth from our world down here. So you mustn't be astonished to find mice living here with us but should realise that they are our regular companions, unconcerned about the field mouse and her problems. Don't you see how glad they are to see this old man eating? Just look how happy they are, rattling their jaws and licking their lips, anticipating more of a fill of the fat than the old man."<sup>126</sup> I looked closely at the mice and saw that what he said was quite true. "Don't you see," he went on, "how they are heading for the old man's beard and are waiting for him to fall asleep? The minute they hear the snores he always comes out with when asleep, like a monster in a play,<sup>127</sup> they sneak out and nuzzle all around his chin, licking it quite clean of all the fatty broth and devouring every last crumb hanging down from it. That's where they live, and, as you can see for yourself, that's how fat they get."

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Thanks to the temporary preoccupation of my guides, I got the chance to find all this out. But then they came over to me, and we resumed our journey. When we had travelled about four stades,<sup>128</sup> passing by many habitations as we did so, we came to an

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abode that was illuminated both by lamplight within and by a shining white tent.<sup>129</sup> A loud groaning was coming from this tent. I looked around and perceived that my guides were once again busy gossiping with the dead—friends and relations, this time, so it seemed—so I stole quietly up to the tent like a thief and peeked through the entrance flap to see what was inside and who it was making that deep and melancholic moaning.

Lying there on the ground was a man whose eyes had been gouged out with iron.<sup>130</sup> He was propped up on his left side and elbow, with a Spartan<sup>131</sup> rug spread out under him. He was a big-framed individual, sinewy rather than fleshy, with a broad chest.<sup>132</sup> In the words of the poet,<sup>133</sup> "He lay great in his greatness, forgetful of his horsemanship, resembling not a man that eats grain so much as a wooded peak."

Another old man<sup>134</sup> squatted beside him, trying to lighten the great burden of his suffering with conversation and words of encouragement. But he appeared not to want to listen, constantly shaking his head and pushing the old man away with his hand, whilst all the time poison kept oozing down from his mouth.<sup>135</sup>

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When I had well and truly seen everything there, I began to look for a place from which I could keep an eye on my guides, constantly checking on them as I did so. The next thing I knew, I had bumped into one of the dead, an old and shrivelled-looking individual who had all the hallmarks of those whom wasting<sup>136</sup> fever brings to the grave. On seeing me, he perceived that I was newly dead from my colour, since those who have just come down to Hades retain a little of their earthly hue, thanks to which they are easily recognised as newcomers by the old-timers. He gave me a friendly greeting, "Welcome, freshman corpse,<sup>137</sup> tell me what's going on up there. How many mackerel can you get for an obol? What's the price of tunny, especially young tunny, and little sprats? What's the price of oil, wine, corn, all that stuff? Wait a minute, I missed out the most important thing of all. Was there a good catch of sardines? They were my favourite food up on earth, even more than pike."<sup>138</sup>

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I gave him what Plato calls the whole truth in reply to each of his questions, and when I had filled him in on earthly news, I asked him in return to tell me who was the person living in that nearby tent, who the old man was squatting alongside him, and what was the reason for the groaning.

He replied civilly. "The person living in this tent, whose deep<sup>139</sup> groans you heard, is the famous Diogenes of Cappadocia.<sup>140</sup> You will have known the main facts about him when you were alive, how he was elevated to the throne, how he campaigned against the Eastern barbarians, and how he was taken prisoner. Then he was freed, but on returning to Constantinople, instead of being restored to his kingdom, he was overwhelmed by a revolt and by treachery, being blinded, as you can see, in spite of a treaty.<sup>141</sup> And as though all this were not enough, he was also afflicted with the agony of a terrible poison. The old man squatting by him is a noble from Great Phrygia.<sup>142</sup> The emperor made use of him on earth as councillor and partner in all that he did. So now, in pity for his misfortune and in memory of their former intimacy, he stays with his master all the time, trying as far as he can to alleviate the burden of his woes with suitable consolations and encouragements."

He was telling me all this when the guides came back over and started to drive me on more urgently, saying, "Get a move on, you're scheduled to meet the college of judges and be removed from our custody any moment now." "What," I asked, "don't tell me there are judges and lawsuits and judgements down here as well?" "Yes," they replied, "and more than that, down here a man's entire life is inspected point by point and he is judged accordingly for every single thing, and there can never be any appeal against the decision of the court of judges."

We got going on this note, but we had only got a short distance before we were accosted by a tall, white-haired man, shrivelled in body but otherwise elegant. He was certainly full of talk, for he puffed<sup>143</sup> out his cheeks as he spoke and roared with noisy laughter and called out a welcome to my guides, adding, "So, who's this new corpse you are taking along?" He then

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turned his eyes on me, looked closely into my face, and gave me the once-over.<sup>144</sup> After a brief inspection, he called out loudly<sup>145</sup> and clearly, "By the good gods,<sup>146</sup> I know this man. It's Timarion, my dear young friend Timarion with whom I often had some fine dinners and who used to come to my lectures when I held the sophistic chair in Constantinople."<sup>147</sup> With this, he threw both his hands around me and gave me a hearty embrace.

I froze with shame at being thus received by a person of such obvious importance whilst I failed to recognise who it was who was welcoming me, having no idea who he was and so not knowing the correct form by which to reciprocate his greeting.<sup>148</sup>

He saw my quandary and got rid of it by anticipating the question. "My good sir, do you really not recognise Theodore of Smyrna,<sup>149</sup> the biggest<sup>150</sup> sophist, who gained fame in Constantinople from the declamation of solemn and distinguished discourses?" On hearing this, I was thunderstruck by the change in his face and figure, and replied, "Sir, I remember the voice and the brilliant lectures and the resonant delivery and the impressive size<sup>151</sup> that were the trademarks of that great sophist from Smyrna in life. But I cannot reconcile that man whose body was knotted up with arthritis and who had both to be carried in on a litter to declaim before the emperor and to eat propped up on his elbow with this radiant health and fit-looking body I see before me."<sup>152</sup>

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The sophist replied, "I will relieve you of that puzzlement as well, my star pupil. In the life above, I gave many discourses that pleased Their Majesties, in return for which I earned many gold pieces<sup>153</sup> and enjoyed many unusual benefits. But I squandered everything on extravagant banquets and sybaritic dinners. Well, you must know yourself, since you were often invited to dine with me, that the money I spent on food rivalled that of any potentate. And that was the root cause of my arthritis and the stiffness in my fingers and the excessive buildup of phlegm that made my joints all plugged and stiffened up like stone.<sup>154</sup> The consequent agonies wore me out body and soul. My body became a useless burden to me. But everything is different down here. A philosopher's

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life-style, plain food, a quiet life—carefree, that's it.<sup>155</sup> Best of all, I've calmed my raging stomach with a diet of cress, mallow, and asphodel<sup>156</sup> and have now reached Hesiod's<sup>157</sup> definition of true happiness: 'Nor know they how great is the refreshment of mallow and asphodel.'

"Let me tell you, in the life above it was verbal dexterity and crowd-pleasing<sup>158</sup> wit that counted. Down here, it is all philosophy and true culture, with less demagogic display. Right, now that I've told you all that, you need be confused no longer and can stop wondering as from this moment about what has happened to me, so that we can get back on our old terms. But not before you have reciprocated. I've told you everything, so you tell me what sort of death removed you from life, and what was the reason you came down to join us here."<sup>159</sup>

"There was no ordinary cause of death, best of masters," I replied. "No enemy's sword, no attack by bandits, no stroke of ill fortune, no long illness to exhaust my body. No, it was rather the abuse of authority on the part of these conductors of the dead to your abode who brutally snatched me from my body while I was still living. To give you a brief résumé<sup>160</sup> of what happened to me from beginning to end, I had been to Thessalonica for a particular reason and was planning to return home when I was struck down by a raging fever along with a serious inflammation of the liver. To top that, I had an unquenchable gastric flux. All my bile emptied out along with a little bit of blood on the surface that turned it red. I had constant dysentery all the way to the river Hebrus—you know that big river in Thrace that is deep enough for boats. We put up there for a while in a billet by the river, so that both I and the horses that were carrying me could get some rest. Spending the night there made me feel better, so I thought it would be a good idea to stay a second night there as well.

"So I did. Night came. Everyone was sound asleep, myself included. But in the very dead of the night,<sup>161</sup> when I was still in the land of dreams, these accursed devils appeared by my bed. On seeing them, I was struck dumb and couldn't wake

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up, and so with this apparition in my mind I was pulled out of my body. And the only so-called reason for my being carried away that I heard from them was these words: "This is the man who has lost one of his elements, namely all his bile. But it has been decreed by Aesculapius and Hippocrates and the rest of the medical profession that anyone in such a condition shall not be allowed to go on living. Wherefore this wretch must be separated from his body."

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"That is what they said. And I, led by a force I cannot explain, was crumpled up inside myself like a tuft of wool and was simply blown out through my nostrils and mouth,<sup>162</sup> like the puffy breaths that are blown out when you yawn. And so, as you can see, I was brought down to Hades, or to put it poetically,<sup>163</sup> 'The soul flitting from the body came down to the underworld.' But if what those accursed academics say about destiny is true, I had not yet fulfilled my allotted span of life but was removed by force from my mortal clay. So now, if there really are in the lower world lawcourts and judgements that punish evil deeds,<sup>164</sup> I beg you to help me, your pupil, by bringing a charge of illegal procedure against these devils."

At this point I broke down and cried. But he was moved to pity and compassion by my distress and replied, "Cheer up, my good fellow, I will help you to the best of my abilities, and I can confidently promise that you will be returned to a second span of life and will have the resurrection you desire. In return, you must arrange to send down from up there what I most desire, namely some of my favourite foods."<sup>165</sup>

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"I hope you are right," I said, "but, frankly, I'll believe it when it happens. For the outcome you so confidently predict seems as improbable, indeed as unrealistic, as the things sculptors and painters create in their studies, hippocentaur, sphinxes, all the other mythological fabrications of the ancients. I really would like to know, prince of professors, on what you base your blithe promise to get me free, since the case will be judged by Aeacus and Minos,<sup>166</sup> who are pagan and so hostile to a Galilaean<sup>167</sup> like me; and you too are a disciple and alumnus of

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The sophist replied, "You yourself ought to know the basis for my total optimism. I have a keenness of mind that can sharply combat any counterattack and that is quick to fasten on the appropriate response to any rival arguments. I also have a ready wit that knows how to come up with the killing epigram, a fluent and lucid style in general, and some medical jargon as well. Armed with all this, I shall find a *point d'appui*, however small, for my brief and shall wrestle these clever medical-type pagan gods to the ground.

"For Aesculapius,<sup>168</sup> thanks to his bad reputation and quack oracles, hasn't uttered a word these many years. Indeed, he has taken a veritable vow of silence. But if he is absolutely forced to by other people's questions, then the questioner is obliged to fashion his query in a way that is suitable for a yes or no answer, so that he can indicate his response simply by nodding or shaking his head. *That's* how Aesculapius will render his verdict.

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"Hippocrates, if he speaks at all, won't say much, and what little he may come out with will be in words of one syllable or two at the most. And even those will be obscure, absurd aphorisms that are quite out of place in a court of law, for example, 'Prescribe and administer cooked things, not raw' and 'In the tumults and the vomitings of the belly,' absolute gibberish to the ears of judges who speak a different language.<sup>169</sup>

"Minos, you see, is a Cretan, and Aeacus is a genuine Greek from Thessaly in the Old World. So whenever any dead Ionian or Dorian attempts to address them, they immediately hoot and holler as though at a joke.

"Then there's Erasistratus,<sup>170</sup> but he's not only quite unversed in the sophistic arts, he's also devoid of the most basic training and isn't even a competent theoretician. He only acquired that meaningless, undeserved reputation<sup>171</sup> of his by constant plugging along, plus his natural savvy and various experiences. *That* was how he managed to diagnose Antiochus' love for Stratonice, which was the source of his meteoric rise to fame.<sup>172</sup>

"Best of all, the godlike Galen,<sup>173</sup> the one man I really do

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fear, is, no doubt providentially, absent right now from the medical conclave. The reason is, so I heard from his own lips a little while ago, his book on the difference between fevers. He's presently tucked away in a corner,<sup>174</sup> far from all noise and bother, busy adding another revised appendix of material omitted from his first edition. Indeed, he once remarked that the revised version would be bigger than the first one. With him away, it will be an easy business for me to overcome these proud but not loud<sup>175</sup> medicals.

"And another thing, don't be afraid of the judges because they are pagan. For they are genuinely devoted to justice. It is precisely for that reason that they were elevated to the supreme court.<sup>176</sup> They aren't concerned about religious differences between themselves and the people who come before them. Everyone is allowed to stick to the religion of his choice.<sup>177</sup> Nevertheless, since the religion of the Galilaeans has spread all over the world, prevailing as it does in all of Europe and much of Asia, divine providence deemed it only fair that somebody of that persuasion should sit on the bench along with these pagan judges.<sup>178</sup> And so Theophilus, who once ruled over Byzantium, is the legal partner of the other two, and no decision of any sort can be put into effect without his consent. You will remember from the historians' accounts of him how completely devoted to justice he was.<sup>179</sup> So there is absolutely no reason to fear that we won't get a fair hearing or be deprived of due process. Well then, let's get ourselves down to the court. Only when we do, you'd better keep your mouth shut, since you are no good as a lawyer. I'll do all the talking."<sup>180</sup>

At that moment the guides came over and asked him if I was known to him. He confirmed that I was a student of his, adding, "I will come with you and help him to plead his case against you, since he has been so unjustly treated in being snatched away from life before his time."

On that note, we all set off together and continued on our way. When we had travelled a further fifteen stades or so through that dark and gloomy land, we eventually glimpsed a shaft of light shining in the distance. As we got closer, it be-

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came broader, and so little by little we were able to emerge from the darkness and find ourselves in a well-lighted oasis which had running water and was luxuriant with all kinds of plants, thanks to the irrigation provided by a very large river.<sup>181</sup>

There were groves of every kind, and sparrows singing very clearly and sweetly, all of this being on a bed of green turf. As I found out from the sophist, who was of course already an expert in things infernal, "Winter never touches the land, nor is there any change of season. Everything is indestructible and ageless, the trees bear fruit but never wither, the only season is spring that is eternally unchanging and unchanged."<sup>182</sup> From this description which the sophist gave me when we first began to see the shaft of light from afar, I realised that it was in fact the Elysian Fields and meadows of asphodel that are so famous on earth.

When we had reached the lighted spot, we sat down at the sophist's request and rested for a little while on the grass, after which we stood up and went on to take our places at the courtroom.

I felt very nervous, not knowing what went on there, and above all because I was quite incapable of pleading my own case, so I went up to the sophist and confided my fears to him. But he rallied my spirits with his experienced patter and assured me that everything would turn out for the best. "The only thing you have to concern yourself with," he remarked, "is making sure you send back those things I need from the upper world when you get back there. All the time I've been down here, I haven't been served a single bowl of broth enriched with pig's fat. You will get the complete list when your return to life has been confirmed by the court."

We kept walking and talking in this way until the court was, as they say, not a bowshot away, close enough in fact for us to hear the case that was just being concluded. It was Caesar's unjust murder by Brutus and Cassius.<sup>183</sup> What the outcome was, I cannot say, being too engrossed in my own problems to pay any close attention to anyone else's.

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When they had stepped down, ushers of the court came up to us and asked, "How plead you, freshman corpse? You<sup>184</sup> shall now be summoned to the court." The sophist, elbowing me backwards, did all the talking: "Ministers of justice, take us directly to your most just leaders, whereupon you shall hear of the most impious and unlawful miscarriage of justice in recorded memory, namely the one wrought by these egregious corpse conductors upon this wretched client of mine. So pledging ourselves to be judged by you, O most upright of judges, in accordance with the laws of the dead, we now free ourselves of these wicked devils and invoke Minos and Aeacus and Theophilus the Byzantine against these accursed enemies of justice."<sup>185</sup>

"Seize them, I say, take them before the bench to be judged for their violation of the laws of the dead. For what law of Hades sanctions the snatching away of a soul from a body that is still living, from a man who, though sick, was clinging on to life on the back of a horse and who could eat an entire chicken in the course of a single day?"<sup>186</sup>

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The ushers followed up this preamble by the sophist by laying hold of the conductors and leading them along with ourselves to the court, where we all stood before the seated figures of Aeacus and Minos and Theophilus the Galilaean.

The two Greek pagans wore flowing robes and turbans<sup>187</sup> on their heads like Arab chieftains. They also had on violet-coloured military boots. Theophilus, by contrast, wore nothing bright or shining. He was dressed in plain, simple black.<sup>188</sup> They say that when he was emperor he was similarly austere and inelegant in appearance. What he *did* shine in most splendidly was honest judgement and all the other virtues. Rough-looking as he was, he radiated gracefulness from his eyes, and in countenance he was shining<sup>189</sup> and confident.

At his shoulder stood a being dressed in white,<sup>190</sup> beardless like the eunuchs that attend empresses; he too shone brightly, and his face gave off radiance like the sun. He was continually whispering into the emperor's ear. Puzzled, I said to the sophist, "From what you told me a little while ago, I recognise

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this seated figure to be Theophilus of Byzantium. But I can't work out who this eunuch is."

"My dear Timarion," he replied, "don't you know that every Christian emperor has an angel to advise him on what he should do?<sup>191</sup> So this one is attending Theophilus here just as he did in life."

The ushers interrupted this exchange by hissing at us, whereupon the sophist puffed open his mouth in his usual style, solemnised his features, folded his hands, and boomed forth<sup>192</sup> with great clarity as follows:

"Timarion, son of Timonices, charges Oxybas and Nyktion, the conductors of the dead, with illegal procedure.<sup>193</sup> For the laws of the dead expressly state that no soul shall be brought down to Hades before the body is fatally damaged, either altogether or in one of its vital organs, and before it loses the vital energies of the spirit. What is more, even when the body has been separated from it, the soul must be allowed to remain near it for three days before the conductors are allowed to take it. But these devils, these body snatchers, conscientious and zealous beyond the call of duty as they are, came in the middle of the night<sup>194</sup> to my client's lodgings by the river, and, although he was still well and truly alive, in fact still eating and drinking and riding<sup>195</sup> his pack animal, they ripped his soul from his body though it clung on desperately and was hard to dislodge. Why, it has blood on it even now, and gobs of dried blood are peeling off it, so firmly rooted<sup>196</sup> in the body was it at the moment when it was so brutally separated. Gentlemen of the court, justice demands that my client be allowed to return to the upper world and recover his body and live out his appointed span. In due course, when his body and soul are separated through *natural* causes, he may then be brought back here and legitimately enlisted amongst the dead."

That was his opening speech. Minos looked fiercely<sup>197</sup> at the conductors and snapped, "Well, you scoundrels, let us hear your side of the story. It will not go well with you if you are proven to have transgressed the laws of the dead."

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Nyktion, who was braver than Oxybas,<sup>198</sup> replied:

"Your most worshipful judges, we have had this responsibility since ancient times, indeed as far back as the reign of Chronos, hence we are very well acquainted with the proper procedures and we know all the right reasons for bringing a soul down to Hades.

"As for this poor devil Timarion, we had observed him in the process of losing through dysentery his fourth element all the way from Thessalonica to the greatest<sup>199</sup> river in Thrace. Acquainted as we are with the law laid down by the greatest medical brains to the effect that no man shall violate the law of nature by living on the basis of three elements, when we saw all his bile emptied out over a space of thirty days, we went to his bed and summoned forth his soul, since it was not lawful for it to remain in a body so deprived. But, your most worshipful judges, it is for you to render your verdict; we will submit ourselves to the law."

This was their defence.<sup>200</sup> The judges whispered amongst themselves for a little while before announcing that the sentence would be deferred for that day. "We need," they said, "the presence of the great doctors Aesculapius and Hippocrates so that we may reach the best possible verdict in concert with them. This is a case that calls for expert medical knowledge. Therefore, let the court stand adjourned. We shall meet with the great doctors in three days' time and clarify the point at issue."

After this proclamation, the judges rose and retired to a spot deeper within the meadow. The ushers took us along with the conductors towards the realm of darkness, not too far inside it though, but to where it bordered on the light, giving the effect of a kind of twilight zone<sup>201</sup> where the two regions met.

36 Even while the judges were still deliberating over what to do, the sophist had bent down and whispered into my ear, "You go to that pine (pointing out a tall and luxuriant one), and in its shade you will find various kinds of vegetables, some familiar to you, others not. Pluck them up by the roots and bring them back with you. There is nothing there that is

poisonous;<sup>202</sup> they are all nice and nourishing. And if you happen to have any left over, be so kind as to share them with me. The things that grow here have the advantage of a heavenly breeze and air, hence they produce a sweet scent before you eat them and just as sweet a burping afterwards."

My master didn't have much trouble persuading me. I went to the pine tree, collected as many vegetables<sup>203</sup> as seemed decent, and loaded up a good supply. Upon rejoining the sophist, we at once moved off with our guides and their adversaries. And so we spent two days and nights in the twilight zone. Around cockcrow, as you might put it, on the third day, we got up and set off for the court. By moving fast, we got to the judges' bench before anyone else.

Presently, to quote Homer again,<sup>204</sup> "Saffron-robed Dawn spread all over the earth," disclosing the figures of Aesculapius and Hippocrates taking their seats along with the judges to join in the proceedings. They began to consider what their verdict should be in our case and ordered the clerk of the court to acquaint them with the minutes of the hearing held in respect of Nyktion and Oxybas three days ago. The clerk proclaimed in formal legalese, "Let those persons who brought the prior indictment against Oxybas and Nyktion, the conductors, three<sup>205</sup> days before the present one present themselves forthwith, that this most worshipful court may adjudge and pronounce its sentence this very day."

The ushers nudged all of us forward, plaintiffs and defendants alike, to stand in front of the bench. Whilst the sophist concentrated his attention on our brief, I concentrated mine on the appearance of Aesculapius and Hippocrates. I wasn't able to see Aesculapius' face properly because it was covered by a gold-spangled veil which was also diaphanous and transparent in such a way that he, poor fool that he was with his pathetic belief in his own divinity, could see everything but could be seen by no one. Hippocrates, by contrast, looked like some Arab with his tall and pointed<sup>206</sup> turban for headgear. He wore a cloak that reached his feet and that was unbelted and totally seamless, without any openings or apertures. His beard was

flowing and grizzled, his hair was closely cropped<sup>207</sup> to the very skin, Stoic-style—indeed, for all I know, it was from him that Zeno got the idea of short hair for himself and his followers.

While I was taking all this in, the clerk produced the court record and read the minutes out aloud: Timarion, son of Timonices, prosecuting Oxybas and Nyktion, etc., etc., the whole story right down to the judges' deliberation and decision to defer sentence until Hippocrates and Aesculapius should be available to offer their expert opinions. When the clerk had finished his reading of the record, Hippocrates and Aesculapius whispered together for a little while,<sup>208</sup> then they summoned Erasistratus to join them, which led to another short pause. After all that, Hippocrates flashed a fierce look and said, "Nyktion and Oxybas, tell us without any prevarication from what disease Timarion's soul was suffering and whether it was actually separated from his body when you brought it down here or whether you snatched it away by force when it was still clinging on."

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Pausing briefly to gather their wits, the conductors responded,<sup>209</sup> "Greatest of the physicians, we have in no way disobeyed or dishonoured your regulations. After all, it was you and your colleagues on earth who established the hard and fast rule that no one should keep on living or breathing who was not fully comprised of the four elements—blood, phlegm, black bile, yellow bile—and that whoever happened to be deprived of one of these four should under no circumstances be allowed to live on.

"Therefore, in fulfillment of our allotted duty in the upper world, on seeing this poor wretch continuously coughing up bile mixed with blood for thirty days and nights, we perceived on the basis of our medical expertise that he could not be allowed to live any longer. We ask you, how could he possibly have had any of this elemental humour left in him after coughing it up in such quantities for so many days? You may then rest assured that we had no need to use force to separate his soul from his body. Quite the contrary, we went in gently through the nostrils and drew it up<sup>210</sup> with a light sucking ac-

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tion. It put up no resistance, since his body was by that time completely exhausted from its continuous secretions."

After offering this defence, the conductors fell silent. The ushers turned to us and said, "Now you give us your side of the story and quickly, so that the divine Aesculapius, the superphysician, may take his leave of the court, since for many years now, in fact ever since he was awarded divine status, he has avoided contact with mortals as much as possible."

At this, the sophist puffed open his mouth<sup>211</sup> and spoke as follows:

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"Your Honours, and you, too, presidents and executive members of the medical association, you have just heard the babbling excuses of these accursed devils and the pathetic and illogical pretence of an argument they have attempted to string together.<sup>212</sup> Now, in rebuttal, I shall show how they have hoisted themselves with their own petard."

Hippocrates meanwhile had turned round and whispered into the ear of one of the ushers, asking who and from where was this loud and wordy<sup>213</sup> advocate of Timarion. The usher filled him in on all the details:<sup>214</sup> originally from Smyrna, he had been brought up in Constantinople, where he was appointed to the chair of sophistry and where he filled the palace with his audacity, earning in the process enormous honour and patronage from Their Majesties. That's what I heard the usher tell Hippocrates as I listened in for a little while.

The sophist was going on, "That my client's body was not yet ready for death is something that the conductors themselves will have fully to acknowledge. I ask you, how could this body, travelling as it was on horseback from Thessalonica, possibly be described as ready for death and unfit to go on living? Moreover, it is a basic principle of funerals that even when the soul is separated, it shall only be brought down to Hades *after* the due rituals have been performed. This principle holds good for all religions,<sup>215</sup> each of which have their own special customs. In the case of the Christians, these rites are performed on the third, ninth, and fortieth days.<sup>216</sup> Yet these creatures brought my client's soul down to Hades without waiting for them."

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Nyktion broke in on this point with a loud protest, "But there was no one there to perform the rites for Timarion. He was a stranger in a foreign land and had nobody who could perform the rites for him. . . ."217

"But to settle the issue of whether or not you snatched away this soul by force, let its condition be examined by some officials with good eyesight.<sup>218</sup> For if it is the case that it was snatched away by force, there will still be bits of flesh sticking to it."

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Two officials called Oxyderkion and Nyktoleustes<sup>219</sup> were immediately detailed to make the inspection. When they had made a thorough investigation of the condition of the soul, they reported back to the judges as follows: "External examination shows the entire soul to be defiled by gore, of a colour commonly found on men who fall in battle, the result of sweat mixing with blood.<sup>220</sup> But our detailed internal investigation discloses that some parts of the soul are still suffused with pure blood and still emit some particle of living breath. Furthermore, some pieces of flesh *are* stuck to it, containing blood and the essence of life."

At this news, the sophist bawled, "There you have it, gentlemen, the vindication of my own argument. For if the soul was still managing to cling obstinately to the body, how could its fourth element have been entirely drained away? According to the theories of the most distinguished doctors, nature surrenders a soul without a struggle when it actually has lost an element. But in this case, it was not the element itself that was voided, but rather the food ingested every day was forcibly expelled when turned into a secretion that was bile-like but not real bile, as a result of the inflammation of the liver. This is quite clear from the results of the second examination. That part of the soul of Timarion which was near to the liver when the bleeding began is all rendered down into bile. And, organically speaking, it is precisely there that our daily intake of food, once transformed into a bile-like substance, produces and gets rid of our bodily refuse which is equally bile-like. There can be only one conclusion. What was secreted was not

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pure elemental bile but ordinary bodily wastes that are voided along with bile, more than usual in this particular case because of the inflamed condition of the liver."

When the sophist had finished his peroration, silence was proclaimed in the courtroom. After a brief pause, the judges discussed the evidence amongst themselves and in consultation with medical experts. Then they cast their votes in the usual lots.<sup>221</sup> The verdict was in our favour.

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A writing tablet was produced, and none other than the Byzantine Professor took up his position. The ushers<sup>222</sup> told me that he had been appointed chief officer of the court on account of his skill and speed in improvisation. "Look," they said, "you will see how short a time it will take him to dictate the verdict to the clerk of the court."

After retiring briefly the judges summoned the Byzantine Professor, who was accompanied by Aristarchus,<sup>223</sup> and spelled out to him all the detailed provisions of the judgement. The Byzantine Professor made the announcement without any hesitation, although he whispered<sup>224</sup> most of it, being unable to force out the words clearly through the crookedness of his lips.<sup>225</sup> Aristarchus acted as the clerk, Phrynichus<sup>226</sup> as the presiding official.<sup>227</sup> When the entire text of the decision had been dictated to the clerk, he read it out to the entire assembly. It went like this:

"It has been resolved by this most worshipful college of great physicians, not forgetting the divine Aesculapius, that Nyktion and Oxybas, in so much as they have transgressed against the laws of the dead, shall be removed forthwith from their office of conductors of souls, and that Timarion shall be restored to life and live in his own body.<sup>228</sup> In due time, when he has completed his allotted span, and has had the holy rituals performed over him, then and only then shall he be brought back down to Hades by the legally appointed conductors of the dead."

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With that, the reading came to an end, the judges stood up, and the court was adjourned. The judges themselves retired to their usual place in the meadow whilst Aesculapius

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moved off more slowly along with the doctors to another spot therein.

The Christians for their part all shouted and jumped for joy and congratulated the sophist from Smyrna, praising him to the skies for the arguments and techniques and methods of his speech.

The ushers, who had been given the job of returning me to the upper world, took me by the hand and began to escort me back through Hades. And as we made our way through the dark regions of the underworld, we came upon the area where the philosophers and sophists lived. My sophist, tired both from the journey and from his intense mental concentration, asked the ushers to let us stay the night with this assembly of great minds. The next day (he suggested), we could take our leave of him, since he intended to stay with them, and so get back to life all the more quickly.

We agreed. Then, in the words of the poet,<sup>229</sup> "The other gods and horse-equipped men slept through the night, but sweet slumber touched me not." For wanting to find out as much as I possibly could about Hades, I stayed awake all through the night, giving everything the onceover.

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I saw Parmenides, Pythagoras, Melissus, Anaxagoras, Thales, and the other founders of the philosophical schools sitting quietly together and discussing their respective beliefs<sup>230</sup> very calmly and unemotionally. The one thing they did agree on was their loathing of Diogenes,<sup>231</sup> whom they had excluded from their circle. He was pacing up and down, not squatting on his haunches, and in his usual fierce and combative style was trying to provoke everybody else to an argument.

I also saw John Italus<sup>232</sup> trying to sit down alongside Pythagoras, but the latter rejected him brusquely, saying, "You filthy rat, you who have put on the mantle of the Galilaeans which they call divine and heavenly, meaning baptism, where do you get the nerve to join us, men who spent their lives in epistemology and syllogistic thought? Either take off that strange robe or take yourself off right away from our company." But John Italus wouldn't take it off.

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He was followed by a mannikin or half-man,<sup>233</sup> a slavish fellow, to be more accurate, a city type, very ribald and coarse, who abused everyone he met in iambic verse, a character quite devoid of intelligence but one who could deceive the ignorant mob with his promises, promises line. You only had to exchange a word or two with him to realise that there was nothing decent or clever about him. He seemed to be nothing more than a clone of his own teacher, a malignant, abusive, fickle, conceited son of a bitch who was everything you would expect such qualities to produce.<sup>234</sup>

But he really caught a Tartar<sup>235</sup> this time. For he went up to Diogenes the Cynic and arrogantly tried to buttonhole him. Diogenes, though, who had recently increased his own stock of shamelessness,<sup>236</sup> was not to be caught like that. To show his contempt for his opponent's brand of offensiveness, he snorted and howled like a dog that is always barking. That provoked John, who was also an amateur of Cynic dogma,<sup>237</sup> to start howling in his turn. This all ended in a wrestling match. The Italian got hold of Diogenes in the shoulder with his teeth,<sup>238</sup> but Diogenes countered by fastening his onto his rival's throat and probably would have throttled him, had not Cato the Roman,<sup>239</sup> who didn't care much for philosophers, extricated John from Diogenes' mouth.

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"You dirty rat," snarled Diogenes. "Why, no less a person than Alexander, son of Philip, the one who conquered all of Asia so easily, came to me in Corinth while I was sunbathing, and *he* spoke to me in tones of respect and humility. So where do you get the nerve to treat me as an inferior, you of all people, whom the Byzantines treated as scum and who was hated by all the Galilaeans? By the Cynic philosophy,<sup>240</sup> of which sect I am the leader, if you dare to say as much as one more word to me, you will get a second painful death and burial."

Cato took John by the hand and led him a safe distance away. But when they trespassed upon the territory of the dialecticians,<sup>241</sup> the latter rose as one man and pelted John with stones, shouting, "Get him out of here, Cato. A *dumm-*

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*kopf* who failed grammar in life and who was a laughingstock when he tried to write speeches doesn't belong here."

So John, ridiculed and abused by all, retreated groaning, "Aristotle, Aristotle,<sup>242</sup> O syllogism, O sophism, where are you now that I need you? If only you had been here to help me, I could have wiped the floor with these idiot philosophers and this pig-dealing<sup>243</sup> bag of wind,<sup>244</sup> Diogenes."

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This scene was interrupted by the arrival of the Byzantine Professor himself. The philosophers greeted him graciously as he drew near to them, and there was much calling out of "Hail, Byzantine." But for all that, he had to talk to them standing up, for they made no move to offer him a seat, and he didn't venture to take one uninvited.<sup>245</sup> When he went over to the sophists, though, it was a very different story. They rose as one man in his honour and gave him an enthusiastic welcome. He got the option of sitting down in the middle of their circle if he wanted to relax, or towering over them all in the chair which they offered him as the reward for the gracefulness of his eloquence, the charm and clarity of his diction, his affability, his gift of instant extemporisation, his natural skill in every literary genre.<sup>246</sup> They kept hailing him as "Sun King," which on enquiry I discovered was an allusion to a speech he had composed in the emperor's honour.<sup>247</sup>

KYDION. Yes, yes, Timarion, but aren't you also going to fill me in on what sort of reception your own Smyrnite sophist got from that professorial assembly?

TIMARION. Well, Kydion, as I was about to say, he kept himself largely aloof from those sharp-witted leaders of the philosophical sects, except when he needed to ask a question or request clarification concerning a particular theory. But he got on like a house on fire with the rhetoricians, especially Polemo and Herodes and Aristides.<sup>248</sup> They were men he could approach with confidence, since they were his compatriots. And they in their turn put him in their midst as soon as they met, and they began to pick his brains on points of rhetorical arrangement and style and delineation of character.

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So, my friend, this is what I saw as I rested throughout the summery night from dusk to dawn along with the usher and the sophist,<sup>249</sup> although they slept all this time that I was keeping watch. When they woke up, the sophist immediately came over to me and said, "Get up, Timarion, my boy, and get on your way back up to life. It's a long time since anyone was resurrected.<sup>250</sup> But don't forget to send me the things I want so badly from up there."<sup>251</sup> "Everything I have shall be yours, I promise you," I replied, "but you had better spell out exactly what it is you want so that I can take care of your wants. So, give me the details."

"My boy, please send me a five-month-old lamb, two three-year-old hens that have been fattened and slaughtered, the kind the poulterers<sup>252</sup> sell in the market, I mean the kind that good butchers have removed the stomach fat from and laid it across their thighs on the outside, and a one-month-old sucking pig and a nice fat and fleshy sow's belly."<sup>253</sup>

When he had given me this list, the sophist embraced me in a fond farewell, adding, "Bon Voyage back to life, but go quickly so that your nearest and dearest will know you are safe before the news of your death gets to Constantinople and your relatives and friends start mourning. For I know that, as the poet<sup>254</sup> puts it, there are many who love you."

So we parted. I began my journey at once and did not stop for any reason. On the way, I saw on the left-hand side of the road Philaretus of Armenia, Alexander of Pherae, and Nero, the worst of them all, shovelling human excrement so noxious that a whiff of it penetrated as far as the road.<sup>255</sup> Finally, I reached the opening, and with the usher behind me and no one trying to block me this time, I went up through it<sup>256</sup> right away into the air, where I saw the Pleiades and the Bear.

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By myself I would not have known which way to go to find my body, but I was transported through the air as though blown by the wind until I came to the river and recognised the house in which my body was lying. I said good-bye to the usher on the river bank, left him there, and went in through the opening in the roof which had been specially contrived to

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release smoke from the hearth.<sup>257</sup> I found my body and reentered it through the nostrils and mouth. A combination of the frosty winter weather and *rigor mortis* had made it very cold. All that night I felt as though I had a bad chill. But the next day I was able to pack my bags and set out for Constantinople.

And here I am, my dear Kydion, safe and sound. You've heard the whole story now.<sup>258</sup> Do me a favour and look out for some new corpses to which we can give the things the sophist ordered and send them down to him. Only it mustn't be any respectable<sup>259</sup> class of person who might resent the job but rather one of those filthy Paphlagonians from the market who will see a profit for himself in being sent down to Hades with some pork. Meanwhile, my inquisitive friend, it's bedtime, so let us say good-bye and go our separate ways home.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
AC	<i>Acta Classica</i>
B	<i>Byzantion</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BF	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
BHM	<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
BS	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
Byz. St.	<i>Byzantine Studies</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
Ducange	C. Du Fresne Ducange, <i>Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimae Graecitatis</i> (Leiden, 1688)
EEBS	<i>Epeteris Etereias Byzantinon Spoudon</i> (in Greek)
GIF	<i>Giornale italiano di filologia</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
IRAIC	<i>Izvestiya Russkago Archeologicheskago Instituta v Konstantinopole</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JOB	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
Lampe	G. W. Lampe, <i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> (Oxford, 1969)
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. Stuart Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th ed. (Oxford, 1940); <i>Supplement</i> , ed. E. A. Barber (Oxford, 1968)
MGHAA	<i>Monumenta Germanicae Historiae Auctorum Antiquissimorum</i> (Berlin, 1897–1919)
NJKA	<i>Neue Jahrbuch für das klassische Altertumwissenschaft</i>
PG	Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PMGM	J. L. Ideler, ed., <i>Physici et Medici Graeci Minores</i> (Berlin, 1841)
PP	<i>Past and Present</i>