

The fourth play in the tetralogy was a satyr-play, containing farcical elements thematically related to the first three plays. One of the Danaids, Amymone is sent out to find water, as Poseidon has dried up all the rivers. She falls asleep and is molested by satyrs. Poseidon hurls his trident, which scares them off. She sleeps with him, and he creates a spring for her which will never run dry.

AMYMONE

A re-imagining of Aeschylus' lost play

By Andrew Wilson

For Juliet

THE DANAID TETRALOGY

IV

AMYMONE

A Satyr Play

This tale appears in the *Bibliotheca* of Pseudo-Apollodorus (1st or 2nd century AD)

Since the land [of Argos] was waterless, because Poseidon had dried up the springs in anger with Inachos because he had testified that the land belonged to Hera. [Danaos] sent out his daughters to fetch water. One of them, Amymone, while searching for water, threw a javelin at a deer and hit a sleeping satyr, and the satyr rose and was eager to have intercourse with her. She appealed for the help of Poseidon, and when Poseidon appeared the satyr took to flight and Amymone lay with Poseidon and Poseidon revealed to her the springs at Lerna.

The Characters

AMYMONE

CHORUS OF SATYRS

SILENUS, Leader of the Chorus

POSEIDON

Text in red is by Aeschylus, fragments 13, 14, 15

Scene: The Argolid. Somewhere. Not far from the sea.

Enter Amymone, carrying a pitcher

Amymone

Phew! I'm exhausted. What a task!
What is my task, I hear you ask?
My task, my job, my occupation?
It doesn't need much education!
This is my pot, my ewer, jug
Which I've been told I have to lug
Around this country till I find –
No one asked me if I mind –
A stream of water or a brook:
Alas, I don't know where to look! -
Because I'm ordered, seems I must -
The river-beds are dry as dust.
There's not a drop in any well
It's ages since the rain last fell.
I'm so depressed, I need a cuddle.
I wish I could just find a puddle.
But what has happened to our land,
That once green fields have turned to sand?
I'll tell you how it all began.
One day my great great- great- great- grand-
Dad Inachos was gently flowing,
Watering lands that folks were sowing.
He was a river, and a god,

So Sorry if you think that odd!
When all at once he heard a noise
Of quarrelling, like two small boys.
The source, though, of this altercation
Was beings of a higher station.
The persons in this screaming match
Were two immortals, on his patch.
The Queen of Heaven was shouting "Love,
This land is mine, so off you shove!"
The other actor in this row
Was calling her a stupid cow.
"I am the Earthshaker," he cried
"It's mine. I own it. Stand aside!"
Hera, Poseidon, head to head -
No wonder mortals thence had fled.
Each soon knew they couldn't win
There were no coins for them to spin.
Inachos in his bed they spy,
Where mostly he preferred to lie:
"We need you to adjudicate –
Which of us will you nominate
As Argos's especial god?"
Without much thought he gave the nod
To Hera, scared to make her cross.
He knew she liked to be the boss.
Poseidon couldn't stand defeat,
So Inachos soon felt the heat.
Poseidon made his current stop;
There was no water, not a drop.

Nothing wet nor damp to give us
Drink in any streams or rivers.
Al this took place lifetimes ago:
But gods are immortal, as you know.
For time, the gods don't give a fig:
It only took a little dig
One night, at supper, on Olympus
To resurrect the whole damn' rumpus.
"Argos has got a new young king!"
Poseidon says – now here's the thing –
He is related to the lad
Being as he's his grandad's dad!
He now insists that Hera's reign
Is over – it's his turn again.
When Hera stormed off in a huff,
Poseidon said he'd had enough.
"I'll take my water home with me!
You want some? It's all in the sea!"
So now we're parched, an arid waste;
I trust you see now why the haste
To find some water anywhere
We are so thirsty, it's unfair.
I'm tired. I can't do any more.
I'll just lie down here on the floor.
[She lies down and sleeps]

Enter a Chorus of Satyrs, all carrying pitchers like Amymone's, except that they are obviously full of liquid.

Chorus

Strophe 1

Come on, keep up!

Don't drop your cup!

Don't lose the beat, like they did!

Don't lag behind.

We've got to find

A spot that's cool and shaded.

Antistrophe 1

What's in this flask

I hear you ask?

Unmixed intoxication!

No watery sips

Get past our lips.

We are the Satyr nation!

Strophe 2

Give some water

To your daughter.

Satyrs never touch the stuff.

Want to learn

What's in this urn?

Take a sniff and then a snuff!

Antistrophe 2

Want to try it?

Don't deny it.
It's the bollocks, liquid gold.

It's vintage wine
And it's all mine.
Can't be bought and won't be sold!

Strophe 3

There is a drought.
There's folks about.
That's why we must conceal it.

Why don't we hide
It safe inside
A place where none can steal it?

Antistrophe 3

Don't be a bore,
A mouthful more!
I'm in no mood for sadness.

I'll have a slurp
And give a burp
To leave it would be madness!

Strophe 4

You're such a pig!
Give me a swig
I've had no chance to taste it.

You greedy swine,
That jar was mine!
I hate to see you waste it.

A Satyr

You're all so pissed,
You nearly missed
The chance to have a fumble!

Look in the grass.
A gorgeous ass!
A pretty lass to tumble!

They put down their jars and surround the sleeping Amymone.

Silenus

I saw her first. I say she's mine.
Don't be impatient. Get in line!
I am your father, take the lead I must,
To demonstrate my prior claim to lust!

Amymone

O gods. What dreadful nightmare's this?
Am I in Hades? Is this the abyss?
These drooling, leering creatures can't
Be human? Please tell me they aren't!

Silenus

I see your head is in a whirl!
We are not mortals, little girl!

We're harmless satyrs, do not fear.
There's never danger when we're near.
But tell us, girly, what's your name?

Aymone

Aymone, means "without blame".

Silenus

I'll make quite sure you stay unsoiled

Aymone

You'd not believe how long I've toiled.

Silenus

You're a Danaid, are you not?

Aymone

One of the fifty. What a lot!

Silenus

And did you stab your man that night?

Aymone

I did, though he put up a fight.

Silenus

You wouldn't let him have a kiss?

Aymone

He was ugly, and he smelled of piss.

Silenus

Was that your first time with a man?

Aymone

It was not! I defied the ban!

Silenus

Who banned you, why? From doing what?

Aymone

He tried to stop us, we could not...

Silenus

Hmm? *[He gestures, mouthing the word he's trying to make her say]*

Aymone

My father tried to stop his brood...

Silenus

Don't shock me saying something rude!

Aymone

From meeting boys and having fun.

Silenus

So, you got used to having none?

Aymone

No way! I crept out every night.

Silenus

Although you knew it wasn't right?

Aymone

I used to sneak out in disguise.

Silenus

No one would know you: that was wise.

Aymone

I'd find a man who I could please!

Silenus

I hope you weren't a naughty tease!

Aymone

I liked men who were cool, and witty.

Silenus

And who, I'm guessing, found you pretty?

Aymone

If a sister or my pa found out!

Silenus

They would have killed you, there's no doubt.

Aymone

I miss the sex, I feel so frumpy!

Silenus

So, you're still up for rumpy-pumpy?

Aymone

If someone fit and young appeared.

Silenus

Not like a satyr with a beard!

Aymone

You're like a herd of billy-goats!

Silenus

No chance then I shall get my oats?

Aymone

Your breath, I find, is like a donkey's fart.

Silenus

But yours is perfumed: nard? Myrrh? Saucy tart!

Fr 14

Aymone

Not now! Just go; and let me rest.

Silenus

I didn't mean to be a pest.

Aymone

I actually found you rather cute.

Silenus

I'll lull you to sleep. Now where's my flute?

Aymone

Thank you. So kind to let me snooze. *[He plays a brief tune. She sleeps]*

Silenus

She's fast asleep. Now where's that booze?

They pick up their jars again.

Chorus

Strophe 1

A billy-goat?

I've made a note –

The bitch will pay for that!

Pass me the jug

I'll have a glug

And then I'll show the brat.

Antistrophe 1

Don't you deride

A satyr's pride

A lot of folk are hairy.

I've got a beard!

Is that so weird?

Why would you find that scary?

Strophe 2

I'm horny, yes!

That's true I guess,

But that just means I'm normal

If my fur coat

Looks like a goat

So sad it's not more formal!

Antistrophe 2

A bit more booze

To help me lose

What's left of inhibition.

With alcohol

One gets more bold

To fulfil one's ambition.

Strophe 3

We don't meet masses

Of sexy lasses

To enjoy conviviality,

We have to resort

When we need sport

To a bit of bestiality.

Fr.15

Antistrophe 3

When she's awake

Make no mistake

She'd never let me touch 'er.

While she's asleep

I'll softly creep

Up really close and clutch 'er.

Epode

If she cries rape
She can't escape
We'll tie 'er up and gag 'er.

If like a worm
She starts to squirm
We'll pin 'er down and shag 'er.

*The **Satyrs, and Silenus**, lecherous and drunken as they are, are also the most cowardly of creatures. As **Amymone** continues sleeping they creep up and surround her – but scatter, abandoning their wine-jars, as soon as she wakes up, yawning and stretching. She therefore does not see them immediately. During the following speech as she turns from side to side they gradually approach again, as in a game of “Grandmother’s Footsteps”.*

Amymone [yawns]

That sleep, though welcome, was uncomfortable.

I had the most unpleasant dream, more like

A nightmare if the truth be told. I dreamed

It was my wedding night, again. I had

Forgotten all about our scheme, to stab

To death the men who'd married us,

Before they could deflower us. I was

In fact, anticipating lively sex,

And looking forward to a playful romp.

In my mind's eye my husband was so fit

So tanned, so buff, and shining like a god.

And then I saw Enceladus, the one

Who's picked me out to be his sorry wife.

Ye gods, I've never seen a more revolting

Sight. A stunted, weedy, pale-faced oaf,

With pimples , pustules, spots and blemishes
So densely massed, a mouldy lump of cheese
Forgotten on the floor for many weeks
Was far more appetising, let me say,
And far more sweetly-smelling than the thing
I find I'm married to. With savage joy
I whip the sharpened dagger from my hair.
And gleefully, I aim its point straight at
His heart, and then I stab, and stab.... Aiai!

As Amymone has become more and more involved in telling her tale, the satyrs have tiptoed closer and closer. Suddenly one of them grabs her from behind. The others surround her baying lustily. She screams louder than anyone has ever screamed in the history of screaming. Enter Poseidon, flailing at the satyrs with his trident, as they try to run, hide, or sham dead.

Poseidon, the Earthshaker [booming]

Who woke me up? Which insect dared disturb
Th' immortal rest of Ocean's lord, the king
Of all the nymphs who frolic 'neath the waves,
Controller of the waters, master of
The earthquake, dread Poseidon, son
Of Cronos, brother of almighty Zeus?
I was enjoying forty winks – well-earned –
In my four-poster sea-bed, fathoms down,
My head reposing on a sponge, sea-moss
To gently cushion my exhausted frame.
And then there came this awful scream, as if
A giant hog were being butchered with
A rusty knife. Who was it? Show yourself!

Amymone

No need to shout. No need to raise your voice.
'Twas I. 'Twas little me. Aymone.
I know who you are. Even if you had
Not said, and said again so many times,
I recognise my great great grandfather,
Who's "something in the sea", I do believe.
I did not mean to scream and make a fuss
But when a randy satyr grabs your tits,
A girl tends to react instinctively.
Well thank you, great-great-gramps, you've been
A brick – those satyrs won't try that again!
So please excuse me now. I mustn't shirk.
I'll grab my pitcher and get back to work.

Poseidon

No kiss for your progenitor?

Aymone

My what? A word to strain one's jaw!

Poseidon

Do you respect your family tree?

Aymone

I don't. It's not done much for me.

Poseidon

I'm an ancestor, who wants a hug.

Aymone

No. You can't have one. I'm no mug.

Poseidon

So hard! So tough! What makes you so?

Aymone

Do not pretend that you don't know!

Poseidon

I've no idea why you're so jumpy

Aymone

It you, you pig, who make me grumpy!

Poseidon

What have I done to cause your huff?

Aymone

My pitcher tells a story. That enough?

Poseidon [*lewdly*]

You need someone to fill your urn!

Aymone

The water shortage is of great concern.

Poseidon

Then no more worries! Let me fill your pot.

Aymone

But you'd want payment, would you not?

Poseidon

A friendly kiss, a little hug?

Aymone

Then would you really fill my jug?

Poseidon

Of course! And with your pitcher full...

Aymone

I've done my chore, how wonderful!

Poseidon

Think how they'll cheer, when you return!

Aymone

Alas. There's much you have to learn.

Poseidon

Then teach me, show me, we'll have fun!

Aymone

You creep! You pervert! We are done.

Poseidon

Don't tell me you reject my deal?

Aymone

Of course I do, old man, get real!

Poseidon

What's your objection to my scheme?

Aymone

A jarful, jugful, does that seem...

Poseidon

You think you'll get a better offer?

Aymone

...Enough to make you think I'd proffer...

Poseidon

My girl, that's all there is, don't miss it!

Aymone

...My mouth to yours, for you to kiss it!

Ugh!

Poseidon

No need for such a sour grimace,

I want a daughterly embrace.

Aymone

No chance, unless you meet my price.

Poseidon

Sounds like a prostitute. Not nice!

Aymone

Full flow restored in all our streams.

Poseidon

My, child, you're unaware, it seems...

Aymone

All rivers full, all wells topped up

Poseidon

It's politics! When you're grown-up...

Aymone

I'm old enough to know a fraud!

Poseidon

If I explained, you'd just get bored...

Aymone

It's simple, let the rivers flow!

Poseidon

It's politics, stuff you don't know.

Aymone

So, let the people die of thirst...

Poseidon

A deal with Hera must come first.

Aymone

The people go on suffering as long...

Poseidon

As Hera won't admit she's wrong!

Aymone

You gods are little kids. I'll do

It by myself. I don't need you.

Poseidon

You won't find water in that ditch!

But please yourself, you silly bitch.

She picks up her pitcher, and moves off. Enter Silenus and satyrs.

Chorus

Strophe 1

We weren't afraid,
We simply made
A strategic withdrawal.

Now that we've spied on
Old man Poseidon,
Nothing to fear at all!

Antistrophe 1

I'm going to betcha
He's a lecher,
And just as bad as all of us!

The lassie blocked him
Seems it knocked him
Sideways, What a bloomin' fuss!

Strophe 2

Silly bugger
Tried to hug 'er.
Could have told him she'd refuse

She's so pretty,
And so witty!
Wrong to choose her to abuse!

Antistrophe 2

He's too old
To get so bold,
He should really grab a granny.

He's not a wee god,
He's the sea-god
But that young lady's far too canny!

Epode

Don't just seize 'er,
Try and please 'er
Or else you'll send her running.

And one thing more.
If you want to score,
You'll have to be more cunning!

Silenus

We all dashed off when you appeared
But you're not really what we feared.
At first, we had the stupid notion
You were ruler of the Ocean.
But now I see that we were thick
You're just a bully with a stick.

Poseidon

Is not my beard that's greeny-blue

Enough to tell you Satyrs who
I am? My power is massive, such
My godly strength is, that a touch
Of this my trident stirs the deep
To wake in ferment from its sleep.
And by the way, it's not a stick.
It's a lethal weapon with a kick!
Take my advice, don't push your luck.
You'll howl with pain if you get struck.
As minor deities, you can't die.
More's the pity, so say I.

Silenus

It very cool to be a Satyr
Immortals we don't have to flatter.
We can taunt a senior god
And tell him he's a randy sod.
There's nothing much more fun than this,
To fuck with him and take the piss.
Our banter's what we're famous for -
We love it more if he gets sore!

The satyrs dance wildly around Poseidon, gesturing obscenely. He levels his trident and hurls it. It misses Silenus and remains stuck in a rock. The satyrs scatter, as Poseidon, unarmed, pursues them offstage.

Enter Amymone, alone, still lugging her empty pitcher.

Amymone

I've been to every stream and brook
In every well I've had a look.
I've peered at every dried-up pond

As far as Corinth and beyond.
The conclusion of my tale of woe –
Nowhere's a drop of H two O.
And what make it ten times worse
I'm hot and sweating like a horse.
Is there a god to help me out?
Someone who'd hear me when I shout?
There's twelve divinities up there
Who see my plight, but do they care?
Apollo's seen as fair and just
But he's the cause of all this dust!
The Sun god with his blazing lamp
Dried what Poseidon had left damp.
My sisters all loved Artemis
But I confess I've been remiss
My disrespect for chastity
Encouraged her hostility.
Not much chance then of her emergin'
To help a girl who's not a virgin.
We roused almighty Zeus's ire
When our dad was exposed a liar.
My prayers to him would be in vain,
Like throwing drachmas down the drain -
But just a minute that's a thought, a
Drain might have a little water –
Amymone you're going mad
Your mind is wandering; that's so sad!
In Argos no goddess is dearer
Than our own patron, mighty Hera.

But she still hates our family, though,
Because of Io, years ago.
And she can never be relied on,
While she quarrels with Poseidon.
Poseidon made the rivers dry -
He can make them flow, if I
Remind him of my offered price,
And say I'm ready to be nice!
Though it means my prostitution
Poseidon is the best solution!
If Aphrodite will assist
That makes quite sure he won't resist.
I wonder if there's any bar
To sex with one's great grand-papa?
He could have ravished me just now
He was so hot for me, and how!
Where is he now, though when it matters?
Has he gone to chase the satyrs?
I can't believe he's not around ...
Ah! There's his trident in the ground.
I'll hand it him to make amends:
"No hard feelings. Now we're friends!"

She struggles to pull the trident out
I think I'm going to need a winch.
I'm tugging! It won't budge an inch.

Enter Poseidon, sheepishly.

Poseidon

Ah there's my trident where it landed!
Without it I feel empty-handed.
Amymone, my darling child
I didn't mean to get you riled.
I'm no perverted, dirty sod,
I'm just a lonely sad old god.
I got myself into this muddle
Because all I wanted was a cuddle.
Sincerely I repudiate
Behaviour inappropriate.
For actions that I now despise
I do humbly apologise.
I feel I must have been insane;
I won't behave like that again.
So goodbye, sorry, fare you well:
I must get back now to my shell.
I work inside a giant clam;
In office hours that's where I am.
So many problems I could mention
Always need a god's attention.
When I've picked up my three-pronged spear
I promise you, I'm out of here.

He moves towards the trident, intending to leave, but Amymone drops her pitcher and falls at his feet to prevent him.

Amymone

O please don't go. I have regrets
For using those rude epithets.

I was offensive, indiscreet,
But now I think you're rather sweet.
I see you are a lovely bloke
Whose beard I'd rather like to stroke!

Poseidon

I'm flattered but you're very young –
What are you doing with your tongue?

Amymone

I'm hope you don't mind being kissed
To make up for the one you missed?

Poseidon

I'm quite embarrassed, overcome,
I fear I'm likely to succumb.
I need to fold you in my arms -
I am besotted by your charms!

Amymone

I had no time for older guys
But now I'm keen to compromise.
Being close now makes me frantic!
You really make me feel romantic!

Poseidon

I like a girl who's a bit flighty
Not like boring Amphitrite.

Accept our fate! We should get wedded.

Fr. 13

I shall bed and you'll get bedded!

Amymone

Go on then, just give me a squeeze
Then let's sneak off behind those trees.
The audience must never see

What goes on 'twixt thee and me!

They retire as once again the satyrs creep back. They shamelessly peep at what's happening behind the trees.

Chorus

Strophe 1

The sea god chased
Us, how we raced!
And gods be praised we were not caught!

We've come back here,
Because we fear
Someone might steal the wine we brought.

Antistrophe 1

It's all there still!
Let's drink our fill.
We've got enough to last the night.

Before we drink,
Let's have a think.
Make sure he's gone for good. All right?

Strophe 2

Was it the breeze
There in the trees?
I swear I saw them move a trifle.

Be Quiet boys!

Don't make a noise
Gather ye round, and have an eyeful!

Antistrophe 2

Are they really?
Can't see clearly.
That bloody bush is in the way.

Makes you chortle,
God and mortal
Blissfully rolling in the hay!

As Poseidon and Amymone emerge from the trees hand in hand, the satyrs again withdraw. Their jars are still where they left them when they ran off.

Amymone

I must say that was rather nice.

Poseidon

I didn't think I'd manage twice.

Amymone

But you're a god, it's no surprise.

Poseidon

I guess I needed exercise!

Amymone

I do not want to spoil the mood....

Poseidon

Hungry? Would you like some food?

Amymone

Not food, you duffer, I need drink!

Poseidon

But there's no water. Let me think!

Aymone

Now which god makes the water flow?

Poseidon

A handsome god I think you know.

Aymone

Stop teasing. If you get a tickle,
Any chance of water – just a trickle?

Poseidon

I need my trident. Fetch it please.
You're hating me; I'm such a tease.

Aymone

I heaved before with all my might.
It wouldn't move. It stuck there tight.

Poseidon

I know you say it wouldn't budge,
Tug one more time. A little nudge!

Aymone

I've got it! Such an easy thing!
But what is this? A gushing spring!!
Three holes where I just pulled it out -
Three fountains now begin to spout!

Poseidon

A river shall flow from this source.
A never-failing water-course
Shall run for ever and maintain
Its stream irrespective of rain.
Precipitation must rely
On Zeus, for water from the sky.

Torrents and rivers, creeks, the sea

All water from below – that’s me.

Amymone

I’ll fill my jug. My quest is done!

Silenus

May we poor satyrs join the fun?

Poseidon

Later. For now, drink up, and bring

Your pots and fill them from the spring.

Work was what Satyrs laboured to avoid:

At last you buggers find yourselves employed!

Amymone leaves for Argos, water-pot on her head, followed by a train of Satyrs carrying their full water-jars, with exaggerated difficulty. Poseidon leaves in the opposite direction, back to the sea. Silenus remains alone on stage. He waits until the coast is clear.

Silenus

Something neither of them know –

Though you will when I tell you so.

It’s not ‘perhaps’, or even ‘maybe’:

Amymone’s going to have a baby!

The outcome of their hour of fun:

The pair will have a lovely son.

To name him will cause lots of fuss,

But they will call him Nauplius,

“The Navigator”. At the helm

He’ll navigate his father’s realm,

And teach his people how to steer

Their ships to countries far and near.

And so, to end, look at it my way:

Through sex the sea becomes a highway.

AMW Marshfield May 18th 2020

