

## Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.139-56; 1.417-26: The Art of the Lover

*Ars Amatoria* (“The Art of the Lover”) was written by Ovid (d. 18 CE) to inform young men looking for love how they might most easily find a girlfriend. In the first passage below (1.139-156) Ovid suggests going to the Circus (a sports arena) and sitting as close to the girl as possible, touching her whenever the opportunity presents itself, and fluffing her pillow. He assures his male reader that women will be impressed by a man who applauds Venus, the goddess of sex and love.

In second passage (1.417-426) Ovid changes tone and warns men about how crafty women can be when they want to get presents or money from their boyfriends. Following that, Ovid lists all the holidays on which men should stay away from their girlfriends in order to avoid giving them presents. On the whole, this poem leaves the impression that Ovid is speaking from personal experience

### Text and Translation

Proximus a dominā, nullo prohibente, sedeto,  
Sit close to your mistress, with no one preventing (you),

Lunge tuum lateri quā potes usque latus; 140  
Join your side close to her side as much as you can;

Et bene, quod cogit, si nolit, linea iungi,  
And (it is) easily done, because the line compels you to be joined, (even) if she should be unwilling,

Quod tibi tangenda est lege puella loci.  
Since you must touch the girl by the law of the place.

139. **a:** lit. “from”  
**sedeto:** future imperative (2<sup>nd</sup> sing.)
140. **lateri:** *latus, -eris, n.:* side  
**quā potes:** lit. “as to which you can,” i.e. as much as you can
141. **Et bene:** lit. “and it is well”  
**linea:** *linea, -ae, f.:* line; a chalk line distinguishing individual seats

Hīc tibi quaeratur socii sermonis origo,  
Here you should seek the start of a friendly conversation,

Et moveant primos publica verba sonos.  
And open the conversation with words everyone can hear.

Cuius equi veniant, facito, studiose, requiras:  
Make sure that you, eager (lover), ask whose horses are entering:

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Nec mora, quisquis erit, cui favet illa, fave.  
And without delay favor whoever it is whom that girl favors.

At cum pompa frequens certantibus ibit ephebis,  
And when the procession crowded with disputing youths comes,

Tu Veneri dominae plaude favente manu;  
You should applaud for Mistress Venus with a favoring hand;

143. **socii:** *socius*, -a, -um : social, friendly  
**origo:** *origo*, -inis, f.: source, opening
144. **sonos:** *sonus*, -i, m.: sound
145. **facito:** future imperative (2<sup>nd</sup> singular)  
**studiose:** *studiosus*, -a, -um: eager
146. **Nec mora:** lit. “Nor is there a delay”  
**quisquis:** *quisquis*, *quidquid*: whoever, whatever  
**favet:** *faveo*, -ere, *favi*, *fautum*: favor (+ dat.)
147. **pompa:** *pompa*, -ae, f.: procession  
**frequens:** *frequens*, -ntis: frequent, crowded, busy  
**certantibus:** *certo* (1): dispute  
**ephebis:** *ephebus*, -i, m.: youth; a Greek loan word
148. **plaude:** *plaudo*, -ere, -si, -sum: applaud (+ dat.)

Utque fit, in gremium pulvis si forte puellae  
And as often happens, if by chance dust falls into the girl's lap,

Deciderit, digitis excutiendus erit:  
It must be brushed off with your fingers:

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Et si nullus erit pulvis, tamen excute nullum:  
And if there is no dust, nevertheless brush off none:

Quaelibet officio causa sit apta tuo.  
Let whatever you like be a suitable cause for your attention.

Pallia si terrā nimium demissa iacebunt,  
If her cloak, having been let down, lies on the ground too much,

Collige, et immundā sedulus effer humo;  
Collect it, and bear it carefully from the dirty ground;

149. **gremium:** *gremium*, -i, n.: lap  
**forte:** *forte*, adv.: by chance
150. **deciderit:** *decido*, -ere, -cidi: fall down; future indicative in a future more vivid condition  
(see Wheelock, p.156)  
**digitus:** *digitus*, -i, m.: finger  
**excutiendus:** *excutio*, -ere, -cussi, -cussum,: brush off
152. **quaelibet:** *quilibet*, *quaelibet*, *quodlibet*: any (you like)
153. **pallia:** *pallium*, -i, n.: cloak
154. **immunda:** *immundus*, -a, -um: dirty  
**sedulus:** *sedulus*, -a, -um: careful  
**humo:** *humus*, -i, f. ground

Protinus, officii pretium, patiente puellā  
At once, a prize of your attention, with the girl permitting,

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Contingent oculis crura videnda tuis...  
Your eyes will happen to see ankles.

Magna superstitio tibi sit natalis amicae:  
Let the birthday of your girlfriend be a great object of dread for you:

Quāque aliquid dandum est, illa sit atra dies.  
On which anything must be given, let that day be a black one.

Cum bene vitaris, tamen auferet; invenit artem  
Although you might shun it well, nevertheless she will carry off (a present);

Femina, quā cupidi carpat amantis opes. 420  
A woman finds the art by which she might devour the wealth of the desirous lover.

155. **protinus:** *protinus*, adv.: at once
156. **(quae sunt) oculis...videnda tuis:** passive periphrastic, without the form of *esse* expressed; lit. “ankles will befall to be seen by your eyes.”  
**crura:** *crus*, *cruris*, n.: ankle
417. **superstitio:** *superstitio*, -onis, f.: source of dread  
**amicae:** *amica*, *amicae*, f.: girlfriend
418. **atra:** here, “unlucky”
419. **vitaris:** indicative in *cum* clause; see Wheelock, p. 147
420. **amantis:** *amans*, *amantis*: lit. “loving”; here “lover”

**Institor ad dominam veniet discinctus emacem,**  
A slovenly peddler will come to your mistress (when she is) in a buying mood,

**Expediet merces teque sedente suas:**  
And he will spread his wares before her while you sit by:

**Quas illa inspicias, sapere ut videare, rogabit:**  
(Wares) which she will ask you to inspect so that you might seem to be wise:

**Oscula deinde dabit, deinde rogabit emas.**  
Then she will give kisses, then she will ask that you buy (it).

**Hōc fore contentam multos iurabit in annos,**  
She will swear that she will be content with this for many years,

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**Nunc opus esse sibi, nunc bene dicet emi.**  
That she needs it now, that now's a good time to buy.

421. **institor:** *institor, -oris, m.:* peddler  
**discinctus:** *discinctus, -a, -um:* slovenly  
**emacem:** *emax, -acis:* lit. “ready/eager to buy”, i.e. “in a buying mood”
422. **expedio:** *expedio, -ire, -ivi, -itum:* free, spread  
**merces:** *merx, mercis, f.:* merchandise, goods
423. **(ut) inspicias:** *inspicio, -ere, inspexi, inspectum:* look at  
**sapere:** *sapio, -ere, -ivi:* be wise  
**ut:** postpositive; read *ut* before *sapere*  
**videare = videaris**
424. **oscula:** *osculum, -i, n.:* kiss  
**(ut) emas**
425. **fore = futurum esse**  
**contentam:** *contentus, -a, -um:* content, satisfied
426. **opus esse:** *opus est:* there is need of  
**emi:** impersonal sense, “it is bought”, i.e. “it is a (good) buy”

Si non esse domi, quos des, causabere nummos,  
If you make an excuse that you don't have any money on you to give,

**Littera poscetur—ne didicisse iuuet.**

Your signature will do—and you'll wish you never learned how (to sign your name).

427. **domi**: lit. “at home”; i.e. “in the man’s pocket or purse”  
**causabere** = *causaberis*: *causor* (1): make an excuse  
**nummus**: *nummus*, *-i*, m.: money, coin
428. **littera**: here, “a written IOU, a signature on a check”  
**poscetur**: *posco*, *poscere*, *poposci*: demand  
**iuuet**: here, “it helps, it gives pleasure”