# De Amicitia

*Warren St. John*

### Prelude

How confident we were in the bleak Decembers,
No serpents to avoid,
Only peace in the village kingdom . . .

### Contacts with Laocoon

Sappho sings so sweetly, in the hour before noon,
And only hours later, at three or four,
    You spoke the prophecy:
      "Equo ne credite!" you said,
To separate the night and day,
and blend the whites and reds in Sinon's eyes.
O, how I grieve for you,
    My fallen friend, taken by
    fang and constriction
O, the spikes in my heart are driven deeper by
    the memory of your words; "Equo ne credite."
Three and four times I tried to place your limp
    body on the pyre.
O, Laocoon, my dear friend, forgive me,
I could not burn you.

### The Game of Osiris

Osiris, they said you "never quite had it together,"
    and how they were mistaken.
When I hid from you at Karnak and Dier-el-Bahri, you
    laughed with me.
(Isis was younger then, so too was my Lesbia.)
The sun shined when you smiled, and it rained in the
    desert dust when you frowned—like when I hid
    in the tomb.
"Anubis will never forgive you," you said,
    but then worked it all out.
I remember the seven months you were gone, how
    barren it became,
Long days in the courtyard with Horus in hats,
Crocodile, Ibis, and jackal:
Bonds with you, hard as Giza Stone.

### To Know the Poet

I seek to know you, my friend Catullus.
O what fevers you endured, O in what stirring waters
    did you remain afloat!
Catullus, my martyr friend, your songs pain me.
Odi et Amo; my tears for you are of sympathy and
    reverence, of resentment, and jealousy.
O, my friend, what pains would I persevere to write
    like you!
Give me your Clodia, here sparrow,
    give me your brother's tomb,
    give me fruitless travels abroad,
    but, dear friend, give me your quill

### The Dance about The Omphalos

Young maidens giggle, and skip to the fa la la
    tra la la of my lyre.
Here, where the eagles met,
    I dwell under the Parnassan night.
Of the maidens, there was one whom I told;
So silly
To eat laurel leaves.
Think you're a Sybyline singer?
Well, I'm not ready
to       drink       from
       the stream
  and     write     what
       I know.