

Strippin' The Hipster

This was back in the day in Phrygia,
A groovy little ungated community of free-range satyrs and
flippin' nymphs.
You had oreads, naiads, hamadryads and dripdryads makin' the
scene,
Which swung like Pop Sun, rockin' steady in his chopped and
channeled chariot every phoenix-chirpin', retsina-slurpin'
and olive-burpin' morning at 5 in the a.m.
There were fauns on the lawns and goats in the groves and
centaurs horny as a brass band on a one-night stand in Nymph
City hip-hoppin' on all the hills,
Cruising for Muses who used to drop in to gig at the Made in
the Glade Cafe or the Blotto in the Grotto Bistro.
The great Greek poets and the noble Roman poets have all blown
odes about it,
But you hadda *be* there.

Now Marsyas, the subject of our story, was there.
Marsyas (no relation to Wynton or Bradford) was a skinny little
hairy old hipster who was good-lookin' as Chet Baker from the
waist up and totally goat below.
He was a crazy satyr who truly dug the pre-Hellenic
hallucinogenic and metempsychotic bebop of the scene,
Especially those high-flyin', primal-cryin', utterly trans-
mogrifyin' rhythms of the Gods,
Which gave new meaning to the phrase, *making the changes*.
When Apollo, for instance, whipped out his Gibson kithara with
the liongut strings and laid a stiff riff on Daphne,
The sweet soft skin of the nymph got knotty and her hands turned
into branches;

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That's because Apollo could *make the changes*.
Marsyas, however, was no Apollo; moreover, he lacked an axe.
He wanted nothing more than to blow in the chorus of Gods, demi-
gods, and even hemisemidemigods;

But without an axe to blow, he was just another goat-ass in the grass.

So one fine Phrygian day, after some stress-free messin' with a herd of cross-dressin' centaurs, Marsyas was boppin' to the pond to see if he could boogie with a wood nymph when something glinting in a thicket, flimmering at the periphery of his vision, caught his hairy eye. The item in question was a shinbone, with round holes bored into it at diggable intervals: "Groovy, it's a flute," said the caprine chappy. "I got me an axe at last."

Now in some sectors of the ancient Greek scene, golden fleece and golden cheese and golden apples and golden grapes and maybe even an occasional golden gyro grew on trees, But shinbone flutes did not. And in truth, this was no ordinary axe: Athena, she of the high dome and the great grey penetrating gaze, had ditched it in said thicket because, vain babe that she was, the flute had screwed up the fine, fine features of her incorruptible face whenever she tried to blow it; She was bugged for sure by the embouchure. Scoot, flute, she decreed in her deathless petulance, and flung the offending object from her lemon-scented penthouse on Mount Olympus into the Phrygian thicket far below.

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So this flute, cluelessly and fortuitously found by my main half-man Marsyas, was indeed no earthly axe, but a discarded device of the highmost holy and triply hip goddess, with properties commensurate to its provenance.

I mean, a woodchuck with a buck tooth in West Bumfuck coulda made music on this flute; a sorry calamari coulda dragged its bent tentacles over the holes and come up with a Top 40 threnody.

But Marsyas, you dig, when he began to lip the shinbone, and a sound like nothin' no hairy, hopped-up hipster ever heard from here to Halicarnassus popped out —

Maryas didn't think, Man, this is one doubly wondrous, triply
dipped, quadruply groovy and possibly supernatural flute I got
here, Bubba!

Uh-uh! Instead, the cat said, Io! dig me! Dig this profound and
crazy sound that I, Marsyas, am makin', baby!

So infatuated was he with what he perceived to be his own
virtuosity, that he hopped and bopped and bounded around all
over the antique scene, blowin' his axe in every nook and
cranny of the classical landscape,

Cryin' all the while, Dig me, you scrawny-ass fauns and enervated
satyrs, you unhep shepherds and limp nymphs! I, Marsyas, am the
baddest blowin', grooviest tootin', most far-out flautist in
all of Phrygia!

I, Marsyas, am *the hippest musician of them all!*

At that, there was a thunderclap,
And Apollo, he of the sun-kissed wig and toasty lobes, was
standing to the right of Marsyas and blinding the goat-boy's
gaze.

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Now, if Marsyas could actually have dug the Sun God's mug from
behind all those waves of cascading flame that emanated from
the cat's Afro,

He would have dug that the stud was pissed;
But never mind — a strip of marble flypaper coulda caught the
vibe.

So, bro, Apollo smiled (and let me hip you jocks to the paradox
here — there's nothing colder in heaven, Hades or Hoboken than
the blinding smile of the Sun Stud),

So, bro, the Muses clue me that *you* be the hippest musician of
them all — is that a fact, or am I just a day-old platter of
chopped moussaka?

Well, replied Marsyas, who by now had recovered the use of his
peepers, not to mention his poise, Well, man, not to dis your
Blissfully Shimmering Shininess, or your Mythically Unsmirch-
able and Cosmic Virtuosity, but if you ain't, then you're a
faded amphora full of rock-solid olive oil on the way there,

dig?
Mock'st thou the Sun Stud, thou feeble, fobbing, folly-fallen,
filth-maundering faun? expostulated Apollo, reverting to the
King James diction of the highmost holy and triply hip
Olympians;
Mock'st thou the God of Music, the Grandmaster of Melody, the
Star of Harmony, the Ipsissimus of Rhythm and the Twitchin'
Prince of Perfect Pitch?
For this hubris, Apollo thundered, It's you and me behind the
tree, two flutes, mano a mano!

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So Marsyas, that skinny little hipster, follows Apollo into
a gorgeous chorus of laurels, where the Sun Stud parks his
chariot and chooses all nine of the Muses to judge the flute
fight.
And then, as the faun's furry fingers begin to fidget over the
shinbone, Apollo unpacks his axe: a nine-foot number cut from
the dick-bone of an uptight Titan who was 86'd when the god
conked him on 93 of his 94 noggins.
It was the grooviest tube you ever laid eyes on, with classy
Parnassian transverse action and gold-plating the entire length
of the whole sweet scintillating cylinder — I mean, there was
even gold-plating on the holes in the fingerholes!
Zeus have mercy, said a totally snowed Marsyas, glimming Apollo's
axe, I'm screwed as the stoner who tried to seduce Medusa.

Let the cutting contest begin, sang the Muses, and Apollo, by
divine right, kicked off.
The Sun Stud blew a riff so lushly and lusciously, so lovingly
and far-above-ingly hovering, that all the flowers in a five-
mile radius simply flipped their pistils, while every grape
within range of the riff yelled I SURRENDER!, deliciously
capitulating and squeezing itself into wine.
And dig it — the Sun Stud was just noodlin'!
But Marsyas had hubris with a capital HU, so he picked up the
shinbone and blew a harsh, flat, deeeaaatt, dee-at-du-at —

two bars, and both of them closed on Sunday.
The Muses were not amused.
Euterpe in particular got testy, saying Hey, man, you gonna lay
down a sound, or goat-shag around?
But wait: the satyr had more to say.
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He followed up with a phrase so raw and caustic, so scraped and
abraded, so funk'd up and hunkered down that even the rocks on
the mountain started bouncin', saying, Yeah, man, we can dance
to that, let's Lindy-hop atop the tip and bop into a avalanche
on Parnassus!
Not bad, said Apollo, who had slipped on a pair of shades as
dark as Hades, not bad for a sad-ass, grape-shot, shook-up and
unshaven satyr — but here's what you left out:
And so saying the Sun Stud blew an impossibly groovy super-
structure over the now-dessicated echoes of the previous
phrase, climbing up the sky like a fiery dynamo all the way
up to the hatbrim of Helios, blazing and blaring and flaring
and flaming and flipping the wig of the Sun itself!
I GIVE IT A TEN! cried Clio, kissin' her scorecard.
TEN MORE! cried Terpsichore.
TEN AGAIN! cried Calliope, and so on down the line, every one
of those nine fine sisters layin' the grooviest of kudos on
the Sun Stud.
Lost in the applause and the general commotion of Apollonian
stroke-stroke was pitiful little Marsyas and his tinhorn of a
shinbone;
But presently, he got his room-sized remnant of a goat-ass
together and said:
Yeah, well, I don't wanna cloud your soaringly laurelled brow,
or bring down the high vibe of the smokin' overture to your
Olympian symphony, but the gig ain't over till the fat Fate
sings.
And with that, he put a hairy lip to the shinbone, and for the
first time Marsyas tried blowin' from the soul instead of from
his greedy, needy, bursting-at-the-seams and me-first ego;
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But the cat had been blowin' himself without knowin' himself for
so long, he couldn't but manage one-half of a feeble tweet, an
off-key squawk that pushed up a daisy but left the rest of the
meadow unmolested.

I GIVE IT A ONE, yawned Euterpe.

ONE LESS, Urania wailed.

There's gonna be one less, 'cause you just messed with your last
Maestro, Marsyas, intoned Apollo, who was switchin' instruments
from flute to shiv.

After all, added the Sun Stud, smiling, We didn't call this a
cuttin' contest for nuthin'!

In a trice, Marsyas found himself all trussed up in some S/M rig,
upside-down in the crotch of a tree.

And man, that sorry satyr began to wail:

Pleeease, Lord Apollo of the high-shinin' dome and stainless
radiance, pleeease Mr. Sun Stud of the grooviest music in
perpetuity!

I never meant to dis your blissful beatitude or drag your
dazzling chariot or knock any gems from the crown of your
outatown sound;

All I ever humbly wanted to do, just for one sweet flick in the
flux we call existence, was to — swing with the infinite!

Now truth be told, the Sun Stud was not entirely a celestial
scumbag.

Ovid and the Latin cats gave Apollo a bad rep, but there was
more to the dude than is generally construed by the moth-eaten
academic myth-wigs who specialize in myth-interpretation.

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Anyway, Apollo dug where the satyr was coming from, or at any
rate where he wanted to be coming from.

So placing his face to the faun's, he swung: Dig me, Marsyas, I
am the Sun Stud within you.

You wanna blow somethin' real, somethin' with real feelin',
somethin' from a place as deep as Delphi, somethin' that blows

the minds of gods and goddesses, demigods and demigoddesses,
men and women and androgynous composites and all the wailin'
shades in Hades up the River Styx without a paddle —
Then you gotta summon me from your gut, Bubba, you gotta praise
Jove and can the jive.
You wanna get to the good stuff, we — meanin' you and me, the
God Within, dig? — gotta strip away all that pseudo-hipster
shit.
And that, concluded Apollo, flippin' the shiv, is precisely what
this little surgical procedure, this triple-hipster bypass, is
all about.
Uh, is it gonna hurt? winced Marysas, shook to the hooves.
Like a Great Motherfucker, said Apollo.
And as the Sun Stud exquisitely stuck that shiv into the
quivering shinbone of Marsyas, and peeled off fluted scrolls
of goateed skin,
The satyr wailed amazing jazz from a sacred place inside himself
— best he'd ever blown — and the flood of his tears brought
forth a limpid river, the coolest and clearest and dearest
flow in all of ancient Phrygia.

So all you cats of a latter day,
You saunterin' fauns and scintillant nymphs in the post-
postmodern aftermath of myth,
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You can have your sweet fun swingin' away in cyberspace,
Your good times groovin' on the bad jazz of Kenny G,
Your high times chompin' on mellow portobellos with melted brie,
But when the God Within says, Gimme some skin, Jim,
You got two possible modes of reply:
You can sputter, in defiance and denial, Gimme some thumb, chum,
you ain 't so dumb;
Or you can say, Hey, baby — it may be painful, but since every-
thing else is extraneous, let's get subcutaneous.
And by layin' some skin on the God Within,
You'll find the true you is groovy, blue, in tune with the Muses
and lucid as roses, and solid as marble the whole way through.

Later, satyr.