

ACIS AND GALATEA

A Pastoral

by John Gay, Alexander Pope,
and John Hughes

In an idyllic pastoral setting, shepherds and nymphs celebrate their carefree life and the perpetual joys of nature. A nymph of the sea, Galatea, longs to be reunited with her beloved, the shepherd Acis. The Nereid attempts to persuade the birds to cease their cheerful song, as they awaken her desire for him. As soon as she departs, Acis appears, seeking his fair Galatea. The shepherd Damon tries to persuade him to abandon his search and join his fellows in their easy recreation, but Acis now sees Galatea and praises her beauty. The two are reunited and declare their happy love for each other.

Shepherds and nymphs warn the lovers of the arrival of Polyphemus, the Cyclops. The giant comes stalking through the forest, intent on having Galatea for himself. Horrified, Galatea rejects the deformed creature. The youth Coridon advises Polyphemus to be gentler in his wooing if he wishes to succeed in winning her. Acis wants to leap to Galatea's defense though he is but a mortal. Damon once more reminds him that love is fleeting, but Galatea proclaims her constancy to Acis, and the two affirm their love and fidelity to each other. The jealous Polyphemus, overhearing these declarations, hurls a rock at Acis, and kills him. Galatea mourns his death, and is joined in lamentation by the shepherds. They remind the sea nymph that with her divine powers she can make Acis immortal, so Galatea transforms him into a murmuring fountain.

— Gilbert Blin