II

THE LOSS OF TROY

_Aeneas Complies with Dido's Request_

They all hushed, their looks fixed and attentive.
High on his couch like a father Aeneas responded,
"The grief you want revived, my queen, is unbearable.
Greeks uprooted Troy's pitiful kingdom
and wealth, and I myself witnessed the misery:
I shared it in large part. Who could describe it—
Dolopians, Myrmidons, hard troops of Ulysses—
and hold back tears? Late-night dew has already
dropped from the sky: declining stars are making us drowsy.

10 Still if you greatly desire to hear of our downfall,
to learn briefly of Troy's ultimate struggle,
I'll speak, though it hurts and chills my heart to remember.

_The Appearance of the Trojan Horse_

"War had broken the Greeks: Fates had rejected
their leaders and many years were lost in their efforts.
They built a horse high as a hill with the cunning
of Pallas the Goddess, fitting sections of pine in the rib-cage.
It seemed a prayer for safe return—that was the rumor—
in fact they'd secretly drawn lots for the bodies
of men and shut them blindly inside, deep in its cavern:
they'd filled the huge belly with weapons and soldiers.

_Rejoicing in Troy_

"From Troy you can see the well-known Tenedos Island,
resourceful and rich while Priam’s kingdom was standing—
now there’s only a bay with dangerous mooring.
The Greeks left for that empty shore and they hid there.
We thought they’d gone, followed a wind to Mycenae.
All of Troy felt a release from long lamentation.
We opened gates and took delight in visiting empty
Greek camps. We stared at desolate beaches:
here Dolopians camped, there a savage Achilles.

30 Here was a place for ships. There, a front they had fought for.

What to Do with the Horse?

“We stared at the deadly gift of husbandless Pallas,
amazed at the horse’s mass. Thymoetes advised us
first to haul it inside our walls to the fortress.
Was he a traitor? Or Troy’s fate was already
tilted . . . but Capys and some with superior judgment
ordered the Greeks’ design dumped in the water.
‘Light it,’ somebody shouted, ‘burn the treacherous offering!’
‘Probe its hiding-places, puncture the belly.’
The crowd split into groups, opposed or uncertain.

Laōcoōn Condemns the Horse

40 “Before all else, with a large crowd of attendants,
Laōcoōn ran from the high citadel, hotly
calling from far off, ‘Are my wretched countrymen crazy?
You think the enemy’s gone? You believe that a single
Greek gift is guileless? Is that what Ulysses is known for?
Either the Greeks hide in that wooden interior
or someone’s crafted a weapon to spy on your city,
to get inside your walls and leer in your houses.
Don’t trust the horse, you people of Troy. Some trick is concealed
here.
Whatever it is, I fear Greeks even with presents.’

50 He finished and threw an immense spear at the horse’s
flank with all his strength. It struck at the rounded
belly—the thing stood there quivering. Noises
came from the cave-like womb that sounded like groaning.
If Gods’ word or our own thoughts were more lucky,
that steel’s thrust would have bloodied the Greeks who were
hidden,
Troy would be standing, Priam’s high towers remaining.
The Capture of Sinon

"But look: Trojan shepherds meanwhile were dragging a man to the king, hands tied at his back, and an uproar around him. Sinon had known what was coming beforehand: he'd rigged this capture himself to open a Trojan gate for Greeks. A brash character, ready either for twirling lies or falling and dying. Young Trojans were running from everywhere, wanting to see him, crowds jostled and poked fun at the captive. Listen to fraud now: learn from a single Greek how all of them lie.

Pity for Sinon

"There he stood in our sight, surrounded and trembling, unarmed, rolling his eyes at our Phrygian armor, 'What world now,' he cried, 'what waters are able to take me? What end remains for someone so wretched? I lost my place for good among Greeks, and the Trojans too will hate me and call for punishment, bloodshed.' His moans changed our minds. All of our harshness dwindled. We urged him to say what bloodline he'd come from, what he could say, or hope to achieve as a captive.

The Enmity of Ulysses

"After his fear finally settled he answered, 'Whatever happens, King of Troy, all that I tell you is true. First, my people—I cannot deny it—are Greek. If Luck painted Sinon a wretched person she'll never paint me a joker or liar. Has Palamedes' name come to your hearing by chance, Nauplius' son? His fine reputation was widespread. But Greeks charged his innocent person falsely just for opposing the war: they viciously framed him and sent him to die—and soon as he lost daylight they mourned him!

The man was my close blood relation and comrade. My Father, poor in my early years, sent me to soldier with Palamedes. So long as he ruled safely and prospered in royal councils, we shared some of that honor and pride. But after slander from vicious Ulysses—you know who I mean—my friend withdrew from the shoreline of life. Stunned, I dragged out sorrow and darkness,
raging inside at the death of an innocent comrade. I spoke out madly, swearing vengeance if any chance came, if I ever re-entered in triumph my Greek homeland. My words provoked the bitterest hatred. That was my first slip: from there it was always Ulysses threatening new charges, scattering tricky tales among people, or openly looking for face-downs.

100 He hardly rested until the collision of Calchas . . . but why unroll all that? It's thankless and futile. Why stall it? If all Greeks are considered alike you've heard enough. Impose your overdue torture. Atreus' sons would pay you plenty! Ulysses would love it.'

The Need for Sacrifice

"No: we yearned to hear and study the motives, blind to his deep malice, to Greek machinations. He faltered; then he went on with spurious feeling. 'Exhausted Greeks had often hoped to abandon Troy, to quit and run from a war that was endless."

110 If only they had! But just as often a bitter sea-storm scared them. Southwinds kept them from going. Especially after this maple planking was fitted, the horse stood there—but all the sky was an uproar. Confused, we sent Eurypylus back to the shrine of Apollo to learn more. He brought back dismal word from the temple:

Blood pleased the Winds in the death of a virgin
before, when Greeks sailed to the shore of the Trojans;
blood is required for return now, through a single Greek's death.

Soon as that word came to the people's
ears their thoughts scrambled, cold tremors assaulted their bone marrow: who'd be claimed by the Fates and Apollo? Here Ulysses dragged out Calchas the seer, raised an uproar there in our midst and called for the heavens' will. Many had warned me already of cruel plots of this schemer. They quietly watched what was coming. For ten long days the tent of Calchas was silent. His voice named no man to be sent to the slaughter. Finally, goaded by fierce yells from Ulysses, he broke silence and fixed on me—as agreed—for the altar.

130 They all approved. What everyone dreaded beforehand, changed into one man's miserable death, they accepted.
Book II

Sinon’s Apparent Escape

‘Soon the unspeakable day arrived. They were ready with salt meal for the rite. They wreathed my temples with fillets. Somehow I fled from death. I admit it: I broke from my bindings and hid in a lake’s marshy sedge through the night hours until the Greeks sailed—if only they would sail! Now I can never hope to gaze on my ancient homeland, children I love, a Father I long for: Greeks will probably punish my family, make them pay for my guilty escape and wretchedly kill them. That’s why I beg you: through Powers above who are conscious of truth, if anything’s left to us humans, a remnant of pure trust: have pity on someone who suffered greatly. Pity a man not deserving such sorrow.’

Priam Himself Pardons Sinon

‘We gave him life for those tears, and even compassion: Priam himself first commanded the captive’s tight chains to be loosened and spoke as a friend would: ‘Whoever you are, the Greeks are gone now and forgotten. You are ours. And tell the truth when I ask you: why did they build a massive horse? Who designed it? What God does it pray to? Or is it a battle contraption?’

The Greeks’ Quarrel with Pallas

‘He stopped and Sinon, trained in the art of deception by Greeks, lifted a chainless hand to the heavens. ‘You Fires that last forever, undamageable Powers, I call you to witness,’ he said, ‘by the altar and horrible dagger I fled from, the Gods’ fillets I wore as a victim: allow me to end my sacred Greek obligations, allow me to hate my countrymen, tell every secret pertinent now, and not be bound by the laws of my homeland. You Trojans, only keep your trust and a promise: save me if I save you: if truth has worth then reward it. All the Greeks’ hopes and trust in the war from the outset rested in constant help from Pallas. But after the reckless Diomedes aided that crime-monger, Ulysses, to raid her revered shrine, stealing the fateful Palladium, killing guards on the citadel’s rooftop, grabbing her sacred statue, daring to bloody and manhandle garlands reserved for the virginal Goddess:'
from that time on the Greeks' hopes were a backward
170 gliding flow, their strength broken, the Goddess against them.
Pallas gave them signs, nothing was doubtful:
her image had hardly arrived in camp when the upraised
eyes flashed and flamed, the torso exuded
salt sweat and it leaped from the ground—amazing to say it—
three times by itself, shaking the shield and the javelin!
Calchas immediately chanted, "Try for escape on the water.
Greek force cannot demolish the city
unless you return home for signs of the Goddess's power.
She carried your rounded keels to sea in the first place."
180 So now with a wind they head for their native Mycenae.
Armed and ready with Gods on their side, they will recross
the sea and arrive suddenly. Calchas will sort out the omens.
They stood this figure here to atone for the insult
to Pallas' statue and power, a crime they've regretted.
And Calchas commanded the huge mass to be raised up,
oakwood-plaited, left right out in the sunlight,
to stop your people from guiding it past the gates of the city
and earning help—our ancient religious protection.
For if your hands profane our gift to the Goddess,
190 Troy and Priam's rule will meet with total destruction—
I wish the Gods could turn that curse on its speaker!—
but if your hands help it to climb to the city,
Asia will march in a great war on Peloponnesian
walls: that doom waits for all of our children.'

Sinon's Trickery Works

"Because of Sinon's deceit and treacherous tactics
the thing was believed. Captured by gushing tears and by lying—
not by Diomedes or Larissaean Achilles—
ten years of war and a thousand ships had not beat us.

Laöcoön and his Sons are Killed

"But then a monstrous, far more frightening omen
200 crossed our path, disordered our feeling and shocked us.
The priest of Neptune chosen by lot was Laöcoön:
just as he killed a large bull at a ritual altar,
imagine: two sea-snakes came from Tenedos' quiet
water—how cold to remember!—their coils were enormous,
they leaned onto waves and drove at our beaches together,
breasting the seas. Their raised crests were a bloody
red high on the swells, and trailing behind them
were long backs and slithering tails in the current.
Making a stir in the frothy surf they already
reached our land, eyes burning bloody and fiery,
flickering tongues and mouths licking and hissing.
We scattered, pale at the vision. The serpents were heading
straight for Laöcoön: first their windings entangled
his two small sons’ bodies, and each snake
bit off pieces of hapless muscle and chewed them.
Laöcoön ran to help, carrying weapons:
they seized him, tied him in huge rounds that already
circled his chest and neck twice, down to the scaly
tails, their tall necks rising above him.
The man pulled at the knots, he struggled to free them.
His garlands a slaver of dark bloodstain and poison,
he sent a horrible scream to the sky at that moment,
just as a bull bellows after it’s wounded,
runs from the altar and shakes a clumsy ax from its neckbone.
Slowly the two big serpents left for the temple
heights. They made for truculent Pallas’s fortress
to hide at her feet, by the round shield of the Goddess.
A new and sinuous terror certainly troubled
every heart now. A few claimed he deserved it:
‘Laöcoön paid for the sin of damaging sacred
wood with a spear.’ ‘The weapon he threw up was evil,’
they shouted, ‘Lead the horse to the Goddess’s temple,
invoke her will!’

*The Trojans Lead the Horse into Troy*

“So. We spread our walls and bared the homes of our city.
Everyone worked: wheels went under the horse’s
hooves for rolling; we stretched towlines of oakum
tight at the neck. A death-machine rose to our wall-tops,
crammed with weapons. Boys went hymning around it,
unmarried girls kept touching the towlines and laughing.
The horse moved closer. It menaced the heart of the city.
Ah, my country! The Gods’ home, famous in battle,
you walls of Troy! The horse got stalled at the gateway
itself four times, four times weapons clanked in that belly
and still we pushed, mindless or blind from some madness.
We brought the beast, our curse, to a stop at the temple.
Cassandra too opened her mouth about coming
death. At a God’s word we Trojans never believed her.
Cursed, we adorned the shrine of each God on that final
day and strung festival greens through the city.

The Attack Begins

250 “Meanwhile the sky changed. Dusk ran to the Ocean, wrapping in deep shadow the earth and the heavens—and Greek lies. People were wearily scattered throughout the city in silence. Sleep gathered their bodies. The Greek fleet sailed from Tenedos Island, squadroned ships in the quiet companionable moonlight. Heading for well-known shore, the flagship discreetly signaled by flare; Sinon, saved by some unfair God or Fate, secretly loosened the pinewood doors for Greeks shut in that belly: the opened

260 horse returned men to the night-air, glad to emerge from their hardwood cave. Thessandrus and Sthenelus, leaders. Cruel Ulysses slid down a rope. Acamas, Thoas and Pyrrhus, Achilles’ son. Machaon, a chieftain. Menelaus. Epeus himself, the hoax’s designer. Wine and sleep had buried the town. They attacked it, cut down the guard, opened a gate for an army of welcome friends, joined and plotted their forces.

A Vision of Hector

“The hour had come when the first relaxation has started to seep through sickly men, thanks to the Sky-Gods,

270 when look—a vision appeared: Hector was grieving right there before my eyes, heavily weeping, dirtied by blood, dust, the chariot’s dragging, feet pierced and swollen by thongs at the ankles. My God, what man was this? How changed from the Hector who’d galloped to Troy sporting the gear of Achilles and hurled Phrygian fire at the ships of Danaans! Mucked beard, his hair stiffened with bloodshed, he carried so many wounds he’d taken defending Troy’s walls. Now I seemed to be weeping

280 myself, I called to the man and questioned him sadly, ‘Light of Troy, surest hope of our people, what kept you so far so long? What shore do you come from? How we’ve missed you, Hector, after so many deaths of friends, the jumbled work of our people for worn-out Troy. What criminal dirt has disfigured your clear face? Why do I see lacerations?’ But no, he’d waste no time responding to trifles.
Chest heaving, he moaned deeply and told me:
'Son of the Goddess, run, escape from the firestorm!

290 Greeks hold your walls. Troy will drop from its summit. Enough’s been done for Priam’s nation. If Trojan defense were possible, here was the hand to defend it!
You will be trusted with Troy’s House-Gods, our relics: take them as Fates’ friends and look to the massive walls you’ll found at last, after you’ve wandered the sea-lanes.’ He stopped and his hand held out powerful Vesta’s fillets and permanent fire from the heart of the temple.

_Aeneas Longs to Do Battle_

‘A mingled wail meanwhile came from the city.
More and more, although my Father Anchises’

300 house was far removed and shrouded by foliage,
I heard noise, a mounting terror of warfare.
Shaken from sleep I climbed upstairs to the building’s roof and stood there, my ears excited and tingling.
Fire appeared like the fire in a cornfield when Southwinds rage, or rapids that rush from a hillside to flatten farmland, proud crops flattened, the labor of oxen, trees dragged down headlong: the farmer, astounded, stands on a tall rock resigned to the bedlam.
Surely the truth was clear now, the deception of Greeks plain. Already Deiphobus’ stately house crumbled, the Fire-God above it; his neighbor’s, Ucalexon’s, burned, and the broad Straits of Sigea mirrored the flames. Men cried out, trumpet’s blaring had mounted, I grabbed for a sword madly—arming was mindless, yet my spirits burned to fight, to muster a column of friends and rush to the palace. Anger and frenzy drove me headlong. It seemed splendid to die in my armor. But look: a priest named Panthus, eluding the weapons of Greeks: Othrys’ son, from the temple of Phoebus.

320 Holding relics himself, he carried some conquered Gods, and a small grandson. He ran to my doorstep distracted.
‘Panthus, how is the palace? What place do we fight from?’
I’d hardly spoken when Panthus moaned and responded, ‘The last day’s come, the unavoidable ending of Troy. Trojans belong to the past with their signal Trojan glory. Jupiter’s angrily shifted all to Argos: Greeks have burned and mastered the city. That tall horse we stood in the midst of our buildings
poured out troops. Sinon's won—scattering arson, cavorting. Thousands of men marched through the open gates, just as they once marched from splendid Mycenae. Others have blocked winding alleys with weapons: tight steel lines confront you, they glimmer and stand there, ready to kill. The first watchmen hardly attempted to hold the gates. When Mars is blind who can resist him? The words of Othrys' son and the will of some Sky-God moved me to arm and burn. A grief-spreading Fury yelled in my ear to hurl death-cries to heaven.

Ripheus joined me, a friend. An excellent fighter,

Epytus. Dymas and Hypanis came through the moonlight, swelling our ranks. Coroebus followed, a younger son of Mygdon. Just that week he'd happened to enter Troy fired by a mad love for Cassandra, bringing a son-in-law's help to the Trojans and Priam—vainly. He'd paid no heed to that Fury-lashed woman's warning.

Seeing men gather, anxious for battle, I started to say, 'Your hearts are strong but it's futile, men. If you really desire to back me by daring

the worst and last, admit what luck's in the matter: every altar and shrine empty, abandoned by every God the empire stood on. You're helping a city in flames. Die, then: rush in the middle of battle: the only help for a loser is hoping for nothing to help him.'

Clashes with Greeks

"That's how frenzy addled men's minds. Like a wolfpack hunting in dark fog when desperate hunger blindly compels them to leave pups in the wolf-den waiting with dry mouths, we maneuvered by hostile weapons, hardly in doubt about death. We made for the city center. The night was black, hovering, hollow. Who can describe that night's death and destruction? What speech or tears are ever right for such struggle? An old city fell, a ruler for decades. Hundreds of listless corpses casually littered yards, streets, and Gods' venerable doorways. And Trojans were not alone paying with bloodshed: strength often came back to the guts of the losers and Greek conquerors fell. Everywhere bitter
mourning, everywhere fright, and death with a hundred expressions.

370 The first Greek to confront us, followed by several friends, was Androgeos. Guessing naively our column was Greek, he spoke up blithely and harried us outright: ‘Move it, you men! Why are you stalling and dragging behind while others burn, plunder and haul off Troy? You came just now from our tall-masted vessels?’ He stopped and guessed shortly—no answer we gave him hit the mark—he’d slipped into enemy circles. Stepping back dumbfounded, he ended the parley just like a man whose weight comes down on a serpent abruptly in rough bush, he hurriedly backs off, scared by the angry swell of that purple and rising neck: Androgeos feared what he saw and retreated. We rushed them. Keeping our ranks close we out-flanked them, they hardly knew the locale, terror constrained them: we killed them. Fortune favored the first of our efforts.

Disguised as Greeks

‘And here Coroebus, buoyed with success and with spirit, called out, ‘My friends, Fortune’s pointed the way to our safety first: let’s follow the right path she has shown us, swap shields with the Greeks and wear their equipment ourselves. Who needs courage to fight them? Be cunning! They’ll give us their own arms.’ While speaking he put on Androgeos’ crested helmet and shield with its graceful design. He strapped a Greek sword near his hipbone. Ripheus gladly followed, together with Dymas, the whole group—each man armed with booty just taken. We moved and mixed among Greeks, hardly by Power of our own in the groping dark, skirmishing often. We grappled and sent down scores of men to the Hell-God. Some of them fled to the ships to look for protecting beachhead while shame or fear forced others to climb in the horse again to hide in a big familiar belly.

Reversals

‘It’s right to believe in nothing if Gods countermand you. Witness the virgin daughter of Priam, Cassandra, dragged by her strung-out hair from the temple altar of Pallas, her eyes yearning, reaching in vain to the heavens,
her eyes—for her soft hands were manacled tightly.
Coroebus could not stand the maddening picture.
He threw himself, a certain death, at the midst of the column.
We all followed in close ranks to attack them.

410 But first a bombardment: from high roofs of the temple
friends overwhelmed us—a pitiful slaughter—
the look of our Greek armor and helmets had fooled them.
Then the Greeks howled in rage at our stealing the virgin,
they gathered and struck us from all sides. Ajax was fiercest,
Atreus’ sons and a whole Dolopian cohort
drove like a whirlwind splitting at times into warring
gusts, Westwind and Northwind, the Eastwind that glories
in Dawn’s horses, when trees groan and a foam-flecked
Nereus rattles his trident, churning the sea-depths.

420 Troops we’d scattered that blurred night through the shadows,
men we’d tricked and chased through all of the city,
showed up now. First they recognized every deceitful
sword and shield. They noted the wrong sound of our voices.
The mob swiftly crushed us, Penelus toppling
Coroebus first by hand close to the war-strong
Pallas’ altar. Ripheus fell, one of the justest
men at Troy, preserving the best of the law-courts—
Gods may see things otherwise—Hypanis, Dymas,
killed by friends. None of your reverence, Panthus,

430 no Sun-God’s headband could hide you or keep you from
falling.

_Aeneas Escapes to the Palace_

“You ashes of Troy! My friends in that final cremation,
witness how when you fell I never avoided
a Greek spear or defeat. If the Fates had been willing,
this hand would have earned my death.

But then we were pulled off—
Iphitus, Pelias and I, Iphitus heavier
now with age and Pelias slowed by a wound from Ulysses.
Shouts called us straight to the palace of Priam.
Fighting here was most intense, as if there were fighting
nowhere else, no one dying in all of the city.

440 The War-God raged, Greeks rushed at the palace,
we saw them ram doors in shielded formation,
they hooked ladders on walls, and close to the entry
itself men struggled to climb—left hands upraising
shields to ward off arrows, right hands grasping at ledges.
Trojans who faced them wrenched roofing from towers, palace battlements—ready, now that the final hour of death had appeared, to defend with such weapons. Old gold-leafed oakbeams, the pride of our Fathers, tumbled down. Trojans below at the doorway closed up ranks and blocked it, swords in a cluster.

*Aeneas Helps the Rooftop Defenders*

"My spirits revived: I’d run to the roof of the building, add my strength to the men there, help out the losers. I knew of a door in back, an invisible entrance used by Priam’s family, an old way in the building. So long as the kingdom lasted, Andromache often had come this way sadly, unattended, to visit her in-laws or lead Astyanax, her boy, to his grandsire. I slipped upstairs, emerged on the rooftop and looked out: sorry Trojans hurled down impotent weapons.

A tower stood at the edge, raised to the highest stars from the roof. All of Troy could be sighted once from here, Greek ships and camps of Achaians. Now we chopped around it wherever a higher level exposed weak joints. We ripped out and toppled the tower from its high base—a sudden destruction fell roaring, dragging down as it slashed through Greek ranks. But others ran up. None of our boulders, no weapon now could stop them.

*Pyrrhus at Priam’s Doors*

"Right at the entrance’s very threshold was Pyrrhus. He leaped in that light, weapons flashy and brazen, just like a snake in sunlight after it’s fattened on bitter plants in cold ground covered by winter: now with its skin sloughed, new and sleek as an infant, chest lifted, it twirls unctuous hind-parts, flicking a three-forked tongue high in the sunlight. Hulking Peripas joined him; Achilles’ chariot driver and armor bearer, Automedon; whole Scyrian cohorts: they all bore down on the doors or flung torches at rooftops. Pyrrhus led on. He gripped a two-edged ax and he broke through the hard doors, he sheared sockets from door-rails of bronze: already he’d gouged a panel of solid oak, making a hole large as a window. The palace interior showed, long corridors opened."
Rooms of ancient kings were revealed, and of Priam. Armored men showed themselves in the foyer. Inside however the house was a tangle of tumult and misery. Women yelled and wailed to the concave ceilings above them—noise carried to gold constellations. Trembling mothers wandered the length of their bedrooms or clung to doors, embracing and giving them kisses. Pyrrhus drove with his father's force: nothing could stop him, bolts, guards, nothing. His battering weakened door-rails, dislodged them from sockets, and crumbled them forward.

Force made its way. Greeks broke through the entrance, cut down sentries, and filled a broad space with their soldiers. Rapids are not so wild when they ravage a levee, masses of water breaching and wrecking the barrier, raging across a meadow, whole fields in a body, dragging off cattle and stalls. I witnessed the rabid, murderous Pyrrhus and Atreus' sons at our threshold. I saw Hecuba's hundred daughters by marriage, and Priam—an altar he'd blessed with fire he'd soon smear with his own blood. Fifty bridal rooms, our great hope for descendants, doorframes proud of Eastern gilding and prizes, fell forward. Greeks took them. Our hearth-fires were failing.

Priam and Hecuba Seek Refuge

"Perhaps you'll also ask what happened to Priam. Soon as he saw Troy falling and taken, palace doors destroyed, Greeks in the building's interior, he foolishly cupped his quavering shoulders in rusty armor. Old as he was he belted a futile sword on, determined to die in the midst of invaders. Under the bare axis of sky in the central court was a large altar next to an aging laurel that leaned on the altar and thickly shaded the House-Gods. Hecuba huddled around the altar in vain with her daughters, doves in a dark storm diving and swerving. Often they crouched and embraced a Goddess's image. Hecuba, seeing Priam himself decked in a young man's armor, asked, 'What madness forced you, my pitiful husband, to bear such arms now? Where will you rush to? The hour is dire not for help or defenses like yours—no, not even if Hector were present. Come here, please. Either the altar will guard us
or we’ll all die.’ She stopped speaking, embraced him and sat the aging king on a seat by the altar.

_Pyrrhus Kills Polites_

‘But look: one of the sons of Priam, Polites, running from Pyrrhus’ killing, eluding the spear-throws of Greeks through a long arcade, circled the empty courtyard, wounded. Pyrrhus threatened and sweated behind him. Now he’s gripped him: now he pushes the spear in. Just when the son had escaped in the eyes of his parents, he fell in thick blood and emptied his life out.

Priam, although surrounded now by the dying, could not hold back or keep from screaming in outrage: ‘For such a crime, for all your daring,’ he shouted, ‘may God grant you the prize and credit you rightly deserve, if goodness and care exist in the heavens! To make me witness my son’s killing in person, smearing a father’s face with family murder—

not even Achilles, hardly your father, related to hostile Priam that way. The rights and trust of a lowly petitioner shamed him. He gave me the bloodless body of Hector to bury, and sent me back to my kingdom.’ Finished, the old man threw an impotent weapon without much force. It clunked on the shield that quickly repelled it, only scratching the boss high on the circle.

_Pyrrhus Kills Priam_

‘‘Well, then,’ Pyrrhus answered, ‘carry a message. Go to Achilles, my Father: remember to tell him how vile were all the acts of Pyrrhus, his bastard.

But first you’ll die.’ While speaking he dragged the king to the altar itself as he doddered and slipped on the thick blood of Polites. He twisted the king’s hair with a left hand and brandished a sword with the right, then sank it deep in the ribcage. So Priam’s luck ended. That was the finish that took him by chance. He’d watched Troy in flames and collapsing,

Troy with so many once-proud peoples and homelands, the ruler of Asia! He’d lay there, a big trunk on the beach sand, head swiped from the shoulders. The body was nameless.
Aeneas is Tempted to Kill Helen

"Then for the first time brute terror surrounded
and stunned me. My dear Father rose in a vision,
and Franco rose out, viously wounded. Lonely Creusa was rising,
my wrecked house, a dying little Iulus.
I looked behind, searching for forces around me.
They'd all left, thrown themselves in exhaustion
downward, madly flung themselves in the firestorm.
So I was alone, still living. I recognized Helen:
keeping quiet, she hid in a dark place by the doorway
of Vesta the Virgin—fires gave off a glare when I wandered
past, my vision carried around and about here.
Dreading Troy's wrath now that Troy was demolished,
dreading the Greeks' angry reprisals, having deserted
her husband—a curse on both Troy and her homeland—
she tried to hide herself and sat by the altar.
What heat burned in my mind, what anger and vengeance,
to make her pay for the criminal fall of my country:
'Should Helen actually gaze on her native Mycenae,
march through Sparta safely, a queen in some triumph,
look on her husband, parents, her home and her children,
with Trojan women—Trojan slaves—in attendance?
With Priam put to the sword and Troy an inferno?
With every Trojan beach sweating and bloody?
It must not be. Although no name is remembered
for punishing women—the work merits no honor—
I'd still be praised for quashing a curse, for inflicting
deserved pain. I'd fill my heart with a joyful
flame of revenge and assuage relatives' ashes.'

Venus Rebukes and Enlightens Aeneas

"I threw out those words, my mind in the grip of some madness,
when there before my eyes, never so brilliant,
my dear Mother appeared, a clear radiance glowing
through all that darkness, her godhead displayed in a vision
accustomed to dazzling Sky-Gods. Her right hand restrained me;
after a pause her rose mouth gave me a warning:
'My son, what lawless anger and great sorrow compel you?
Why this fury? Where's your concern for your mother?
Look first where you left your father Anchises,
worn with age. Is your wife Creusa surviving,
your boy Ascanius? Greeks were around them completely
in close ranks: unless my love had withstood them,
600 fire would have seized your family, Greek swords would have
drained them.
It’s not for you to damn the face of Tyndareus’ daughter
or guilty Paris. No, the rancor of Sky-God and Goddess
rips out Trojan wealth and levels your city.
Look: I remove all the cloud which is blurring
your human vision now, that mist which is dulling
your eyes, so you won’t fear commands of your mother
at all, and not neglect to follow my orders.
There in that mass of rubble where stone has been broken
from stone you see dust and smoke mixing and curling,
610 and Neptune: he heaves with a huge trident that rumbles
foundation and wall: he tears the city completely
loose from its base. And there: Juno, armored in iron,
first at the Scaeian gate, fiercely tenacious and madly
calling for men from the ships.
Look behind you now: Tritonian Pallas, presiding
high on that fortress, a stormcloud flashing, wild as a Gorgon.
Jupiter strengthens Greek spirit himself and in person,
building strife and abetting the Gods’ war upon Trojans.
Escape, my son. Put an end to your struggle.
620 I won’t leave you: I’ll bring you safe to the home of your father.’

_Aeneas Returns Home_

“She stopped and disappeared in the dense, shadowy darkness.
Terrifying forms had appeared, hostile to Trojans,
great and powerful Gods.
Then I saw the whole city actually settle
in cinders, the Troy of Neptune pried from its bases
just like an old ash-tree high in a mountain,
repeatedly struck by two-edged axes of farmers
trying to fell it: it still threatens to topple
when each blow rustles its hair, jolting its forehead.
630 Slowly the wounds win: finally sighing,
torn from that ridge, it drags down clutter behind it.
Down from the roof, led by a Goddess, I managed among them:
Greeks and fire gave way, armor retreated.
Anchises Refuses to Leave

"Soon as I reached the house and door of my Father, our ancient home, I wanted to carry my Father first into high mountains: I looked for him foremost. The man refused, with Troy cut down, to continue living or suffer exile. 'You, with your youthful blood intact,' he said, 'your strength hard as a standing oak—you should escape. Had Gods of the sky wanted my life to continue, they'd save my house. I saw my fill of disaster before when I lived through Troy's earlier capture. So here is my laid-out body: greet it and leave it. My hand will find some death; or Greeks will have mercy, finding my wealth. The toss in the grave will be easy. I've stalled death for years now, useless and hated by God from the time when mankind's king and the Father of heaven exhaled fiery wind of lightning and scorched me.'

So he went on, fixed in memory, rigid. We all wept—my wife Creusa was crying. Ascanius, all our household—afraid my Father would bring us all down with himself, pile one death on another. Still he refused: he clung to one purpose, to sit there. Moved to fight once more, I longed for some wretched death. What else had luck or talking provided? 'You really expect I could run off and leave you, Father? What sin falls from the lips of my Father! If Gods are glad nothing is left of our Trojan grandeur, if adding Troy's death to your own and your children's will bring you joy, the door to such killing is open. Pyrrhus will stand here shortly, blood-spattered from Priam: he butchered a son while the father watched by a shrine—then the father.

Dear Mother,' I shouted, 'is this the reason you saved me from fire and spear? To see Greeks enter my household, Ascanius close to my Father, close to Creusa, all in each other's blood like beasts at a slaughter? Bring arms, you men! A last light calls to the losers. Back at the Greeks: let me re-enter the battle and fight again. We won't go down today completely revengeless.'
Fire Over Ascanius

"Once more belted in armor, passing my left arm fast through a shield, I turned and made for an exit, when look—my wife clasped my knees at the doorway. She held our little Iulus up to his father. 'You're going to die? We're yours in everything: take us. Still, if you place trust in the armor you're wearing, guard our house first. To whom will little Iulus be left, your father and me? They called me your wife once.' Her speech and moaning filled each room of the building. Suddenly a sign appeared—astounding to tell of—there between the hands and tearful looks of his parents we saw a gentle flame at the top of Iulus' head that lit and licked at the soft hair with a harmless tongue and seemed to feed on the forehead and temples. We trembled in fear. We tried to shake out the burning hair, to extinguish the sacred fire with water.

Anchises is Moved to Leave

"But now my Father Anchises looked to the heavens in joy, held both hands to the sky while he pleaded, 'All-powerful Jupiter, watch us if any prayer inclines you: if faith is deserving I only ask you to give one sign and confirm everything, Father.' The older man had hardly spoken when thunder suddenly cracked on our left and a star plummeted downward, leading a brilliant trail of fire through the darkness. We watched it fall past the roof of the building and bury itself with a flash in forested Ida, showing the way. For a time the luminous furrow gave off light, and sulfurous fumes covered the region. Now my Father was truly convinced. Rising to heaven he thanked Gods and called that meteor sacred. 'No further delay! I'll follow now where you lead me, Gods of my Fathers. Save my house, save my descendants! The omen was yours: Troy lies in your power. My son, I yield truly. I want to go as your comrade.'

Aeneas Leads his Family Out of Troy

"Fire could now be heard more clearly through walls when he finished speaking: waves of seething heat had come nearer.
'Come then, kindly Father, climb on my shoulders, my own back will support you. The task is no trouble. Whatever happens we'll face danger together

or reach safety together. Little Iulus, walk as my friend. My wife, follow our steps at a distance. You servants, give my instructions all your attention: leave the town where you see that mound by the aging temple of lonely Ceres. An old cypress is nearby, kept for many years by the faith of our Fathers. From different routes we'll reach that one destination. Father, hold our sacred family House-Gods: for me, coming from bloody recent fighting and bloodshed, it's wrong to touch them—not till I've washed in a living river.'

After speaking I lowered my neck to be covered with hide across the shoulders—the tan skin of a lion. I lifted my Father. Little Ascanius threaded fingers in mine and pursued me, walking and skipping. My wife followed behind. We moved through shadowy places where I, not bothered before by any projectiles, not even by Greek lines in massed opposition, trembled now at every nightwind. I tensed up at each sound, fearing for both my son and my Father.

Creusa is Lost

"In time we approached a gate. I seemed to have covered the whole distance when suddenly footsteps were thudding nearby, crowding my ears, my Father peered through the shadows and told me, 'Son, hurry, my son, they are closing! I see their burning shields and shimmering breast-plates.' I still don't know what hostile Power alarmed me there or stole my focus. For while I was running swiftly away, leaving the byways I knew of, some Fate stole Creusa, my wife. How wretched it made me! Where did she lose her way? Or stop in exhaustion?

No one knows. She never returned to my vision. I gave no thought nor searched for anyone missing—not till we came to the ancient hill and the sacred temple of Ceres. We all assembled finally. With only one missing. Slipped from her friends, her son and her husband.

What God or man did I not blame in my madness? What crueler thing had I seen in Troy's devastation?
Book II

57

I left our Trojan House-Gods, my Father Anchises and son safely with friends, hiding in thicketed hollows.

The Search for Creusa

"I made for the city again belted in glittering armor.

750 Bent on renewing every risk in returning, through all of Troy I'd offer my neck again to the danger. First I looked for the entrance, the gate I had slipped through along the dark wall. I picked up and followed my trail back through the night, my eyes probing and circling. Everywhere cold, even the quiet alarmed me. I went to my house—by chance she had gone there, if only by chance—but Greeks had rushed the whole building and seized it. Now a starving fire rolled to the rooftop: wind-blown flame and heat surged, rampaging skyward.

760 I went on. Again I saw the house and fortress of Priam. Hand-picked guards were already in Juno's deserted shrine near a pillar. Phoenix and vengeful Ulysses watched booty. Treasure from all through the city pulled from burning altars, crater-like drinking bowls of gold, vestments and stolen ritual tables, were piled high. Boys in a long line with their mothers stood around, shivering. I even dared at times to hurl shouts at the darkness. I filled streets with sorry calls for Creusa.

770 Sighing, I called again and again. It was futile. Then as I madly, endlessly searched through the city, a joyless image appeared: the shade of Creusa herself before my eyes, her form familiar but taller. My hair stood up, my tongue stuck in my throat and I stood there, dumb. She said some words that eased my anxiety: ‘Why do you take such pleasure in madness and mourning, my sweet husband? Things happen according to God's will. The high King of Olympus won’t let you take Creusa from here as a friend on your travels.

780 Look to a long exile. You'll plow deserts of water, arriving in Western Land where the Lydian Tiber gently meanders through rich Tuscany farmland. A time of joy will come in that realm, and a queenly wife to be claimed. Resist tears for Creusa, your loved one: I won't see Myrmidon thrones or Dolopian swagger: I won't slave for Greeks and their mothers:
I am of Troy—Venus' daughter in marriage!
I'm kept on our shore by the great Mother of Sky-Gods.
For now, good-by. Love your son and mine, and protect him.'

790 Finished speaking, she left me weeping and wanting
to say so much. She vanished, thin as the night-air.
Three times my hands reached for her neck to embrace her;
three times her form eluded my grasp—reaching was futile.
She moved like a dream with wings or a stirring of breezes.

*Final Departure*

“At length I rejoined my friends. Nighttime was ending.
And there I found a huge number collected,
new and striking groups of men, adolescents
and mothers gathered for exile. A sorry assortment.
They'd come from everywhere, ready with savings and spirit
for sea or land, wherever I wanted to lead them.
The morning star, high over the ridges of Ida,
signaled dawn. Greeks held and blockaded
the gates of Troy: no hope for help was allowed there.
Resigned, I lifted my Father and made for the mountains.”