IX

WAR AT THE TROJAN FORT

Turnus is Goaded Again

While all that happened far off in that region, Saturn’s daughter Juno sent down Iris from heaven to brash Turnus. By chance Turnus had sat down in sacred ancestors’ lowland, a grove of Pilumnus. Rose-mouthed Iris, Thaumas’ daughter, addressed him: “Turnus, what none of the Gods dared to assure you, although you wished it, look—a day’s rotation has brought you! Leaving friends, fleet and campsite, Aeneas has looked for Evander’s throne, a Palatine scepter.

What’s more, he’s reached the farthest Corythian cities and armed gathered throngs of Lydian fieldhands. Why delay? Now is the time: call out your horses and chariots, hurry: shake that campsite and seize it!”

She stopped and rose on paired wings into heaven, trailing through clouds the grand arch of a rainbow.

An Army on the Move

The man knew her; he raised both hands to her starry home while he followed the Goddess’ flight, and he asked her, “Iris—you grace the sky—who sent you down to this country? Who drove you through clouds? That sudden storm of your brilliance—

Where does it come from? I see the sky where it opens and stars roam the zenith. I’ll follow your lofty sign wherever you call me to war.” Soon as he finished
he went to the river and cupped fast-flowing water. He prayed and vowed repeatedly, burdening heaven. Soon the entire army moved through an open field, a wealth of horse and gold-embroidered apparel. Messapus controlled the vanguard, the princes of Tyrrhus the rear, and Turnus the largest force in the center (grasping and twirling a sword, by a whole head he was tallest):

30 the way the deep Ganges rises from seven quiet streams, or the Nile recedes from the lowland, hiding its own rich flow in the channel.

_Alarms_

Now the Trojans could see that gathering dustcloud: a bleak, sudden darkness rose on the flatland. Caius called out first in front of the earthworks. "What's that mass of roiling smoke and darkness, you people? Swords, quickly! Bring arrows, climb on the bulwarks, the enemy's here, wake up!" Clamoring Trojans swung and locked each gate then filled up the wall-tops.

40 Aeneas, their best fighter, had told them on leaving to do just that: if luck went bad in his absence, to form no rash column or trust to the open field, but stay in camp, walled and protected. Even if anger and shame urged them to combat, still they should block the gates, following orders, armed and sheltered in towers, awaiting the enemy.

_A Wolf at the Sheepfold_

Turnus, racing ahead of a slow-moving column, followed by twenty hand-picked riders, abruptly reached the fort. He rode a white-spotted Thracian; the gold helmet he wore was crested with crimson. "Who will join me first, you men, to challenge the Trojans? Look"—he whirled a spear in the air and he threw it—the battle's gambit. He proudly rode on the open field where friends took up the war-cry, responding with shrill screams, perplexed at the dull hearts of the Trojans, who dared not move on the field and openly face down armed men—they stayed in camp. So Turnus went circling the walls widely on horseback, avidly looking for access, just like a wolf at a full sheepfold, lying in ambush

60 or growling at chinks, enduring the pelting of downpour and midnight wind. While lambs are safe with their mothers
and bleating loudly, he snarls, shamelessly angry
and gruff: they’re out of reach, hunger has maddened
and tired him for hours, his mouth unbloodied and thirsting.
Turnus glared at the camp’s wall with a flared-up
anger just like that: hard pain burned in his marrow.
Where could he try to enter? How could he drive out
Trojans ringed by ramparts and spread them on flatland?

*Burn the Ships!*

The fleet lay to one side joined to the campsite,
70 guarded by mounds of earth and the flow of the river.
He’d strike it. He called for fire from cheering companions
and briskly filled both hands with crackling pinewood.
They all worked hard—the presence of Turnus compelled them—
till each young man was armed with a blackening firebrand.
They seized hearth-fires; smoke from torches and glowing
ash lifted, a skyward mix for the Fire-God.

*The Poet Invokes his Muse Once More*

What Power, you Muse, prevented the burning of Trojan
ships? Who kept the intense heat from those vessels?
Tell me—there’s old, constant faith in the story.

*Cybele’s Protection*

80 Back in time when Aeneas first constructed a navy
near Mount Ida, preparing to head out to deep sea,
they say the Gods’ Mother herself, Cybele, offered
a plea to great Jupiter: “Grant to your loving
Mother, my son, a request now that you’ve conquered Olympus.
For years I’ve loved one pine forest especially,
a grove on the highest ridge where my rites are conducted,
evergreen-dark and mixed with shadowy maple.
I gladly gave my trees to Troy when Aeneas
lacked a fleet. Now I’m troubled; anxiety pains me.

90 Ease my fear and grant your Mother a prayer:
let no set course, no wind or waterspout shatter
or sink them. Let them be strong: they rose on my mountain.”

*Jupiter’s Promise*

Her son, however, who turned stars of the cosmos:
“Mother, where would you call the Fates from? What are you
asking—
that mortal and man-made ships be granted immortal
rights, and Aeneas blandly pass through uncertain
danger? What God is allowed such absolute power?
No: the ships will complete their task, reaching Ausonian
ports one day. But those that escape from the sea-storms,

100 bringing the Trojan prince to land in Laurentum,
will change their earthly shape: I will command them
to turn into Sea-Nymphs to rove like Nereus’ daughters,
Doto and Galatea, their breasts breaking the sea-foam.”
He stopped and swore by the Styx, the stream of his brother,
by banks burning with pitch, that darkening maelstrom.
He nodded, then; the nod rumbled all of Olympus.

Newborn Sea-Nymphs

At length the promised day arrived and a cycle
owed to the Fates ended: the fury of Turnus
warned that Mother to ward off fire from her sacred

110 ships. First a strange glow in the eastern
sky dazzled the eyes and a grand cloud with Idaean
dancers rushed overhead. A voice terrified people,
it fell through the air and filled ranks of Rutilians and Trojans:
“Don’t be afraid, men of Troy, my ships are defended,
you need not man or arm them. Turnus will burn up the ocean
before my sacred pine! My ships, I release you.
Go as Nymphs of the sea: your Mother commands it.”
Every ship suddenly broke her riverbank cable
and moved like a dolphin, nosing downward and upward,

120 heading for deep water. A marvellous omen:
each had stood with its bronze prow by the river:
now each had a girl’s form, carrying seaward!
Rutilian spirits were stunned. Even Messapus
trembled; his horse-team fretted. The Tiber had slowed down,
calling its march to the sea back and murmuring harshly.

Another Reading of the Omen

Turnus however remained courageous and cocksure.
Aggressively rousing spirits he challenged them outright:
“The omen’s against Troy! Jupiter’s hauled off
their usual refuge himself: the ships are not waiting

130 for fire and Rutilian sword; so now, with no sea-road
or hope of escape, the Trojans have lost half their resources!
But we hold the land—with thousands of people
bearing Italian arms. No sign will dismay me,
whatever divine response the Trojans come up with.
We granted their Fates and Venus enough when the Trojans
touched fertile Ausonian land. And how will we stop them?
With Fates of my own: this sword will destroy that disgusting
race! They’d steal my bride—not only Atreus’ children
have felt that threat—but not only Mycenae can take up
arms. One fall was enough? Yes: if they’d only
sinned once, and come to despise afterward every
female. Now their men put faith in this dirt-pile,
stall us with trenches—a paltry space before death comes!
It gives them spirit. But haven’t they seen what the Sea-God
built by hand—their Phrygian city—crumbling and burning?
You, my hand-picked swordsmen: who will demolish
that rampart? Join me, charge that simpering campsite!
I need no thousand ships or armor from Vulcan
to beat down Trojans—even if all of the Tuscans
called them friends. They need not dread a Palladium’s
clumsy theft at night, nor a killing of bastion
guards on the heights: we don’t hide in a horse’s
belly or darkness: we circle walls with fire in the daylight!
I’ll hardly make them think we’re Pelasgian youngsters,
or Greeks delayed for ten winters by Hector.
But men, the better part of daylight has left us
now: take what remains to relax and be happy.
Our action has gone well. Prepare for battle, be ready.”
He gave the task meanwhile of blocking each entrance
with men at watch and circling the walls with fire to Messapus,
who picked fourteen Rutulians, each with a hundred
soldiers behind him, to stand by the Trojan embankments.
The men’s gold and purple helmets were gleaming:
taking turns they ran to a post or they left it,
stretching on grass to drink wine, holding a brazen
bowl while a campfire blazed. Sentries idled a sleepless
night in gambling.

The Trojans’ Anxiety

Armed Trojans watched from bulwarks above them.
They held higher ground but they worried and bustled,
inspecting gates, building buttresses, walkways,
weapons in hand. Mnestheus pushed them and eager
Serestus—appointed the men’s principal leaders
by lordly Aeneas if any misfortune should threaten.
Along the wall the whole contingent was watching
in turn by lot, each man assigned to a lookout.
Nisus Plans Boldly

One gate watchman was Nisus: a spirited fighter, the son of Hyrtacus, sent by Ida the huntress to join with Aeneas, adding his light-weight arrows and quick-thrown spear. Nearby was a friend, Euryalus: no one who followed Aeneas in Trojan arms had such beauty. Boyhood showed on his face—young and unshaven. These two loved each other, whether they charged in a skirmish or held the same post by an entrance. Nisus wondered, "Do Gods, Euryalus, addle or heat up our minds? Or men make gods of their dangerous cravings? My mind has nudged me now for a long time into combat, some ultimate test. My brain won't rest and be quiet. Look at the trust in things the Rutulians maintain: some little fires pulsing, sentries relaxing with wine or sleeping, silence everywhere. Listen now to my thoughts. One idea is recurring. All our people and elders have called for Aeneas' return: men should reach him with clear information. If elders will give you all I ask for—the action and honor will satisfy me—you'll see me find an escape-route under that hill to the walled city of Pallanteum."

Euryalus Will Not Be Left Behind

Stunned and amazed at such great longing for honor, Euryalus spoke at once to his feverish comrade. "So: you'd run from your friend at the height of an action, Nisus? Sent alone in the worst possible danger? Not so. My Father Opheltes, accustomed to battle, taught me different when Troy struggled with terror from Greece. I never acted with you in this manner. I followed our noble Aeneas' Fates to the limit: here, this spirit disdains the light of the living and sees life as a small price for the honor you strive for."

The Specter of a Mother's Loss

Nisus, responding: "I never feared in fact you were lacking. But no, it's wrong: let great Jupiter bring me back to your cheers—or whoever regards the action with favor—but if some God, as you often see in a crisis, if some bad luck or God or accident takes me,
I’d want you to live. You’re young: you deserve to be living. Let those who drag me from battle or ransom my body place me in common ground. If Fortune prevents that, let rites be performed and a tomb adorned in my absence. No, let me not cause your sad mother unbearable grief, boy—the only mother of many who dared to follow, who scorned the city of mighty Acestes.”

It’s Decided

But the other: “Weave your logic—it’s empty and futile.

My mind won’t fail now or change its position.

Let’s hurry,” he said, rousing a watch to relieve them, to take their turn at once. Euryalus, leaving the post, walked as a friend with Nisos to look for their leaders.

Escape Plans

Through all that country various animals rested. Cares were soothed and beasts unmindful of struggle. But leading Trojan commanders, men who were hand-picked, held a high council that dealt with critical pressures. What should they do now? Who’d bring word to Aeneas? They stood there, leaning on long javelins, holding shields, in the central camp. Nisos together with young Euryalus quickly asked for a hearing—a serious matter, worth their time. So Ascanius welcomed the nervous pair first and commanded Hyrtacus’ son to speak. “Hear us, you men of Aeneas,” Nisos said, “judge us fairly, regarding not only our youth but our plan. Rutulians, winey and sleepy, are still, relaxed. We’ve seen a way to escape them: it lies at a fork by the gate closest to water. Fires are fewer there, stars darkened by pitchy smoke. Allow us to take this chance. If you do so, you’ll see us return soon from the search for Aeneas at Pallanteum’s walls—and a huge slaughter completed, with loot from corpses. Trails won’t blur our sense of direction: we’ve seen in a hazy valley the settlement’s outskirts. We hunt there often; we know each bend of the river.”

Trojan Wonder and Thanks

Aletes, weighed with age, mature in his insight: “Gods of our Fathers, Troy’s in your power forever! You’re not prepared, not yet, to annihilate Trojans—
not when you bring us men of such spirit and steady
courage." He grasped the hands and shoulders of both men
while praying, eyes and cheeks moistened by weeping.
"What's worthy, you men, what prize for such laudable instincts?
How can we pay you? Gods must give you the finest
reward first—and your own nature. The love of Aeneas
will pay you the rest, and soon. My leader Ascanius,
grown up now, will always remember your service."

Pledges Never Fulfilled

Ascanius broke in, "Yes: only my Father's
return will save us, you men. I swear by our House-Gods,
Nisus, by great Assaracus' House, by shrines of the white-haired
Vesta: whatever faith and fortune are due me
I place in your lap. Re-call my Father and bring him
in view: once back he'll change our sadness to nothing.
I'll give you a pair of goblets finished in silver
and rough design—my Father's prize when he conquered Arisba;
two large weights of gold; two ritual tripods;
an ancient bowl from Sidon given by Dido.
If Luck allows us in fact to beat the Italians,
to capture scepters and share by lot their possessions,
I'll take the horse and golden weapons of Turnus
out of the lot—you've seen that stallion, the crimson
crest and shield, Nisus—right now I reward you!
My Father too will give you twelve of the choicest
female captives, males with all of their armor,
and most of all land—Latinus himself is the owner.
Euryalus, in truth you're older than me by a little:
we'll surely revere you now. I'll take you completely
to heart and keep you close on every occasion.
I'll seek no glory in any matter without you.
Advancing peace or war I'll give you my foremost
trust in word and act."

A Strong Mother

Euryalus answered
in turn: "No length of time will alter or move me
from courage and daring. If only Fortune will follow
and not oppose me! I ask for only one favor
beside all your gifts. My Mother descended from Priam's
ancient people. The land of Troy did not keep her,
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nor King Acestes’ walls when we sadly departed. 
She’s unaware now of all of my danger. 
I left her without good-byes. Night is my witness 
and your right hand: I cannot stand the tears of the woman.

290 I ask your help to console her. She’s poor and abandoned. 
Let me receive that pledge: I’ll go with more daring 
and face risk.” Trojans were struck by the prayer.

A Pledge to be Fulfilled

Some shed tears, notably handsome Iulus, 
touched by a form of his own love for a father. 
Then he said, 
“You’re surely deserving—all your initiative stands out! 
Your mother in fact will be mine, lacking Creusa’s 
name only. No small thanks will await her 
for bearing a son. Whatever results from your action

300 I swear as my Father used to swear on my forehead: 
all I promised, if things go well and you safely 
return, will keep for your mother and family members.” 
He stopped, in tears, and loosened the sword from his shoulder, 
strikingly worked in gold through the skill of Lycaon 
of Knossos, ready for use in an ivory scabbard. 
Mnestheus gave Nisus the hide stripped from a shaggy 
lion, and trusted Aletes gave him a helmet.

Bloodletting at Night

They left at once, well armed. Everyone followed 
down to the gates—young men, elders and leaders,

310 many in prayer. A handsome Ascanius joined them, 
older in spirit now, weighed with concerns of adulthood. 
He offered them many words for his father. But thin air 
scattered them all and sent them to clouds. They were futile. 
Once outside the two men passed trenches in darkness 
and made for the enemy camp, soon to be killing 
every man they could see winey or sleeping, 
sprawled on grass. On a bank were chariots, front-up; 
men dozed by a wheel or harness. Wine-flasks and armor 
lay around. First the son of Hyrtacus spoke up:

320 “Euryalus, now it’s for real. We must be aggressive. 
Here’s our path. Keep watch so no one behind me 
can raise a hand. While you pay careful attention 
I’ll slash and widen the trail with plenty of killing.”
He spoke in a low voice, then drove with a weapon at proud Rhamnes who happened to lie there on heaped-up bedding, his whole chest in a labor of snoring. Turnus had royally welcomed this king as a prophet. But no prophecy now could prevent him from dying. Nisus killed three servants thoughtlessly lying nearby among weapons; the armor-bearer of Remus; a driver close to his team. The blade cut through their dangling necks. He carried the leader’s head off, ignoring the blood-spurtting trunk which darkened and puddled the ground and bed. Lamus and Lamyrus also, and young Serranus, a fine figure who’d gambled a lot that night, his body spread out completely, oppressed by the Wine-God—if only he’d happily played on longer, matching day and night with his gambling! Just as a starving lion will scatter a crowded sheep-pen when mad hunger compels him to bite at and drag off lambs limp from shock, afraid of bloody and snarling jaws: Euryalus killed each man in a sweating rampage. He came on plenty of nameless or common soldiers, on Fadus, Herbesus, Abaris, Rhoetus—only Rhoetus knew dimly, watching and fixed on it all in stark fear next to a wine-urn. He stood and faced the sword: it sank in his ribcage completely, then withdrew, covered with dying blood. He dribbled, coughing a violet mixture of wine and blood, then fell. Euryalus pressed on in stealth hotly. Close to the friends of Messapus he saw a last fire guttering, horses tethered and cropping weeds. But Nisus spoke to him tersely (he sensed the boy’s desire to kill was excessive): “We’ll pause right here. Hostile light is approaching. We made a way through the enemy. Enough of this killing.”

* A Dangerous War-Prize

They left behind plenty of weaponry finished in silver, men’s drinking bowls and beautiful carpets. Euryalus did take Rhamnes’ medallions and gold-scaled sword-belt—the wealthy Caedicus once had released them, a gift for Remulus, making friends from a distance. When Remulus died he told a grandson to have them; after that man’s death Rutulians took them in battle. Euryalus vainly strapped the belt on a sturdy
shoulder then donned Messapus’ fine helmet and crested crown. They left the camp and headed for safety.

**Spotted and Chased**

Horsemen meanwhile sent from the town of Latinus (though part of the force had lingered in fields in formation) were riding to Turnus, their prince, bearing dispatches.

370 All three hundred had shields; their leader was Volcens. Nearing the camp now and skirting the earth-works, they saw two men on a trail to the left in the distance. A helmet glittered in darkness—glinting reflections exposed in the night a thoughtless act of Euryalus. Volcens took close notice and called from the vanguard, “Hold it, you men—why are you armed and about there? Where are you headed?” The Trojans gave him no answer but hurriedly ran for the woods and trustworthy darkness. Horsemen galloped here and there to the junctures they knew of, and watched and blocked all of the exits.

**Separated in the Woods**

The forested patch bristled with bushes and swarthy holm-oak. Dense thorn-trees filled it completely. Tracks were obscure, a path visible rarely. Branches and darkness hampered Euryalus, weighted with booty. Fear and the area’s footpaths confused him. Nisus escaped. Unthinkingly now he had slipped from hostile ground (afterwards known as Albanus, from Alba’s name—Latinus had high stables at that time): He stopped and searched for his missing friend. It was futile.

390 “You miserable boy, Euryalus, where did I leave you? How can I trace you back and unwind the perplexing trails of all these woods?” He turned and examined footprints at once. He roved through thickets in silence. He heard horses—he heard a noise of pursuers—and not long after a cry came within earshot. Soon he saw Euryalus taken, surrounded, confused by the dark locale and enemy uproar, held and pinned. He fought intensely but vainly.

**A Prayer to the Moon Goddess**

What could Nisus do? What force or daring, what weapon could save the boy? Should he charge the enemy center, die some splendid death from the wounds he would fall on?
Cocking a spear with his arm he impulsively turned it, 
looked to the high Moon and prayed to that Goddess: 
“Stay close, Latona’s daughter, help in my struggle. 
You are the stars’ pride, the forest-protector: 
if Hyrtacus ever brought a gift to your altar 
for me, his son, if my own hunting augmented your honor, 
my hanging sacred gifts on your dome and your door-top: 
guide my spear through the night-wind to scatter that cordon.”

Spears Out of the Darkness

410 He stopped, tensed each nerve for the spear-throw, 
and hurled: cutting through shadowy darkness, the weapon 
came from behind at Sulmo and cracked when it jolted 
the backbone—splintered wood passed through the stomach. 
The man groveled, spitting a warm flow from his belly, 
he shivered—the body shook with continual spasms. 
Men glared around. And look: Nius already had poised another sharper spear by his earlobe. 
While enemies worried, that spearpoint ground through the temples 
of Tagus and stuck there, warmed by the brain it had punctured.

Euryalus’ Life is Threatened

420 Volcens madly fumed, unable to pinpoint 
the spear’s thrower. Where could he charge in his fury? 
“You’ll pay me with warm blood,” he said, “in the meantime— 
one life for both.” He drew a sword from its scabbard 
and made for Euryalus. Nius utterly panicked, 
shouting wildly, unable to hide in the darkness 
any longer, he suffered absolute torment: 
“I’m here, I did it, turn on me with your weapons, 
Rutulians! I tricked you all, that boy is unable 
to dare a thing, I swear by the sky and starlight that know you.
430 Only his love for a sorry friend was excessive.”

But just as he spoke the blade drove at Euryalus, 
broke through the white chest and punctured the ribcage. 
The boy crumpled, dying, his beautiful body 
runtime with blood. The neck went limp on a shoulder 
the way a violet hangs when cut by a ploughshare, 
it's life lost; or the weak stem of a poppy, 
dangling its head when chance rain overwhelms it.
The Rage of Nisus

So Nisus charged dead center, striving for Volcens most through them all: he focused only on Volcens. Enemies clustered densely around him on this side and that side; repulsed, Nisus drove harder, whirling a bolt-like sword till it sank deep in the screaming Rutulian's face. He took the enemy’s life as he perished himself, repeatedly stabbed. He fell on his lifeless friend, in peaceful rest at last as he died there.

In Memory of Two Soldiers

Lucky pair: if my song retains any power, no day will ever forget you. Time will remember, so long as the house of Aeneas remains by the solid Capitol’s rock and a Roman father governs the empire.

Rutulians Mourn Their Dead

540 Rutulians took back stolen belongings in triumph, but carried the dead Volcens back to his quarters in mourning: mourning in camp too when the bloodless Rhamnus was found and all those leaders lost in a single slaughter—Serranus, Numa—hundreds of people ran to the place, fresh with death and the half-dead, still warm men, blood filling and foaming the river. People recognized booty which hard sweat had recovered—Messapus’ dazzling helmet and chest decorations.

Two Heads on Spears

In time early Dawn sprinkled the landscape with light, leaving the saffron bed of Tithonus. When sunlight soon poured out, already revealing the world, Turnus roused men for the battle and armored himself. Bronze-clad troops were aligned by each leader for war. Various rumors had sharpened their anger. In fact they stuck two heads (a horrible specter) on raised spears and followed them yelling and screaming: “Euryalus, Nisus!”
Aeneas’ durable men formed a defense-line
by walls on the left—the river guarded their right side.

They lined deep earthworks or stood on top of a tower,
dejected—they knew too well whose heads were uplifted.
The grey and bleeding faces shocked and dismayed them.
Rumor meanwhile put on wings in the worried
camp and hurried with news to the ear of Euryalus’
mother. Warmth drained from her sad bones in an instant.
Her hand pushed off the shuttle, unrolling the weaving.
She ran outside to a joyless howling of women.
She tore out hair and senselessly made for the front-line
troops and defense-works, forgetting the danger and weapons
of hostile forces. She filled the sky with her protest:
“I see your face, Euryalus? How could you leave me
old and alone—you, my only consoler,
so cruel? They sent you to face horrible danger:
you spared no time for a last good-by to a miserable mother?
Now you’re given to Latin dogs and vultures to plunder.
Sprawled in a foreign land, your wounds unwashed by your
mother,
your eyes not shut, your corpse not part of a death-march.
This robe won’t cover you now—I hurriedly wove it
night and day, easing my old concern with some weaving.

Where will I follow? What ground will hold your dismembered
body and torn flesh? All you could offer
is that, my son? On land and sea, the face I have followed?
Stab me, if anyone’s kind! Rutulians, hurtle
all your spears—kill me first with your weapons!
Or you, our Gods’ majestic Father, have pity:
thrust my despised face into hell with your lightning.
Otherwise how can I break from this bitter existence?’’
Her grief stunned them. A moan somberly drifted
through all, their fighting spirit flaccid and breaking.

Pain so consumed her now that Idaeus and Actor,
warned by Ilioneus and mourning Iulus,
took her between themselves to rest in a shelter.

Memories of Troy

A sound of brass: the trumpet’s call in the distance
blared out terror. Shouts followed, the heavens re-echoed
and Volscians all charged in shielded formations,
ready to fill trenches and dislocate ramparts. One group probed a gate or wall, scaling with ladders where chinks of light revealed a thin line of defenders and men were not so crammed. Against them the Trojans pushed with hard poles and poured out sundry bombardment—accustomed through long war to defending a city. Stones were rolled down, too, lethally heavy, sometimes able to break up covered formations. Closely ranked, the attackers took on every missile, some now falling: Trojans had rolled an enormous stone where a large mass threatened: it rushed down and sprawled Rutulians broadly, smashing their armored protection. They cared no longer to fight such a battle blindly. Rutulians eagerly pelted the ramparts instead with arrows.

Elsewhere Mezentius, waving a torch of Etruscan pine, charged in smoke and fire—a harrowing vision—while Neptune’s child, Messapus, that breaker of horses, tore at a wall’s timber and called for some ladders.

_Help from the Muses_

You Muses, Calliope: I pray for your breath in my music. What deaths took place? Which men were finished by Turnus’ sword? How did he send them down to the Hell-God? Unroll the conflict’s whole extent to my vision. Remember it, Goddesses: truly you can remember.

_An Embattled Tower_

A high tower looked out far from its walkways and stood on crucial ground. Many Italians contended with all their force and equipment to take it or wreck it. Trojans countered by dropping more boulders and hurling dense volleys of spears from the windows. Turnus, theleader, threw up a firebrand whose burning flame stuck to one side: winds were increasing: the fire held on, consuming planking and doorframe. Trojans inside were in turmoil. They wanted to bolt from the fire but could not. They turned and crowded together in parts less plagued by the heat. But the tower abruptly fell inward, heavily crashing like thunder from heaven. Half dead on the ground in the huge pile-up that followed, impaled on their own spears, chests punctured by hardwood,
many came to an end. Helenor and Lycus
alone escaped, but hardly—Helenor the younger,
secretly borne to a king of Maconia once by Licymnia—
a slave who’d sent him to Troy’s war, though his father
forbade it. With light sword and bare shield undistinguished,
had himself ringed by a legion of Turnus,
550 Latin lines closing on this side and that side.
Just like a beast closely surrounded by hunters,
growling at spears, knowing death is approaching,
will fling itself in a final leap at the weapons:
Helenor could also see he would die in that hostile
mob and he rushed in, charging where weapons were densest.

Turnus like the Wolf of the War-God

But Lycus was much more quick on his feet and he sprinted
past enemy armor straight for the heights of a rampart.
His hands clawed for the top and he reached to his comrades
but Turnus had chased him—close behind with a weapon
560 now he triumphantly chided: “You hoped to be able
to slip from my hands, fool?” He instantly grabbed him
though Lycus hung on, detaching a big section of earth-works:
much like Jupiter’s eagle lifting a rabbit
or white swan with hooked talons and heading for cloud-bank:
or Mars’ wolf snatching a lamb it wants from the mother’s
pen while she baas and baas. Everywhere cheering
went up as Rutulians rushed and filled up the trenches
with dirt while others hurled fire-brands at wall-tops.

Defenders Kill and Are Killed

Ilioneus’ massive rock—a chunk of some mountain—
killed Lucetius nearing a gate and carrying torches.
Good with a spear, Liger flattened Emathon.
Asilas killed Corynaeus with arrows, unseen from a distance.
Caeneus beat Ortygius. But Turnus defeated
Caeneus, Dioxippus, Promulus, Clonius, Itys,
Sagaris, Idas, who stood on top of a tower.
Capys finished Privernus: the light spear of Themillas
had hurt him first, his hand madly discarding
a shield to reach for the wound: an arrow came winging,
fastened the hand to the left side, sank in and deeply
580 punctured the chest: that wound in his lung would be fatal.
Book IX

Mezentius’ Prey

Arcens’ boy stood tall in exceptional armor, 
a sheen of Iberian iron, the chlamys embroidered: 
a standout figure. His father Arcens had sent him; 
his mother had raised him in groves around the Symaethus 
River close to the altars of rich and tranquil Policus. 
But now Mezentius, dropping a javelin, whistled 
a sling three times overhead, stretching the leather, 
and flung a water-quick shot at the enemy’s forehead 
and split it. The young man sprawled on a pile-up of gravel.

Taunting the Trojans

590 And this was the first time (they say) that Iulus 
aimed a fast arrow in war (scaring and hunting 
beasts before), handily downing the sturdy 
Numanus. Named Remulus also, he’d taken 
the younger sister of Turnus lately in marriage. 
He’d just now marched to the front line and had hollered 
remarks, unseemly and seemly, throwing a newly 
royal chest out, striding hugely and calling, 
“Embarrassed again, Phrygians? Trapped in your bulwarks, 
imprisoned twice? And stalling death with some earthworks?

600 Look at the men who demand our wives and a battle! 
What God or madness drove them to Italy? Ulysses, 
that phrase-painter, is not here, nor Atreus’ children: 
our people are rooted and hard: we carry our children 
first to the river for fierce cold and a toughening current. 
Our boys keep watch. They hunt and wear out the forest. 
They tame horses for play! And they level their arrows. 
Our men get used to work, to a pittance, to patience. 
They break ground with hoes or they shake towns in a battle. 
Our lives are bruised by iron. The hides of our oxen

610 are chafed by flattened spears. And aging comes slowly: 
it takes no strength from our mind and changes no vigor— 
we clap helmets on grey-hairs! We constantly relish 
gathering new war-loom and living off booty. 
And you? In your shiny prints of yellow and purple? 
Your hearts are dull. You like to indulge in your dances, 
wearing tunics with sleeves, headdresses, neckbands— 
Phrygian women for sure, not men! Go back to the two-stop 
flutes you’re used to twiddling on Dindymus Mountain. 
Cybele’s calling, your mother on Ida, with timbrels

620 and boxwood. Leave arms to men. And yield to our iron.”
The Aeneid of Virgil
Translated by Edward McCrorie, With a foreword by Vincent Cleary
http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=10501
The University of Michigan Press, 1996

The Odds Against Numanus

Ascanius could not stand such threatening language
and sing-song talk. The Trojan leveled an arrow
point-blank, arms apart, stretching the horse-hair.
He paused to pray humbly to Jupiter, vowing:
“All-powerful Lord, favor my daring
start: I’ll bring annual gifts myself to your temple.
I’ll station a gold-horned bullock in front of your altar.
He’ll carry a shining head high like his mother’s,
the horns butting already, hooves kicking up gravel.”

630 The sky’s Father heard him. It thundered in cloudless
blue on his left while the lethal bow-string was twanging:
the drawn-back arrow flew through the air with a chilling
sound and struck Remulus’ head, cracking the temple
with steel. “Go on, make fun of our strength with arrogant
speeches!
Captured twice, Rutulians? Trojans have sent you an answer.”
Ascanius cut short words but otherwise Trojans
gladly shouted, their spirits raised to the star-heights.

A Warning from the Sun-God

By chance from a tract of sky long-haired Apollo
had watched. He noted the fort, the Ausonian war-lines,
and spoke from a throne of cloud to the winner, Iulus:
“A fine new strength, young man. Stars will receive you,
a God’s son, and your sons will be Gods. By law in the future
every war will end under Assaracus’ people.
Troy could not contain you.” Even while speaking
he sprang from the highest air and parted the winds’ exhalations
to head for Ascanius. Changing in form he resembled
old Butes, who’d carried the arms of Anchises
at Troy once and loyally guarded his doorway;
later Aeneas had made him Ascanius’ comrade. Apollo
became the old man in every way—in complexion,
speech, white hair, and the barbarous clank of his armor.
He said these words to a heated Iulus:
“Enough, son of Aeneas. Your weapon has safely
killed Numanus. Great Apollo has granted
your first distinction; he doesn’t envy your weapons.
But no more battling, young man.” Apollo was finished
and gone from men’s eyes in the midst of that warning:
he vanished from view in thin air in the distance.
Dardan leaders recognized the God and those godlike arms—they heard, when he flew, a rattling quiver. They therefore checked, at the word and will of the Sun-God, Ascanius’ war craving. They entered the battle again themselves, throwing lives into manifest danger.

Bitias and Pandarus at the Gate

Shouting passed through all the wall-top defenders. They stretched bows keenly and twisted their spear-thongs, all the ground was a sprawl of weapons, colliding helmets and shields clanged: fighting grew fiercer, rising the way an immense storm from the western horizon strikes the ground with rain from the Kid-stars, hail falling from clouds at sea, Jupiter bristling with Southwinds, twirling waterspouts, bursting clouds in the heavens.

Bitias and Pandarus, sons of Alcanor in Ida, raised among Jupiter’s groves by the Wood-Nymph, Iaera, men like tall young oaks in their fatherland’s mountains, opened a gate assigned by command of their leader. Sure of their arms they boldly invited Rutulians to enter! They stood there, right and left, each by a tower, belted in iron, crests flashing high on their helmets: paired like trees growing in breezes together beside some stream like the gently flowing Athesis, or high on a Po bank, lifting their uncut hair to the sky, each crown nodding and swaying. Seeing the open gate, Rutulians rushed in rapidly and Quercens, a finely armored Aquiculus, Tmarus (a headstrong character), Haemon (a son of the War-God), either were turned back with all their supporters or lost their lives right there at the entrance. Anger swelled: minds went mad at that moment, Trojans gathered as well, crowding the same place, some of them dashing far out boldly in hand-to-hand combat.

Turnus Exploits an Opening

To lordly Turnus, all rage in another sector and routing defenders, word came that the Trojans, flushed by the latest killing, had opened an entrance. He stopped what he’d started. Intense fury compelled him
to rush that enemy gate and those arrogant brothers. He speared Antiphates first, the first to confront him, his mother a Theban, his father a tall one, Sarpedon. The hard-thrown spear downed him, the shaft of Italian cornel flying through light air and thudding the stomach, gone deep in the gut. The wound, dark as a cavern, foamed with blood, spear-point warmed by the innards. Turnus killed Meropes next, Aphidnus and Erymus. Now Bitias: vision burning, brain in an uproar, the Trojan would fall to no spear, not by a spear-throw: a massive bludgeon came twirling and whistling from Turnus, thrown like a thunderbolt. Neither Bitias’ double bull’s-hide shield nor the gold-scaled breastplate he trusted held up. The huge thighs weakened and gave out. Earth groaned when his big shield toppled like thunder and struck him: as piled-up boulders fall at times on Euboean beaches near Baiae: dropped and heaped in the water in great masses earlier, now they are thudded forward or dragged down to lie in the tumblers of mixed-up sea or to stir dark sand on the bottom. Procyta’s highland shakes at the sound, and Aenaria’s hard bed, where Jupiter’s order sentenced Typhoeus.

_A Blunder of Pandarus_ 

So here the war-strong Mars contributed spirit to Latin strength, twisting a sharp spur in each breastbone. He scattered desire to escape and dark fear among Trojans. Rutulians massed, provided with plenty of fighting room, and the War-God drove their spirits. Pandarus, knowing blood had poured from his brother, that Luck had changed place and Chance went against him, with all his strength, working ponderous shoulders, turned the gate on its hinges. Plenty of Trojans fighting hard outside the wall were abandoned. Others rushed to get back and Pandarus took them—madman! He’d failed to see the Rutulian leader dash inside surrounded by soldiers. Locked in the camp-ground he looked like a huge tiger with slow-moving cattle. A strange light immediately glinted in Turnus’ eyes and he hanged a frightening shield. On his helmet the crest quivered, blood-red. The shield flickered like lightning. Aeneas’ men knew that massive and hateful form and a few abruptly panicked. But Pandarus leaped out,
a tall figure, hotly enraged at his brother's
death. "This is no house of your bride or Amata,
Turnus. No Ardean walls of your father contain you.
It's hostile ground you see—with no power to leave it."

Paying Dearly for a Mistake

740 Turnus chuckled. He told Pandarus calmly,
"Start it. Try your hand if you're willing and manly.
Then go tell Priam you found another Achilles."
He stopped and Pandarus, summoning all of his power,
hurled a spear with knots and bark still on the hardwood.
It picked up a breeze but Juno, the daughter of Saturn,
deflected its wounding course. It slammed in a gate-post.
Turnus told him, "You won't escape from my weapon:
it comes from a strong right hand, a maker of really
wounding blows." And rising high for a sword-swing,
750 he chopped: the blade cut through brow and both temples,
dividing the young cheeks—a horrible mangling.
Loudly the huge bulk of Pandarus pounded the gravel,
arms limp, brain and blood on the armor.
He sprawled on the ground dying, the evenly severed
head slumping here and there on each shoulder.

Terror Inside the Fort

Trojans turned, ran in fear and confusion.
If just one thought had now occurred to the winner,
to open the gates by hand and usher his friends in,
that day would have marked the war's end and the Trojans'.

760 But frenzy consumed Turnus: a mad craving for slaughter
drove him against the enemy.
He took on Phalaris first, then severed a hamstring
of Gyges. He seized their spears and threw them at fleeing
Trojans. Juno supplied him with spirit and sinew:
he killed Halys, their friend; Phegeus, right through the buckler;
men on a wall working for Mars, unsuspecting;
Alcander next; Halius, Noeman, Prynatis.
Lynceus, moving against him, called for companions.
But Turnus, with sword flailing, deftly mounted a rampart
and took him, a single close-range sword-swipe removing
the helmeted head—it lay at a distance. The next one
to die was a fierce hunter, Amycus—no one was better
at smearing metal tips of arrows with poison.
A son of Aeolus died—Clytius. A friend of the Muses—
Cretheus: every Muse had loved his continual singing, 
the lyre in his heart: tuning and playing on harpstrings, 
he'd sung about men's armor, horses and warfare.

_A Desperate Rallying Cry_

Finally Trojan chiefs—they'd heard of the slaughter—
joined forces. Mnestheus and lively Serestus
looked on scattered friends and their enemy, walled in.
Mnestheus asked them: “Where will you run or escape to? 
Beyond that wall what other walls do you own here? 
A single man completely enclosed by your earthworks, 
you men: how can he shed such blood on your campground 
safely, sending dozens of fine young men to the Hell-God? 
What laggards! You feel no shame? Or regret for your ancient 
Gods, our strong Acneas, your suffering people?”

_Closing in on the Lion_

His language burned them. They stopped running and tightly 
closed ranks. Turnus checked his aggression
briefly, and made for a part of the fort guarded by water.
Tougher now, Trojans crowded and pressed him, 
loudly yelling the way tribesmen will threaten 
a fierce lion with hostile spears: although he is frightened 
he'll glare wildly and snarl: fury and daring 
prevent his turning tail, while men and their spearpoints 
prevent his moving against them, much as he wants to. 
That's how Turnus backed off doubtfully, taking 
slow steps, burning inside with resentment. 
Even now he attacked the enemy center
twice, forcing columns back to the walls in disorder.
But soon the whole camp's forces massed in a body. 
Juno, Saturn's daughter, could not dare to supply him 
with strength to fight them: Jupiter sent down 
Iris from windy skies with a stern warning for Juno: 
Turnus must yield this high ground to the Trojans. 
The man was therefore powerless. Neither a sword-hand 
or shield could stop them: hard-thrown missiles from all sides 
drubbod him. The cavernous helmet was constantly ringing 
around his temples. Boulders dented the solid 
bronze, knocked the crest from its crown, and the pelting 
threatened the shield's boss. Trojans doubled their spear-throws, 
Mnestheus himself like a stormcloud. The whole body of Turnus 
flowed with sweat, a grimey and seeping moisture. His breathing
slowed and weakened. His frame shook in exhaustion.

*Into the River*

Leaping headlong finally in all of his armor, he dove in the river. The tawny flow of the Tiber received his fall and gentle currents returned him to friends. Blood washed off, the man was contented.