



## Virgil *Aeneid* X

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### Summary of the *Aeneid*

#### ***Book 1.***

It is getting on for seven years since Troy fell. Aeneas and his men are, it seems, on the last leg of their journey to Italy, setting out cheerfully from the coast of Sicily. Their progress is noted by their greatest enemy, the goddess Juno. She is horrified that the re-establishment of hated Troy in Italy is so close, and fearful of the consequences for her beloved Carthage. She raises a storm which, even though the sea is almost instantly calmed by Neptune, separates Aeneas' fleet, wrecking some of the ships, separating the rest, and driving Aeneas to the African coast with only seven of his original twenty. Aeneas' mother Venus, seeing this, protests to Jupiter at his apparent failure to help the Trojans as he had promised. Jupiter responds with a prophecy: Aeneas *will* reach Italy, he *will* be the forefather of Rome, and Rome will create a mighty empire under Aeneas' descendant Augustus, which will bring peace to the world. Aeneas now, though much distressed, spies out the land and, with the help of his mother, discovers that he is close to Carthage, a city recently founded by Dido. Dido has fled from her native Phoenicia after her husband Sychaeus was murdered for his gold by his brother Pygmalion. Dido recognises a fellow-exile and, prompted by Jupiter through Mercury, welcomes Aeneas with great kindness, offering him support in his journey or a home in Carthage, whichever he chooses. There is a great feast to celebrate their meeting. But Venus is worried at a possible change of heart from the Tyrians and thus the danger they pose to Aeneas. She sends her son Cupid, disguised as Aeneas' son Ascanius, to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas. Late at night, Dido invites Aeneas to tell his story.

#### ***Book 2.***

Aeneas: 'After ten years of unsuccessful campaigning, the Greeks were helped by the goddess Pallas to build the soldier-filled Horse, which they left on the shore as they pretended to sail home to Greece. We Trojans were bewildered: only the priest Laocoon recognised it for what it was, urging us to destroy it. But a Greek agent



called Sinon, claiming to have quarrelled with his countrymen, persuaded us that it would be a divine talisman of abiding Trojan superiority if we brought it into the city. When two giant snakes appeared from the sea and killed Laocoon, this was interpreted as punishment for his sacrilege and we were persuaded to wheel the horse into Troy. A feast was held to celebrate our apparent victory, and late at night, as we were off guard, the men in the horse opened the gates to the returning Greek army. The dead Hector appeared to me in a dream, warning me to take the household gods of Troy and leave. But I was determined to take revenge on the Greeks, and fought futilely until all my supporters were scattered or killed. I witnessed the slaughter of Priam. Then my mother Venus warned me of the danger to my family at home, and I returned there to gather them up. For a while my crippled father refused to come with us, but a sign from heaven made him change his mind and we set off. As we hurried through the darkness, I carrying Anchises and Ascanius following behind, my wife Creusa was separated from us. When I tried to find her, she appeared as a vision and told me to set off for the West; another wife and another kingdom await me there.

### ***Book 3.***

'In spring I set off with as many companions as I could find. We settled first in Thrace at an ill-omened spot, the site of the tomb of Priam's murdered son Polydorus. Leaving this, we came to Delos, where Apollo instructed us to seek our ancestral motherland. Anchises understood this to be Crete, from where our ancestor Teucer had come to the Troad. But our settlement here was troubled by plague. Then I had a vision of the Penates who commanded me to look for "Italy, the ancient home of Dardanus". At this point Anchises remembered words said by Cassandra: "make for Hesperia". We now sailed to the west, pausing at the island of the Harpies, monstrous but prophetic creatures who warned us that we would recognise our destination only when hunger forced us to eat our tables. Then we came to Actium in Epirus and were amazed to find that the king there was Priam's prophet son Helenus, now married to Hector's widow Andromache. His words were that we should sail to the west coast of Italy and seek out Apollo's prophetess the Sibyl at Cumae: she would instruct us about the re-founding of Troy. From Epirus we sailed south-west along the coast of Italy, deciding to go round Sicily rather than risk Scylla and Charybdis, monsters of



the straits. In Sicily we rescued one of Odysseus' companions, left behind after the Cyclops episode. On the last leg of our Sicilian journey we put in at Drepanum, where my father died. From there we were, as you know, driven to your land.'

#### ***Book 4.***

Dido is now irretrievably in love with Aeneas. Her sister Anna urges her to accept this: 'You will persuade him to stay and build up your kingdom'. But all Dido's efforts to persuade the gods to give her a favourable message fail. Now Juno and Venus make a plot to separate Dido and Aeneas in a storm from a hunting party, forcing them to seek shelter in a cave, where a 'marriage' will take place. Juno sees this as a means of undermining Aeneas' mission, Venus as a cynical means of using Dido in Aeneas' interests. The hunt, storm and 'marriage' take place. But now an African king, Iarbas, who had thought of Dido as his, becomes aware of what is happening. He protests to his father Jupiter, who sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his obligations. Much upset, Aeneas prepares to depart. Dido is aware of this. She meets his protestation 'I must go' with despair and contempt, and when she sees that she cannot dissuade him, prepares for her own suicide, which she carries out when she sees Aeneas' fleet sail away. Her resentment will be the foundation for the hostility between Rome and Carthage, which she prophesies with her dying words.

#### ***Book 5.***

Aeneas puts in at Sicily. It is the anniversary of his father's death. He celebrates it with funeral games: a rowing race described in great detail, a running race, a boxing match, an archery contest. To conclude, there is a cavalry display by the boys which anticipates the *Lusus Troiae* of Augustus' day. During this time the Trojan women have been on their own. Juno sends her messenger Iris to persuade them that there has been enough journeying: they should force Aeneas to stop by burning his ships. Some are indeed burnt, but Jupiter sends a rainstorm to rescue the others. Aeneas is advised first by one of his company and then by his father in a dream to make the best of this by taking only a select company of his people and leaving the remainder to establish the city which will become Segesta, a traditional ally of Rome. His father also instructs Aeneas to employ the assistance of the Sibyl at Cumae to visit him



where he now is in the happy region of the Underworld. Now Venus begs Neptune to grant Aeneas safe passage to Italy. He agrees ... safe passage for all but one. This 'one' proves to be Aeneas' steersman Palinurus, who is beguiled into falling asleep at the helm: he falls off and is lost at sea.

### ***Book 6.***

Aeneas lands at Cumae; he and his men are interrupted in their admiration of the temple's artistic treasures by the appearance of the Sibyl herself, who is prepared to prophesy for Aeneas. 'Yes, you will reach Latium, but there will be fighting as bad as at Troy; Juno will remain your enemy, and "a foreign bride" will be the matter fought over.' Aeneas asks: can he visit his father in the underworld? Yes, says the Sibyl, but only if he has special favour from the gods, which will be shown if he can pluck a golden branch from Persephone's sacred tree. And first he must bury one of his companions – Misenus the trumpeter, who was rash enough to challenge the sea-god Triton to a musical contest. This done, Aeneas seeks out the golden branch, plucks it, and descends into the underworld accompanied by the Sibyl. After a nightmarish walk they reach the Styx; Aeneas is shocked by the distress of the unburied souls who cannot get across. Among these they meet Palinurus, whom the Sibyl scolds sharply when he asks for special passage. Charon the ferryman greets them with suspicion, but is pacified by the branch and ferries them across. On the other side they meet Dido unreconciled, Greek and Trojan fighters, and Aeneas' cousin Deiphobus hideously wounded. The Sibyl takes Aeneas past the gates of Tartarus where the worst sinners are eternally confined: the giants, Tantalus, Theseus and others. Finally they reach the Woods of the Blessed, where they find musicians and warriors of old; they are directed into a valley where they meet Anchises considering the long line of his descendants who will become the Roman nobility. Anchises explains how it is that some are reborn and some are privileged to remain for ever pure spirit. He identifies many of the future Romans, including Romulus, Augustus and the great conquerors. A distressing finale is made by the sight of young Marcellus, Augustus' nephew, destined for greatness but dead by 22BCE.

**Book 7.**

Aeneas now sails north along the coast to the Tiber estuary, which they reach one calm and beautiful morning. Virgil seeks renewed inspiration from the Muse for what is now 'a greater sequence of events, a greater achievement'. He explains. The local land is that of King Latinus. Latinus' daughter Lavinia has been sought by many men, but the leading claimant is Turnus, prince of the Rutuli, supported by Latinus' wife Amata. Portents, however, say that she must marry an outsider. Now Aeneas lands. His people make a meal by heaping other food on their bread, and as they eat this too, Ascanius observes 'We are eating our tables' – the fulfilment of the Harpies' prophecy. Giving thanks, they explore the country and send a delegation to Latinus, who receives them in splendour and welcomes them as the destined outsiders – though anxiously acknowledging the trouble he knows will arise. Juno now, as in Book 1, becomes aware of imminent Trojan success. Enraged, she sends the Fury Allecto to break up the friendship of Latins and Trojans. Amata is her first target, who storms in vain protest at Latinus and then takes herself off in a frenzy into the hills, Lavinia with her. Allecto turns to Turnus, who at first mocks her but is then inflicted by her with a wild madness for war. Now she causes a dispute with the Trojans: Ascanius, hunting, shoots the pet stag of the daughter of Tyrrhus, the royal herdsman. A fight ensues, in which several people are killed. The way is open for war, and Latinus abdicates from his authority rather than condone it. Virgil now lists the communities which are sending troops into battle on the Latin side.

**Book 8.**

Turnus raises the standard of war. The Latins send an embassy to seek help from Aeneas' old Greek opponent Diomedes, now settled in Apulia. Troubled by these events, Aeneas is comforted by a vision of the god Tiber, who instructs him to sacrifice a white sow and her 30 piglets whom he will discover on the river bank, and then go to seek help from the Arcadian Evander, King of Pallanteum on the site of future Rome. A river journey takes him there, and he is welcomed at the feast of Hercules, slayer of the giant Cacus who lived on the Aventine Hill. Evander tells the story in detail. He then takes Aeneas on a walk round various sites of later Rome until they reach Evander's house which is on the Palatine, just where Augustus' is one



day to be. Overnight, Venus persuades her husband Vulcan to make for Aeneas the armour he will need in war. Next morning Aeneas and Evander discuss an alliance against the Latins and Rutuli. Evander can himself supply only a small force of cavalry commanded by his son Pallas, but he is confident that Aeneas will be supported by the Etruscans, who have their own issues with the Rutuli – and they have been told to seek the leadership of a foreigner. A sign from Venus lends divine approval to this plan. Evander bids his son farewell and Aeneas leaves with the Arcadians for Etruria. Now Aeneas receives his armour, of which the most conspicuous item is a great shield, on which are pictured many of the greatest events of Roman history, whose climax, illustrated in gold and silver, is the Battle of Actium with Augustus at its centre. Also pictured is the triple triumph celebrated by Augustus in 29BCE.

### ***Book 9.***

Iris is sent by Juno to point out to Turnus that the Trojan camp is weak in Aeneas' absence: he should attack. But the Trojans show no sign of coming out to fight. Turnus therefore turns on their fleet, which he intends to burn. But the ships were built on Trojan Mount Ida and are therefore under the protection of the Mother Goddess. Long ago she secured for them the privilege that if they reached Italy and were no longer needed, they would be turned into nymphs of the sea. Now there is a voice from heaven: 'The Trojans should not be concerned for their ships' – which break free from their moorings, turn into nymphs, and depart. Turnus puts his own interpretation on this: the Trojans are now trapped. Night falls, and Ascanius holds an anxious conference with the remaining officers. It is interrupted by young Euryalus and his lover Nisus, who offer to go on a night mission through enemy lines to bring news to Aeneas. They are strongly thanked, and set out from the camp. As they pass through the enemy lines, they kill a number of the sleepers and take their armour. This armour glints in the moonlight and gives them away to a late-arriving detachment of Turnus' men. Euryalus is captured; Nisus' efforts to help him cause both of their deaths. With the day there is a ferocious assault on the Trojan camp, in the course of which Ascanius kills his first enemy, and bravado on the part of the gate guards leads to Turnus getting inside the camp. He himself, instead of opening the



gates to his allies, prefers to go on a killing spree, until, with the Trojans about to surround him, he leaps from the rampart into the river and escapes.

### ***Book 10.***

At a meeting on Olympus, Jupiter protests: 'Why has war broken out in spite of my orders?' Venus indignantly responds: 'All your promises to me are being broken.' Juno answers her: 'None of this would have happened if the Trojans had not forced their way into Latium and demanded the king's daughter for Aeneas.' Jupiter concludes the discussion: he will not favour either party: Destiny must decide. Meanwhile battle rages round the Trojan camp. That night Aeneas is on his way back by sea from Caere, where he had gone to confirm the Etruscan alliance. At dawn he is met by the nymphs, formerly his ships: their leader warns him of the dangerous situation at the camp. As he approaches the land, he is a magnificent sight in his new armour, and, once disembarked, he causes havoc among the enemy. In another part of the field Pallas rallies his Arcadian cavalry who are stumbling in a rocky river bed and leads them on foot against the Rutuli. His triumphant progress is cut short by Turnus: an exchange of spear casts leaves Pallas dead and Turnus triumphantly stripping him of his sword-belt. Rage at Pallas' death now makes Aeneas a terrifying enemy. The camp is relieved; its occupants join the battle. It looks as if time is running out for Turnus, but Jupiter allows Juno to give him a brief respite. She creates a false Aeneas, which Turnus pursues onto one of the ships; when he boards it, Juno casts the ship off and Turnus is carried, furious and humiliated, to his home town of Ardea. Turnus' place on the battlefield is taken by Mezentius, who after a long period of bloody success comes up against Aeneas: he is wounded in the groin. Lausus his son attempts to come to his rescue and is killed. Mezentius, unable to walk, mounts his horse Rhaebus to attack Aeneas; when Rhaebus is killed he accepts his own death with dignity.

### ***Book 11.***

Mezentius is buried. Aeneas laments Pallas, whose body is sent back to Pallanteum in a procession which includes young men who are to be sacrificed at his funeral. The Latins appeal for time to bury their dead; Aeneas proposes a duel between himself



and Turnus to put an end to the conflict. Turnus' old opponent Drances is effusive in his gratitude to Aeneas. A six-day truce is agreed. At Pallanteum Evander utters his own lament, concluding with his demand that Aeneas kill Turnus in revenge. There are funerals on the Trojan and the Latin sides. Now the embassy from Diomedes returns (book 8); Diomedes will not take part in a war against Aeneas and recommends the Latins to make peace. Latinus makes his own proposal: to cede territory to the Trojans or, if they wish, to help them make ships to move elsewhere. Drances supports this, putting all the blame for defeat upon Turnus. Turnus responds furiously: 'Why are you giving up when we still have the forces needed to win?' It is announced that Aeneas and his allies are on the move. Turnus breaks off discussions and arms himself for battle. He is met by Camilla who has brought her own huntress-forces to support the Latins. We hear about her origin, and about Diana's promise to avenge her death. Turnus sets up an ambush against Aeneas' troops in a mountain pass. Meanwhile the Etruscans are fiercely attacking Latinus' city. The defenders are successful with Camilla's support until she is killed by an arrow. Her killer is speedily killed himself, but Turnus is compelled to abandon his ambush and return to relieve the city. Aeneas brings his men safely through the narrows. Night falls.

### ***Book 12.***

Turnus now accepts Aeneas' proposal of single combat. Latinus, and now Amata, attempt to dissuade him, but the presence of his beloved Lavinia at this meeting prompts Turnus to insist. He goes to arm himself and nerve himself for battle. Aeneas is doing likewise, but when in the morning the two of them appear for the ceremony which is to prepare for the duel, Turnus is looking weak and dejected. Juno encourages Turnus' sister, the nymph Juturna, to do what she can to protect him. The pre-duel sacrifice is performed and the oaths are taken by Aeneas and Latinus. Now Turnus' evident weakness fills the Latins with pity and resentment. Juturna in disguise provokes them and then sends an omen which prompts the augur Tolumnius to break up the ceremony. Battle ensues, in which Aeneas, who is trying to establish order, receives an arrow in his leg. Turnus embarks on a long series of killings. Efforts to extract the arrow from Aeneas' leg fail, until Venus herself provides a medicine. At last Aeneas goes into battle, with words to Ascanius which sound





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curiously like a last farewell. He kills his own series of opponents, while Juturna disguises herself as Turnus' charioteer to keep him clear of Aeneas. Aeneas tires of this. He moves to capture and burn the city. Amata kills herself. Turnus comes to his senses, abandons his chariot, and goes to do battle with Aeneas. The battle is a long one, and it is interrupted by a conversation between Jupiter and Juno, in which Juno is reconciled to the Trojans settling in Italy on condition that they are absorbed into the Italian peoples and nothing remains to identify them as Trojans. The way is clear for Turnus to die. Aeneas wounds him in the thigh. He collapses. Aeneas is about to spare his life when he sees Pallas' sword belt. Ablaze with anger, he stabs and kills him.