

The Tragedy of Love

Publius Vergilius Maro, known as Virgil, was regarded by the Romans as their greatest poet — Rome's own national poet. Virgil was born at Andes, near Mantua, in Italy on October 15, 70 B.C.E. He received his education at Cremona, at Milan, and at Rome, where he studied rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, and medicine. Virgil was an introvert who never married. His earliest work was the *Eclogues*, a collection of ten pastoral poems composed between 42 and 37 B.C.E. Virgil was twenty when Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon and began the series of civil wars that did not end until Antony and Cleopatra were defeated by Augustus at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E. During the civil wars, farmers were obliged to go to war, and as a consequence, their farms declined. The *Georgics*, written between 37 and 30 B.C.E., is an entreaty for the restoration of the agricultural life in Italy with which Virgil was so familiar and which he loved so well.

Virgil was the Roman Homer. Virgil's national epic poem, the *Aeneid*, recounts the trek of Aeneas, Rome's legendary founder, whose destiny, according to the Romans, was to civilize the world. The *Aeneid* begins with the destruction of the city of Troy by the Greeks in the 12th century B.C.E. Its hero is the Trojan Prince, Aeneas, who under divine guidance settled the first colony in Italy, from which Rome sprang. Aeneas is the son of the goddess of love, Venus, claimed by the first Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar, as his ancestor. Virgil gives Aeneas the virtues of devotion to duty and the singleness of purpose, creating him in the likeness of Augustus Caesar, Virgil's ideal Roman ruler. Augustus Caesar gave the Mediterranean world the foundation for two centuries of ordered government. Aeneas, like Augustus, is a selfless hero who battles, not for himself, but for the future of Rome. This poem, as well as Virgil's others, were so loved by the Ancient Romans that they were used as primary school textbooks.

The *Aeneid* includes a love story between Aeneas and Dido, Queen of Carthage in North Africa. During Aeneas' journeys, Dido and Aeneas fall in love, but Aeneas leaves Dido to pursue his destiny. Although he leaves her reluctantly, he leaves, nevertheless.

Few of us would make the great sacrifice Aeneas does, though many of us have shared in Dido's pain.

70 B.C.E.

Virgil born
in Andes

65 B.C.E.

Lucretius
writes *On the Nature
of Things*Julius Caesar
murdered

44 B.C.E.

Begins the
Eclogues

42 B.C.E.

Begins the
Georgics

37 B.C.E.

Augustus
defeats
Antony and
Cleopatra

31 B.C.E.

Begins the
Aeneid

29 B.C.E.

Virgil dies

19 B.C.E.

BUT MEANWHILE Queen Dido, gnawed by love's invisible fire, had long suffered from the deep wound draining her lifeblood. Again and again the thought of her hero's valour and the high nobility of his descent came forcibly back to her, and his countenance and his words stayed imprinted on her mind; the distress allowed her no peace and no rest. And now the next day's dawn was cleansing the world with Apollo's light and had parted the moist shadows in high heaven, when Dido spoke distractedly to the sister whose heart was one with hers: "Anna, Sister Anna, why am I poised frightened between fitful sleep and waking? What do you think of this new guest who has joined us in our home? He has a rare presence, and valiant indeed are his heart and his arms. I can well believe, and I have a right to believe, that his parentage is divine. An ignoble spirit is always revealed by fear. But — what torments from destiny and what horrors of war, endured to the bitterest end, were in his story! If I had not been irrevocably resolved never again to desire a union in wedlock with any man, since the time when death's treachery cheated me of my first love, and if all thought of the marriage-rite and the bridal-room had not become utter weariness to me, possibly this might have been the one temptation to which I could have fallen. Yes, Anna, I shall tell you my secret. Ever since the tragic death of my husband Sychaeus, whose sprinkled blood, which my own brother shed, desecrated our home, no one but this stranger ever made an impression on me, or stirred my heart to wavering. I can discern the old fire coming near again. But I could pray that the earth should yawn deep to engulf me, or the Father Almighty blast me to the Shades with a stroke of his thunder, deep down to those pallid Shades in darkest Erebus, before ever I violate my honour or

break its laws. For he who first united me with him took all love out of my life; and so it is he who should keep it close to his heart and guard it even in the grave." She had spoken her thoughts; and the tears welled, and wetted the fold of her garment which she held to her eyes.

Anna answered her: "Sister mine, whom I love more than life itself, will you live alone sorrowing and pining through all your youth, and never know the love of children and all that Venus gives? Do you really believe that this matters to ashes, to a ghost in a grave? Granted that in the past no African nor, before we came here, any Tyrian suitor could ever tempt you from your grief, for you scorned Iarbas and other chieftains, sons of this land so fertile in victorious fame; must you therefore now resist a love which appeals to you? Besides, you should remember who are the owners of the land in which is your settlement. You are hemmed in on one side of you by the cities of the unconquerable Gaetulians, by Numidians who know no curb, and by the forbidding quicksands, the Syrtes, and on the other by a waterless desert and the ferocious raiders from Barca. And I need not speak of the danger of war from Tyre, where your brother continues his threats. Now it is my belief that, when these Trojan ships kept course for Carthage before the wind, the gods themselves scaled their approval and Juno herself gave her support. And, Dido, only imagine, if you make this splendid marriage, what a great future lies in store for our city and our realm! With a Trojan army marching at our side, think what deeds of prowess will exalt the fame of Carthage! You have only to pray to the gods for their blessing and ensure their favour by sacrifice; and then entertain your guest freely, weaving pretexts for keeping him here, while his ships are still

damaged, and winter and Orion the rain-bringer spend their fury on the ocean under a forbidding sky."

By speaking so Anna set Dido's heart, already kindled, ablaze with a new access of love, gave new hope to tempt her wavering intention, and broke down her scruples. Their first act was to visit the shrines and pray to the gods for their indulgence at each altar in turn Poor Dido was afire, and roamed distraught all over her city; like a doe caught off her guard and pierced by an arrow from some armed shepherd, who from the distance had chased her amid Cretan woods and without knowing it had left in her his winged barb; so that she traversed in her flight forests and mountain tracks on Dicte, with the deadly reed fast in her flesh. Sometimes Dido would take Aeneas where her walls were being built, letting him see the great resources of Phoenicia and how far the construction of her city had progressed. And she would begin to speak her thoughts, but always check herself with the words half-spoken. At day's decline she would want the banqueting to begin again as before; she would insist beyond all reason on hearing yet once more the tale of Troy's anguish, and again she would hang breathless on the speaker's words. Afterwards, when they had parted, as the moon in her turn quenched her light to darkness and the setting stars counselled sleep, Dido mourned, lonely in the empty banqueting hall, and threw herself on the couch which he had left. He was away now, out of sight and hearing, but she still saw him and still heard his voice. Sometimes she held Ascanius close to her, under the spell of his resemblance to his father, and trying hard to escape from the love which she dared not tell. Meanwhile the partly built towers had ceased to rise. No more did young soldiers prac-

tise arms. The construction of harbours and impregnable battlements came to a stop. Work hung suspended on gigantic, menacing walls, and the sky-high cranes were still.

Now no sooner had Saturn's daughter, Jupiter's dear wife, seen that Dido was in the firm grip of her affliction and that no thought of her reputation any longer resisted her passion, than she approached Venus with a suggestion: "Well, you and that boy of yours certainly have fine fruits of victory to show, and great is the glory which you have won. Your distinction is indeed high and deserves to be famous, now that you two divinities have managed to trick one woman into defeat. At the same time I am not wholly unaware that you only view the peaceful home of tall Carthage with suspicion because you fear the strength of my city's defences. But how far do you mean to go? What need is there to continue so fierce a rivalry? Surely it is better for us to collaborate in arranging a permanent peace, sealed by a marriage-compact. You have gained the object on which you had set your heart. Dido has drunk the maddening poison into her very bones; she is ablaze with love. Let us therefore share this nation between us, each having equal authority in its government. Let Dido be free to become a Phrygian's slave-wife and to hand over her Tyrians into your power as the dowry."

Meanwhile Aurora arose and left the ocean. When her rays appeared, a select company issued from the city-gates. Out came the wide-meshed nets, the small stop-nets, and the hunting spears with their broad iron heads; and out dashed Massylian riders, and a pack of keen-scented hounds. The queen still lingered in her own room, while the noblest among the Carthaginians awaited her at the doors. Her spirited horse, caparisoned in a splendour of purple

and gold, pawed the ground and champed a foaming bit. At last she came, stepping forth with a numerous suite around her and clad in a Sidonian mantle with an embroidered hem. Golden was her quiver and the clasp which knotted her hair, and golden was the brooch which fastened the purple tunic at her neck. Up came the Trojan party, too, including the delighted Iulus. As the two processions met, Aeneas, by far the most handsome of them all, passed across to Dido's side. He was like Apollo . . . Aeneas walked as alertly as he; and a grace like Apollo's shone from his noble face.

Soon a confused rumbling sound started in the sky. Then came the rain-clouds and showers mixed with hail. The hunters all scattered in alarm about the fields searching for shelter — the Tyrian retinue, the band of young Trojans, and the Dardan boy who was grandson of Venus. Torrents came streaming from the hills. Dido and Troy's chieftain found their way to the same cavern. Primaeval Earth and Juno, Mistress of the Marriage, gave their sign. The sky connived at the union; the lightning flared; on their mountain-peak nymphs raised their cry. On that day were sown the seeds of suffering and death. Henceforward Dido cared no more for appearances or her good name, and ceased to take any thought for secrecy in her love. She called it a marriage; she used this word to screen her sin.

Now, in great joy, turnout spread various talk among the peoples of Africa, repeating alike facts and fictions; how there had arrived one Aeneas, descended from the blood of Troy, and how the beautiful Dido had deigned to unite herself to him; and how they were now spending all the long winter together in comfort and self-indulgence, caught in the snare of shameful passion, with never a thought of their royal duty. Such was

the talk which this foul goddess everywhere inserted into the conversations of men. Next she turned her quick steps towards King Iarbas, spoke to him, set his thoughts on fire, and heaped fuel on his fury.

Mercury laced on his feet those golden sandals with wings to carry him high at the speed of the winds' swift blast over ocean and over land alike.

As soon as his winged feet had carried him as far as the hut-villages of Africa, he saw Aeneas engaged on the foundations of the citadel and the construction of new dwellings. He had a sword starred with golden-brown jasper, and wore a cloak of bright Tyrian purple draped from his shoulders, a present from a wealthy giver, Dido herself, who had made it, picking out the warp-thread with a line of gold. Mercury immediately delivered his message: "What, are you siting foundations for proud Carthage and building here a noble city? A model husband! For shame! You forget your destiny and that other kingdom which is to be yours. He who reigns over all the gods, he who sways all the earth and the sky by the power of his will, has himself sent me down to you from glittering Olympus. It is he who commanded me to carry this message to you swiftly through the air. What do you mean to do? What can you gain by living at wasteful leisure in African lands? If the glory of your great destiny is powerless to kindle your ardour, and if you will exert no effort to win fame for yourself, at least think of Ascanius, now growing up, and all that you hope from him as your heir, destined to rule in an Italy which shall become the Italy of Rome." With this stern rebuke, and even while he was still speaking, Mercury vanished from mortal vision and melted from sight into thin air.

Aeneas was struck dumb by the vision. He was out of his wits, his hair

bristled with a shiver of fear, and his voice was checked in his throat. Already he was ardently wishing to flee from the land of his love and be gone; so violent had been the shock of this peremptory warning from the gods. But what could he do? How could he dare to speak to the infatuated queen, and win her round? What would be the best opening for him to choose? Rapidly he turned it over in his mind, inclining now to one plan and now to another, and hurriedly considering all the different aspects and possibilities. As he pondered, one policy seemed preferable to every other. He called to him Mnestheus, Sergestus, and the gallant Serestus: they were to fit out the fleet, make ready all their tackle, and muster their comrades on the shore, without giving any explanations, and concealing the reason for the change of plan. Meanwhile he would see Dido, for in her ignorance and goodness of heart she would never suspect that so deep a love could possibly be broken. So he would try to find the right approach and the least painful moment to speak, and discover a tactful way out of their predicament.

His men obeyed with pleasure and alacrity and began carrying out their orders. But no one can deceive a lover. The queen divined the intended deceit in advance. Before she was told, her intuition discerned what would happen and her fears were alive to every possible danger, real or unreal. In this nervous state the news came to her, brought, once more, by unholy Rumour, that the fleet was being equipped in preparation for a voyage. Furious, and quite unable to face the truth she ran in excited riot about Carthage At last Dido accosted Aeneas, speaking first, and denounced him:

“Traitor, did you actually believe that you could disguise so wicked a deed and leave my country without

a word? And can nothing hold you, not our love, nor our once plighted hands, nor even the cruel death that must await your Dido? Are you so unfeeling that you labor at your fleet under a wintry sky, in haste to traverse the high seas in the teeth of the northerly gales? Why, had you not now been searching for a home which you have never seen in some alien land, and had ancient Troy itself been still standing, would you have been planning to sail even there over such tempestuous seas? Is it from me that you are trying to escape? Oh, by the tears which I shed, by your own plighted hand, for I have left myself, poor fool, no other appeal, and by our union, by the true marriage which it was to be, oh, if I was ever kind to you, or if anything about me made you happy, please, please, if it is not too late to beg you, have pity for the ruin of a home, and change your mind. It was because of you that I earned the hate of Africa’s tribes and the lords of the Numidians, and the hostility of my own Tyrians also; and it was because of you that I let my honor die, the fair fame which used to be mine, and my only hope of immortality. In whose hands are you leaving me to face my death, my — Guest? I used to call you Husband, but the word has shrunk to Guest. What does the future hold for me now? My brother Pygmalion coming to demolish my walls, or this Gaetulian Iarbas, marrying me by capture? At least, if I had a son of yours conceived before you left, some tiny Aeneas to play about my hall and bring you back to me if only in his likeness, I might not then have felt so utterly entrapped and forsaken.”

She finished. He, remembering Jupiter’s warning, held his eyes steady, and strained to master the agony within him. At last he spoke, shortly: “Your Majesty, I shall never deny that I am in your debt for all those many

acts of kindness which you may well account to me. And for as long as I have consciousness and breath of life controls my movement, I shall never tire, Elissa, of your memory. Now I shall speak briefly of the facts. I had no thought of hiding my present departure under any deceit. Do not imagine that. Nor have I ever made any marriage-rite my pretext, for I never had such a compact with you. If my destiny had allowed me to guide my life as I myself would have chosen, and solve my problems according to my own preference, I should have made the city of Troy, with its loved remembrances of my own folk, my first care; and, with Priam’s tall citadel still standing, I should have refounded Troy’s fortress to be strong once more after her defeat. But in fact Apollo at Gryniium, where he gives his divination in Lycia by the lots, has insistently commanded me to make my way to Italy’s noble land. Italy must be my love and my homeland now. If you a Phoenician, are faithful to your Carthaginian fortress here, content to look on no other City but this city in far-away Africa, what is the objection if Trojans settle in Italy? It is no sin, if we, like you, look for a kingdom in a foreign country. Each time the night shrouds the earth in its moist shadows, each time the fiery stars arise, the anxious wraith of my father Anchises warns me in sleep, and I am afraid. My son Ascanius also serves as a warning to me; I think of his dear self, and of the wrong which I do him in defrauding him of his Italian kingdom, where Fate has given him his lands. And now Jove himself has sent the Spokesman of the Gods — this I swear to you by my son’s life and by my father — who flew swiftly through the air, and delivered the command to me. With my own eyes I saw the divine messenger in clearest light entering the city gate, and heard his voice with my own ears. Cease, there-

fore, to upset yourself, and me also, with these protests. It is not by my own choice that I voyage onward to Italy.”

Throughout this declaration Dido had remained standing, turned away from Aeneas but glaring at him over her shoulder with eyes which roved about his whole figure in a voiceless stare, then her fury broke: “Traitor, no goddess was ever your mother, nor was it Dardanus who founded your line. No, your parent was Mount Caucasus, rugged, rocky, and hard, and tigers of Hyrcania nursed you For what need have I of concealment now? Why hold myself in check any longer, as if there could be anything worse to come? . . . Has he spared a sigh or a look in response to my weeping, or has he once softened, or shed a tear of pity for one who loved him? Depth beyond depth of iniquity! Neither Supreme Juno, nor the Father who is Saturn’s son, can possibly look with the impartial eyes of justice on what is happening now. No faith is left sure in the wide world. I welcomed him, a shipwrecked beggar, and like a fool I allowed him to share my royal place. I saved his comrades from death and gave him back his lost fleet The Furies have me now, they burn, they drive . . . ! So, now, it seems, he has his orders from Apollo’s own Lycian oracle, and next even the Spokesman of the Gods is sent by Jove himself to deliver through the air to him the same ghastly command! So I am to believe that the High Powers exercise their minds about such a matter and let concern for it disturb the calm! Oh, I am not holding you. I do not dispute your words. Go, quest for Italy before the winds; sail over the waves in search of your kingdom. But I still believe that, if there is any power for righteousness in Heaven, you will drink to the dregs the cup of punishment amid sea-rocks, and as you

suffer cry ‘Dido’ again and again. Though far, yet I shall be near, haunting you with flames of blackest pitch. And when death’s chill has parted my body from its breath, wherever you go my spectre will be there. You will have your punishment, you villain. And I shall hear; the news will reach me deep in the world of death.” She did not finish, but at these words broke off sharply. She hurried in her misery away and hid from sight, leaving Aeneas anxious and hesitant, and longing to say much more to her. Dido fainted, and fell; and her maids took her up, carried her to her marble bedroom, and laid her on her bed.

Meanwhile Aeneas the True longed to allay her grief and dispel her sufferings with kind words. Yet he remained obedient to the divine command, and with many a sigh, for he was shaken to the depths by the strength of his love, returned to his ships. Vigorously indeed the Trojans set to work. They were soon launching their tall galleys all along the beach What must have been Dido’s thoughts when she saw all this movement, and how bitterly must she have sighed as she looked from her commanding citadel, and discerned the lively bustle along the shore and all the turmoil of loud confusion on the sea? Ah, merciless Love, is there any length to which you cannot force the human heart to go? For Love now drove Dido to have recourse to tears again, and again to try what entreaties might do, subjecting pride to passion in a last appeal, in case she had still left some way unexplored, and was going to a needless death. The tears rolled down, but without effect.

It was final. Dido was lost; and she saw with horror the fate starkly confronting her. Her one prayer was now for death. The sight of heaven’s vault was only weariness to her. And, as if to steel her will to fulfill her de-

sign and to part from the light of day, as she laid her offerings on the altars where incense burned, she saw a dreadful sight; for the holy waters turned to black and the poured wine by some sinister transformation was changed into blood. She told no one, not even her sister, what she had seen. And, furthermore, there was in her palace a marble chapel, sacred to her first husband, which she venerated with utmost love, keeping it decorated with snowy fleeces and festal greenery. Now from this chapel, when night held the world in darkness, she thought that she distinctly heard cries, as of her husband calling to her. And often on a rooftop a lonely owl would sound her deathly lamentation, drawing out her notes into a long wail. Then many presages of ancient seers shocked her to panic by their dread warnings. She would have nightmares of a furious Aeneas pursuing her, and driving her wild with fear, and of being left utterly alone, and travelling companionless a long road, searching for Tyrian friends in a deserted land.

So agony prevailed; and Dido was possessed by demon-powers. Having made her decision for death, she first worked out, all by herself, the time and the means. Then, with a calm and hopeful expression to conceal her plan, she accosted her distressed sister and spoke to her: “Sister, Anna, congratulate me! For I have found the way which will either give him back to me or release me from loving him. Dear Anna, I swear to you by the gods, I swear by you and your own sweet life that it is against my will that I arm myself with magic. Now, build me a tall funeral pyre. Build it in the center of our home under the open sky but out of view. Lay on it the arms of the false man, which he left hanging from a wall in our bridal room, and all the garments which he wore, besides; and you must

also place on it the bridal bed which was my ruin. I choose to destroy whatever can remind me of one who must never be mentioned. Besides, such is the advice of the priestess." After saying this she fell silent, and her face suddenly paled. It never occurred to Anna that her sister was using this strange rite to veil her own impending death. She could not herself imagine so violent a passion, and had no fear of anything worse happening now than had happened when Sychaeus died. So she made the preparations, as Dido had asked.

Presently the pyre had been built with logs of holm-oak and pine. It was vast, rising to a great height, and it stood in the center of the building. The queen had festooned the hall with flower-chains, and wreathed the pyre with the greenery of death. On it was the bed, and there she placed a sword which Aeneas had left, with garments which he had worn, and a portrait of him, knowing all the time what was to be. Around it were altars. The priestess, hair astream, told in a voice like thunder the names of her thrice-hundred gods, told Erebus and the Void, and Hecate of three forms, who is Diana the maiden of the triple countenance. She had sprinkled water, supposed to be from the fount of Avernus. Herbs, reaped with bronzen sickles by moonlight and bursting with a black poisonous milk, were gathered there, and with them a love-charm ripped from the brow of a baby foal before the mother could take it. Close to the high altar stood Dido, holding the sacred meal and lifting pure hands above, with garment girt back and one foot unsandalled. And, soon to die, she called on the gods and the stars which know fate's secrets to hear her. And she added a prayer to any Power there may be, some Power watchful and fair, with a thought for lovers whose love is not matched well.

It was night, and tired creatures all over the world were enjoying kindly sleep. But not so the Phoenician queen. Her accursed spirit could not relax into sleeping, or welcome darkness into her eyes or brain. Instead, her torment redoubled; her love came back again and again, and heaved in ocean-tides of rage. And she began yet once more to pursue her thoughts, communing with herself in her heart: "There! What is there for me to do? Risk mockery by returning to my former suitors, sound their feelings, and plead humbly with some Numidian to marry me, though time after time I have scorned to think of one of them as a husband? Or instead should I sail with the Trojan fleet and submit to Trojan orders however harsh? Am I so sure that they are pleased with the aid and relief which I gave them, that they remember, and that their gratefulness for what I did then is still alive? But indeed, even granted that I wished it, would they let me come, and welcome me to their ships? They are arrogant, and hate me. Lost fool, can you not see? Can you even now not realize how treacherous Laomedon's nation can be? Besides, if I sail with these mariners, who are so triumphant now at their departure, do I go alone, or do I take with me all my Tyrian friends, thronging round me when I go to join the Trojans? If so, how can I order them to spread their sails to the winds and force them to voyage once more out onto the ocean? It was all that I could do to uproot them from their former city, Sidon. No. You have deserved death and you must die. Only the blade can save you from the agony . . . O Anna, I have been mad; but it was you who first laid on me this load of suffering, for you gave way to my tears, and set me at the mercy of my foe. If only I could have been allowed to pass my life free from reproach as the wild animals do, without any

wedding, and in no danger of anguish like mine And the vow which I made to the ashes of Sychaeus is broken too." Such were the terrible words of grief which burst from Dido's heart.

Meanwhile Aeneas, who had now settled his plans for sailing and completed his preparations, was lying asleep on his ship's stern. As he slept he again had a vision of the god, who returned in countenance as before and was like Mercury in every feature, in his voice and complexion, his blond hair, and limbs with the grace of youth. As Aeneas gazed, Mercury repeated his warning: "Son of the Goddess, can you, with so great a disaster impending, remain asleep, and not discern the dangers which wait ready to break about your head? Fool! Can you not hear the breath of the favouring west winds? She plans in her thought a fearful and treacherous wrong. In her a violent rage surges and surges again, and she is resolved to die. Will you not hasten away while it is not too late for hastening? You will soon see a confusion of wreckage on the sea, the cruel glare of fire-brands burning bright, and the whole shore ablaze, if dawn finds you still lingering here. Ho! Come, have done with delays. Women were ever things of many changing moods." So he spoke, and then melted into the black darkness.

Aeneas was shocked indeed by the sudden apparition. He leapt up and gave his comrades the alarm: "Hasten, men! Awake! Take your places for rowing. Quick, unfurl your sails! For, see! Again a god has descended from high heaven, and again he stings us in to haste. We must hack through our twisted hawsers, and flee. We follow you, holy Deity, whoever you may truly be, and we joyfully obey your command, as before. Be with us and graciously aid us. Bring us favors from the stars of heaven." With the

words he quickly unsheathed his sword and struck the cables with the flashing blade. One ardor seized them all. They heaved and they hurried. Not one remained on shore. The water was hidden beneath the fleet. They bent to it, churned the foam, and swept the blue surface of the sea.

By now Aurora, rising, had left the saffron bed of Tithonus and was sprinkling her fresh light on the world. From her watch-tower the queen saw the white gleam of dawn, and saw the fleet moving forward with sails square to the wind. She realized that the shore and the harbor were empty, without a single oarsman. At the sight, she struck her beautiful breast, three times struck it and then a fourth, she tore her golden hair, and she cried aloud: "Ah, Jupiter! Is this stranger to make a mock of my realm, and calmly go? See his faithfulness to his plighted word! And yet they say that he carries with him the gods of his ancestral home, and bowed his shoulders to bear his old and feeble father! Could I not have seized him, torn him limb from limb, and scattered the pieces on the waves? And put his comrades to the sword—yes, and killed Ascanius and served him up to be his father's meal? Ah, but the fortune of such a fight was never certain. Uncertain, then. But whom had I to fear, having, in any event, to die? I might have taken firebrands into their camp and set all their ships' decks blazing. I could have quenched the life of son, of father, and of all their line. And then, to crown all, I could have flung myself to death . . . Angels of Death awaiting Elissa! Neither love nor compact shall there be between the nations, And from my dead bones may some Avenger arise to Persecute with fire and sword those settlers from Troy, soon or in after-time, whenever the strength is given! Let your shores oppose their shores,

your waves their waves, your arms their arms. That is my imprecation. Let them fight, they, and their sons' sons, for ever!"

Such was her curse. And now she turned to consider every course of action, for she wanted, as quickly as might be, to break off her living in day's hated light. She spoke shortly to Barce, who had been Sychaeus' old nurse — her own nurse, dark ashes now, had been left in the ancient homeland — : "Nurse, dear, ask Anna my sister to come to me here. And tell her she should hasten to sprinkle river-water over her, and bring with her the victims and all else that is needed for the atonement which I have been commanded to make. Let her come, prepared as I say; and you yourself should wreath your brow with a ribbon of piety. It is my intention to complete certain rites to Stygian Jupiter, which I have formally prepared and begun, and to put an end to my sorrow by committing to the flames the pyre which holds the Trojan's life." So she spoke. Barce, with all an old woman's interest, quickened her pace.

But Dido, in trembling haste and frantic at her desperate design, burst through the doorway into the inner room. Her eyes were reddened and rolling, her cheeks quivered under a flush, and she was pale with the pallor of imminent death. In a mad dash, she climbed the high funeral pile, and unsheathed the Trojan sword, a gift never meant for such a use as this. Her sight rested on the garments which had come from Troy, and on the bed with its memories.

She paused a little for tears and for a thought; and she cast herself down on the bed, and there spoke her last words: "Sweet relics, sweet so long as God and Destiny allowed, now receive my lifebreath, and set me free from this suffering. I have lived my

life and finished the course which Fortune allotted me. Now my wraith shall pass in state to the world below. I have established a noble city. I have lived to see my own ramparts built. I have avenged my husband and punished the brother who was our foe. Happy, all too happy, should I have been, if only the Dardan ships had never reached my coast!" With this cry she buried her face in the bed, and continued: "I shall die, and die unavenged; but die I shall. Yes, yes; this is the way I like to go into the dark. And may the heartless Trojan, far out on the deep, drink in the sight of my fire and take with him the evil omen of my death."

There she ended. And even while she still spoke she had fallen upon the blade. Soon her attendants saw her with blood foaming about the sword and the stains of it on her hands. A cry rose to the palace-roof. Carthage was stricken by the shock and Rumor ran riot in the town. Lamentation and sobbing and women's wailing rang through the houses, and high heaven echoed with the loud mourning; as if some enemy had broken through and all Carthage, or ancient Tyre, were falling, with the flames rolling madly up over dwellings of gods and men. Her sister heard, and the breath left her. Marring her cheeks with her fingernails and bruising her breast with her clenched hands, she dashed in frightened haste through the crowds, found Dido at the very point of death, and cried out to her — : "O Sister, so this was the truth? You planned to deceive me! Was this what your pyre, your altars, and the fires were to mean for me? How shall I begin reproaching you for forsaking me so? Did you scorn your own sister and not want her with you when you died? You should have asked me to share your fate, and then one same hour, one

agony of the blade, might have taken us both. To think that with my own hands I even built the pyre, and cried loud upon our ancestral gods, only to be cruelly separated from you as you lay in death! Sister, you have destroyed my life with your own, and the lives of our people and Sidon's nobility, and your whole city too. Come, let me see your wounds — I must wash them clean with water, and gather with my own lips any last hovering breath." While speaking she had climbed to the top of the steps and clasped her sister, who was still just breathing, to her breast, and fondled her, sobbing, and trying to stanch the dark blood with her dress. Dido attempted to raise her heavy eyes again, but failed; and the deep wound in her breast, where the sword stood planted, breathed loud. Three times she rose, supporting herself on her elbows, but each time she rolled back onto the bed. With roaming eyes

she looked to high heaven for the daylight, and found it, and gave a sigh.

But Juno, who has all power, took pity on the long anguish of her difficult death, and sent Iris down from Olympus to release the wrestling spirit from the twined limbs. For since she perished neither by destiny nor by a death deserved, but tragically, before her day, in the mad heat of a sudden passion, Proserpine had not yet taken a golden lock from her head, to assign her life to Stygian Orcus. So therefore Iris, saffron-winged, sparkling like dew and trailing a thousand colours as she caught the light of the sun, flew down across the sky. She hovered over Dido's head: "By command I take this lock as an offering to Pluto; and I release you from the body which was yours." Speaking so, she held out a hand and cut the lock. At once, all the warmth fell away, and the life passed into the moving air.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Is Aeneas heartless in not considering Dido's feelings? Does he behave like a son of Venus should?
2. Why do some people put their personal goals ahead of people they love?

TALK ABOUT IT

3. Aeneas was from Troy in Asia Minor, and Dido from Carthage in North Africa. Does love transcend ethnic boundaries? Should it?
4. Sex and love are often seen as synonymous. Do you believe that they are?

WRITE ABOUT IT

5. Have you been in love with someone who loves their job or something else more than you? Describe how you dealt with that situation or how you think you would deal with it.
6. What is your basis for loving someone? Is it physical appearance, status, wealth, inner beauty, or something else?

READ MORE ABOUT IT

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