Arms and a man I sing, the first from Troy,
A fated exile to Lavinian shores
In Italy. On land and sea, divine will—
And Juno’s unforgetting rage—harassed him.  
War racked him too, until he set his city
And gods in Latium. There his Latin race rose,
With Alban patriarchs, and Rome’s high walls.
Muse, tell me why. What stung the queen of heaven,
What insult to her power made her drive
This righteous hero through so many upsets
And hardships? Can divine hearts know such anger?
Carthage, an ancient Tyrian settlement,
Faces the Tiber’s mouth in far-off Italy;
Rich, and experienced and fierce in war.
They say that it was Juno’s favorite, second
Even to Samos. Carthage held her weapons,
Her chariot. From the start she planned that Carthage
Would rule the world—if only fate allowed!
But she had heard that one day Troy’s descendants
Would pull her Tyrian towers to the ground. 20
A war-proud race with broad domains would come
To cut down Africa. The Fates ordained it.
Saturn’s child feared this. She recalled the war
That she had fought at Troy for her dear Greeks—
And also what had caused her savage anger.
Deep in her heart remained the verdict given
By Paris, and his insult to her beauty,
And the rape and privileges of Ganymede—
A Trojan. In her rage, she kept from Italy
Those spared by cruel Achilles and the Greeks.
They tossed on endless seas, went wandering,
Fate-driven, year on year around the world’s seas.
It cost so much to found the Roman nation.

Sicily fell from sight. They sailed with joy
Into the open, bronze prows churning foam. 35
But Juno, with her deep, unhealing heart-wound,
Muttered, “Will I give up? Have I been beaten
In keeping Italy from the Trojan king?
Fate blocks me. But then why could Pallas burn
The Argive fleet and drown the men it carried,
Only to punish Ajax’ frenzied crime?
Out of the clouds she hurled Jove’s hungry fire,
Scattered the ships and overturned the sea.
Ajax, panting his life out, pierced with flame,
She whirled away and pinioned on a sharp rock. 45
But I, parading as the queen of heaven,
Jove’s wife and sister, fight a single people
For years. Will anybody now beseech me,
Bow to me, and put presents on my altar?”
Her heart aflame with all of this, the goddess
Went to Aeolia, land of storm clouds, teeming
With wild winds. There King Aeolus rules a vast cave

That struggling winds and howling tempests fill.
He disciplines them, chains them in their prison.
They shriek with rage around the bolted doors;
The mountain echoes. Seated on a pinnacle,
Aeolus holds a scepter, checks their anger—
Without him, they would seize land, sea, and deep sky
To carry with them in their breakneck flight.
Fearing this, the almighty father shut them
In that black cave and heaped high mountains on it,
And set a ruler over them to slacken
Or pull the reins in, strict in his control.
Juno approached him now and made this plea:
“The king of men and father of the gods
Gives you the right to rouse and soothe the waves.
A race I hate sails the Tyrrhenian sea,
Bringing Troy’s beaten gods to Italy.
Goad your winds into fury, swamp the ships,
Or scatter them, strew bodies on the water.
Fourteen voluptuous nymphs belong to me,
And the most beautiful is Deiopea.
Her I will make your own, in steadfast union,
If you will help me. She will spend her life
With you—the lovely children that you’ll father!”
Aeolus said, “You merely must decide,
My sovereign. I must hurry to obey.
My power, my modest kingdom, and Jove’s favor
You brought me. I recline at the gods’ banquets,
I rule the stormy clouds because of you.”
With his upended spear he struck a flank
Of the hollow mountain. Like a battle charge,
The winds pour out. They spiral through the world—
The East and South gales, and the mass of whirlwinds
From Africa swoop down, uproot the sea,
And send enormous billows rolling shoreward.
The men begin to shout, the ropes to squeal.
Sudden clouds snatch away the daylight sky
From Trojan sight. Black night roosts on the sea.
Heaven resounds, and fires dance in its heights.
The world becomes a threat of instant death.
A swift and icy terror numbed Aeneas.
He moaned and held his hands up to the stars
And gave a cry: “Three times and four times blessed
Are those who perished in their fathers’ sight
Beneath Troy’s walls. You, Diomedes, boldest
Of Greeks, could you not spill my soul and let me
Fall on the fields of Troy, like raging Hector
Slain by Achilles’ spear, or tall Sarpedon,
Where the Simois River churns beneath her ripples
Shields, helmets, bodies of so many strong men?”
A screaming northern gale flew past his wild words
And slammed the sails, and pulled a wave toward heaven.
The oars broke, the prow swerved and set the ship
Against a looming precipice of water.
Crews dangled on the crest, or glimpsed the seabed
Between the waves. Sand poured through seething water.
Three times the South Wind hurled them at rocks lurking
Midway across—Italians call them Altars;
Their massive spine protrudes—three times the East Wind
Drove them toward sandy shallows—awful sight—
And rammed them tight, and ringed them with a sand wall.
Before Aeneas’ eyes a towering wave tipped,
To strike head-on the ship of staunch Orontes
And the Lycians, and whirled the helmsman out
Head first. The boat was whipped in three tight circles,
And then the hungry whirlpool swallowed it.
The endless sea showed scatterings of swimmers.
Planks, gear, and Trojan treasure strewed the waves.
The storm subdued the strong ships carrying
Ilioneus, Abas, brave Achates,
And old Aletes. Deadly water pushed
Through the hulls’ weakened joints, and fissures started
To gape. Now Neptune felt, with some alarm,
The roaring havoc that the storm let loose.
Even the still depths spurted up. He raised
His calm face from the surface and looked down.
He saw Aeneas’ ships thrown everywhere,
Trojans crushed under waves, the plunging sky.
Juno’s own brother knew her guile and anger.
He called the East and South Winds and addressed them:
“Is this the arrogance of noble birth?
Without my holy sanction, you have dared
To churn up land and sea and raise these mountains?
Which I—but first I’ll calm these waves you’ve roused.
Later I’ll punish you with more than words.
Get out now, fast, and tell this to your ruler:
I was allotted kingship of the sea,
And the harsh trident. In his massive stone hall—
Your home, East Wind, and all the rest—we let him
Swagger, but he must keep that dungeon locked.”
Faster than words, he calmed the swollen sea,
Chased off the mass of clouds, brought back the sun.
Cymothoe and Triton heaved the ships
Off jagged boulders. Neptune with his trident
Helped them. He freed vast sandbanks, smoothed the surface,
His weightless chariot grazing the waves’ peaks;
As often in a crowded gathering
Crude commoners in rage begin to riot,
Torches and stones fly, frenzy finds its weapons—
But if they see a stern and blameless statesman,
They all fall silent, keen for him to speak.
Then he will tame their hearts and guide their passions:
Like this, the roar of the broad sea grew quiet
Under the lord’s gaze. Now beneath a clear sky,
He slackled the reins and flew on with the breeze.
Aeneas’ worn-out group now fought to reach
The nearest shore, turning toward Libya.
A bay runs inland, and an island makes
A harbor with its sides; waves from the deep
Break there and flutter out their separate ways.
Mammoth cliffs flank the place, and twin stone spires
Loom to the sky. Beneath them, smooth and safe
The water hushes. Forests as a backdrop
Quiver, a grove with its black shadows rises.
At the bay’s head, rocks dip to form a cavern
With a clear spring and seats of natural rock.
Nymphs live there. At the shore no rope is needed
To hold worn ships, no hooked and biting anchor.
Aeneas landed seven ships, regrouped
From the whole fleet. The Trojans went ashore
In great and yearning love of that dry sand.
Still dripping with salt water, they lay down.
To start, Achates struck a spark from flint
And caught the flame in leaves and fed it dry twigs
From all sides, till it blazed up through the tinder.
Downheartedly they got out instruments
Of Ceres, and the soaking grain they’d rescued;
They had to sear it dry before they ground it.
Meanwhile Aeneas climbed a crag to view
The great expanse of sea. Where did the wind toss
Antheus, Capys, Caicus’ lofty prow
Hung with his arms—or any Trojan vessel?
There was no ship in sight; but three stags wandered
The shore. Entire herds came after them,
And grazed in a long column through the valley.
Taking a stand, he snatched the bow and arrows
That his devoted friend Achates carried.
He brought the strutting, branching-antlered leaders
To the ground first, and then his arrows chased
The mass in havoc through the leafy groves.
Exulting, he continued till he brought down
Seven large bodies for his seven ships,
Then went to share the meat out at the harbor,
And with it casks of wine that good Acestes
Had stashed with them when they left Sicily—
A noble gift. Aeneas spoke this comfort:
“Friends, we are all at home with suffering—
Some worse than this—but god will end this too.
You came near Scylla’s frenzy, and the deep roar
At the cliffs, you saw the rocks the Cyclops threw.
Revive your hearts, shake off your gloomy fear.
Sometime you may recall today with pleasure.
We fight through perils and catastrophes
To Latium, where divine fate promises
A peaceful homeland, a new Trojan kingdom.
Endure and live until our fortunes change.”
Sick with colossal burdens, he shammed hope
On his face, and buried grief deep in his heart.
Trojans around his prey prepared their feast,
Ripped the hide off the ribs and bared the guts.
Some of them pierced the quivering chunks with spits,
Some set out cauldrons, others tended flames.
The food restored and filled them—the old wine,
The rich game—as they stretched out on the grass.
After the feast, their hunger put away,
They dwelt in longing on their missing friends.
They hoped, they feared: were these men still alive,
Or past the end and deaf to any summons?
Loyal Aeneas, most of all, was groaning
Softly for keen Orontes, Amycus, Lycus,
For Gyas and Cloanthus—brave men, hard deaths.

The day was over. Jove looked down from heaven
At the sail-flying waters, outstretched lands
And shores, and far-flung nations. At the sky’s peak,
He fixed his gaze on Libyan territory.
His mind was anxious, busy. And now Venus
Spoke these sad words to him, her shining eyes
Filling with tears, “You, everlasting ruler
Of gods and men and fearful lightning-thrower,
What great crime did Aeneas and the Trojans
Commit against you? They have died and died,
But in the whole world found no Italy.
You promised that the circling years would draw
Teucer’s new lineage from them, Romans, chieftains,
To rule an empire on the land and sea.
Father, what new thought turns you from this purpose?
When Troy calamitously fell, I weighed it
Against the fate to come, to my great comfort.
And yet the pummeling fortunes of these heroes
Don’t change. When will you end their trials, great ruler?
Antenor could escape the swarm of Greeks;
Into Illyrian coves, into Liburnia,
He safely voyaged, to the Timavus’ source,
Where the sea breaks through nine mouths, and the mountain
Roars, and the echoing waves oppress the fields.
And here he founded Padua, a homeland
For Trojans, with a Trojan name, its gateway
Displaying Trojan arms. He has his rest there.
But we, your children, promised heirs to heaven,
Have lost our ships—obscene!—through Someone’s anger
And treachery. We are kept from Italy.
Is this our new realm, won through righteousness?”
The gods’ and mortals’ father gave his daughter
The smile that clears the sky of storms and kissed her
Lightly, and this was how he answered her:
“Take heart—no one will touch the destiny
Of your people. You will see Lavinium
In its promised walls, and raise your brave Aeneas
To the stars. No new thoughts change my purposes.
But since you suffer, I will tell the future,
Opening to the light fate’s secret book.
In Italy your son will crush a fierce race
In a great war. With the Rutulians beaten,
Three winters and three summers he’ll shape walls
And warrior customs, as he reigns in Latium.
But his son Ascanius, now called Iulus too
(He was named Ilus during Ilium’s empire),
Will rule while thirty spacious years encircle
Their circling months, and he will move the kingdom
To Alba Longa, heaving up strong ramparts.
Three centuries the dynasty of Hector
Will govern, until Ilia, royal priestess,
Conceives twin boys by Mars and gives them birth.
And the wolf’s nursling (glad to wear brown wolfskin),
Romulus, will then lead the race and found
The walls of Mars for Romans—named for him.
For them I will not limit time or space.
Their rule will have no end. Even hard Juno,
Who terrorizes land and sea and sky,
Will change her mind and join me as I foster
The Romans in their togas, the world’s masters.
I have decreed it. The swift years will bring
Anchises’ clan as rulers into Phthia,
And once-renowned Mycenae, and beaten Argos.
The noble Trojan line will give us Caesar—
A Julian name passed down from the great Iulus—
With worldwide empire, glory heaven-high.
At ease you will receive him with his burden
Of Eastern plunder. Mortals will send him prayers here.
Then wars will end, cruel history grow gentle.
Vesta, old Faith, and Quirinus, with Remus
His twin, will make the laws. Tight locks of iron
Will close War’s grim gates. Inside, godless Furor,
Drooling blood on a heap of brutal weapons,
Will roar against the chains that pinion him.”
Concluding, he dispatched the son of Maia
To have the Trojans welcomed down in Carthage
With its new fort. Dido, who was not privy
To fate, might keep them out. The god’s wings rowed him
Through the vast air, to stand on Libya’s shore.
Since it was heaven’s will, the fierce Phoenicians
Peacefully yielded; most of all their queen
Turned a calm, gentle face to meet the Trojans.
Steadfast Aeneas had a worried night,
But at the light of nurturing dawn decided
To go and find out where the wind had brought them
And who or what—the land looked wild—lived here,
And bring what he could learn to his companions.
The fleet lay hidden in a tree-lined inlet,
Under a rocky overhang enclosed
By bristling shade. He set off with Achates,
Holding two quivering pikes with iron blades.
Deep in the woods his mother came to him,
A girl in face and clothes—armed, as in Sparta,
Or like Harpalyce in Thrace, outracing
The breakneck Hebrus with her harried horses—
A huntress with a bow slung, quick to hand,
From her shoulders, and the wind in her free hair,
And a loosely tied-up tunic over bare knees:
She greeted them and asked, “Please, have you met
One of my sisters wandering here, or shouting,
Chasing a foam-mouthed boar? She has a quiver,
And wears a spotted lynx skin and a belt.”
Venus stopped speaking, and her son began.
“Young girl, I haven’t seen or heard your sister.
But I should call you—what? There’s nothing mortal
In your face or voice. No, you must be a goddess:
Apollo’s sister? Daughter of a nymph clan?
No matter: have compassion, ease our hardship.
On which of the world’s shores have we been thrown?
Beneath which tract of sky? The wind and huge waves
Drove us to this strange land in which we wander.
I'll slaughter many victims at your altar.”

She answered, “That would surely not be right.
These quivers are what Tyrian girls all carry;
We all wear purple boots, laced on our calves.
This is the Punic realm and Agenor’s city.
Unconquerable Africans surround us.
Dido is queen; she came here out of Tyre,
Escaping from her brother’s persecution.
It’s quite a story; I’ll just tell the main parts.
Her husband was Sychaeus, the Phoenician
Richest in land—and she, poor thing, adored him.
Her father gave her as a virgin to him
In marriage. But Pygmalion her brother
Is king, and there is no one more depraved.
Hate rose between them. In blind lust for gold,
And indifferent to his sister’s love, Pygmalion
Wickedly caught Sychaeus at an altar
And murdered him. He dodged and made up stories,
Cynically drawing out her anxious hope.
But in her dreams there came to her the vision
Of her unburied husband’s strange, pale face.
He bared his stabbed chest, told of that cruel altar,
Striped bare the monstrous crime the house had hidden.
He urged a quick escape. To aid her journey
Out of her country, he revealed where treasure,
A mass of gold and silver, lay long buried.
Alarmed, she made her plans, alerted friends—
All those who also hated the cruel tyrant
Or lived in sharp fear. Seizing ready ships,
They loaded them with gold. The ocean carried
Greedy Pygmalion’s wealth. A woman led.
They came here, where you now see giant walls
And the rising citadel of newborn Carthage.
They purchased land, ‘as much as one bull’s hide
Could reach around,’ and called the place ‘the Bull’s Hide.’
But who are you? What country are you from?
Where are you going?” Answering, Aeneas
Sighed and drew words out of the depths of feeling.
“Goddess, our whole sad story, from its start,
Would keep you here until the Evening Star
Closed off Olympus, bringing this day rest.
Through endless seas, we come from ancient Troy—
Perhaps you’ve heard that name. A storm has thrust us,
By its whim, onto these shores of Africa.
I am devout Aeneas, known in heaven.
I saved my household gods and now transport them
To a home in Italy. I descend from high Jove.
My goddess mother and the fates have led me.
Of twenty ships launched on the Phrygian sea,
Seven remain—torn by the waves and east wind.
Europe and Asia banished me, to wander
In empty Africa, a needy stranger.”
Venus cut short this grief, these grievances.
“Whoever you might be, it’s by the favor
Of the gods, I think, that you’re alive to reach
This Tyrian city. Go straight to the queen’s house.
I have good news. Your friends and ships are safe.
The north wind turned and brought them back. My parents
Taught me to read the sky—I hope correctly.
Look at that cheerful squadron of twelve swans.
Jove’s eagle swooped from heaven through the clear sky
And routed them. But the long row regrouped—
Those still aloft look down on those who’ve landed.
Their joyful rushing wings on their return,
Their cries, and their tight circles through the sky
Are like the ships that carry all your people:
Come into port or heading in with full sails.
Go on, then, make your way along the road.”
She turned away. Her rosy neck now shone.  
Her hair’s ambrosia breathed a holy fragrance.  
Her belt fell loose, her robe now swept her feet.  
Like a true god she walked. He recognized  
His mother, and called after her retreat:  
“I am your child—must you keep torturing me  
With these illusions? Let me take your hand—  
Let there be words between us, as we are!”  
Bitterly he approached the city walls,  
But Venus hid the group in murky air,  
In a thick cloud draped over them like clothing.  
This way no one could see or touch them. No one  
Could ask why they were there or hold them back.  
She soared to Paphos in a glad return home  
To her temple’s hundred altars, warm with incense  
From Arabia, and fragrant with fresh garlands.  
Meanwhile they hurried, following the path.  
They climbed a lofty hill above the city,  
And looked down at the fortress straight ahead.  
Aeneas was amazed at those great structures  
Where huts had been: the gates, paved roads—the hubbub!  
Some Tyrians feverishly laid out long walls  
Or rolled rocks in to raise the citadel;  
Others chose sites and bordered them with trenches.  
Laws, offices, a sacred senate formed.  
A port was being dug, the high foundations  
Of a theater laid, great columns carved from cliffs  
To ornament the stage that would be built there:  
Like bees in spring across the blossoming land,  
Busy beneath the sun, leading their offspring,  
Full grown now, from the hive, or loading cells  
Until they swell with honey and sweet nectar,  
Or taking shipments in, or lining up  
To guard the fodder from the lazy drones;  
The teeming work breathes thyme and fragrant honey.
“What luck they have—their walls grow high already!”
Aeneas cried, his eyes on those great roofs.
Still covered by the cloud—a miracle—
He went in through the crowds, and no one saw him.
Deep in the city is the verdant shade
Where the Phoenicians, tired from stormy waves,
Dug up the sign that Juno said would be there:
A horse’s head, foretelling martial glory
And easy livelihood through future ages.
Dido was building Juno a vast shrine here,
Filled with rich offerings and holy power.
The stairs soared to a threshold made of bronze;
Bronze joined the beams; the doors had shrill bronze hinges.
Here a strange sight relieved Aeneas’ fear
For the first time, and lured him into hope
Of better things to follow all his torments.
While waiting for the queen and looking over
The whole huge temple, marveling at the wealth
It showed, the work, the varied artistry,
He saw Troy’s battles painted in their sequence—
A worldwide story now: the sons of Atreus,
And Priam, and Achilles, cruel to both.
He halted, weeping: “What land isn’t full
Of what we suffered in that war, Achates?
There’s Priam! Even here is praise for valor,
And tears of pity for a mortal world.
Don’t be afraid. Somehow our fame will save us.”
With steady sobbing and a tear-soaked face,
He fed his heart on shallow images.
He saw men fight around the citadel—
Trojan troops routing Greeks, crested Achilles
Driving his chariot at the Trojans’ backs.
He wept to recognize, close by, the white tents
Of Rhesus: savage Diomedes stormed
And massacred the camp on its first night,
And seized the ardent horses there before
They tasted Trojan grass or drank the Xanthus.
Here Troilus, wretched boy who’d lost his armor,
And no match for Achilles, sprawled behind
His empty chariot and its panicked horses—
Holding the reins. His neck and long hair skidded
Over the ground. His spear point scored the dust.
The Trojan women, hair unbound, went begging
To the temple of implacable Athena.
They took a robe for her and beat their breasts.
She would not raise her eyes and look at them.
Three times Achilles dragged the corpse of Hector
Around Troy’s walls, then traded it for gold.
Aeneas gave a soulful groan to see
His comrade’s armor, chariot, and body,
And Priam stretching out defenseless hands.
He saw himself among Greek chieftains, fighting;
He saw black Memnon and the ranks of Dawn.
Penthesilea, leader of the Amazons
With their crescent shields, was storming through the throng,
Her gold belt tied beneath her naked breast—
This virgin warrior dared to fight with men.
Dardanian Aeneas gazed in wonder,
Transfixed and mesmerized—but while he stood,
Dido the lovely queen came to the temple,
Surrounded by a copious troop of soldiers.
Diana on the banks of the Eurotas
Or high on Cynthus, leading dances, followed
By a thousand clustering, trailing nymphs but taller
Than all of them, and shouldering her quiver
(Latona in her silent heart rejoices)—
Dido was like her, striding happily
Through her people, planning, urging on her kingdom.
Beneath the vault, before the goddess’ doors,
She sat on her high throne, hemmed in by soldiers,
Made laws, gave judgments, and assigned the work
In fair proportions or by drawing lots.
But now Aeneas saw, among a crowd,
Antheus, Sergestus, spirited Cloanthus,
And other Trojans whom the pitch-black whirlwind
Had scattered, driving them to distant shores.
He and Achates both were riveted
With fear and joy. They yearned to clasp their friends’ hands,
But didn’t—they were startled and bewildered.
They hung back, watching from the hollow cloud.
What was the news, where were they moored, and why
Had they come here? Spokesmen from every ship
Came clamoring to the shrine with their petition.
When they had entered and had leave to speak,
The eldest, Ilioneus, calmly started:
“Your highness, we poor Trojans plead with you:
Jove let you found a city and bring justice
To lawless tribes. We are sea-wandering,
Wind-harried: save our ships from evil fires.
Spare decent people—think of what we’ve been through.
We have not come to plunder Libyan homes
Or drive your herds away onto the shore.
Arrogant crime is not for beaten men.
There is a place Greeks call Hesperia,
An ancient land—rich-loamed and strong in war.
Oenotrians lived there, whose descendants called it
Italy, from king Italus, as we’re told.
On our way there,
Stormy Orion heaved the surge against us,
Cruel south winds drove us far into the shallows,
Scattered us under conquering waves and over
Rock barriers. We few rowed here to your shores.
What race is this? What nation would permit
Such outrage? They have thrust us from the beach
With war and yield no stopping place on land.
You scorn the human race and human weapons?
Be sure the gods remember good and evil.
Aeneas was our leader—none more just
Or faithful ever was, no better warrior.
If fate still lets him breathe instead of sleeping
Among the shades of death, we’d have no fear,
And you would not be sorry for competing
With him in kindness. We have towns and troops, though,
In Sicily. We are kin of great Acestes.
Please let us beach the fleet the winds have ruined,
And saw new planks, shape new oars in your woods.
Perhaps our friends and leader will return—
Then we can sail with joy to Italy.
If that won’t save us, and our loving father
Lies in this sea, and there’s no hope of Iulus,
We’ll sail to Sicily—a king, Acestes,
A home is there for us across the strait.”
So Ilioneus spoke, and all the Trojans
Instantly roared approval.
Dido looked down and gave this brief reply:
“Ease your hearts, Trojans, put away your fears.
The threats to my new kingdom here have forced me
To carefully place guards on all the borders.
Who hasn’t heard about Aeneas’ family,
Or Troy—those brave men and the flames of war?
Phoenicians know the world! This town’s not set
Beyond where the Sun harnesses his horses.
To Saturn’s fields, the great lands of the West,
Or the kingdom of Acestes next to Eryx,
I’ll send you off secure and well-supplied.
Or would you settle here and share my kingdom?
This town I found is yours too. Land your ships.
To me, you will be equal to my own.
I wish the storm had brought your king Aeneas
Himself. But I will send some trusted men
Along the shore as far as Libya reaches—
He might be cast up, wandering woods or towns.”
Heartened now, staunch Achates and Aeneas
The patriarch were burning to break free
From their cloud. But first Achates asked his leader:
“Goddess’ son, what new thoughts rise up in you?
Your fleet and followers are in safe havens.
Save for one man our own eyes saw the waves
Take under, it is as your mother said.”
He’d scarcely finished when the cloud that veiled them
Ripped apart and dissolved in open air.
Aeneas stood, his godlike face and shoulders
Flashing in clear light, since his mother breathed
Graceful long hair, the blushing glow of youth,
And happy, shining eyes onto her son—
Like ivory beautifully carved, like silver
Or marble that is edged with tawny gold.
The queen, the crowd were startled. He addressed them,
Unhesitating: “Here I am, you see—
Trojan Aeneas, saved from Libyan waters.
You are the first to pity Troy’s disasters.
We are the scraps the Greeks left. We have nothing.
Disasters pelted us on land and sea.
It is not in the power of all our people—
Who are world-scattered now—to thank you, Dido,
For making us the sharers of this place.
The gods and your own conscience must reward you.
Surely divine powers honor selflessness,
And justice does exist. What happy era
And what outstanding parents gave you birth?
While streams run seaward, while the shadows move
On mountain slopes, and the stars graze in heaven,
Your name will have unceasing praise and honor—
Whatever country calls me.” He clasped hands
With Ilioneus and Serestus, right and left,
Then others, brave Cloanthus and brave Gyas.
Phoenician Dido was amazed to see him,
And shocked by all his suffering. She spoke:
“What fate has hounded you through endless dangers?
What force has brought you to our savage shores?
Are you the one born by the river Simois—
Trojan Anchises’ and kind Venus’ son?
Teucer in exile came to Sidon, looking
For a new kingdom, I recall, and seeking
My father Belus’ help, who was away
Ravaging wealthy, newly conquered Cyprus.
Since then I’ve known the tragedy of Troy,
And the Greek kings who fought there, and your name.
Your enemy himself admired Trojans,
And claimed the ancient “Teucrian” line as his too.
So come now, warriors, join me in my house.
Fate dragged me through much suffering myself
Until it let me settle in this land.
My own experience has taught compassion.”
She spoke, and led Aeneas to her palace,
Proclaiming sacrifices in the temples.
She sent his shore-bound comrades twenty bulls,
A hundred giant boars with bristling backs,
And a hundred fat lambs, and their mothers too,
Gifts for a joyful day.
Her house was now prepared luxuriously
And regally, with a feast laid in the middle,
With embroidered covers and imperial ivory,
Dishes of massive silver, gold-embossed
With heroism through the generations—
The whole long story of her ancient race.
Aeneas, with an anxious father’s love,
Dispatched Achates swiftly to the ships,
To give Ascanius news and bring him here.
To his fond father, he was everything.
Aeneas ordered gifts brought in—the salvage
Of Troy: a mantle stiff with gold-stitched figures,
A veil trimmed yellow with acanthus flowers—
Greek Helen’s finery, taken from Mycenae
When she set off for Troy and lawless marriage,
Glorious presents from her mother, Leda—
And the scepter that was held by Ilione,
Eldest of Priam’s daughters; a pearl necklace;
And a crown’s double bands of gold and gems.
Achates rushed to fetch them from the ships.
But a new strategy was in the mind
Of Venus. She sent Cupid in disguise,
Looking like sweet Ascanius, with the gifts,
To twist a frenzied flame around the queen’s bones.
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Of Venus. She sent Cupid in disguise,
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To twist a frenzied flame around the queen’s bones.
She feared this lying race, this doubtful refuge.
At evening, too, came thoughts of ruthless Juno
To trouble her, so she approached winged Love:
“My son, you are my strength, I rule through you.
You even scorn the patriarch’s lightning bolts.
Humbly I come to seek your holy aid.
Your know your brother’s tortuous worldwide voyage,
How Juno’s spite will never let him rest.
You’ve shared my grief about this many times.
Phoenician Dido flatters and detains him.
Juno has sanctioned this; but for what purpose?
She won’t hang back at this decisive time.
So I’ll move quickly, shrewdly, trap the queen
In fire—and then no heavenly will can change her.
She will be mine, through passion for Aeneas.
Now listen while I tell you how to do it.
My darling prince, at his dear father’s call,
Is setting out to the Phoenician city
With gifts saved from the sea and Trojan flames.
I’ll put the boy to sleep and hide him high
On Cythera or Idalium, in my shrine.
He won’t know, he won’t stumble on the scheme.
You are a boy too: for a single night
Impersonate the features Trojans know.
Amid the royal banquet’s flowing wine,
Dido will be enchanted with you, hold you
In her lap, with doting kisses. That’s your chance:
Stealthily breathe on her your flame of poison.”

Love stripped his wings, obeying his dear mother,
And strutted in a gleeful imitation.

Venus poured deep sleep through the prince’s body
And took him in her arms to the high groves
Of Idalium. Soft marjoram wrapped its flowers,
Its breath of aromatic shade around him.

Now with delight and deference Cupid went
After Achates, with the royal gifts.

He found the queen among her splendid hangings,
Posed in the middle, on a golden couch.
Father Aeneas and the ranks of Trojans
Assembled and lay down on purple covers.

Servants poured water on their hands, provided
Baskets of bread and fine-spun napkins. Inside,
Fifty maids honored household gods with hearth fires
And made the long feast ready course by course.

Two hundred men and women of the same age
Served wine and weighed the tables down with good things.
Phoenician guests flocked in the festive doorway
And took their places on embroidered couches,
Admiring Aeneas’ gifts, admiring Iulus
(Or the god’s bright face and masquerading words)
And the cloak and the embroidered yellow flowers.
The Punic queen—cursed and disaster-bound—
Was looking on with hunger in her heart,
Enchanted by the presents and the boy.
He put his arms around Aeneas’ neck—
Which gratified the duped and loving father—
Then sought the queen. Her eyes and mind were fixed
On him. Poor thing, she held him on her lap,
The powerful hidden god. He thought of Venus,
His mother, and began to ease Sycaeus
Out of her mind and try a living love
Against a heart long quiet and disused.
An interval; the tables are removed.
They set out massive wine bowls crowned with flowers.
A clamor rises, and their voices roll
Through the wide hall. Lamps hang from golden panels,
Blazing, and waxed-rope torches rout the darkness.
The queen called for a bowl—massed gems and gold—
To hold unwatered wine. From Belus onward,
The dynasty had drunk from it. Now, silence.
“Jove, your laws govern visits, as they say.
Make this a glad day for our Trojan guests
And us, a day our children all remember.
Come, Bacchus, giver of joy, and kindly Juno;
Join in this gathering with good will, Tyrians.”
She poured a sacrifice onto the table
And made a start—her lips just brushed the rim—
And passed the bowl to Bitias with a challenge.
He wallowed in the full, foam-brimming gold.
The other leaders drank. Long-haired Iopas,
Great Atlas’ pupil, struck his golden lyre.
He sang the wandering moon, the sun’s eclipses,
Fire and rain, how men and beasts were made,
The Keeper of the Bear, the Twins, the Rain Stars;
Why winter suns dive in the sea so quickly,
What obstacle makes winter nights so slow.
Repeated cheers rose, led by Tyrians.
Unlucky Dido spoke of various things,
Drawing the night out, deep in love already.
She asked so many questions: Priam, Hector,
The armor of the son of Dawn, how good
Diomedes’ horses were, how tall Achilles.
“Tell it from the beginning, friend—the ambush
By the Greeks, your city’s fall, your wanderings.
This is the seventh summer now that sends you
Drifting across the wide world’s lands and seas.”