

Aen. 2.40-56, 201-249

*Vergil, Aeneid,
Book 2, Lines 40-56, 201-249*

Book 2.40-56

Primus ibi ante omnis magna comitante caterua 40

Then first before [them] all with a great crowd accompanying [him],

Laocoon ardens summa decurrit ab arce,

Laocoon ablaze runs down from the top of the citadel

et procul 'o miseri, quae tanta insania, ciues?

and at a distance he says: "O wretched citizens, what [is this] so great madness?

creditis auectos hostis? aut ulla putatis

Do you believe that the enemy has been carried off? Or do you think that any

dona carere dolis Danaum? sic notus Vlixes?

gifts of the Greeks are lacking in tricks? Is thus Odysseus known?

aut hoc inclusi ligno occultantur Achiui, 45

Either the Greeks enclosed in the timber are hidden,

aut haec in nostros fabricata est machina muros,

Or this device has been made [to go] against our walls,

inspectura domos uenturaque desuper urbi,

in order to look down upon [our] homes and in order to come upon the city from above,

aut aliquis latet error; equo ne credite, Teucri.

or some other trick lies hidden; do not trust in the horse, Trojans.

quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentis.'

Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks even bearing gifts."

sic fatus ualidis ingentem uiribus hastam

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Having spoken thus he hurled a huge spear with mighty force

in latus inque feri curuam compagibus aluum

into the flank and into the belly of the beast curved with joints.

contorsit. stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso

That [spear] stood fixed, trembling, and in the shaken belly

insonuere cauae gemitumque dedere cauernae.

the hollow cavities resounded and gave a groan.

et, si fata deum, si mens non laeua fuisset,

And, if the fates of the gods, if [their] intention had not been ill-omened,

impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras,

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he [would have] compelled us to defile the Greek hiding places with iron,

Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres.

and Troy would now stand, and you would remain, lofty citadel of Priam.

Laocoon, ductus Neptuno sorte sacerdos,

Laocoon, having been chosen by lot as priest to Neptune,

sollemnis taurum ingentem mactabat ad aras.

was slaughtering a huge bull at the solemn altars.

ecce autem gemini a Tenedo tranquilla per alta

But behold!—twin snakes from Tenedos across the tranquil depths

(horresco referens) immensis orbibus angues

(I shudder recalling) with immense coils loom over the sea

incumbunt pelago pariterque ad litora tendunt;

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and head toward the shores side by side;

pectora quorum inter fluctus arrecta iubaeque

the chests of which raised [high] among the waves

sanguineae superant undas, pars cetera pontum

and the blood red crests surmount the seas, the other part behind

pone legit sinuatque immensa uolumine terga.

skims the sea and twists the huge backs in a coil.

fit sonitus spumante salo; iamque arua tenebant

With the sea salt foaming a sound is made; and now they were taking hold of the fields

ardentisque oculos suffecti sanguine et igni

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and, their blazing eyes suffused with blood and fire

sibila lambebant linguis uibrantibus ora.

they licked their hissing mouths with vibrating tongues.

diffugimus uisu exsanguis. illi agmine certo

We pale men fled from the sight. Those [snakes] seek Laocoon in a fixed battle line;

Laocoonta petunt; et primum parua duorum

and first of all each serpent, having embraced the small bodies

corpora natorum serpens amplexus uterque

of the two sons, entwines [them]

implicat et miseros morsu depascitur artus;

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and feeds on [their] pitiful limbs with [its] bite;

post ipsum auxilio subeuntem ac tela ferentem

afterwards they seize [Laocoon] himself and he is approaching as help bearing weapons

corripiunt spirisque ligant ingentibus; et iam

and they bind him with huge coils; and now

bis medium amplexi, bis collo squamea circum

having wrapped him in the middle twice, twice having placed their scaly bodies around his neck

terga dati superant capite et ceruicibus altis.

they tower over him with their head and with their lofty necks.

ille simul manibus tendit diuellere nodos

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At that very moment that one tries to pull apart the knots with his hands

perfusus sanie uittas atroque ueneno,

his headband soaked with gore and black poison,

clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:

at that very moment he raises horrifying cries to the stars:

qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram

Of such a sort [is] the mooing, when a wounded bull flees the altar

taurus et incertam excussit ceruice securim.

and has shaken from [his] neck the ill-aimed axe.

at gemini lapsu delubra ad summa dracones

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But the two serpents slithering away escape to the highest shrines

effugiunt saeuaeque petunt Tritonidis arcem,

and make for the citadel of cruel Tritonia

sub pedibusque deae clipeique sub orbe teguntur.

and under the goddess' feet and the circle of her shield shelter themselves.

tum uero tremefacta nouus per pectora cunctis

Then indeed through the shuddering hearts of all a fresh terror

insinuat pauor, et scelus expendisse merentem

winds its way; and men say that Laocoön has paid

Laocoonta ferunt, sacrum qui cuspide robur

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deservedly for his crime for having profaned with his spear the sacred oak

laeserit et tergo sceleratam intorserit hastam.

and hurled at its frame his accursed spear.

ducendum ad sedes simulacrum orandaque diuae numina conclamant.

They shout in unison that the image must be drawn to her temple and that her divine power must be supplicated.

diuidimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis.

We lay open the walls and we open up the city walls and we open up the city's buildings.

accingunt omnes operi pedibusque rotarum

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All gird themselves for the work; under its feet

subiciunt lapsus, et stuppea uincula collo

they place rollers [lit., "the slippings of wheels"] and secure hemp ropes tightly around its neck.

intendunt; scandit fatalis machina muros

It climbs our walls, that fateful engine,

feta armis. pueri circum innuptaeque puellae

pregnant with arms. Around it boys and unmarried girls

sacra canunt funemque manu contingere gaudent;

chant holy songs and delight to touch the rope with their hands.

illa subit mediaeque minans inlabitur urbi.

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Up it goes, and into the city's midst threateningly it glides.

o patria, o diuum domus Ilium et incluta bello

Oh my country! Oh homes of the gods, Ilium, and you, renowned in war,

moenia Dardanidum! quater ipso in limine portae

battlements of the Dardanidae! Four times on the very threshold of the gate

substitit atque utero sonitum quater arma dedere;

it came to a standstill, and from its belly four times the armor clattered;

instamus tamen immemores caecique furore

we press on nevertheless, thoughtless and blind with madness,

et monstrum infelix sacrata sistimus arce.

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and we set the ill-omened monster on our hallowed citadel.

tunc etiam fatis aperit Cassandra futuris

Even then Cassandra opens her lips with the coming doom,

ora dei iussu non umquam credita Teucris.

by the god's command never believed by the Trojans.

nos delubra deum miseri, quibus ultimus esset

We unfortunate ones, for whom that day was our last,

ille dies, festa uelamus fronde per urbem.

wreath the shrines of the gods with festal leafage throughout the city.