Part II

Virgil

Teucrorum spes
Hector is dead.

Achilles is dead.

The Greeks have pretended to abandon the siege.

They sail from Troy, leaving the fatal Wooden Horse on the shore…

We pick up the story of the destruction of the city as Aeneas himself will tell it to Dido, Queen of Carthage.
VIRGIL. All fell silent, gazing at Aeneas. He rose and spoke.
PATER AENEAS. Queen, you bid me speak of sorrow beyond words, of how the Greeks destroyed the wealth of Troy and of her lamentable kingdom, the terrible things I saw, in which I played a large part.
Who could speak of such things and not weep? Not the Myrmidons, nor the Dolopians, not even one of harsh Odysseus’ men. And night comes fast, the stars call us to sleep.
But if you so much wish to know our suffering, and hear briefly Troy’s last agony, although I shudder to recall it and shrink back in grief, I shall begin.
Scene 1

Hector
PATER AENEAS. It was the hour when heaven-sent rest steals upon mortals, a most welcome gift.
Suddenly in my sleep Hector appeared, sorrowful and weeping copiously. He looked as he did when dragged behind the chariot, black with bloody dust, his feet swollen, pierced by the leather thongs.
What a sight, how changed from Hector when he came back wearing Achilles’ spoils, or set the Greek ships on fire!
His beard was filthy, his hair stiff with blood, his body bore all the wounds suffered round the wall of his father’s city.
In my dream I forced myself to speak first, weeping like him, and sorrowful.
AENEAS. Light of the Trojans, dearest hope of Troy, what delayed you? Where have you come from, Hector, long awaited? How we gaze on you now, we battle-weary men, after so many deaths and so much suffering!
What has spoiled your face, once so serene?
What wounds are these I see?
PATER AENEAS. He did not dwell on these vain questions, but groaned from the depths of his heart and said:
HECTOR. Goddess-born, flee, escape from the fires; the enemy holds the walls, Troy is falling. You have done enough for your country and for Priam. If one arm could have saved Troy, mine would have done it.
Troy now entrusts to you its holy things and household gods. Take them as companions of your fate. Seek for them a city you will found after long voyaging.
PATER AENEAS. The city meanwhile was plunged deeper in grief. The house of Anchises was secluded, screened by trees, but the noise and horror of battle drew nearer.
I shook off sleep, and climbed up to the roof and stood there, listening intently. Then indeed the good faith of the Greeks — their treachery — was plain to see.
Deiphobus’ house had burned down, his neighbour Ucalegon burned too. Sigeum’s water reflected the flames, cries of men and trumpet calls rose up.
Out of my mind I grabbed weapons, though weapons were useless now; but I was desperate to gather men for battle, rush with friends up to the citadel. Furious anger drove me; it seemed good to die fighting.
But there came Panthus, escaped from the Greek spears.
AENEAS. Where is our last stand, Panthus? Where is our stronghold?
PANTHUS. This is Troy’s last day, and ineluctable hour. We Trojans are finished, Troy is no more, nor Teucer’s mighty race. Merciless Zeus has handed everything to Greece, the Greeks are masters in our burning city.
Standing high in the city the horse pours out armed men, and Sinon, in triumph, spreads the flames. At the open gates throng thousands, as many as ever came from Mycenae.
Others block the narrow streets with drawn swords. They are in battle line, steel flashing, ready to kill. Only a few guards at the gates try to fight blindly on.
PATER AENEAS. Driven by his words and by the gods’ will I went into the fire and the fighting where the grim Fury called me, and the noise of battle, and shouts rising to the sky.
I met Rhipeus in the moonlight,
Epytus, huge in his armour,
and Hypanis and Dymas joined us too.
When I saw them drawn up, burning to fight,
I spoke to them:
AENEAS. Bravest of men, but all in vain, if you are set on following a man who dares to fight to the end, you see how things are with us.
Our gods have fled their shrines.  
You rush to defend a burning city.  
Let’s die, let’s plunge into the battle’s heart!
For the defeated, the only hope is to have no hope.
PATER AENEAS. This added frenzy to their courage: then we rushed through the enemy to certain death, through the middle of the city, black night spreading its wings over us.
Who could describe the slaughter of that night?
What tears could match our suffering?
An ancient city fell, that had ruled for many years. Dead bodies lay strewn in its streets, houses and holy shrines.
Nor did only Trojans die. Sometimes courage returned to their defeated hearts and conquering Greeks fell dead.
Bitter grief was everywhere; everywhere was fear, and death in many forms.
Scene 2

Priam
PATER AENEAS. At the threshold of the palace was Pyrrhus, Achilles’ son, in his glory, light flashing on his bronze weapons.
Inside was confusion and lamenting, and further in, the rooms echoed with the wailing of women, their cries rising to the golden stars.
Frightened mothers roamed the great building clinging to the doorposts and kissing them.
Pyrrhus pressed on, with all his father’s force, neither bolts nor guards could stop him. The battered door gave way, the posts fell down.
Force made the breach and the Greeks stormed through, slaughtered the guards, filled the house with soldiers.
I saw Pyrrhus myself, in a frenzy of killing, and the sons of Atreus on the threshold. I saw Hecuba and her hundred daughters, and Priam’s blood spilled on the altar, polluting the flame which he himself had consecrated.
Those fifty bedrooms, with their hopes of future children, the doorposts rich with spoils of foreign gold, all fallen in. What fire had not destroyed, the Greeks held.
Perhaps you wish to know of Priam’s fate.
Seeing his city taken, his gates forced, the enemy in his house, the old man put his long-disused armour round trembling shoulders, strapped on a useless sword and made for the battle, ready to die.
In the heart of the house a broad altar stood open to the sky, an ancient laurel bent over it, shading the household gods.
Here vainly embracing the gods’ images
Hecuba and her daughters flocked
round the altar like storm-blown doves.
When she saw that Priam had put on the armour he wore in youth, she cried:
HECUBA. Are you mad, wretched husband, to strap on these weapons? Where are you rushing? This is no time for such help or such defenders. Even my Hector, were he here now…
Come here. The altar will protect us all, or we shall die together.
PATER AENEAS. Speaking, she drew the old man to her and seated him by the altar.
Now came Polites, one of Priam’s sons, a fugitive from death at Pyrrhus’ hands; through enemy spears, and through long colonnades and empty halls he fled, already wounded,
and Pyrrhus chased him, hot to wound him more, 
now caught him, now thrust in his spear. 
Before his parents’ eyes Polites fell, 
vomiting up his life’s blood.
Now Priam was face to face with death
but did not hold back or shrink from angry words.
PRIAM. For your crime, if there is justice in heaven, may the gods give you due thanks, and reward you justly for making me see my son die before his father’s eyes.
Achilles, whose son, liar, you claim to be, did not treat Priam so, but showed respect to a suppliant and for my trust in him. He gave me Hector’s body, let me bring it home to the city where I rule.
PATER AENEAS. Then the old man feebly threw his spear. It struck but could not pierce Pyrrhus’s shield and hung useless from the central boss. Pyrrhus replied:
PYRRHUS. So, take a message to my father, the son of Peleus. Tell him of my deeds, and the wickedness of his son. Now, die.
PATER AENEAS. With that he dragged Priam to the altar, trembling and slipping in his son’s blood, twisted his left hand in Priam’s hair and raising his glittering sword plunged it to the hilt in Priam’s side.
So ended Priam’s fate. This was the death assigned to him, once the proud ruler of so many Asian lands and peoples: to die with Troy ablaze before his eyes and the citadel destroyed.
His mighty trunk lay on the shore, the head hacked from the shoulders, a corpse without a name.
Scene 3

Helen and Venus
PATER AENEAS. Only then did I grasp the horror round me. I was aghast. I thought of my dear father as I saw the old king breathe out his life from that cruel wound. I thought of Creusa, my house, my little son.
Alone now, I caught sight of Helen watching the doors of Vesta’s temple where she was hiding. The fires gave light as I looked round.
This Fury, the bane of Troy and Greece, feared the Trojans, the Greeks, and the anger of her husband; so, hated by all, she had hidden and now sat by the altar.
Anger flared in my heart, I longed to avenge my country as it fell.
exact the penalty for Helen’s crimes.
AENEAS. Shall this woman see Sparta again and walk in triumph, a queen? Shall she see husband, home and family, and be attended by Trojan women and Phrygian slaves?
No! There is no fame, no praise, in killing a woman, but I shall be praised for wiping out this evil, and taking vengeance for my people’s ashes.
PATER AENEAS. Furious I ran towards her, when, more clearly than ever before, I saw my loving mother appear, brightly radiant in the darkness,
a goddess as the heavenly gods see her, in form and stature. She caught my hand, held me back, and opened her rosy lips:
VENUS. Son, what bitterness stirs this fierce anger? Why are you raging? Where is your love for me?
Won’t you first look for your father, worn out by age, see if Creusa is still alive, and your son Ascanius?
The blame lies not with Helen’s hated beauty, nor with Paris. The cruelty of the gods has destroyed the wealth and towers of Troy.
Look, for I shall tear away the cloud that dulls mortal eyes; you are my son, you can obey me without fear.
Where you see scattered stones and smoky plumes of dust, Neptune has loosened the foundations with his trident, and is shaking the walls, tearing up your city from its roots.
Here, fierce Juno, first to seize the Scaean gate, stands there sword in hand, calling up troops from the ships.
Look there, Pallas is sitting on your citadel, shining with her fearsome Gorgon,
while Jupiter himself heartens the Greeks and gives them strength. It is he who rouses the gods against Troy. Flee, my son, flee, give up your struggle. I shall be with you and bring you safe to your father’s door.
PATER AENEAS. With that she faded into the dark night and there before my eyes — a dreadful vision — the gods in all their power, Troy’s enemies.
Then I seemed to see the whole of Ilium sink into the flames, and Neptune’s Troy overthrown.
Scene 4

Anchises and Creusa
PATER AENEAS. I came down from the roof and led by the goddess found a way through fire and sword. The weapons and the flames fell back before me. And when I reached my father’s house
my father, whom I wanted to take to the mountains, refused to live on with Troy destroyed, refused to suffer exile.
ANCHISES. You who are young and strong, you must escape.  
If the gods wanted me to live  
they would have saved my house. I survived  
once before when the city fell: that was enough.
Say farewell and leave my body here.
I’ll find death on my own. The enemy will take pity and kill me for my spoils.
Lack of burial is easy to bear.
Hated by the gods, I have lingered long,
since Jupiter touched me with the wind
of his thunderbolt and scorched me with fire.
PATER AENEAS. So he spoke, and stayed rooted there, unmovable. Weeping, we all — Creusa, Ascanius — all begged him not to destroy everything and add to our doom.
He persisted and clung to his purpose. 
In despair, longing for death, I rushed to take arms again. What could I do? What fortune awaited me?
AENEAS. Did you think, father, I would leave without you?
How could you speak such sacrilege?
If the gods want to leave us nothing
and you are set on adding us all
to the ruin, the door is open,
the deaths you seek are near.
Pyrrhus will soon be here, spattered with Priam’s blood, he who kills the son in the father’s sight and the father at the altar.
Gracious mother, was it for this you brought me through spears and fire? To see the enemy in my house and Ascanius, Anchises and Creusa dead in each other’s blood?
Bring my armour, friends. Our last dawn summons the defeated. Let me back to the Greeks and to the battle. Today we shall die but not all of us will die unavenged.
PATER AENEAS. I strapped on my sword again and fitted my arm in my shield, and was leaving, when Creusa threw herself at my feet in the doorway, holding up little Iulus.
CREUSA. If you are bent on death, take us with you. But if you trust in arms, then first guard this house. To whom do you abandon Iulus, your father, and me, who was once called your wife?
PATER AENEAS. Her cries were filling the house, when a sudden amazing portent appeared.
As we held Iulus between us
light streamed from his pointed cap, and flames
licked his hair and brow, but did not hurt him.
Frightened, we beat out the flames in his hair and quenched the fire with water. But Anchises, joyful, raised his hands to heaven and prayed:
ANCHISES. All-powerful Jupiter, if you are swayed by prayer, look upon us — we ask no more — and if our devotion has earned it, help us, and confirm this omen.
PATER AENEAS. At once, thunder rang out from the left, and a star fell, burning bright through the darkness.
We saw it glide over the roof and bury its brilliance in Mount Ida’s woods, its track marked by light, and sulphurous smoke all about.
Then my father was convinced. He stood up, addressed the gods, and prayed to the star.
ANCHISES. No more delay. I follow where you lead.
Gods of my fathers! Save my house,
save my grandson.
This sign is yours, and Troy is in your hands.
I yield, my son, and go as your companion.
AENEAS. Come then, dear father, climb on my back, I’ll carry you, the weight will be nothing.
Whatever comes, bad or good, we’ll share it. Little Iulus can walk with me, my wife can follow at a distance.
You, father, carry the holy things and the household gods, for I have just been fighting and must not touch them till I have washed in a flowing stream.
PATER AENEAS. With that I spread a lion-skin over my shoulders and stooped to lift my burden. Little Iulus held my hand and followed, his small steps unequal to mine. My wife followed behind.
We walked through shadows and I, 
till now unmoved by the attacking Greeks, 
now feared the breeze and jumped at every noise, 
fearful for my companion 
and for the one I carried.
We were near the gates, I thought we were safe, when I heard marching feet and my father, peering through the darkness, cried:
ANCHISES. Run, my son! They are coming this way!
I see the flames reflected in their shields
and their bronze weapons glinting.
PATER AENEAS. Then some malign god robbed me of my wits.
I ran away down unfamiliar streets,
and so by cruel fate I lost Creusa.
Whether she stopped, or was lost, or sat down exhausted, no one knows.
I never saw her again.
What man or god did I not accuse
in my mad frenzy? What crueller thing did I see
in the fallen city? I left
Ascanius, Anchises, the household gods
with my companions in a hidden valley.
Retracing my steps I took the risk of calling her by name through the dark streets, again and again, but it was in vain.
Then as I sought her among the buildings, her sad ghost appeared before me, larger than life.
I was horrified, my hair stood on end, 
my voice stuck in my throat. Then she spoke 
and comforted me with these words:
Dear husband, why such wild grief?
Such things do not happen against the will of the gods. It was not fated for Creusa to go with you when you left this place. The lord of high Olympus does not allow it.
A long exile is your lot, a wide sea to plough;
but you will reach Hesperia, where the Tiber flows
through rich fields.
There happy days await you, a kingdom, a royal wife. Do not shed tears for your dear Creusa.
I shall never see the houses of Myrmidons or Dolopians,
I shall not be the slave of Greek women,
I, a Trojan woman, wife of Venus’ son.
The Great Goddess keeps me on these shores.
Farewell now; always love the child we share.
Then as I wept, longing to speak, she left me, and faded back into thin air.
Three times I tried to embrace her, three times her phantom slipped through my arms, light as wind, and insubstantial as a dream. So at last the night was over and I found my friends again.
Aeneas did escape from Troy with Anchises and Ascanius and his followers.

He and his companions sailed, with many adventures en route, to Drepanum (Trápani) in Sicily, where Anchises died.

In obedience to the will of the gods, Aeneas has now set sail for the mainland of Italy.

We pick up the story again – with Virgil now as the Narrator – at the moment when Juno catches sight of the fleet of Aeneas as they round the north-west tip of Sicily.
Scene 5

Juno and Neptune
VIRGIL. Just out of sight of Sicily, they were making cheerfully for the open sea, their bronze prows churning the salt sea, when Juno, still nursing her eternal grudge, reflected:
JUNO. Shall I admit defeat? Can I not keep the Trojan king from Italy? Indeed the Fates forbid me. Yet Pallas could burn the Greek fleet and drown the crews,
but I, Queen of Gods, Jupiter’s sister and wife, have fought one people for so long. Will anyone still worship Juno or lay offerings upon my altars?
VIRGIL. Angrily brooding, she came to Aeolia, home of clouds, teeming with wild South winds.
Here King Aeolus in a vast cave controls the brawling winds and noisy storms with chains and fetters. Juno now appealed to him, using these words:
JUNO. Aeolus, the father of gods and men gave you the power to calm the sea or rouse it with your winds. Now a people I hate is sailing the Tyrrhenian sea taking Troy and its defeated gods to Italy.
Whip up your winds and sink their ships,
disperse their fleet,
scatter their bodies on the sea.
AEOLUS. Queen, your task is to search out your desire, mine to obey your orders.
To you I owe this kingdom and sceptre
and Jupiter’s favour. You give me
a couch at the feasts of the gods
and make me lord of clouds and storms.
VIRGIL. With that he swung his spear and pierced the side of the hollow mountain. The winds rushed out as if for battle, and stormed across the world.
They swooped on the sea and flung up water from its depths — East and West winds together, and the stormy Southwester — and rolled huge waves towards the shore.
Then came shouts of men, creaking of cables; clouds blotting out daylight from the Trojans’ eyes, black night brooding on the sea.
The heavens thundered, lightning flashed again and again across the sky. Everything promised the sailors instant death.
Aeneas’ limbs grew weak and cold, he groaned and raised both hands to heaven.
AENEAS. Oh, three and four times blessed, those who died before their fathers’ eyes beneath Troy’s walls!
Diomedes, why could you not kill me, spilling my life-blood on the plains of Troy?
There where Hector fell to Achilles’ spear, and mighty Sarpedon, and where Simois swept away shields, helmets, and so many bodies of brave men.
VIRGIL. As he shouted, a squall came howling, from the north, struck his sail, raised waves sky-high.
The oars broke, the prow swung round, the ship was broadside to the waves. Down came a towering mountain of water.
Some ships hung on the wave-crests; for others the waters opened, showing the sea-bed and the churning sand.
Three the South wind caught and drove off course on to a hidden reef — Italians call it the Altar — an underwater spine of rock.
Three the Southeaster took, and stranded on the Syrtean shoals, walled in by sand a wretched sight.
One, carrying the Lycians and loyal Orontes, Aeneas saw struck astern by a huge wave.
The helmsman was swept overboard headfirst, the ship spun round three times and was swallowed by a whirlpool.
Here and there, men could be seen swimming, and with them floated weapons, timbers, and Trojan treasure.
Meanwhile, Neptune noticed the sea in turmoil, the storm let loose, the waves boiling up from calm deeps, and was angry. Looking out over the sea, he calmly raised his head above the waves.
He saw Aeneas’ fleet scattered over the whole sea, the Trojans at the mercy of waves and weather, and recognised Juno’s guileful anger.
He summoned East and West winds and spoke:
NEPTUNE. Have you grown so proud? Do you dare 
stir up this chaos without my command? 
You, whom I...
But first I must calm the troubled waves.
You’ll pay the penalty for this later.
Off with you, and tell your king this:
the rule of the sea and the dread trident
fell to my lot, not his. He holds the rocks,
East wind, home to you and your kin. Let Aeolus
swagger there, and rule inside your prison.
He spoke, and quickly calmed the restless waves,
dispersed the massed clouds, and brought back the sun.
Aeneas and his seven remaining ships are driven back by the storm as far as the coast of North Africa.

He goes ashore and kills some deer which he brings to his exhausted, grieving and disheartened crew.
Scene 6

Venus and Jupiter
AENEAS. Friends, we have known trouble before this. You have suffered worse, and this too will pass. God will see to that.
You have been to Scylla’s cave and heard the mad dogs howl, you saw the Cyclops’ rocks. Take heart. The day may come when you are glad to remember even these things.
Whatever happens, we are making for Latium, where the Fates promise us rest.
Troy is to rise again. Your task is to endure, and save yourselves for better times.
VIRGIL. So he spoke; but he was sick at heart, feigning hope, and hiding his deep grief.
Hunger satisfied and the feast cleared, they talked at length of their lost comrades, torn between hope and fear: did they still live, or were they dying at that moment, no longer hearing if they were called?
Now all was over, when from high heaven
Jupiter surveyed the sail-winged sea,
outspread lands, shores and scattered peoples,
and paused, and looked at Libya.
As he pondered the suffering he saw, Venus, downcast, eyes shining with tears, spoke to him.
VENUS. You who rule men and gods by your commands, and by the fear of your lightning, what harm has my Aeneas done to you?
What have the Trojans done? They have suffered great loss of life, and find the whole world closed to them because of Italy.
Surely you promised that as time rolled on the Romans would arise from them, from Teucer’s line restored. And they would rule the sea and all the lands. You promised, so what changed your mind, Father?
That promise once consoled me for Troy’s fall, weighing one fate against another. Now after so many disasters, the same evil fortune hounds them.
Great king, what end do you grant to their pain? Is this the reward for piety? Is this how you bring us to a kingdom?
JUPITER. Spare yourself these fears, Lady of Cythera. Be sure the fate of your descendants remains unchanged.
You will see Lavinium’s promised walls,
and raise brave Aeneas to the stars.
Nothing has changed my mind.
As you are anxious, I shall speak,
unroll the scroll of fate, reveal its secrets.
Aeneas will wage war in Italy,
crush fierce tribes, build walls for his people
and establish their customs.
This kingdom will last three hundred years under Hector’s race, till the priestess queen Ilia, pregnant by Mars, gives birth to twins.
Then Romulus will take up the line, proudly wearing the hide of the wolf that fostered him. He will build walls worthy of Mars, and give his name to his people, the Romans.
For them I set no bounds in space or time, but have granted them empire without end.
Harsh Juno, who now harries earth, air and sea,
will choose better counsels,
and with me will cherish the Romans,
lords of the world, those who will wear the toga.
So has it been decreed.