

CONSOLATIO AD LIVIAM

You who for long seemed blast and recently
Were called the mother of the Neros, see
That half that name is gone; this doleful lay
To Drusus you are reading, for today
You have, to call your mother, but one son;
Hearing that word, you may not say "Which one?",
No double love diverting you. Who'd dare
To teach you laws of mourning, who'd take care
To check your tears? It's easy, although he
Has touched us all, to utter gallantly 10
Words of another's grief: "This is a blow
But light upon your head that you seem so
Brave in distress." A young man is no more,
Revered by all, great in both peace and war.
Of late he wrested from the enemy
Their Alpine lairs, sharing the captaincy
With his brother, while he crushed the fierce Suevi
And the indomitable Sicambri
And routed them. A triumph, Rome, he gained
For you, before unknown, and thus attained 20
New lands. Not knowing then your destiny,
Mother, you planned to vow your loyalty
To Jove and to Bellona and to load
With gifts Mars and those gods to whom are owed
Worship and with a mother's mind you thought
Of a sacred triumph, and perhaps you sought
A chariot. Instead a funeral

You needs must lead: for Drusus burial
 Before Jove's citadel is waiting. You
 Imagined his return, cherishing too 30
 The joys he bade you feel. In victory
 He faced you: "Soon he'll come, the mob shall see
 Me giving thanks, for Drusus I must bear
 Gifts for his safety. People everywhere
 Shall call me lucky as I meet my son."
 I'll kiss his neck, face, eyes. Thus will I run
 To him." Great joy you cherish: put aside
 False hope, poor wretched lady. Don't confide
 In us your joy. For Caesar's great successes,
 One half your hopes are stubborn now. Your tresses, 40
 Livia, let loose. What good's your honesty,
 Your living life with such integrity
 And pleasing such a fine man? Why enthrone
 With chastity such goodness that you've shown
 That it has capped your praises? To retain
 Always an upright mind and to remain
 Quite free of vices? To have harmed no-one,
 Though with that capability? That none
 Have feared your might? That you have never strayed
 To public life but, as is fitting, stayed 50
 Within your home? Injustice certainly
 Rules such lives: here too, she erratically
 Directs her wheels, and she's felt here no less:
 Lest she miss something in her greediness
 She rages, for injustice everywhere
 Is turned to justice. If indeed despair

Was Livia's alone, the monarchy
Of Fortune had diminished. What if she
Had stirred no envy by her politesse?
The palace should from all human distress 60
And death be free. Our godlike guard must be,
High in his citadel, able to see
Mankind in safety: he should have no call
To mourn his kin, nor they him; what we all
Endure should not be his lot. Every one
Of us saw him bewail his sister's son;
As now, that grief was public. Side by side
Lay his two sons-in-law, though one had died
Before the other; but before the door
Was scarce closed on the tomb, there was one more, 70
His sister, to be buried. Once again
Great Caesar must lament. Fates, clean up, then,
The tomb too often opened. Now you've died,
Drusus, your name has fruitlessly been cried
For the last time. Enough! That grief can be
Voiced endlessly. A multiplicity
Of mourning cries! Your virtues represent
So many men; you were pre-eminent,
Yet not alone – your fruitful mother bore
Two fine sons. Oh, where could one find a more 80
Outstanding pair or such true loyalty
And undisputed love? We were to see
Nero's pale face and all-dishevelled hair,
Unlike himself as his fraternal care
He showed in mourning. Grief for his brother's death

Was clear in every line. At his last breath
You sat with him. He saw your tears and felt
Your breast pressed close to his breast; his eyes dwelt
On yours, near merged in dark death, soon to be
Closed by his brother. But, unhappily, 90
Your mother did not kiss your eyes and cling
To your near-lifeless body, trembling,
Nor catch your lifeless spirit, as it fled,
With open mouth nor on your body spread
Her scattered tresses. You were torn away
From her, while savage war caused your delay –
Your country needed you. She melts, as melt
The soft snows that by winds and suns are dealt
A blow, fretting at you and your distress
And her lost vows and blames herself no less 100
For living long. Thus in dark greenery
Did the Daulian bird, now gentle finally,
Lament Itys; thus across windy seas
Complained the gentle-voiced Alcyones
To the deaf waters; thus of Ocean's son
The new-created birds in unison,
Beating their plummy breasts, sang grievingly:
Thus, with her daughters, too, wept Clymene
When from his father's chariot that young man
Fell, fatally struck. Sometimes she, braver than 110
Her eyes, would make her tears congeal and set,
Restraining them within herself, and yet
They hung suspended: once more out they burst,
Drowning her lap and bosom as at first

They did, her eyelids full. Their strength would grow
 By this delay and they would fuller flow
 Though after the briefest lull. The finally,
 When tears allowed, she started dolefully
 To speak, sobs breaking through: "Where are you, son,
 Fruit of my womb, though gone too soon, the one 120
 Half of the fortune of a two-fold birth,
 Pride of your aged mother. Though the earth
 Conceals you now, that pride remains in me.
 Where are you now? From such nobility
 The flaming pyre contains you. Shall we say
 These gifts have been prepared against the day
 Of your return? Do you deserve to see
 Your mother's face again? And as for me,
 Do I deserve your coming back again?
 If Caesar's wife may say these things, why, then, 130
 I doubt the gods are great. What have I done?
 In piety what gods have I not won?
 Is this my recompense? Here I enfold
 Your lifeless limbs. The flames and pyre both hold
 My very womb. Alas, how can I bear,
 Cursed as I am, to see you lying there
 Or to anoint you, son? Now finally
 I clasp and gaze at you sorrowfully
 And stroke your hands and kiss your face. So *now*
 Do I see you taking the consul's vow 140
 As victor? Is it thus now that you bring
 Such great names? It is at your burying
 I see the faces for the first time, though

They are reversed, significant of woe.

Who could believe it? This, my brightest day –

To see my son in honorable array?

Am I no longer blest? Taken from me

Is half of the Neronian family,

Named for my father Drusus! He's my son

No longer. If I'm told by anyone 150

That Nero is at hand, can I then say

'Which one?' I've touched the depths Taken away,

He makes of me the mother of only one.

Alas! I fear! I feel a chilliness run

Straight through me. Surely I must never call

Any my own. He keeps me in the thrall

Of fear for his brother, too; all things, I vow,

I fear, much braver heretofore than now.

Nero, ay I at least before you leave

This earth: may you with pious mouth receive 160

My soul and close my eyes: would that you two

Had done this. It's possible that you

And I shall lie together side by side,

In just one tomb, and you shall not abide

With the forefathers; you and I shall blend

Our ashes and our bones. Then may Fate lend

Speed to her wheel." Nay, more than this says she:

Tears follow, for she weeps her progeny.

She barely gained the body – it almost

Lost all its rites, because the entire host 170

Was set to burn its chief as he had died,

In all is armour. But they were denied:

His brother took his sacred body and
Gave what he could back to his native land.
Drusus's funeral passed unhappily
Through Roman towns where he in victory
Would have proceeded, where indeed he went
The Rhaeti conquered. O how different
Than now! As consul, he beheld their woe,
Their faces broken. If he entered so, 180
What should the *vanquished* do? With misery
And plangent cries the house resounds, where he
Had planned to plant the captured arms. One face
Of grief the groaning city shows. The race
We fought against, I pray, will also show
This face. They close their doors and warily go
About the city, moaning publicly,
And in their homes. There's no activity
Within the courts. The gods are absent here,
Requesting no incense upon the bier, 190
Ashamed to face their worshippers, in dread
Of the contempt that they have merited.
A man of the people raised his timid hand
For his poor needy son, for he had planned
To pray. "And yet why should I pointlessly
Make vows to gods who in reality
Are not gods? Even Livia could not move
Their hearts for Drusus' sake. Am I to prove
Jove's chiefest care?" At that, in anger he
Left off his vow and ceased his litany 200
With hardened soul. A mob runs in and cries,

In tears, about the consul's sad demise
 And Rome's loss. Every eye is moist. We knights
 Are all assembled at the funeral rites;
 Young, old, mothers and daughters – each one shows
 Stark grief. Before their chieftain's image goes
 The victor's bay, owed to the shrines. The pall
 Is borne by high-born youths, contented all
 To share the load. Caesar, your foster-son
 You praised while weeping, although this was done 210
 With sorrow breaking into your address.
 You craved a like demise in your distress,
 Should fate allow your death (but the gods deflected
 The omen). Heaven, though, has long expected
 Your entry there. Great Jove will eagerly
 Greet you, strong in his thunderous weaponry
 Within his hall. Drusus won what he sought –
 That he would please you – and your praise has brought
 Atonement for his death. Befittingly
 Armed cohorts bless the pyre. Each obsequy 220
 The cavalry and infantry fulfil
 For their great chieftain, and from every hill
 Their triple shouts are heard re-echoing
 While yellow Father Tiber, shuddering,
 Rose up mid-stream and with his mighty hand
 Parted his tresses made of willow and
 Of reeds and moss and wept so copiously
 His deep strait such a multiplicity
 Of waves could scarce contain. For he now aimed
 To take away the lifeless corpse unmaimed 230

By quenching all the flames: now was he set
To check the waves and flood the pyre. And yet,
Close to the campus, Mars, who dwelt nearby,
Spoke thus, while his own cheeks were far from dry:
“Tiber, though wrath becomes your kind, refrain;
For neither you nor anyone should gain
Sway over Fate. He died my votary,
His country’s captain, hemmed by weaponry,
His course veiled by his death. What I could pay
In tribute I have paid: we won the day: 240
The author of this work is gone, although
The work remains. I once assailed Clotho
And her two sisters, who inexorably
Drew out their threads that Ili’s progeny
Who founded Rome might sidestep Erebus
Somehow. One of these three spoke to me thus:
‘Take one half of our gift. One of the two
Answers your prayer. He has been promised you,
While the two Caesars Venus will from now
Possess. To Martian Rome these gods we vow, 250
None other.’ Tiber, do not strive in vain
To stay the flames with water; do not stain
The dead youth’s rites. Go now, glide on your way
With unchecked waves.” He promised to obey,
Stretching his waves that flowed on to the sea,
And sought his rocky home. Lingeringly
The flame strayed underneath the standing pyre,
Afraid to touch the sacred head; the fire
The flame embraced the wood it then devoured,

Ad from the foliage over which it towered 260

It licked the stars, as it had radiated

On Oeta's hills when Hercules was cremated.

His looks burn, too, alas, his noble grace,

His dynamism and his kindly face,

Victorious hands, his mouth whence fluency

Once sprang, his breast, where great profundity

Once dwelt; the hopes of many, too, lie there,

Where an unhappy mother's cherished care

Is held. He will live on through hard-won fame,

Which will alone escape the greedy flame. 270

It will be part of history and read

In every age and with it will be bred

The works of bards and writers. Glorious

In honour shall you stand, and as for us,

They'll say we caused your death. But, Germany,

You can't renounce your culpability

But will atone. Your kings I will behold,

Their necks all blue with chains, faces, once bold,

Now cowed at last, cruel hands in fetters tied.

Down haughty cheeks unwilling tears will glide. 280

That black and pompous spirit, pleased to dwell

On Drusus' death, must in a gloomy cell

Meet death himself. I'll stop and leisurely

Look on the naked corpses happily

As they foul up the roads. Let Dawn that day

Upon her saffron car, soon as she may,

Bring such a splendid sight! Add to this list

Of Drusus' deeds the temples that exist

In the Forum and those two concordant stars,
Castor and Pollux. Serving the Lord Mars 290

He soon fulfilled a leader's role and met
His end when old! Poor Drusus will not get
To see his bounty, poor man, or to see
His name upon the temple. Frequently
Would Nero, weeping humbly, humbly sigh:
"Why should I meet the brother-gods when I
Don't have a brother?" Drusus, you vowed to
Return as victor; these times owe us you –
You did! Consul, chief, chief victorious –

We lost all three. Profuse unhappiness 300
Affects all Rome. His friends are a loyal crowd,
Unkempt and sad. One of them cried aloud,
Arms held out to his friend: "Why do you, pray,
Leave friendless, without me?" What shall I say
Of you, his spouse? A worthy match we noted
In you - a warrior-youth and a devoted
Consort. You, Caesar's daughter, were his queen:
No less than Jove's own consort had you been,
His last and only love, his labour's peace.

He mourned his losing you at his decease, 310
His cold tongue striving to pronounce your name.

Unhappy lady, he is not the same
As he professed himself or as the man
Who went to war; he comes not back nor can
He explain to you how the Sicambri fell
Or the retreating Suevians or tell
Of rivers, mountains, places, sights that he

In that new world had gazed at wonderingly.

Lifeless and cold, he lies without you there.

Why do you rush about, tearing your hair 320

Just like a Maenad? Whither do you flee?

Why mar you face? Such was Andromache

When Hector, bloodstained, bound to a wheel, dismayed

The galloping steeds. When Capaneus, unafraid,

Was struck by the flashing brand, Evadne, too,

Was frenzied. Why, in misery, do you

Embrace your sons, your sole securities,

While in your dreams you're plagued with fantasies,

Thinking you're clasping Drusus, suddenly

Feeling around the bed in hopes that he 330

Is yours again? If credit is not blind,

His honourable forefathers he'll find

In fields of bliss. Arrayed in gold, he'll ride

Upon a four-horsed chariot, dignified

Among them. In that car of ivory,

Regally dressed, he'll ride triumphantly,

A victor's wreath upon his brow. He'll bear

The German standards as they greet him there,

An honoured consul. In the well-known name

Of their own house he'll revel. This one fame 340

He captured from the foe. They'll scarce believe

That in so short a time he could achieve

So much. They'll think a warrior must needs

Have ample space to do such mighty deeds.

They will exalt him, they, o excellent

Mother, enabled to you to make lament

Less grievously. You, worthy of the men
 The Golden Age produced and, then again,
 Your princely sons, your consort, can't you see
 What fits the mother of such progeny, 350
 The couch you rise from at the break of day?
 Te plebs and our great leaders should display
 A different face; a special loyalty
 Your royal house owes. It is your destiny
 To be exalted. Livia, persevere!
 Our eyes are drawn to you, your voice we hear,
 We mark your deeds. A ruler must not go
 Unheard. Remain exalted, conquer your woe,
 Stay strong (for you can do do!). Can there be
 A better guide to virtue than when we 360
 Are ruled by a Roman queen? We all own fate
 A death, the greedy Charon must await
 Al men' the boat scarce holds us. Every soul
 Must travel thither, speeding to one goal.
 Black death finds all. It's prophesied that sky
 And earth and sea are destined all to die:
 With such a threat let all men see your plight.
 That mighty youth, while he still saw the light
 Of day, was our great hope, of his dynasty
 The supreme pride – yet mortal; you weren't free 370
 From worry while your son in battle fought;
 Life should be used, for it is lent, not bought,
 No interest that on a certain day
 We must pay back. In her malignant way
 Fortune ordains the time: youths she will take,

Yet keep the old; a furious charge she'll make,
Raging around the world, on blind steeds dashing
Blindly in triumph with her lightnings flashing.
Don't with complaints offend the stern goddess,
Your words against that powerful queen suppress. 380

But she who brought you sadness recently
Once favoured you. Since you are royally
Connected, with two sons, and partnered, too,
With mighty Jove and Caesar returned to you
Ever from mastering every nation, skilled
In winning wars, and the Neros have fulfilled
Your hopes and prayers, by conquering the foe
So often – as the Alpine valleys show;
The Rhine and the Isargus whose dark gore
Can yet be seen bear witness and, what's more, 390

The grasping Danube and, near the Black Sea,
Remote Apulum and, inclined to flee
The Armenian and, a suppliant at last,
Dalmatia and, in many a mountain fast,
The Pannonians and, lately, Germany,
Now known to Rome; thus one iniquity
Counts less than many merits. His demise
Was far away nor could you see his eyes
Half-closed in death and (into a sick mind
Thus woe most gently steals) you were to find 400

Your grief through news. Fear saw your misery
Through lengthy threats which caused anxiety
In you. Not all at once did grief waylay
Your heart, but step by step and day by day

Fear soothed you. Jupiter had earlier shown
A sign of bloody fate when he had thrown
His bolt at three shrines in a single night –
That of grave Juno and, devoid of fright,
Minerva and the second palace where
Great Caesar dwells. They say that in the air 410
Stars fled and Lucifer his accustomed way
Abandoned – none could see him, and the day
Possessed no star to guide her: it was clear
A star's demise menaced all people here
On earth and River Styx would soon receive
A noble light. You who survive relieve
Your mother's grief. Live on that she may know
You in In old age. I pray that you may go
Beyond your brother's san (and yours) that she
May live with you. These things will surely be 420
God will excuse the past and happiness
Will reign hereafter. In your great distress,
You will not eat: you seemed about to fade
When Caesar brought to you unwelcome aid;
He pressed you, claiming right was n your side
To live on, and your thirst he satisfied.
Your son was no less thoughtful: we all know
Of their attentions to you, and thus you
Survived. Supress your tears: for they cannot
Recall him once the ferryman has got 430
Him in his ghostly skiff. For everyone,
His siblings, parents, wife and little son

Mourned Hector, and, redeemed but for the flame,
 No ghost back through the Stygian waters came.
 Thus Thetis, too: Achilles' bones remain,
 Incinerated, on the Trojan plain.
 Loosing her dark-blue tresses, Panope,
 His aunt, enlarged with tears of misery
 The waves, as did the hundred deities who
 Attended Gaia and Oceanus, too, 440
 And Thetis most of all. But even she
 And all the gods could not the stern decree
 Of the greedy god reverse. Why waste my breath
 On facts? Octavia wept Marcellus' death,
 Caesar wept each one openly. Each strand
 Of death must not be checked by any hand –
 Its laws are rigid. He would boldly say,
 If he escaped Avernus' cloudy bay
 (Should it be lawful): "Why count years? For I
 Have lived so many: age is reckoned by 450
 One's deeds: count them! Life is fulfilled with *these*,
 Not tardy years: so let my enemies
 Live long. My ancestors and the Neros
 Before them taught me this (the Punic foes
 They conquered). Caesar's lofty house (mine, too,
 Through you) shows this. My death thus was my due,
 Mother. Although these merits better delight
 Alone, they're honoured, too. Within your sight
 My name is full of titles: 'consul' is shown
 And 'conqueror of a land unknown –
 Germany', who once served Rome but now lies dead:

Apollo's laurels wreathed bout my head,
I was aware of every obsequy,
The gifts of kings, the old solemnity
Of marching men and, there for all to read,
The conquered towns, the young men's pious deed
In bearing me with great nobility
Up to my funeral pyre, and finally
From sacred Caesar tearful praise I drew.
Should I be pitied? No, I beg of you, 470
Don't weep, though you have cause!" Drusus feels so,
If he indeed feels anything below
The earth: believe no less of such a one.
You have (and may you ever have) a son
Who's pattern to so many and may he
Who is the elder son be lastingly
Preserved for you. You have a husband who
Guards all mankind and, while he's living, you
Must not, by mourning, Livia, bring shame
Upon our mighty Caesar's royal name. 480

