

The Annals of Imperial Rome

Tacitus (A.D. c.56-c.120), the greatest of the Roman historians, chronicles the early Roman Empire, from the death of the first emperor Augustus (in A.D. 14) up to the years of the First Jewish-Roman War (A.D. 63-73). The *Annals* is his final work. It portrays the pathological souls of tyrants, the psychology of power politics, and the preciousness and precariousness of liberty.

Book I

The city of Rome was originally in the hands of kings; liberty and the consulship were instituted by Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were assumed temporarily. The Board of Ten did not exercise control beyond a two-year period, nor was the military tribunes' consular authority long prevalent. Neither Cinna's regime nor Sulla's was lengthy. The power of Pompey and Crassus quickly gave way to Caesar, likewise the armies of Lepidus and Antony to Augustus, who as 'first citizen' received everything, weary as it was from civil strife, into his command.

For the Roman people of old – their successes and misfortunes – writers of renown produced a record, and the tale of Augustus' times did not lack reputable talents until the spread of flattery proved a deterrent. The affairs of Tiberius and Gaius, Claudius and Nero, in their prosperity, were falsified through fear and after their fall were written with hatreds still fresh. Thus my plan is to report a few final things about Augustus, then Tiberius' principate and the rest, without anger or favour, from whose causes I consider myself distant.

After Brutus and Cassius were killed, the state was no longer armed. Sextus Pompey was crushed in Sicily and, with Lepidus discarded and Antony dead, the only Julian faction-leader left was Octavian, who then dropped the 'triumvir' title. I am a consul, he proclaimed, content with tribunician authority for protecting the populace. When he had enticed the army with gifts, the people with subsidized food and everyone with the sweetness of repose he rose up gradually and absorbed the functions of senate, magistrates and laws, without opposition: the most spirited men had perished in battle or through proscription and the rest of the elite – the readier each was for servitude – were exalted with wealth and office, and, once bettered by revolution, preferred a safe present to former perils. Nor did provinces protest this state of affairs: the rule of senate and people was feared because of powerful men's rivalries and magistrates' greed, and the protection of the laws was feeble, given their constant disruption by violence, lobbying and finally cash.

Augustus marked out reinforcements for his mastery: Marcellus, his sister's son, still quite young, with a priesthood and aedileship, and Agrippa, low in origin but good at soldiering and his ally in victory, with repeated consulships. After Marcellus' death Augustus took Agrippa as son-in-law. Stepsons Tiberius and Drusus he advanced with independent commands although his own household was still unscathed. Augustus had brought Agrippa's sons Gaius and Lucius into the imperial family and was ablaze with desire – although he made a

show of refusing – for them to be called ‘leaders of the youth’ while still in boyhood’s toga, and marked out for consulships. Then Agrippa passed away. Lucius Caesar, en route to Spain’s armies, and Gaius Caesar, returning from Armenia wounded and weak, were taken either by premature but fated death or by the guile of their stepmother Livia. Since Drusus was already gone, Tiberius alone of Augustus’ stepsons remained and everything converged on him. He was adopted as son, partner in rule and partaker of tribunician power, and shown throughout the armies, not, as before, through his mother’s unseen artifice but at her open urging. (Livia had bound the elderly Augustus so tightly that he banished his only grandson Agrippa Postumus to Planasia. A man without virtue’s attainments, to be sure, with physical strength the basis of his senseless bravado, but discovered in no wrongdoing.) And yet Augustus put Germanicus, Drusus’ son, at the head of eight legions on the Rhine and ordered his adoption into the family by Tiberius – although Tiberius had an adult son at home – to multiply the defences providing support.

No war remained then except against the Germans, more to dispel the disgrace of losing an army with Varus than from desire of extending the Empire or for any worthwhile prize.

At home the situation was calm. For magistracies there was no change to the terminology. The younger men were born after Actium and most of the elderly were born during the civil wars. How many were left who had seen a republic?

Given the upheaval in the community’s disposition nowhere did former morality survive unscathed. Everyone discarded equality and looked to the Emperor’s orders – without alarm at the time, since Augustus’ age was vigorous and he sustained himself, his house and the peace. But when advanced age grew weary in a body now frail and the end with its new hopes was near, a few made pointless speeches about liberty’s benefits; more feared war and some desired it. The majority drew distinctions between impending masters with varied talk. Agrippa Postumus is grim and furious at his belittlement. In neither age nor experience is he equal to so huge a burden. Tiberius is mature in years and tried in war, but has the old inborn Claudian arrogance. Many signs of brutality, though repressed, are emerging. Raised from first infancy in the ruling house, in his prime he was heaped with consulships and triumphs. Even when, apparently retired, he lived at Rhodes in exile, anger and pretence and secret lusts were his sole preoccupations. There is also his mother with her female unruliness. This means servitude to a woman and two young men besides, who will oppress the state in the interim and eventually dismember it!

With these things and their like in the air, Augustus' condition deteriorated. Some suspected his wife's crime, for a rumour had started. A few months earlier Augustus, with select accomplices and Fabius Maximus his sole companion, sailed to Planasia to see Agrippa Postumus. There were many tears on both sides and signs of affection, and the expectation that Agrippa would be restored to his grandfather's household. Maximus told this to his wife Marcia, she to Livia. This was known to Augustus and soon thereafter Maximus was dead. By choice? Uncertain. At Maximus' funeral people heard Marcia's laments: she blamed herself as responsible for her husband's ruin. Whatever the reality was, Tiberius had scarcely reached Illyricum when he was summoned by a hurried letter from his mother. It has not been ascertained whether he found Augustus still breathing at Nola or lifeless. For a strict cordon was placed around the house and its approaches by Livia and happy news was occasionally broadcast. Once provision was made for the occasion's demands, word went out simultaneously that Augustus was gone and Tiberius in control.

The first action of the new regime was killing Agrippa Postumus. He was unaware and unarmed, but the centurion, though mentally braced, had trouble finishing him. Tiberius did not address the senate on this subject. His father's orders, he pretended. Augustus instructed the senior guard officer not to delay killing Agrippa when his own days were done. True, with his many cruel complaints about the man's character Augustus achieved ratification for Agrippa's exile by senatorial decree. But he never went so far as to murder any of his own. Death inflicted on a grandson for a stepson's security? Not credible. Closer to truth: Tiberius and Livia – he from fear, she from stepmotherly hostility – hastened the killing of a man suspect and hated. When the centurion, following military protocol, reported that what Tiberius ordered was done, Tiberius responded: I gave no orders. You must render an account of your deed to the senate. When this was discovered by Sallustius Crispus, who shared Tiberius' secrets and had sent a document to the commanding officer, Crispus feared being put on trial himself. Thinking it equally dangerous to produce fiction or truth he warned Livia against making household mysteries, friends' advice and soldiers' services common knowledge. Tiberius must not relax the regime's strength by bringing everything to the senate. It is a condition of absolute power that its account only balances if rendered to one man.

In Rome people rushed into servitude: consuls, senators, equestrian-ranked. The more distinguished, the more false and frenzied – with faces composed not to seem happy at an emperor's departure or too

gloomy for a beginning – in mixing tears and joy, protest and flattery. Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius, the consuls, were the first to swear allegiance to Tiberius. With them were Seius Strabo and Gaius Turranius, superintendent of the Guard cohorts and grain supply, respectively. Then came the senate, soldiers and people. For Tiberius began everything with the consuls, as if the old constitution was in force and he uncertain about ruling. Even his edict summoning the senate was issued under the heading of tribunician power, which he held under Augustus. Its words were few and quite limited in scope. I will consult you about my parent's honours. I am staying with his corpse and that is now my sole public function. But after Augustus' death Tiberius gave the Guard its watchword as emperor. He had sentries – armed – and everything else pertaining to a court. With him into the Forum came soldiers, into the senate, soldiers. He wrote to the armies as if the principate were his, hesitant nowhere except when addressing the senate. His particular fear was lest Germanicus, who had numerous legions plus a vast quantity of allied troops and remarkable support among the people, prefer holding absolute power to expecting it. Tiberius meant to benefit his reputation, too: he would seem to have been summoned, to be the official choice, rather than to have crept in through wifely ambition with a senile adoption. Later, people realized that he feigned hesitation to scrutinize the attitudes of leading men, whose language and looks he gave a criminal twist to – and stored up.

At that initial meeting Tiberius only allowed discussion of final arrangements for Augustus. Augustus' will, brought by the Vestals, had Tiberius and Livia as heirs. Livia was taken into the Julian family and Augustus' name. As secondary heirs Augustus listed grandsons and great-grandsons, in the third place Rome's leading men, many of whom he hated – a form of boasting and strutting for posterity. Augustus' legacies were not beyond a citizen's measure, except that he gave the people and urban populace 43,500,000 sesterces, Guard soldiers 1,000 coins each, and legionaries and Roman citizen auxiliaries 300 per man.

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Meanwhile the senate grovelled, reduced to abject appeals. Tiberius chanced to say: Though unequal to the totality of the state, I will assume a protectorate over whatever portion is entrusted to me. Then Asinius Gallus: 'A question, Caesar. What portion do you want entrusted to you?' Upset by the unexpected query, Tiberius fell briefly silent. Then, collecting his wits, he responded. It does not suit my sense of decency to choose – or avoid – some of what I would rather

be entirely excused from. In return, Gallus, inferring offence from Tiberius' expression, said: My question did not mean to divide what cannot be split, but to show by your own confession that the body of the state is one and must be ruled by one man's mind. He added praise of Augustus and reminded Tiberius of his victories and outstanding acts as civilian over so many years, but did not assuage anger thereby. Gallus was long since hated: after marrying Vipsania (Agrippa's daughter, formerly Tiberius' wife) his behaviour exceeded citizen-like limits and in him his father Asinius Pollio's spirit survived.

After this, Lucius Arruntius, with a speech very like Gallus', produced comparable offence, although Tiberius had no long-standing hatred towards him. But he was suspicious of a wealthy and active man of outstanding attainments and comparable fame. For in Augustus' final conversations, when discussing who would refuse to take the Emperor's role though adequate to it, who of the unqualified would want it, who had both the ability and the desire, Augustus had said: Marcus Lepidus is capable but reluctant, Asinius Gallus eager and deficient. Lucius Arruntius is not unworthy and, if he gets a chance, will risk it. About the first names accounts agree; in Arruntius' place some give Piso. All except Lepidus were later overtaken by various charges laid by Tiberius.

Even Quintus Haterius and Mamercus Scaurus grated on a suspicion-filled mind, Haterius when he said 'How long, Caesar, will you allow the absence of a head of state?' Scaurus for saying 'There is hope that the senate's prayers will be effective in your not having used the prerogative of tribunician power to veto the consuls' proposal. Against Haterius, Tiberius protested immediately. Scaurus, for whom his anger was more implacable, he silently bypassed. Wearied by the general outcry and individuals' demands, Tiberius gradually changed course. Not that he admitted to holding power, but he did stop his denials and their requests. People agree that when Haterius went to the palace to excuse himself and tumbled down before Tiberius' knees as he walked, he was nearly killed by soldiers because Tiberius, either by chance or tripped by Haterius' grasp, fell forward. Nor did the danger of such a man appease him. Finally, Haterius petitioned Livia and gained her most attentive entreaties' protection.

Senators showed significant obsequiousness towards Livia, too. Some were proposing that she be called the country's 'parent', others, its 'mother', more, that to Tiberius' name be added 'son of Livia'. Tiberius: Honours for women need limits and I will apply equal restraint in honours accorded myself, he maintained. Anxious about resentment and taking female prominence as a slight to himself, he did not allow her

even a lictor by decree and refused an 'Altar to Adoption' and other such things. For Germanicus he sought a proconsular command and envoys were sent to confer it, as well as to console Germanicus' sorrow at Augustus' departure. (Tiberius didn't ask the same for Drusus, since Drusus was consul-designate and at hand.) He nominated twelve candidates for the praetorship, the number traditional since Augustus, and when the senate urged an increase, he pledged on oath not to exceed it.

An innovation: elections were transferred from assembly to senate. (Until then, although the most important elections went according to the Emperor's decision, some were decided by citizen support.) The people did not protest their lost prerogative except with empty murmuring, and the senate, released from outlay and sordid pleading, grasped it willingly, since Tiberius limited himself to recommending no more than four candidates whose appointment – without rejection, without lobbying – was obligatory.

The plebeian tribunes asked to put on at their own expense the festival, new to the calendar, called 'Augustalia' from Augustus' name. But money from the Treasury was decreed and permission to wear triumphal robes in the procession, but not conveyance in a chariot. Later the annual event was transferred to the praetor with jurisdiction over cases between citizens and foreigners.

Such was the state of affairs in Rome when sedition overtook Pannonia's legions, for no new reasons, except that the change of emperor opened up mob licence and, from civil war, an expectation of profits. Three legions were together in summer quarters with Junius Blaesus in charge. At news of Augustus' death and Tiberius' inauguration – cause for public mourning or rejoicing – he suspended ordinary duties. This was the beginning of carousing among the soldiers, of squabbling and paying heed to every reprobate, and finally of desiring luxury and leisure and rejecting discipline and toil.

In the camp was a certain Percennius, formerly head of a theatre clique and later a regular-grade soldier, wayward of tongue and practised at engaging crowds in fan fervour. Naive souls were uncertain about the terms of military service after Augustus. He gradually set them moving with night-time conversations or, at the turn of day to evening after the better men slipped away, he would bring the worst together.

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At about the same time and for the same reasons Germany's legions were disturbed, in bigger numbers and more violently, and with a great

hope that Germanicus would be unable to endure another's command and would offer himself to legions whose power would carry everything along.

There were two armies on the Rhine. The Upper army was under the legate Gaius Silius; for the Lower, Aulus Caecina was responsible. Overall control was with Germanicus, then busy conducting a census of the Gallic provinces. Those under Silius' direction were watching undecided for the fate of sedition elsewhere. The Lower army's soldiers slid into a frenzy, starting with those of the Twenty-first and Fifth, and carrying along the First and Twentieth. For they were together in summer quarters in Ubian territory, at leisure or light tasks. Upon hearing of Augustus' end, the home-bred multitude from a recent levy in Rome – habituated to carousing, impatient of toil – filled the naive minds of the rest. The time has come for veterans to demand timely discharge, for military-age men to demand more generous pay, and for everyone to demand an end to misery and punish centurion brutality. This was not said by one man, like Percennius among Pannonia's legions, or in the fearful hearing of soldiers wary of other, stronger armies: sedition had many faces and voices. Rome's affairs have been placed in our hands. The commonwealth grows with our victories. Victorious generals have our name by association.

Caecina did not confront them: the outnumbering madness stripped him of constancy. Suddenly, crazed men drew swords and attacked centurions, long a fuel for soldiers' hatred and for violence a spark. Face down, the centurions were battered with sixty lashes apiece to match their number, then thrown torn, gashed and in some cases lifeless before the rampart or into the Rhine. Although Septimius escaped to the tribunal and fell at Caecina's feet, howls for him persisted until he was surrendered for destruction. Cassius Chaerea – who later, by killing Gaius, gained posterity's remembrance – was then in his prime, high-spirited; amidst men resisting and armed he used his sword to open a path. No longer did an officer's or camp superintendent's authority obtain: the night watch, sentry duty, and whatever else present need indicated, were allocated by the men themselves. There was striking evidence, for those assessing soldier mentality more thoroughly, of a great and implacable upheaval in the fact that the men were equally – not here and there or at the prompting of a few – ablaze, equally silent, with so much uniformity and constancy that you would have thought they had a ruler.

Meanwhile Germanicus, who, as I said, was taking a census in Gaul, got word that Augustus was dead. He had Augustus' granddaughter Agrippina as his wife and several children from her. He himself, son

of Tiberius' brother Drusus and Livia's grandson, was nevertheless anxious about hidden antipathy towards himself in uncle and grandmother, its causes sharper because unfair. For Drusus had a substantial remembrance among the Roman people and, it was believed, intended to restore liberty if he gained power. This generated goodwill for Germanicus – and the same hope. The man had a citizen-like character and remarkable affability, quite different from Tiberius' words and looks, arrogant and obscure. Plus there were female grievances from stepmotherly provocations, Livia's to Agrippina, and Agrippina herself somewhat too excitable, except that purity and love of husband helped her turn a still untamed character to the good.

The closer Germanicus was to exalted hope the more unstinting were his exertions for Tiberius. He administered the loyalty oath to himself, his entourage and Belgae communities. Hearing thereafter of chaos among the legions he set out quickly and encountered them outside the camp, their eyes lowered as if in remorse. After he entered the fortifications a confusion of complaints became audible. Some men, taking his hand apparently for a kiss, inserted his fingers into their mouths to show their lack of teeth. Others displayed limbs bent with age. When they assembled there in an obvious jumble he ordered them to separate into their units – we will hear you better this way, was the response – and the standards brought forward so that this at least would make the cohorts distinct. They complied, slowly. After beginning with veneration for Augustus, Germanicus changed course to Tiberius' victories and triumphs, mustering particular praise for Tiberius' finest achievements in Germany with those very legions. Then he extolled Italy's consensus and the loyalty of the Gallic provinces. Nowhere is there trouble or disaffection. Silence or a restrained murmur was the reception.

Then Germanicus touched on the mutiny. Where is soldierly self-control? Where is traditional discipline, your glory? Where have you put your tribunes, your centurions? he kept asking. Every man bared his body, angrily showing wound scars and marks of flogging. Soon a confusion of voices berated exemption-payments, meagre pay and hard jobs, specifying rampart and ditches, fodder, timber and firewood in heaps, and everything else procured of necessity or to combat leisure in camp. The sharpest outcry came from veterans counting out thirty or more campaigns. Give relief to weary men! Instead of death in unchanging toil, they pleaded, a time-limit for military service – so exhausting! – and retirement without want. Some even demanded Augustus' cash legacy. There were expressions propitious for Germanicus and even a declaration. If you want power, we are ready! Then, how-

ever, as if contaminated by crime, Germanicus leapt headlong from the tribunal. They blocked his departure with weapons, threatening him unless he went back up. I will die rather than shed my loyalty! he exclaimed and grabbed the sword at his side. It was out and heading for his chest, except that those closest took and forcefully restrained his right hand. The furthest edge of the assembly, a mixed bunch, and – difficult to credit! – some individuals came closer urging him to strike. A soldier named Calusidius even drew and offered his sword, adding: It's sharper. This seemed brutal and wrong even to raving men and there was a lull in which Germanicus was hurried by friends into his tent.

There they discussed remedies. For reports kept arriving. Envoys are being arranged for bringing the Upper army into the cause. The Ubian capital is designated for destruction, and hands steeped in booty will burst free to ransack Gaul. Another fear was the enemy, aware of the Roman mutiny, and if the riverbank was abandoned, likely to invade. But if auxiliary and allied troops are armed against defecting legions it means civil war. Strictness is dangerous, indulgence scandalous. Whether nothing or everything is conceded to soldiers, the state's position is precarious. So after comparing arguments the decision was to write a letter in the Emperor's name. Discharge is granted to men with twenty years' service. Those who have done sixteen get a release; they remain in detachments, exempt from everything but repelling the enemy. Augustus' legacy – which they had demanded – is payable and doubled.

The soldiers saw these terms as emergency fabrications and demanded them immediately. Discharges were handled quickly by officers; largesse was postponed for winter quarters. Men of the Fifth and Twenty-first did not leave until, still in summer quarters, the money – assembled from the travel allowances of Germanicus himself and his friends – was paid in full. The First and Twentieth were led back to the Ubii by the legate Caecina in a disgraceful column: money chests seized from the commander rode among standards and eagles. Germanicus set out for the Upper army. The Second, Thirteenth and Sixteenth did not hesitate when he administered the military oath; the Fourteenth delayed a little. Cash and discharges – even though these legions did not insist – were delivered.

In Chauca territory a mutiny was begun by a garrison of detachments from disaffected legions. The immediate execution of two men brought some constraint. The order was given by Manius Ennius, the camp superintendent, from fine precedent rather than actual authority. With commotion still swelling he fled but was found. Since hiding

places were unreliable, he borrowed protection from boldness. It is not a superintendent but your general Germanicus and your Emperor Tiberius that you are violating. This dismayed his opponents, and he immediately seized a standard and turned it towards the Rhine. Anyone who leaves the column will be considered a deserter! he shouted and led them back to winter quarters, disruptive but daring nothing.

Meanwhile the senate's envoys reached Germanicus back at Cologne. Two legions, the First and Twentieth, were wintering there, plus, in detachments, their recently discharged veterans. Apprehensive and guilt-maddened, they were open to fear. They have come with the senate's instructions to nullify what we extorted by sedition! As crowds regularly supply a 'defendant' even for false charges, they blamed Munatius Plancus, former consul, leader of the delegation, author of the senatorial decree. Early that night they began to demand the standard in Germanicus' residence. With a rush to the entrance they worked open the doors, dragged him from his bedroom and, brandishing a death threat, forced him to surrender it. Later, wandering the streets they encountered the envoys who, hearing about the scare, headed for Germanicus. The soldiers loaded them with insults and were preparing a killing, for Plancus especially, whose status impeded flight. The only recourse for the endangered man was the First's camp, where, as he clung to the standards and eagle, reverence provided security. Had the eagle-bearer Calpurnius not warded off violence verging on a rarity even between enemies, an envoy of the Roman people, in a Roman camp, would have stained the gods' altars with his blood. Only at daybreak, when general and soldier recognized one another and what had been done, did Germanicus enter the camp. He ordered Plancus brought and received him onto the tribunal. Then berating their blind frenzy – its resurgence is due to the gods' anger, not the soldiers' – he revealed why the envoys had come, expressing eloquent sorrow about embassy privilege and Plancus' serious and undeserved misfortune. How much disgrace the legion has incurred! The assembly stood stunned, not quiet, when he dismissed the envoys with a guard of auxiliary cavalry.

In that dangerous situation everyone criticized Germanicus for not going to the Upper army, where there was compliance and help against rebels. Enough – more than enough! – mistakes were made with discharges and payments and mild measures. Even if you hold your own well-being cheap, why keep your little son and pregnant wife among crazed men, violators of every human law? Restore them at least to their grandfather and the state. Germanicus hesitated long over his wife's refusal. I am Augustus' descendant, not someone worthless in

the face of danger! she declared. Finally, embracing her pregnant belly and their common son and lamenting much, he got her to leave.

They set out, a female and pitiable column: the General's wife a refugee with her little son in her lap, in tears around her his friends' wives, who were also taken away. And there was no less gloom in those who stayed. The sight was unlike that of a prosperous Caesar or of a Caesar's camp: more like a captured city. The groaning and wailing attracted the ears and eyes of the soldiers, even, who emerged from their tents. What is this tearful sound? This journey, so dismal? Notable women have no centurion for protection, no soldier, nothing appropriate to a commander's wife, nothing of the customary entourage. They are heading for the Treveri and the good faith of foreigners! Then came shame and compassion and the memory of her father Agrippa and grandfather Augustus. Drusus was her father-in-law. She herself is a woman of impressive fecundity and pre-eminent purity. Her child was born in camp and brought up sharing the legions' tents. (They called him – a soldier's word – 'Little Boot', that being the footwear he generally wore, to win crowd favour.) But nothing so changed them as resentment of the Treveri. Pleading and obstructing – Come back! Stay! – some rushed up to Agrippina, most returned to Germanicus. He, still fresh to grief and anger, began thus to the men flocking round:

'Wife and child are not dearer to me than father and state, but my father will have the protection of his majesty and Rome's empire that of other armies. I am removing my spouse, my children – whom I would willingly offer up for destruction if that served your glory – to somewhere far from madmen, so that whatever crime impends is expiated by my blood only, so that Augustus' great-grandson murdered and Tiberius' daughter-in-law dead do not increase your guilt. These days, what have you left undared or undefiled? What name shall I give to this gathering? Shall I call you soldiers, blockading your emperor's son with rampart and weapons? Or citizens, so despising the senate's authority? You have shattered combat's rules, the sanctity of embassies and the law of nations. Caesar curbed an army mutiny with a single word by calling men refusing the military oath "civilians". Augustus dismayed the legions at Actium with face and look. I am not their like, but I am their descendant and if a soldier from Spain or Syria were rejecting me it would be strange and unwarranted. But the First and Twentieth! The Twentieth received its standards from Tiberius and you joined him in numerous battles – from which numerous rewards accrued! It's a fine thanks you give your general. Am I to send this report to my father, who hears wholly happy news

from other provinces? “Your own recruits, your own veterans are not satisfied with discharges and cash payments! Only here are centurions killed, officers cast out, envoys shut in. Camp and river are polluted with blood and I myself live on sufferance among men who hate me.”

‘At that assembly, O my short-sighted friends, why did you take away the sword with which I intended to pierce my heart? He did a finer and fonder thing, the man who offered one: at least I would have fallen not yet complicit in my army’s numerous crimes! And you would have chosen a general who would leave my death, perhaps, unpunished, but would avenge those of Varus and his three legions. May the gods not allow the Belgae to have the honour and renown – although the offer stands – of rescuing the Roman name and subduing Germany’s peoples! May it be your spirit, Augustus, whose place is now heaven, and your image, Drusus my father, and the memory of you in these soldiers of yours, who are now open to decency and glory, that washes away this stain and turns citizen wrath towards enemy destruction! And you too, men, in whom I now see new faces, new feelings, if you are now restoring to the senate their envoys, to your emperor your obedience, and to me my wife and child, move away from contagion, separate the troublemakers. This will be a foundation for remorse, and loyalty’s tie.’

Suppliant at this, and declaring his reproaches true, they pleaded. Punish the guilty, forgive the misguided, and lead us against the enemy! Recall your wife, let the legions’ darling return! He should not be given to Gauls as hostage! Agrippina’s return Germanicus excused with the imminence of birth and winter. But my son will return. The rest is for you to do. They ran off transformed, tied up the most seditious and dragged them to the legate of the First, Gaius Caetronius, who determined verdict and punishment for each like this. The legions stood assembly-fashion but with drawn swords. The accused was brought forward on a platform by an officer. If they shouted ‘Guilty!’ he was sent headlong and slaughtered. The soldiers rejoiced at the killings. We are clearing ourselves! And Germanicus did not stop them, since without orders from him both the deed’s brutality and its resentment would be theirs.

The veterans followed this example, and were then sent to Raetia. The pretext was defending the province against threatening Suebi, but the purpose was to extricate them from a camp still grim because of the remedy’s harshness and likewise the memory of crime.

Germanicus then reviewed the centurions. When called by the commander each stated his name, rank, birthplace, years of service, deeds

of valour in battle and decorations, if any. If officers and legion affirmed his industry and innocence, he kept his rank. Whenever reproaches of greed or cruelty were unanimous, he was discharged.

The immediate problems settled thus, there remained one equally vast in the bravado of the Fifth and Twenty-first, which were wintering at the sixtieth milestone, a place called Vetera. These were the first to mutiny, their hands committed the worst atrocities. Neither dismayed by the punishment of fellow-soldiers, nor moved by their remorse, they remained angry. Accordingly, Germanicus prepared to send weapons, fleet and allies down the Rhine. If they refuse my command, I will decide the issue by war.

In Rome the outcome in Illyricum was still unknown when news of the German legions' uprising arrived. A frightened community criticized Tiberius. While he teases senate and people – powerless and weaponless! – with mock hesitation, soldiers mutiny! The still-immature authority of two young men cannot curb them. He should have gone himself and confronted them with his imperial majesty. They would have yielded if they had seen an emperor with long experience, supreme in both severity and generosity. Wasn't Augustus, even in weary age, capable of numerous trips to Germany? And yet Tiberius, in his prime, sits among the senators, playing word games. He has done enough for Rome's servility; the soldiers' morale needs patching up so they are willing to endure peace.

Unmoved by such talk, indeed fixed, was Tiberius' intention not to leave the capital or put himself and the state at risk. For he had many countervailing worries. The army spread around Germany is stronger, the army in Pannonia is closer. The former relies on Gaul's resources, the latter threatens Italy. So which do I put first? I don't want those put second to be provoked by the slight. The approach by my sons is even-handed and avoids harm to my majesty, which gets greater reverence from a distance. And it's excused in young men if they refer some things to their father. Soldiers who stand up to Germanicus or Drusus can be appeased or broken by me, but what other help is there if they defy the Emperor? Still, as if just on the point of departure, he chose companions, collected supplies, equipped ships. Later, with winter or business as contradictory excuses, he fooled first the insightful, then the people, then the provinces for a very long time.

Germanicus, though having an army in hand and punishment ready for the defectors, thought the men should still have time to show whether, following recent precedent, they would see to their own affairs. He wrote to Caecina: I am coming with a strong force. If they don't pun-

ish evildoers first, I will use indiscriminate killing. Caecina read this secretly to eagle- and standard-bearers and to the soundest element in camp. Free everyone from infamy and yourselves from death, he urged. In peacetime, issues of responsibility and justice get consideration, but under war's pressure innocent and guilty perish equally. After testing individuals they deemed suitable and seeing the majority of the troops obedient, they set a time, on Caecina's recommendation, for an armed attack on those who are the worst disgraces, eager for sedition. A signal was exchanged, then they burst into tents and butchered men unawares. Only the plotters knew the origin of the killing – and its endpoint.

The sight was different from that of any civil war anywhere. Not in battle, not from opposing camps, but in their own quarters, the men – together by day at meals, together by night at rest – took sides and wielded weapons. Shouting, wounds and blood were there to see, but the reason was hidden. Chance ruled the rest. Some good men were killed, too, after the worst offenders, seeing the targets of violence, armed themselves. Neither general nor officer was present as a restraint. The masses were given licence – and vengeance to the full. Later Germanicus entered the camp. That was not a cure, he said tearfully, but a calamity. He ordered the bodies burnt.

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Book II

(18 CE) The following year had Tiberius (third time) and Germanicus (second time) as consuls.

Germanicus entered office in an Achaean city, Nicopolis, which he reached via Illyricum's coast – he visited his brother Drusus in Dalmatia – after suffering a difficult voyage in Adriatic and then Ionian waters. He therefore spent a few days refitting his fleet, and approached the bays renowned for the Actian victory, the trophies dedicated by Augustus, and Antony's camp, in remembrance of his forebears. (As I mentioned, his great-uncle was Augustus, his grandfather Antony, and Actium was a vast canvas of events both sad and happy.) From there to Athens, where, as a concession to the treaty of that allied and ancient city, he used just one lictor. The Greeks' welcome involved far-fetched honours and preliminaries on long-gone deeds and words to give more dignity to their flattery.

Germanicus' next destination was Euboea, then he crossed to Lesbos, where Agrippina gave birth for the last time: Julia Livilla. Then he

went to Asia's edge, Perinthus and Byzantium, Thracian cities, later inland to the Propontis strait and Pontus mouth, moved by desire of acquaintance with places ancient and storied. Equally, he provided relief to provinces exhausted from internal quarrels and officials' abuses. On his return, struggling to visit Samothrace's rites, contrary northerlies turned him away. So after going to Ilium and the sights there venerable for shifting Fortune and our origin, he retraced Asia's coast and docked at Colophon to profit from the Apollo oracle at Claros. (This is not a woman, as at Delphi, but a priest from specific families, primarily Milesian. He hears only the questioners' number and names, then descends into a cave, drinks from a secret spring and, though generally ignorant of literature and poems, gives responses in verse on whatever subjects one has in mind.) The priest was said to have intoned for Germanicus, riddlingly – oracular habit! – imminent departure.

Piso, however, to give his plans a quicker beginning, berated an Athens dismayed by his disruptive entrance in a brutal speech with grating but indirect attacks on Germanicus for excessive affability in paying court, contrary to the dignity of the Roman name, not to Athenians – who were, from numerous calamities, extinct – but to that ethnic bog. These were Mithridates' allies against Sulla, Antony's against Augustus! Even the past provided charges: the city's failures against Macedon, her violence against her own. Piso's annoyance at Athens stemmed from private anger, too, for not letting off a certain Theophilus, forgery-convicted in Athens' court, at his request.

Then, after a quick voyage through the Cyclades and maritime shortcuts, Piso caught up with Germanicus at Rhodes. Germanicus, though aware of Piso's taunting attack, behaved with such mildness that, when a sudden storm swept Piso against some cliffs and his enemy's death could have been credited to chance, he sent warships to assist in his removal from danger. But Piso was not appeased. Scarcely tolerating even a day's delay, he left Germanicus and arrived first.

After he reached Syria and its legions there was largesse, bribery and gratification for the lowest rankers: he removed long-standing centurions and strict officers and gave their places to his own dependants or worthless men, and allowed laxity in camp, licence in cities, and soldiers loose and carousing through the countryside. So far did he go in corruption that common talk deemed him 'the legions' parent'. Nor did Plancina limit herself to female decorum. She took part in cavalry exercises and infantry manoeuvres and hurled insults at Agrippina and Germanicus. Even some good soldiers were disposed to criminal compliance. These things are not happening against Tiberius' wishes, a

covert rumour started. Matters known to Germanicus, but attending to the Armenians was his more pressing care.

These were an unsettled people, from the inhabitants' ancient character and the country's situation alongside our provinces for a wide stretch, and reaching a long way towards the Medes. They exist between two huge empires and are quite often at odds, hating Romans or resenting the Parthian. They didn't have a king then, Vonones having been removed. But national favour inclined to Zenones, son of Pontus' King Polemo, because from his earliest infancy Zenones adopted Armenian institutions and style. With hunting and banquets and other barbarian practices he had formed attachments to elite and populace alike. So Germanicus – in Artaxata, nobles approving, multitude swarming – placed the royal diadem on his head. The rest, showing reverence, saluted him as King Artaxias, applying a term from the city's name.

The Cappadocians, given provincial organization again, received Quintus Veranius as governor. There was some tribute reduction from royal levels to encourage hope of Roman control being milder. The Com-magenians under Quintus Servaeus were first then in a magistrate's jurisdiction.

All ally business was successfully settled, but this did not keep Germanicus happy, because of Piso's insolence. Ordered to lead part of his force – himself or through his son – into Armenia, Piso did neither. At Cyrrus, winter quarters of the Tenth, the two met, faces tight, Piso against fear, Germanicus lest he seem to threaten. (He really was, as I mentioned, quite compassionate. But friends clever at kindling grievances exaggerated the truth, heaped up falsehoods, and against Piso, Plancina and their sons made various sorts of allegations.) Finally, with a few associates present, the conversation was begun by Germanicus in the manner generated by anger and its concealment, and responded to by Piso with defiant entreaties. They parted in open hatred. Afterwards, Piso rarely sat on Germanicus' tribunal, and whenever he did so he was ruthless and disagreed openly. People heard him say, too, at a dinner hosted by the Nabataean king when golden garlands of substantial weight were presented to Germanicus and Agrippina and lightweight ones to Piso and the rest: This is a banquet for the Roman emperor's son, not the Parthian king's. He cast aside his garland and said much more about extravagance. This was cutting, to Germanicus, but tolerated nevertheless.

Amidst this, envoys from the Parthian king Artabanus arrived, sent to speak of friendship and treaty. Artabanus desires the pledges renewed

and will do Germanicus the honour of approaching the Euphrates' bank. He seeks, meanwhile, that Vonones not be held in Syria or send messages from nearby to move local elites to disaffection. To this Germanicus responded splendidly about the Roman/Parthian alliance, and about the king's arrival and courtesy towards himself with dignity and modesty. Vonones was removed to Pompeiopolis, a coastal city in Cilicia. This was a concession not to Artabanus' entreaties but to spite for Piso, with whom Vonones was hugely influential owing to gifts and services he had used to attach Plancina.

(19 CE) Marcus Silanus, Lucius Norbanus, consuls.

Germanicus travelled to Egypt to become acquainted with antiquity. Concern for the province was his pretext. And he did relieve the price of grain by opening warehouses and gave the populace much gratification. He circulated without soldiers, sandaled and dressed just like a Greek, in imitation of Publius Scipio, who did this in Sicily with the Punic war still raging, we hear. Tiberius, after grating references, mildly worded, to Germanicus' dress and demeanour, berated him for having entered Alexandria. Contrary to Augustus' arrangements! Without my assent! For Augustus, among the regime's other mysteries, set Egypt apart – entrance was barred, without permission, to senators and equestrian-ranked notables – to preclude the pressure of famine on Italy by anyone holding that province and its land and sea barriers with even a thin garrison against huge armies.

Germanicus, having not yet discovered his journey rebuked, sailed up the Nile, starting from Canopus, a Spartan foundation owing to the burial there of the ship's pilot Canopus when Menelaus, returning to Greece, was thrown off course into a different sea and to Libya. Next, the river mouth dedicated to Hercules, whom the locals say originated in their country and was exceedingly ancient. Other, later, men of the same type have his name by association. Then Germanicus visited ancient Thebes' impressive traces. Still present on massive structures were Egyptian letters tallying former opulence. He ordered one of the older priests to translate the native language. There once lived here 700,000 men of military age, and with that army King Rhamses conquered Libya, Ethiopia, Medes, Persians, the Bactrian, the Scyth, and held in his power the lands that Syrians, Armenians and the neighbouring Cappadocians inhabit, and from the Bithynian sea on one side to the Lycian on the other. Also read out were the tributes imposed: the weight of gold and silver, the number of weapons and horses, temple gifts of ivory and incense, and what quantities of grain and every supply each nation paid, totals scarcely less splendid than currently ordained by Parthian might and Roman power.

Germanicus examined other marvels, too. Mainly Memnon's stone likeness, which, when the sun's rays hit it, emits a voice-like sound, and amidst drifting and scarcely passable sands the mountain-high pyramids erected by royal rivalry and riches, and the lake excavated as receptacle for the overflowing Nile. Also the Nile's narrows elsewhere, and its profound depth, which no investigator's rope-lengths can fathom. Then to Elephantine and Syene. These used to be the limits of the Roman Empire, which now extends to the Red Sea.

While Germanicus spent this summer going province to province, Drusus sought substantial glory coaxing the Germans into disputes and driving the now-broken Maroboduus to complete ruin.

Among the Gotones was a nobly born man named Catualda, a fugitive from Maroboduus' violence earlier and at present, Maroboduus' situation being precarious, daring revenge. With a strong force he entered Marcomani territory and, after bribing the elite to join him, burst into the palace and adjacent stronghold. Ancient Suebian booty was found there, and from our provinces camp-followers and traders whom commercial privileges, then passion for accumulating money and finally forgetfulness of country had transferred each from his own home to enemy ground.

For Maroboduus, utterly deserted, the only help was Tiberius' mercy. After crossing the Danube border of Noricum, he wrote to Tiberius not as fugitive or suppliant but mindful of his former lot. Although many peoples were calling me, once a most illustrious king, to them, I preferred Rome's friendship. Tiberius' response: You will have a safe and honoured home in Italy, if you stay. But if your advantage is served otherwise, you will depart under guarantee as you arrived. In the senate Tiberius said that Philip was not so great a threat to Athens, nor Pyrrhus or Antiochus to Rome. The speech survives. Maroboduus' majesty, the impetuosity of his subject peoples, how close an enemy to Italy, and his own policies in destroying him were Tiberius' themes.

Maroboduus was held at Ravenna, on display, in case the Suebi grew insolent, as ready to return to his kingdom. But he didn't leave Italy for eighteen years and grew old with his renown much diminished by excessive attachment to life. Catualda? Same downfall, refuge no different. He was routed soon thereafter by Hermunduri resources under Vibilius' leadership, then welcomed and sent to Fréjus, a colony in Narbonensis. The barbarian followers of each – lest in quiet provinces their diffusion cause disturbance – were settled beyond the Danube between the Marus and Cusus rivers with Vannius of the Quadi as

their king.

Simultaneous news: a king, Artaxias, for the Armenians by Germanicus' gift.

Senators decreed that Germanicus and Drusus enter Rome to ovations. Arches, too, were built flanking the Mars Ultor temple with likenesses of the Caesars – Tiberius being happier at having used good sense to consolidate peace than had he concluded a war through battles.

Accordingly, he approached Thrace's King Rhescuporis, too, with ingenuity. That whole people had been under Rhoemetaces' control. At his death, Augustus entrusted half the population to his brother Rhescuporis, half to his son Cotys. In this division arable land and cities and places near Greece fell to Cotys, and what was uncultivated, wild and enemy-connected to Rhescuporis. The kings' characters were comparable: Cotys' was mild and pleasant; Rhescuporis' ruthless, grasping and intolerant of partnership. At first they acted with duplicitous harmony. But then Rhescuporis emerged from his territory, appropriated things given to Cotys and attacked him resisting. He acted tentatively under Augustus, whom – the source of our royal power and, if spurned, its avenger – he feared. But upon hearing about the Emperor change he dispatched raiding bands and razed strongholds – inducements to war.

Nothing kept Tiberius so anxious as avoiding stability's disruption. He chose a centurion to tell the kings not to fight and Cotys' auxiliaries were immediately dismissed. Rhescuporis, with pretended restraint, asked to meet. Disputes can be handled by discussion. There was little delay over time, place or even terms: in one man easy temper, in the other deceit motivated mutual concessions and acceptances. Rhescuporis added a banquet for sanctifying, as he said, the treaty. The rejoicing extended to late night. Amidst feasting and drunkenness Cotys was incautious. After he understood the plot, he kept invoking the sacrosanctity of kingship, their common family gods, hospitality. Rhescuporis weighted him with chains. All Thrace now in his power, he wrote to Tiberius. A trap was laid for me and the plotter has been forestalled. Meanwhile, under pretext of war against Bastarnae and Scythians, he acquired new infantry and cavalry reinforcements. Tiberius' response was mild. If there was no trickery, you can rely on innocence. Neither I nor the senate will discriminate right and wrong without a hearing, so after surrendering Cotys come and dispel the animosity of accusation.

This letter Moesia's governor Latinius Pandusa sent to Thrace with soldiers for Cotys' surrender. Rhescuporis hesitated between fear and

anger, but chose to defend a crime complete rather than a crime begun. He ordered Cotys killed. Took his own life, he lied. But Tiberius did not alter approved technique. After the death of Pandusa, whom Rhescuporis accused of being hostile, he installed Pomponius Flaccus over Moesia, a veteran campaigner with a close friendship with the king and therefore more suitable for deception – the principal motivation for his appointment.

Flaccus crossed into Thrace and with huge promises impelled Rhescuporis, despite his uncertainty and consciousness of crime, to enter the Roman camp. Surrounding the king thereafter – a show of honour! – was a strong contingent. Officers used advice and encouragement and, the further they travelled, more open custody in dragging him, finally recognizing the inevitable, to Rome. Accused before the senate by Cotys' wife, Rhescuporis was condemned to detention far from his kingdom. Thrace was divided between his son Rhoemetalces – who opposed his father's plans, people agreed – and Cotys' children. These were still young, so the ex-praetor Trebellenus Rufus was given for the interim administration of the realm, on the model of our ancestors, who sent Lepidus to Egypt as guardian for Ptolemy's children. Rhescuporis sailed to Alexandria, where – attempting flight? falsely charged? – he was killed.

In this same period Vonones, whose removal to Cilicia I mentioned, bribed his guards and tried to flee to the Armenians, thence to Albani and Heniochi and a Scythian king, his kinsman. Apparently hunting, he left the coast and sought trackless woods. Then he made a swift ride to the Pyramus, whose bridges the locals broke after hearing of the king's flight. Going through at a ford was impossible. Accordingly, Vonones was arrested on the riverbank by the cavalry officer Vibius Fronto. Remmius, a reservist assigned to the king's former guard, acting angry, ran him through. This increased people's belief that Remmius' complicity in crime and his fear of exposure caused Vonones' death.

Germanicus, returning from Egypt, discovered all his orders in legions and cities abolished or reversed. This led to serious rebukes for Piso and equally harsh moves by Piso against Germanicus. Piso decided to leave Syria. Germanicus' ill health detained Piso, but then he heard that Germanicus had revived. Vows for Germanicus' safety were being discharged: victims at altars, sacrificial implements, Antioch's people celebrating – all were cleared away by Piso's lictors. Then he left for Seleucia, waiting out the illness that again befell Germanicus.

The brutal violence of disease was augmented by Germanicus' belief

in poison given by Piso. And people kept finding in floor and walls disinterred human remains, spells and curses and Germanicus' name scratched on lead tablets, ashes half-burnt and smeared with gore, and other baneful objects supposed to consecrate souls to underworld deities. Piso's emissaries, too, were blamed for probing Germanicus' physical misfortunes.

For Germanicus these were causes for anger no less than alarm. If my threshold is besieged, if I must breathe my last under enemy eyes, what will befall my poor wife? My infant children? Poison seems slow. Piso is in a hurry, pressing to have the province and its legions for himself. But Germanicus is not so feeble and murder's rewards will not remain with my killer! He composed a letter renouncing friendship with Piso. (Many say, too, that Piso was ordered to leave the province.) Without delaying further, Piso sailed, setting his course for a short return journey if Germanicus' death left Syria open.

Germanicus was briefly roused to hope, but then – his body exhausted, the end at hand – addressed his attendant friends thus: 'If I were succumbing to fate, I would feel justifiable resentment towards gods hurrying me from parents, children and country during my prime with a premature exit. But now, criminally cut short by Piso and Plancina, I leave in your hearts these last entreaties. Tell my father and brother how, tortured by bitter experiences and overcome by plotting, I finished an utterly wretched life with the worst of deaths. Whoever was stirred by my expectations or kindred blood, and even those envious of me alive, will weep that a man once flourishing, the survivor of numerous wars, fell to womanish subterfuge. You will have occasion to complain before the senate, to invoke laws. The special duty of friends is not escorting a corpse with pointless complaint, but remembering his wishes and carrying out his instructions. Even strangers will mourn Germanicus. You will avenge him, if your attentions were for me, not my position. Show the Roman people Augustus' granddaughter – my wife – and tally six children. Pity will be with the accusers. Those fabricating wicked orders will find neither belief nor pardon.' An oath was taken by his friends with the dying man's right hand in their grasp. We will forgo life before vengeance.

Turning to his wife, Germanicus pleaded, by her memory of him and by their children. Shed your high spirit, submit to raging Fortune! And when you return to Rome, do not, by contesting power, provoke those stronger than you! These words were spoken openly, others in private, signifying, people thought, danger from Tiberius. Soon thereafter life failed, to vast lament in the province and surrounding nations. External peoples and kings grieved – so great was his affability

towards allies, his mildness towards enemies. Appearance and speech alike produced reverence, and, despite his preserving the stature and consequence of exalted position, he escaped enviousness and arrogance.

Germanicus' funeral, lacking ancestor busts and cortege, abounded in eulogies and the recollection of his virtues. For some, his beauty, age and manner of death, even the nearby location in which he died, resembled Alexander's destiny. Each had an attractive physique, illustrious birth, and died not much past thirty from an insider plot among foreign peoples. But Germanicus was mild to friends and moderate in pleasures, with just one marriage and acknowledged children, and was no less a warrior, even if he lacked Alexander's rashness and was prevented from pressing into servitude the Germany he felled in numerous victories. Had Germanicus been sole arbiter of affairs, had he had royal prerogative and name, he would have achieved military glory as readily as he excelled in clemency, self-control and virtue's other attainments.

The corpse, before cremation, was exposed in Antioch's forum, the location chosen for his last rites. Did it manifest signs of poisoning? Unconfirmed. People's inclinations – pity for Germanicus and preconceived suspicion, or favour for Piso – produced divergent interpretations.

There followed a discussion among Germanicus' legates and the other senators present. Who should be put in charge of Syria? Although the rest made moderate efforts, between Vibius Marsus and Gnaeus Sentius the question was long disputed. Finally Marsus yielded to Sentius' seniority and more vigorous contention. Sentius sent to Rome a woman notorious for poisoning in Syria, a close friend of Plancina, Martina by name, at the request of Vitellius and Veranius and the others preparing charges and prosecution as if defendants were already on trial.

Agrippina, exhausted by grief and physically frail but impatient of anything that delayed her revenge, boarded ship with Germanicus' ashes and children, to everyone's pity. A woman foremost in nobility, with a marriage, until recently, most fine, accustomed to being seen amidst worshipful well-wishers, now clasps dead remains, uncertain of vengeance, anxious for herself and, because of her unhappy fecundity, many times over subservient to Fortune.

Piso was at Cos when the news arrived: Germanicus is dead! His reaction showed no control. He sacrificed and visited temples without restraining his joy and with still greater insolence in Plancina. (From mourning for a lost sister she changed right then to happy attire.)

Officers streamed in with advice. You have the legions' support. Return to a province wrongly taken and rulerless! Piso deliberated, accordingly. What to do? His son Marcus recommended hastening to Rome. Nothing unforgivable has occurred so far, nor should feeble suspicions and empty talk cause great alarm. Disputing with Germanicus merited hatred, perhaps, but not punishment, and the confiscation of your province gave your enemies satisfaction. But if you return with Sentius resisting, civil war begins. Officers and soldiers won't stay on your side. Memory of their commander is fresh and deep-seated love for the Caesars prevails.

He was opposed by Domitius Celer from Piso's inner circle. This is an outcome to be exploited! Piso, not Sentius, is Syria's governor. To you the symbols and prerogative of a governor were given, to you the legions. If hostile action threatens, who is more justified in armed opposition than one with a governor's authority and personal orders? Leave time for rumours to grow old. Innocent men generally can't compete with fresh animosity. But if you keep an army and increase your strength, much that is unforeseeable will fortuitously turn out better. 'Or do we hurry to dock with Germanicus' ashes, so that – unheard and undefended – you are caught by Agrippina's wails and an ignorant mob at the first whisper? You have Livia's complicity and Tiberius' support, but in secret. Germanicus' death is most ostentatiously mourned by those who most rejoice.'

It took no great pressure to bring Piso, who was given to spirited actions, into agreement. In a letter to Tiberius he berated Germanicus for extravagance and presumption. Expelled to make room for revolution, I resumed responsibility for my army as loyally as I held it before. Celer was given command of a warship. His orders? Avoid the coast, take a deep-water route past the islands to Syria. Deserters converged. Piso organized them into units and armed camp followers. After crossing his ships to the mainland he intercepted a detachment of Syria-bound recruits and wrote requesting auxiliary help to Cilicia's princes. Young Piso provided energetic war service despite having spoken against undertaking a war.

Coasting along Lycia and Pamphylia they encountered the ships conveying Agrippina. Both sides were hostile, weapons initially ready. Mutual alarm kept them from going beyond abuse. Marsus served Piso with notice: You must come to Rome to stand trial. Piso's mocking response was: I'll be there when the praetor of the poisoning court has announced a date for defendant and prosecutors.

Meanwhile Celer docked at Syria's Laodicea. Approaching the Sixth's

winter quarters, since he thought this the most suitable unit for revolutionary plans, he was blocked by its legate Pacuvius. Sentius disclosed this to Piso by letter, with a warning: Don't try using bribery-agents on the camp or war on the province. Everyone whom Sentius knew to be mindful of Germanicus or opposed to his enemies he assembled. The Emperor's majesty – his incessant refrain – and the state are under attack! He headed a force strong and battle-ready.

Nor did Piso, although his attempts kept going wrong, abandon the safest option available. He seized a Cilician stronghold, well fortified, called Celenderis. Mixing in deserters and recently intercepted recruits and slaves belonging to himself and Plancina, he gave the auxiliary forces sent by Cilicia's princes a legion's organization, declaring: I, Tiberius' representative, am excluded from the province he gave me, not by the legions – for I come at their summons – but by Sentius concealing private hatred with false charges. Stand firm in battle! His soldiers will not fight when they have seen Piso, whom they once called 'parent', as the better choice on legal grounds and strong on military ones. Then he deployed his troops before the stronghold's fortifications on a steep and broken hillside; the rest was surrounded by sea. Opposite stood veterans drawn up in lines and reserves. On one side the soldiers were uncompromising, on the other the terrain was, but there was no courage and no hope, nor even any weapons except farm tools or emergency manufactures. Upon contact, suspense lasted only until the Roman cohorts struggled up to level ground. The Cilicians fled and shut themselves in the stronghold.

Meanwhile Piso attacked the fleet waiting nearby, a vain attempt. Returning then, and visible on the stronghold wall, he tried – now by striking his breast, now urging individuals by name, rewards their inducement – to start a mutiny, rousing enough that a standard-bearer of the Sixth brought a standard over. Then Sentius ordered the horns sounded, a siege-mound assembled, ladders erected. Let the fastest go up and others shoot in javelins, rocks and firebrands, a barrage! Finally, his obstinacy defeated, Piso pleaded. Let me surrender my weapons and stay here while Tiberius is consulted: to whom does he entrust Syria? His terms were not accepted, nor was anything else conceded but ships and safe conduct to Rome.

In Rome, after Germanicus' sickness was widely known and everything – coming from afar – was exaggerated for the worse, there was grief and anger, an outburst of protest. So this is why he was banished to the ends of the earth, why the province was entrusted to Piso. This is the result of Livia's secret conversations with Plancina! And the Drusus-talk of our elders was true. Rulers disapprove of citizen-

like character in their sons, and these men were cut short simply for advocating equality's protection for the Roman people, their liberty restored. Crowd talk was so fired by news of Germanicus' death that (before the magistrates' edict, before the senate's decree) official business was suspended. Courts were deserted, houses shut. Everywhere there was silence and lamentation, none of it contrived for show. People did embrace the symbols of mourning, but their internal grief was deeper.

Some traders who had left Syria with Germanicus still living chanced to bring happier news about his condition. It was immediately believed, immediately circulated. At each encounter people passed the news, however baseless, to others and those to more, accumulating joy. People rushed about the city, worked open temple doors. Night-time fostered credulity and it was easier, in the dark, to insist. Tiberius did not counteract the error until it weakened with time and distance. The population – as if bereaved again – felt a sharper grief.

Honours were devised and decreed according to each sponsor's love for Germanicus – or his ingenuity. Germanicus' name was to be sung in the Salian hymn, chairs of office were to be set up in imperial cult shrines topped by oak-leaf crowns, Circus processions to be led by an ivory likeness, priests to replace Germanicus chosen only from the Julian family. Plus arches at Rome, on the Rhine, and on Syria's Mt Amanus. The inscription? His achievements and He died on public service. A cenotaph at Antioch where he was cremated, a monumental bier at Epidaphne where he died. As for statues and cult sites, it is not easy to reach their tally. At the proposal of a shield distinctive for gold and size amidst the leaders of eloquence, Tiberius declared that he would dedicate an ordinary one, equal to the rest. Distinction in eloquence is not based on fortune. It is renown enough if Germanicus is ranked with the ancient writers. The equestrian order named a seating section (formerly called 'junior') 'Germanicus' section' and ruled that on 15 July their squadrons would follow his image. Many measures persist; some were immediately abandoned or age brought oblivion.

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Book IV

(23 CE) Gaius Asinius, Gaius Antistius, consuls.

For Tiberius, it was a ninth year of settled state and flourishing house (he considered Germanicus' death advantageous). But suddenly Fortune began to riot and he himself to let his violence loose or to em-

power the violent. Start and cause lay with Aelius Sejanus, the Guard commander, whose power I mentioned earlier. Now I shall explain his origin, character, and by what action he advanced to seize mastery.

Sejanus was born at Bolsena to an equestrian-ranked father, Seius Strabo, and in early manhood attended upon Gaius Caesar, Augustus' grandson. (There was also a rumour that he offered perversion for sale to the wealthy spendthrift Apicius.) Later he so attached Tiberius by various arts as to render this man, inscrutable to others, incautious and unguarded with himself alone, less through cleverness – for Sejanus was defeated by the same arts – than through the gods' anger at Rome, for which his flourish and fall proved equally ruinous. His body was tolerant of exertions, his spirit bold. Self-concealing, he was a denouncer of others, a combination of flattery and insolence. Outwardly, calculated decency. Inside? A passion for attaining the heights. To this end he applied occasional largesse and extravagance, and more often industriousness and vigilance – qualities no less harmful when assumed for acquiring rule.

He increased his office's power, previously limited, by gathering the cohorts scattered throughout the city into a single station so they would hear orders simultaneously, and so their number, strength and mutual visibility would yield confidence for them, and in the rest, fear. His pretexts? Dispersed, the soldiers are carousing. In sudden threats, coordinated responses provide more assistance. Their behaviour will be more disciplined if the fortification is located far from city allurements. When the station was finished, he infiltrated soldier minds by approaching and addressing them; also, he himself chose the officers. Nor did he refrain from senatorial lobbying: bedecking hangers-on with offices and provinces. Tiberius was amenable and so well-disposed as to honour him – partner of my labours! – not just in conversation but before senators and populace, and to permit offerings to Sejanus' statues in theatres and public squares and at legionary headquarters.

But his house was full of Caesars: adult son and grown grandsons hindered Sejanus' desires. Since destroying numbers simultaneously was unsafe, Sejanus' plot required intervals between crimes. He decided, however, on an approach still more secret, beginning with Drusus, against whom he was moved by fresh anger. (Drusus, impatient of his rival and rather excitable in spirit, in a chance quarrel had shown Sejanus his fists and slapped his face when opposed.) As Sejanus tested every possibility, the readiest seemed resorting to Drusus' wife Livilla, Germanicus' sister. (Although her looks early in life were unbecoming, she was later surpassingly beautiful.) As if fired by love, Sejanus lured her with adultery and after winning this first deprav-

ity – a woman without her purity not being inclined to refuse other things – urged her towards hope of marriage, towards partnership in rule and husband-murder. With Augustus as her great-uncle, Tiberius as her father-in-law and Drusus' children, Livilla befouled self, ancestors and posterity with a small-town adulterer, replacing respectable and present expectations with scandalous and doubtful ones. She took into complicity Eudemus, her friend, physician and, under profession's cover, the frequenter of her seclusion. Sejanus ousted his wife Apicata, who had borne him three children, lest his mistress become suspicious. But the magnitude of the deed brought fear, postponements and occasional changes of plan.

Meanwhile, at year's beginning, one of Germanicus' children, Drusus, donned manhood's toga. The senate's decisions about his brother Nero were duplicated. Tiberius added a speech containing much praise of his own son for acting with paternal benevolence towards a brother's children. (Drusus – difficult as it is for power and concord to occupy the same spot – was considered fair to the young men, or at least not antagonistic.) Then the long-standing and often advanced plan of a trip to the provinces was raised. The leader's reasons were the multitude of time-expired men and the necessity of levy-replenishment for the armies. Volunteers are lacking and, where available, do not behave with the same courage and restraint, since mostly poor and vagrant men voluntarily undertake military service. Tiberius also surveyed quickly the legions' total and the provinces they secured. I think I, too, should track this. What were Rome's military resources then? Who the allied kings? How much narrower the Empire?

Italy's two coasts had two fleets at Misenum and Ravenna over them. Gaul's adjacent shore had the warships captured in the Actian victory, which Augustus sent to Fréjus sturdily crewed. But the principal bulwark was beside the Rhine, support simultaneously against Gauls and Germans: eight legions. The recently conquered Spanish provinces were held by three. The Moors, by gift of the Roman people, were in King Juba's hands. The rest of Africa was controlled by two legions, Egypt by the same number, and from Syria's border to the Euphrates – all the lands encompassed in this huge loop – by four, with Iberian, Albanian and other kings as neighbours, protected by our great size against external realms. Thrace was held by Rhoemetalces and Cotys' children, the Danube bank by two legions in Pannonia, two in Moesia. An equal number were posted in Dalmatia, in a location behind the Danube legions and, if Italy needed emergency troops, nearby for summoning. Yet Rome was occupied by its own soldiers: three Urban and nine Guard cohorts, recruited mostly from Etruria and Umbria

or ancient Latium and towns long Roman. At suitable provincial locations there were allied warships and cavalry and auxiliary troops of approximately equivalent strength, but following Tiberius' survey is risky since these moved here and there with contemporary needs, and their number swelled and was occasionally reduced.

It is fitting, I am inclined to believe, to review the state's remaining elements as well, how they were handled until then, since that year initiated for Tiberius a regime changed for the worse. At first, public business and the most important private business was conducted in the senate. Leading men had permission to speak, and those who lapsed into flattery were checked by Tiberius himself. He conferred office with regard to nobility of forebears, distinction of military service, brilliant civic attainments; it was agreed that no other men were preferable. Consuls looked like consuls, praetors like praetors, and even lesser magistrates exercised their functions. Laws too – the treason court excepted – functioned well. Grain- and money-taxes, plus other public revenues, were managed by associations of equestrian-ranked men. Tiberius entrusted his affairs to the most well-regarded, even to some strangers on account of their reputation. Once established, they were retained indefinitely; many grew old in the same jobs. The populace did suffer under galling grain prices, but not by the Emperor's fault. Indeed he countered the lands' infertility and rough seas with outlay and attention insofar as he could. For the provinces his policy was that no new burdens trouble them, that they bear old ones without officials' greed and cruelty: no corporal punishment, no property confiscation. Land-holding in Italy was a rarity for Tiberius, his slaves were restrained, his household limited to a few freedmen. And for his disputes with individuals he used courtroom and law.

All these things Tiberius retained, though in no affable style – he was prickly, rather, and generally alarming – until they were upset by Drusus' death. For while Drusus survived, they remained, since Sejanus, his power still incipient, wanted to be known for beneficial policies and feared an avenger not hiding his hatred but frequently protesting that despite a living son another was called 'assistant in command'. How long before the word is 'colleague'? At first, hope of mastery requires toil, but once embarked you have support and agents. A station has been built at the commander's behest, soldiers are in hand. People see Sejanus' statue in Pompey's edifice. Future grandchildren will be shared with the Drusi. One will eventually have to plead for restraint, that Sejanus be satisfied. Such outbursts by Drusus were neither rare nor restricted to a few hearers, and even his secrets – his wife having been seduced – were betrayed.

Sejanus, thinking haste necessary, chose a poison that, by gradual infiltration, would produce a fortuitous disease's appearance. It was given to Drusus by the eunuch Lygdus, as was discovered eight years later. Tiberius, throughout Drusus' illness – either unafraid or to display firmness of character – and even with him dead but still unburied, attended senate meetings. When the consuls in a show of grief seated themselves with ordinary senators, he reminded them of office and position. To a senate effusive with tears he, having mastered his groans and with his speech therefore uninterrupted, provided backbone. I am aware that, with my suffering so fresh, I can be faulted for showing myself to the senate. Even relatives' words are hard to tolerate, even daylight hard to face for most mourners, and they should not be blamed for frailty. But I seek sturdier consolations in the commonwealth's embrace. Bemoaning Livia's extreme age, the still untried stage of his grandsons, and his own decline, he asked that Germanicus' children – the only balm for present ills – be brought. The consuls left, spoke bracingly to the youths and escorted them before Tiberius. Taking hold, he said, 'Senators, when these boys lost their father I entrusted them to their uncle and prayed that, despite having progeny of his own, he foster and raise them no differently than his own line and train them for his own benefit and posterity's. With Drusus now taken, I turn my prayers to you. In the presence of gods and fatherland I beseech you: these great-grandsons of Augustus, descendants of the most renowned ancestors, raise them up, guide them, fulfil your role and mine. These men, Nero and Drusus, replace your parents. Your birth is such that your good and ill are public concerns.'

There was much lamentation, then propitious prayers, from the audience. Had he stopped his speech, he would have filled listeners' minds with pity for him, and praise. Returning to empty and often mocked themes – restoring the republic, and the consuls or someone else should assume its direction – he deprived even what was true and honourable of belief. In Drusus' memory the same things were decreed as for Germanicus, with a number of additions, as is later flattery's wont. Drusus' funeral with its parade of likenesses reached celebrity's maximum: the Julian family's source Aeneas, all the Alban kings and Rome's founder Romulus, then the Sabine nobility, Attus Clausus and other Claudian faces in a long row were on view.

In relating Drusus' death I have reported matters recorded in the most numerous and authoritative sources. But I'm inclined to include a contemporary rumour so strong that it has not yet faded, that, after seducing Livilla for crime, Sejanus also secured, by perversion, the allegiance of the eunuch Lygdus, who was dear to his master for age

and beauty and among his most prominent attendants. And that, after the accomplices settled poisoning's place and time, Sejanus went so far in audacity as to change course and, using an enigmatic hint to tax Drusus with poison for his father, to warn Tiberius that he must avoid the first drink handed him when dining with his son. The old man, taken in by the trick, they say, after entering the party, handed the cup he received to Drusus, who, by unwitting acceptance and youthful quaffing, increased Tiberius' suspicion. Are fear and shame causing him to inflict on himself a death contrived for his father?

This widely publicized story – besides the fact that it is confirmed by no reliable authority – you can readily refute. For what man of even middling insight, let alone the vastly experienced Tiberius, would have offered death to a son unheard, and done so by his own hand with no recourse for regret? Would Tiberius not have tortured poison's agent instead and sought the person responsible? Used the innate hesitancy and delay that he applied even to strangers towards an only son discovered in no previous wrongdoing? But because Sejanus was viewed as every crime's inventor – and in line with Tiberius' excessive fondness for him and others' hatred for both – people believed utterly fantastic and monstrous things – the talk is always quite appalling when our masters die. Besides, the crime's sequence, uncovered through Sejanus' wife Apicata, was laid bare by torturing Eudemus and Lygdus. Nor is there a writer so hostile as to blame Tiberius, despite their investigation and exaggeration of everything else. Why do I relay and challenge rumour? To rebut in a clear instance false hearsay and to request from those into whose hands my work comes that they not give the widespread and incredible – so greedily received! – priority over things true and not tainted with the marvellous.

During Tiberius' eulogy for his son from the Rostra, the senate and people adopted the garb and words of grieving more in simulation than sincerely, and rejoiced in secret that Germanicus' house was reviving. This was favour's inception, which, with their mother Agrippina's failure to hide her hopes, accelerated ruin. For Sejanus saw that Drusus' death yielded no vengeance on killers and lacked public sorrow. Impetuous for crimes, and because the first ones prospered, he pondered how to bring down Germanicus' children, whose succession was certain. Three-way poisoning was not possible, given the unusual loyalty of their guards and Agrippina's impenetrable purity. Her defiance, then, he attacked, stirring Livia's long-standing hatred and Livilla's fresh complicity. Arrogant in her fecundity, confident in popular support, she covets mastery! – these were the criticisms they should address to Tiberius. Thus went the words of cunning denounc-

ers, among whom Sejanus placed Julius Postumus, whose adultery with Mutila Prisca brought him intimacy with the grandmother and suitability for Sejanus' plans: Prisca, who was influential with Livia, was making an old woman who was inherently anxious about power aloof towards her daughter-in-law. Even people close to Agrippina were enticed in perverse conversations to stimulate her swollen pride.

Tiberius' work on public affairs was uninterrupted. Treating business as solace, he handled citizen trials and allies' petitions, and senatorial decrees were made on his proposal to relieve the earthquake-damaged cities of Cibyra in Asia and Aegium in Achaea by a three-year remission of taxes. As for Vibius Serenus, Further Spain's governor, who was condemned for abuse of office, his appalling behaviour earned him deportation to Amorgos. Carsidius Sacerdos, charged with helping the enemy Tacfarinas with grain, was acquitted; also, on the same charge, Gaius Gracchus. (Exile's companion while still an infant, taken by his father Sempronius to Cercina and raised there among men outlawed and ignorant of cultural attainments, Gracchus later supported himself by trading cheap goods throughout Africa and Sicily. But he didn't escape the dangers of great rank.) Had Aelius Lamia and Lucius Apronius, former governors of Africa, not protected the innocent man, he would have been eliminated by an unlucky family's renown and paternal misfortunes.

This year included embassies from Greek communities – the Samians for Juno, the Coans for Aesculapius – seeking confirmation of the temples' ancient right of asylum. The Samians relied on a decree from the Amphictyonies, whose adjudication in all matters was pre-eminent when the Greeks, having founded cities throughout Asia, controlled the sea coasts. The Coans had an antiquity no different, plus the place's merit: they had led Roman citizens into Aesculapius' temple when on King Mithridates' order they were being slaughtered throughout Asia's islands and cities.

Then, after various and usually futile complaints from the praetors, Tiberius finally brought up the excesses of actors. Their numerous undertakings are disruptive in public and foul in homes. Farces – formerly Oscan, utterly trivial crowd-pleasers – have reached such a point of depravity and clout that the senators' authority must check them. Actors were expelled from Italy at that time.

This same year afflicted Tiberius with another bereavement by removing one of Drusus' twins. No less by the death of his friend Lucilius Longus, partner in all sorrows and joys and the sole senator companion of Tiberius' Rhodian retreat. Accordingly, for Longus, though

newly noble, a public funeral and a publicly funded statue in Augustus' Forum were voted by senators, by whom all public affairs were still handled at that time. They even heard the defence of the Emperor's Asia representative Lucilius Capito to the province's accusation, along with the Emperor's loud assertion. I gave him jurisdiction only over slaves and private finances. If Capito employed a governor's force and used military manpower, my instructions were ignored. Listen to the allies! Accordingly, the accused, after trial, was condemned. For this vengeance, and also because of Gaius Silanus' punishment the previous year, Asia's cities decreed a temple for Tiberius, his mother and the senate. Permission was even granted to build it and Nero spoke their thanks to senators and grandfather, amidst the delight of his audience, who, with Germanicus' memory still fresh, felt that it was he they were seeing and hearing. In the man's favour were his restraint and leader-worthy looks, while Sejanus' known hatred for him – dangerous! – increased their welcome.

Around this time, apropos of choosing a new Jupiter-priest in place of the deceased Servius Maluginensis, and also of passing a new law, there was a speech from Tiberius. Simultaneous nomination of three patricians born from spelt-wed parents, from whom one is chosen, is traditional. But the supply is not as before, the practice of spelt-marriage having been discarded or preserved by small numbers. (He mentioned several reasons for this, especially the disinterest of men and women, plus the inherent difficulties of the ceremony itself, which is deliberately avoided, and because whoever assumes this priesthood and whoever becomes his wife leave paternal control.) Accordingly, a remedy is required via senatorial decree or law. Thus did Augustus adapt practices of hoary antiquity to present use. After consideration of religion's impediments, the decision: to the institution of the priesthood, no alteration. But legislation did put the priest's wife under his control 'for ritual purposes'; in other activities she should have the general rights of women. Young Maluginensis was appointed in his father's place. So that the prestige of consecrated individuals grow, and likewise a readier inclination in them for conducting ceremonial, two million sesterces were voted for Vestal Cornelia, who was admitted in Scantia's place, and that whenever Livia was in the theatre her seat be among the Vestals'.

(24 CE) Cornelius Cethegus, Visellius Varro, consuls.

When the pontiffs and, on their example, the other priests undertook vows for the Emperor's preservation, they also commended Nero and Drusus to the same gods, less from affection for the youths than from obsequiousness, which in a corrupt age is equally risky if absent or

excessive. For Tiberius, hardly ever mild towards Germanicus' house, was at that time intolerably aggrieved by the equal treatment of young men and his old age. He asked the assembled priests whether it was a tribute to Agrippina's entreaties or threats. The priests, despite denying, were criticized – in moderation, for the majority were his kin or community leaders – but in his senate speech Tiberius advised for the future against using premature honours to exalt young men's unstable spirits towards arrogance. For Sejanus was applying pressure. His complaint? The community is divided as if for civil war! People call themselves 'pro-Agrippina'! Unless resisted, there will be more. The only remedy for the spreading strife is if one or two of the most forward be toppled.

This led to an attack on Gaius Silius and Titius Sabinus. Germanicus' friendship was fatal for each. For Silius, it was also that, as a huge army's manager for seven years and, after earning an honorary triumph in Germany, the Sacrovir War's victor, the greater the crash of his fall, the more fear-spattered were others. Many believed him to have increased grievance by his lack of control, boasting ceaselessly. My troops remained dutiful when others plunged towards sedition. Tiberius' dominion would not have lasted had my legions, too, possessed a revolutionary urge. By this, Tiberius felt his position undermined, no match for so great a favour. For benefits are delightful only insofar as they seem capable of being requited. When they far exceed this, the return, in gratitude's place, is hatred.

Silius' wife was Sosia Galla, whom Agrippina's affection made hateful to the Emperor. The decision was to destroy these, postponing Sabinus for now. The consul Varro was dispatched. With the excuse of an inherited antagonism he gratified Sejanus' hatred – to his own disgrace. When the accused requested a brief delay until his accuser left office, Tiberius countered. Magistrates regularly proceed against private citizens and there should be no weakening of a consul's privilege, since it rests on his watchfulness 'that the republic suffer no harm'. (Typical Tiberius, concealing new-found crimes in old-fashioned terminology!) Varro quite agreed – as if Silius' trial was legitimate and he was consul and a republic existed – and the senators were assembled. The defendant remained silent, or else, if he began a defence, he exposed whose anger was crushing him. The charges were complicity in war during the long Sacrovir cover-up, a greed-sullied victory, his wife as partner. True, on the extortion charges Silius and Sosia were liable, but everything was handled as a case of treason and Silius forestalled imminent condemnation with a voluntary end.

Violence was nevertheless done to Silius' property. Not so provincials

might get their money back – none was reclaiming. But Augustus' generosity was stripped away: there was an itemized list of things claimed for the imperial purse! This was the first occasion of Tiberius' attentiveness to others' money. Sosia was exiled on Asinius Gallus' motion. His proposal? Half her property should be confiscated, half left for her children. Marcus Lepidus countered, conceding a quarter to the accusers – the legal requirement – the rest to the children.

(This Lepidus, I find, was a consequential and wise man in that period: he steered many matters away from other men's violent obsequiousness into a better course. Nor did he lack balance, if he flourished with authority and Tiberius' favour unchanging. This makes me wonder. Are fate and one's birth-lot the source, as of other things, also of an emperor's inclination towards some and grievance against others? Or is it something in our choices? Can one forge, between craggy defiance and degrading deference, a path clear of favour-seeking and danger? But Cotta Messalinus, whose ancestors were equally illustrious, was differently disposed and recommended making a provision, by senatorial decree, that governors – even those innocent and unaware of another's guilt – suffer for their wives' provincial crimes as if for their own.)

The next action concerned Lucius Piso, a well-born and spirited man. He, as I reported, had shouted in the senate that he would leave Rome because of the accusers' divisiveness, and spurning Livia's power dared to drag Urgulania into court and roust her from the Emperor's house. At the time, Tiberius took this citizen-like. But in a mind recycling angry thoughts, although grievance's impact weakened, memory stayed strong. Piso was berated by Quintus Veranius for secret treasonous conversation. Plus: There is poison in his house and he attends the senate armed! This was dismissed as too appalling to be true. But on the numerous other charges that accumulated Piso was entered as a defendant – and not tried, owing to timely death.

There was discussion, too, of the exile Cassius Severus, a man of lowly origin and baleful conduct – an effective speaker, however – who through uncurbed antagonisms had achieved a formal senatorial verdict of removal to Crete. By like behaviour there he attracted hatreds fresh and former. Stripped of property and forbidden fire and water, he grew old on rocky Seriphus.

In this same period the praetor Plautius Silvanus for reasons unknown sent his wife Apronia into freefall. Dragged into Tiberius' presence by his father-in-law Lucius Apronius he responded in confusion: I was heavy with sleep and therefore unaware. My wife took her own life.

Without delay Tiberius went to the house, visited the bedroom. The signs of a woman struggling and pushed were discerned. Tiberius reported to the senate and a trial was scheduled. Urgulania, Silvanus' grandmother, sent her grandson a dagger. On the Emperor's orders, it was believed, given Livia's friendship with Urgulania. The defendant, after trying blade in vain, held out his veins for release. Soon Numatina, a former wife accused of inducing derangement in her husband by spells and potions, was judged guiltless.

This year finally released the Roman people from the long war against the Numidian Tacfarinas.

Earlier commanders, when they believed their achievements sufficient for obtaining an honorary triumph, would ignore him. There were three laurelled statues in Rome then, but Tacfarinas was still harassing Africa, strengthened by Moorish auxiliaries. (These Moors, Juba's son Ptolemy being young and inattentive, had exchanged royal freedmen and slave dominance for war.) In the Garamantes' king Tacfarinas had a purchaser for plunder and ally in depredation. Not that the king arrived with an army, but mobile troops were sent and distance magnified their reputation. From the province itself came an eager rush of men destitute of fortune, disruptive in character. For Tiberius, after Blaesus' achievements – as if Africa now contained no enemy – had recalled the Ninth, and the year's governor Cornelius Dolabella did not dare retain it, fearing emperor's orders more than war's uncertainties.

Therefore Tacfarinas spread a rumour. The Roman state is being mangled by other peoples, too, and therefore withdrawing gradually from Africa. The remnants can be overcome if everyone who prefers freedom to slavery bears down. He increased his forces and, camp established, surrounded Thubursicum. But Dolabella, having assembled the available soldiers – such is the terror of the Roman name, and then Numidians cannot face an infantry line – dissolved the siege upon arrival and fortified the area's useful positions. Dolabella also had the Musulamii leaders who attempted defection beheaded. Then, in the knowledge, after numerous campaigns, that one did not hunt down a roving enemy with a heavy or single incursion, he roused King Ptolemy and his population and readied four columns. These were entrusted to legates or officers. Raiding parties were led by select Moors. Dolabella himself was on hand as adviser to all.

Soon thereafter came a report. The Numidians are at a half-ruined stronghold – they applied the torch – called Auzea. Tents pitched, they are settled and confident in their location: vast surrounding scrublands enclose it. Unencumbered cohorts and cavalry units were

sped forward, ignorant of their destination, in a swift column. At daybreak, as horns chorused and the shouting rang harsh, they were on the half-asleep barbarians. The Numidians' horses were hobbled or feeding loose in the distance. On the Roman side: infantry was massed, cavalry distributed, everything battle-ready. The enemy, by contrast, was utterly unaware: no weapons, no organization, no plan. Like sheep, they were seized, killed, captured. The soldiers, recalling with animosity their exertions and the fight so often desired against an elusive enemy, sated themselves individually with vengeance and blood. Word spread through the units. Tacfarinas, familiar from so many battles, should be everyone's prey. Without the leader dead, no rest from war. Tacfarinas, however, his bodyguard down around him, his son in chains, Romans everywhere, rushed the weapons and so avoided captivity by a death not unrequited. This end capped the fighting.

Dolabella sought an honorary triumph. Tiberius refused in deference to Sejanus, lest his uncle Blaesus' praise seem bygone. But Blaesus was not therefore more notable, while, for Dolabella, honour's denial gave his glory vigour: with a smaller army he carried off noteworthy captives, the leader's death and credit for the war's completion. Then came envoys from the Garamantes, rarely seen in Rome. They were sent, after Tacfarinas was killed, by a nation shattered and guilt-conscious, to satisfy the Roman people. In recognition of Ptolemy's active support throughout the war a traditional honour was revived and a senator dispatched to give him an ivory staff, an embroidered toga – venerable senatorial gifts – and the appellation King and Ally and Friend.

That same summer the seeds of slave war germinated throughout Italy; chance smothered them. The uprising's originator was Titus Curtisius, ex-Guardsman. Beginning with clandestine gatherings in Brundisium and surrounding towns, later with notices posted in public, he was summoning to freedom agriculturalists from remote highlands, spirited slaves, when, as if by the gods' gift, three cruisers arrived to meet the needs of travellers in those waters. The quaestor Cutius Lupus was in the same area (he had the traditional 'pasturelands' province). By distributing his marines he demolished the plot then commencing. Quickly, Tiberius sent Staius, a military officer, with a strong force. Staius dragged the leader and those closest in boldness to a Rome already fearful because of the domestic multitude, which was growing huge while the freeborn populace was every day smaller.

The same consuls.

Misery and brutality were on appalling display with a father accused, his son the accuser – both named Vibius Serenus – before the senate. Dragged back from exile with a filthy and unkempt exterior and now in shackles, the father was readied for his son’s speech. The younger man was quite elegant and confident-looking. A plot has been formed against the Emperor and subversives sent to Gaul! said the war’s denouncer and witness. And he implicated ex-praetor Caecilius Cornutus. He supplied funds. (Cornutus, worry-weary and because danger seemed tantamount to destruction, inflicted a hasty death on himself.) In response, the accused, his spirit not a bit broken, faced his son, shook his chains, called on avenging gods. Give me back my exile, where I live far from such behaviour! Let my son, sooner or later, meet punishment! He insisted: Cornutus was innocent and mistakenly terrified, and you’ll understand this easily – see whether others are divulged. For I did not contemplate emperor-murder and revolution with a single associate.

The accuser then named Gnaeus Lentulus and Seius Tubero, to Tiberius’ great embarrassment. Rome’s leading men, his own intimate friends, Lentulus extremely old, Tubero frail, they were being arraigned for rousing the enemy and disrupting the state. These men at least were immediately cleared. The elder Serenus was investigated via his slaves and the investigation went against the accuser. Crime-deranged and also terrified of the crowd murmuring threats – The oak! The cliff! and Kin-killer punishments! – the accuser left Rome. Dragged back from Ravenna, he was forced to pursue the prosecution, Tiberius not hiding his long-standing hatred towards the exile Serenus. For after Libo’s conviction Serenus had sent Tiberius a letter complaining that his devotion alone had proven profitless, with additional remarks of more bravado than was safe in arrogant and rather offence-prone ears. Tiberius brought this up eight years later with various charges concerning the intervening years, even if the torture – Slave stubbornness! Tiberius said – turned out contrary.

After opinions were expressed that Serenus should suffer the traditional punishment, Tiberius, to mitigate antipathy, vetoed it. Asinius Gallus’ proposal that Serenus be confined on Gyarus or Donusa he also rejected. Both islands are waterless and life’s necessities must be given to whoever is permitted life. So Serenus was returned to Amor-gos. And because Cornutus had fallen by his own hand there was a discussion about abolishing accuser-rewards when someone indicted for treason takes his life before his trial is complete. The voting was in favour, except that Tiberius protested bluntly and, contrary to his own practice, openly on the accusers’ behalf. The laws are impotent,

the state heading for disaster! Better to overthrow the justice system than to remove its guardians! Thus informers – a breed of men demonstrably a public menace and never adequately checked even by penalties – were coaxed forth by rewards.

Amidst these events, so persistent, so sorrowful, there arose a modest gladness: equestrian-ranked Gaius Cominius, guilty of a poem abusing Tiberius, was surrendered by Tiberius to the entreaties of his senator brother. This made people feel it more remarkable that a man who knew the better, and the reputation attending clemency, preferred the more dismal. For Tiberius' wrongs were not done in idleness and one can discern when an emperor's deeds are celebrated genuinely and when with illusory gladness. He himself, false-fronted at other times, his words practically fighting their way out, spoke with more fluency and ease when bringing relief. But for Publius Suillius, formerly quaestor to Germanicus, who was facing banishment from Italy upon conviction for bribe-taking as judge, Tiberius proposed island exile with so much intensity of feeling that he pledged, on oath, This is for the good of the state! (What seemed harsh at the time turned into praise once Suillius was back: the coming age saw him vastly powerful and venal, a man who long used the Emperor Claudius' friendship profitably, but never well.) The same penalty was decreed for the senator Firmius Catus for attacking his sister on false treason charges. Catus, as I reported, had led Libo into a trap and then destroyed him with evidence. With this service in mind, but using other pretexts, Tiberius entreated against exile; to expulsion from the senate he made no opposition.

Many of the things I have reported – and will report – may seem small and trivial in the recording, I am quite aware. But no one should compare my annals with the writing of those who narrated the past history of the Roman people. Huge wars, successful assaults on cities, routed and captured kings, or, when they turned to internal affairs, disputes of consuls against tribunes, land-holding and welfare laws, conflicts between the commons and the 'best men' – these were the things they recorded, free to roam. My work is in a narrow field and inglorious: peace undisturbed or modestly provoked, Rome's sorry affairs, an emperor inattentive to imperial expansion. It is not useless, however, this scrutiny of things at first sight trivial. From these, great events' stirrings often arise.

All nations and city-states are ruled by the people or leading men or individuals; the constitution formed by selecting from and conflating these types finds praise more easily than existence and, when it does exist, cannot last long. Therefore, although in the past, with a forceful

populace or when senators were in power, one needed to know the nature of the crowd and how it was managed, and those most fully cognizant of the characters of senate and ‘best men’ were believed canny about their times and wise, now, with the situation changed and the state’s only security consisting in one-man rule, there is advantage in assembling and reporting these things: few use insight to distinguish the honourable from the less good, the useful from the harmful, and more are taught by others’ outcomes. But though beneficial they bring minimal pleasure. The locations of peoples, vicissitudes of battles and notable deaths of leaders: these things hold and revive readers’ attention. I string together brutal orders, serial accusations, deceptive friendships, the ruin of innocents and identical causes of destruction, confronting the material’s monotony and glut. Plus this: antiquity-writers have few critics. No one cares whether you give Carthaginian or Roman armies a happier encomium. But for many who under Tiberius incurred punishment or disgrace, descendants survive, and where the families themselves are gone you will find people who think, their characters being similar, that others’ bad behaviour is a reproach to themselves. Even glory and virtue have haters – for too nearly accusing their opposites. But I return to my project.

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Book XIV

(59 CE) Gaius Vipstanus, Gaius Fonteius, consuls.

A crime long contemplated, Nero deferred no longer. Audacity maturing with power’s age, he was daily more ablaze with love of Poppaea. She, hopeless of marriage for herself and divorce for Octavia with Agrippina alive, kept scolding the Emperor with frequent accusations and occasional mockery, calling him a puppet. Subservient to another’s orders, you lack not only power but even freedom. Why is my wedding being deferred? My body, no doubt, displeases, or my laurelled ancestors, my fertility, my true heart. Is there concern lest as wife I expose the senate’s sufferings, the people’s anger at your mother’s arrogance and greed? But if Agrippina can only tolerate a daughter-in-law pernicious to her son, let me be restored to marriage with Otho! I will go anywhere, so long as I only hear of insults to the Emperor instead of seeing them and sharing your danger. These and like words, with tears and adultery’s art, hit home. Nobody opposed them, since everyone desired the mother’s power broken, and none thought the son’s hatred would extend to murder.

Cluvius records that, desirous of retaining power, Agrippina went so

far – at midday, when Nero was heated by wine and dining – as to offer herself more than once, he being drunk, she groomed and ready for incest. Already wanton kisses and caresses signalling depravity were noticed by insiders, Cluvius says, when Seneca sought a woman's help against female allurements. The freedwoman Acte, anxious about her own danger and Nero's shame, was dispatched with a denunciation: Incest talk is widespread – your mother's boasting! – and soldiers will not tolerate an unclean emperor's rule. Fabius Rusticus reports the impulse as not Agrippina's but Nero's, and as thwarted by the same freedwoman's ingenuity. Cluvius' story other authors, too, recount and reputation inclines this way: either Agrippina did intend this enormity or contemplation of strange lust seemed perfectly believable in one who as a girl defiled herself with Lepidus in hope of mastery, and from the same impulse submitted to Pallas' desires and trained for every disgrace by wedding her uncle.

Nero avoided private concourse and when Agrippina left for her park or her estates in Tusculum or Antium he commended her for relaxing. Eventually finding her insufferable wherever she was housed, he decided to kill her, deliberating only as to poison, sword or other method. He favoured poison first. But if given at the Emperor's table it could not be ascribed to chance, Britannicus already having died thus. And it seemed toilsome to test the servants of a woman alert, from criminal experience, to plots. Plus, by taking antidotes in advance she had fortified her body. How sword and slaughter might be hidden no one discovered, and the possibility that someone selected for so momentous an action might defy orders was frightening. The freedman Anicetus, commander of the Misenum fleet, offered an idea. He was Nero's boyhood tutor and was hated – the feeling was mutual – by Agrippina. He explained: A ship can be built such that, at sea, part will come loose by design, disgorging her unawares. Nothing contains as many accidents as the sea, and if she is cut short by shipwreck, who is so unjust as to assign to crime damage done by wind and wave? The Emperor will give the deceased a temple, plus altars and other signs of devotion.

The cleverness was pleasing, and the date helped: Minerva's festival was spent at Baiae. Nero lured his mother there, repeating, Parental ill-humour must be endured and my own temper calmed, in order to generate a reconciliation rumour that Agrippina would accept, women being gullible for happy report. Meeting her at the shore – she was coming from Antium – with hand clasp and embrace, he took her to Bauli. (This is the name of a sea-washed villa on an inlet between Cape Misenum and Baiae's lagoon.) Among the boats stood one more

ornate – this, too, apparently, in his mother’s honour; she had been used to conveyance by trireme and fleet rowers. Then she was invited for dinner, so that night would help conceal crime. There was clearly a traitor. Agrippina, either after hearing about the boat plot or uncertain whether to believe it, went to Baiae in a chair. Attentiveness alleviated fear: she got a friendly reception and a seat next to Nero. There was much conversation, sometimes with youthful intimacy on Nero’s part, then again reserved, as if sharing serious matters. The party went on long and he escorted her out, clinging fast to eyes and person, either to complete the illusion or else the last sight of his doomed mother checked a spirit however bestial.

A night star-bright and, with sea calm, quiet – practically proving the crime! – was provided by the gods. The boat did not go far. (Two of Agrippina’s household accompanied her: Crepereius Gallus, standing near the tiller, and Acerronia, leaning back near the foot of Agrippina’s couch, speaking happily of the son’s penitence, the mother’s recovered influence.) At a signal, the canopy collapsed from a heavy load of lead. Crepereius, crushed, expired immediately. Agrippina and Acerronia, the couch’s projecting ends being by chance too strong to succumb to the weight, were protected. Nor did the ship’s dissolution result, since there was universal confusion and the plotters were hampered by the many unaware. The rowers’ next plan was to tilt the boat to one side and sink it that way. But not even they reached quick consensus in the crisis, and the others, opposing, made an easier opportunity for going overboard. Acerronia, crying out unwisely, I am Agrippina! Help the Emperor’s mother! was killed by naval weaponry, poles and oars and whatever chance offered. Agrippina was silent and therefore less visible; she did, however, receive a shoulder wound. By swimming, then encountering rowboats, she found conveyance to Lake Lucrinus and was taken to her villa.

Pondering the purpose behind the invitation – Deceitful letter! – and the particularly honorific reception, the fact that the boat – near shore, no wind pushing, not on the reef – collapsed top-down like a structure on land; observing, too, the murder of Acerronia and considering her own wound, Agrippina realized that the trap’s only remedy lay in not being understood. She sent her freedman Agermus to report to her son: By the gods’ kindness and your good fortune I escaped grave accident. I beg you, however frightened you are by your mother’s danger, to defer your intention of visiting. At present I need repose. Meanwhile, simulating unconcern, she applied medicines to her wound and bandages to her body. She ordered Acerronia’s will found and her property sealed – this alone without pretence.

Nero, awaiting word of deed complete, was informed: She got away, lightly wounded but having come close enough to danger to be sure about its source. He was unstrung by panic, insisting: Soon, soon she will arrive quick to avenge! She'll arm slaves or rouse soldiers, or else approach senate and people – and blame me for shipwreck and wound and murdered friends! What prop do I have against her, unless Seneca and Burrus have something? (Reviving, he had summoned them immediately. It is unclear whether they were ignorant earlier, too.) A long silence from both ensued, lest they dissuade in vain. Or else they believed matters so far deteriorated that unless Agrippina was forestalled Nero must perish. Seneca was the readier in that he turned to Burrus and asked whether the soldiers should get the order to kill. Guardsmen pledged to the whole house of the Caesars and, remembering Germanicus, will venture no atrocity against his progeny, Burrus replied. Let Anicetus finish what he promised. Anicetus, unhesitating, demanded crime's culmination. At this, Nero declared: Today, finally, I am being given power. The source of so great a gift? A freedman! Anicetus, go quickly and take the men readiest to orders. Hearing that the messenger Agermus had come from Agrippina, Nero himself set the stage for incrimination: as Agermus relayed his message, Nero threw a sword between his feet and, as if Agermus had been caught in the act, ordered chains – to pretend that his mother, having contrived the Emperor's exit and from shame at crime apprehended, took her own life.

News of Agrippina's accident spread – as if it had happened by chance! When people heard, they went to the shore. Some mounted embankments, some nearby boats, others went as far as body permitted into the sea, some stretched up hands. With protests, prayers and shouts from people, questioning variously and replying uncertainly, every shore was full. There streamed in a huge crowd with lights. At knowledge of her safety people hurried as for congratulation, until deflected by sight of an armed and menacing column. Anicetus surrounded the villa with sentries. He demolished the gate and seized the slaves he encountered, eventually reaching Agrippina's bedroom door. A small number stood there, the rest having been dismayed by terror at the invaders. In the bedroom there was a modest light, a single slave girl. Agrippina was more and more anxious at there being no one from her son, not even Agermus. A happy outcome would look otherwise than solitude and sudden noises and indications of the worst. When the girl started to leave, 'You too desert me?' she cried. And turned to see Anicetus, accompanied by ship captain Herculeius and fleet centurion Obaritus. If you are paying a call, report me recovered. But if you intend to accomplish the deed – I don't believe it of my son. No or-

der has been given for kin-murder! The killers surrounded her couch. First was the captain, with a club to the head. To the centurion, then drawing sword for death, she thrust forward her middle and cried, 'Hit the belly!' Many wounds finished her.

Reports agree so far. Did Nero inspect his lifeless mother, praise her body's beauty? Some relate, others deny. She was cremated that night with a dining couch for bier and paltry offerings. (Nor, while Nero held power, did earth cover or enclose her. By her household's care she received an insignificant mound near the Misenum road and Caesar's lofty villa looking out on bays below.) The pyre ablaze, a freedman of hers, Mnester by name, ran himself through – unclear whether from fondness for his benefactress or fear of destruction. This was the finale that for many years Agrippina saw and scorned. Consulting astrologers about Nero, she was told that he would rule – and kill his mother. 'Let him kill me,' she said, 'provided that he rule.'

Nero only realized the crime's magnitude when it was complete. The rest of the night, sometimes in silence, rooted, more often panic-spurred and witless, he awaited daylight thinking it would bring ruin. At Burrus' instigation early obsequiousness from Guard officers determined him to hope. They clasped his hand and congratulated him on escaping from danger unforeseen and from his mother's deed. Friends then visited temples and, after their example, nearby Campanian towns attested joy with sacrifice and deputation. Nero's pretence was the opposite. He was gloomy, apparently angry at his own safety, in tears over his parent's death. Since, however, unlike the human countenance, the look of places does not alter, and the troubling sight of that sea and shore accosted him – some even believed that a trumpet sounded from surrounding heights and wailing from his mother's tomb – he withdrew to Naples and sent the senate a letter whose gist was this: An armed assassin was discovered – Agermus, one of Agrippina's most trusted freedmen – and retribution has been given in consciousness of guilt by the woman who devised the crime.

He added far-fetched accusations. She hoped for partnership in power and Guards swearing obedience to a woman, and for an equivalent disgrace for senate and people. Frustrated and in anger at soldiers, senate and populace, she discouraged largesse to citizens and soldiers and contrived perils for notable men. How I exerted myself to ensure that she not invade the senate or pronounce on foreign nations! The Claudian era, too, offered indirect attack. He transferred all of that regime's crimes onto his mother, accounting her elimination Rome's good fortune. For he even told the shipwreck story. But who could be found so doltish as to believe it an accident? Or that a shipwrecked woman

sent a single armed man to break through the Emperor's cohorts and fleets? Not Nero – whose monstrousness exceeded all complaint – but Seneca was criticized for this production: it was a confession, what he had written.

There was remarkable competition among the pre-eminent: thanksgivings were decreed for the regular temples; Minerva's festival, during which the plot was uncovered, was to be celebrated with annual games; a gold statue of Minerva, and beside it the Emperor's likeness, was to be placed in the senate house; Agrippina's birthday was to be inauspicious. Thrasea Paetus, though accustomed to dismiss earlier flatteries with silence or terse assent, left the senate then, causing danger for himself without initiating freedom for the rest. Portents, meanwhile, were frequent and vain: woman birthing snake; woman dead by lightning during conjugal relations; sun suddenly obscured; bolts from heaven in Rome's fourteen regions. So devoid of heavenly concern were events, that for years afterwards Nero united command and crime.

To accumulate antipathy to his mother and – with her removed – prove his own mildness increased, he restored to their family seats the notable women Junia and Calpurnia and the ex-praetors Valerius Capito and Licinius Gabolus, Agrippina's exiles. Permission was granted that Lollia Paulina's ashes be returned and a tomb built. Men that he himself recently relegated, Iturius and Calvisius, were released. Silana had met her end after returning from a more distant exile to Tarentum when Agrippina, whose antagonism brought her down, was already tottering – or relenting nevertheless.

Nero lingered in Campania's towns, anxious. How shall I make my entrance into Rome? Will I find the senate compliant, the people supportive? He was answered by the vicious, of whom no palace produced more: Agrippina's name was hated; her death fired the people's favour. Go fearless and experience veneration for yourself firsthand. Let us lead the way! They found everything readier than promised: citizen groups met him, the senate in festal garb, their wives and children marshalled by sex and age. Viewing stands were built along his route, as at triumphs. Accordingly, the proud conqueror of public servility approached the Capitoline, rendered thanks, and poured himself into every barely checked debauch that mother-respect, such as it was, had delayed.