

# Virgil Extracts 2

## Lines 544-560<sup>1</sup>



Huntress Diana's speech continues with a description of the terrifying deed with which Metabus dedicates his daughter to her. The woodcut above shows how a medieval artist perceived the scene.

Remember: you must **learn** the translation of your set passages. You must be able to remember the translation when you see the Latin. Use your flashcards to test yourself. I have put a set of flashcards up on Quizlet here: <https://quizlet.com/gb/864902106/igcse-latin-virgil-2026-8-flash-cards/?i=2ds0qg&x=1qqt> which you can use if you prefer this to making your own cards.

Check the new words against the vocabulary listed on the syllabus. Add words to your vocabulary notebook as necessary.

On the next page is today's passage set out for you to write your translation above the text. On the following pages we go through it all line by line.

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<sup>1</sup> Illustration: By kladcat - Woodcut illustration of Camilla and Metabus escaping into exile, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20099585>

*ipse sinu prae se portans iuga longa petebat  
solorum nemorum: tela undique saeva premebant 545  
et circumfuso volitabant milite Volsci.  
ecce fugae medio summis Amasenus abundans  
spumabat ripis, tantus se nubibus imber  
ruperat. ille innare parans infantis amore  
tardatur caroque oneri timet. omnia secum 550  
versanti subito vix haec sententia sedit:  
telum immane manu valida quod forte gerebat  
bellator, solidum nodis et robore cocto,  
huic natam libro et silvestri subere clausam  
implicat atque habilem mediae circumligat hastae; 555  
quam dextra ingenti librans ita ad aethera fatur:  
“alma, tibi hanc, nemorum cultrix, Latonia virgo,  
ipse pater famulam voveo; tua prima per auras  
tela tenens supplex hostem fugit. accipe, testor,  
diva tuam, quae nunc dubiis committitur auris.” 560*

Now we will translate phrase by phrase. Spot the verbs first if you can. The subject is still Metabus, father of Camilla. Sinus is literally the hanging fold of a toga and by extension a lap or breast where a child might be carried. *Sinu* is ablative.

*ipse sinu prae* [“in front”] *se portans*, *iuga* [“ridge” accusative plural] *longa petebat*, *solorum* [“lonely” genitive plural] *nemorum*

[“wood” genitive plural]:

Have a go then look at my attempt on the next page.

Carrying her in front of him in a fold of his toga he sought the long ridges of lonely woods.

Find the verbs. What do you notice about the endings? How does it show that Metabus is not the subject here?<sup>2</sup> Find the nominative plural words that are the subjects of these verbs.

*tela undique saeva premebant* [“were overwhelming” or even  
“were defeating”] *et circumfuso volitabant* [“were flying”] *milite*  
*Volsci.* [“Volscans” nominative]

Translate and compare with my attempt on the next page.

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<sup>2</sup> ...bant “they were ...ing”

Fierce spears were overwhelming/overwhelmed him on all sides and the Volscans were hovering/hovered around him with their soldiers.

I confess to being puzzled by the singular *milite* but other translations have it “soldiers” or “troops” and “with their soldier” makes no sense.

Although Virgil does not explain how this happened, the grown up Camilla is described as the Queen of the Volscans who are on Turnus's side in the battle.

*ecce fugae medio, summis Amasenus abundans*

[“overflowing”] *spumabat* [“was foaming/foamed”] *ripis,*

The subject is *Amasenus* which is a small river of Latium flowing into the sea near the city of Tarracina, now the river Amaseno. *Summis* goes with *ripis*.

Translate and compare. Don't worry if you don't get it right just make an attempt. Then look at my suggestion on the next page and work out why it is correct.



Behold, in the middle of his flight, the overflowing Amasenus foamed to the top of its banks.

*tantus* *se nubibus* [“clouds” ablative] *imber* [“rain storm”

nominative singular] *ruperat* [pluperfect “had burst”].

Translate and compare with my translation on the next page.

So great a rainstorm had burst from the clouds.

Faced with this torrent what can Metabus do, carrying little Camilla? He is the subject of the next sentence. Find the main verb. Can you also find a passive verb?<sup>3</sup>

*Ille, innare* [“to swim”] *parans*, *infantis amore tardatur* [*tarare* “to hinder”] *caroque oneri timet*

Have a shot at it and then compare with my translation on the next page.

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<sup>3</sup> We cover the passive in the lesson Y2T3W2D1. You can look at this lesson now or just make a note that verbs which have *r* or *ur* added to the ending are passive: that is the subject does not do the action. The subject has the action done to them. E.g. The ball **was hit** by the bat. The words “was hit” form the passive verb.

He, preparing to swim, was hindered by love of the baby and he feared for his dear burden.

*omnia secum* [“with himself”] *versanti* [“turning over”]

*subito vix haec sententia* [“idea”] *sedit* [“he settled on”]:

My old commentator says of the second half: “The following idea suddenly occurred, and had hardly occurred before he carried it into execution’ We have given this translation or rather paraphrase... The brevity and confused arrangement of the text are purposely adopted by the poet to show the trepidation of Metabus, and the rapidity with which his plan was formed and carried into execution.” In other words the sentence is compressed to show the urgency of Metabus's actions.

Some sort of paraphrase is needed. Do you best!



Turning over everything with himself, suddenly scarcely had this idea occurred than he carried it out.

You will find the phrase *Bellum gero* in the syllabus vocabulary under *gero*. It is important to learn it. War is always *waged* in Latin.

*telum* *immane* [“huge”] *manu* *valida* [“strong” ablative] *quod*

*forte* *gerebat bellator;*

the next words describe *telum*:

*solidum nodis* [“knots”<sup>4</sup> ablative] *et robore* [“oak” ablative ]

*cocto* [“seasoned, hardened in the smoke”<sup>5</sup>]

My old commentary says:

“*telum immane*. Nominative absolute<sup>6</sup> or rather a species of anacoluthon the construction changing after *cocto*.”

An Anacoluthon is a sentence interrupted midway, where there is a change in the grammatical structure of the sentence and of intended meaning following the interruption. Basically, this is a continuation of the confused structure we noted before. Virgil is doing it deliberately to show that Metabus is rushing and his thoughts are in a jumbled whirl. It makes it hard to translate though and we need to plough on before we have enough to be able to make some sort of translation.

*huic* *natam* [“his daughter” accusative] *libro et silvestri subere*

*clausam implicat* [“entwines wraps”, notice present tense for

immediacy]

My old commentary says “*libro et silvestri subere clausam* 'wrapped up in bark and wild cork' i.e. in the bark of a wild cork tree”. Have a shot at this now bearing in mind that the second part does not really follow on in meaning from the first because it is an anacoluthon! My translation is on the next page.

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4 The kind you get in timber, not the kind you get in ropes.

5 Literally “cooked”

6 To find a simple explanation of what this is see <https://thehabit.co/nominative-absolutes/>

When Virgil tells us something as though it is happening **now** (as in *implicat* here) to make it more vivid it is called the historic present tense.

a huge oak in his strong hand with which he had earlier been waging war, solid with knots and seasoned oak hardened in the smoke, he wraps his daughter in the bark of a wild cork tree

Can you see the break in the meaning? Find the verb. *Hasta* here is the same item of equipment as *telum*.

*atque habilem* [“skilfully” or perhaps “snug”<sup>7</sup>] *mediae* [dative]

*circumligat* [“binds” present tense again] *hastae*;

You might get this! Have a go and then see mine on the next page.

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<sup>7</sup> My old commentary says “in a position convenient to throw.”

And binds her snugly to the middle of the spear.

Find the verb. It is deponent<sup>8</sup> i.e. it looks passive (so look for an *ur* ending) but is really active. It is in the present tense and means “he says”. His words follow and for once the verb really is at the end both in English and Latin!

*quam dextra* [“right hand” ablative] *ingenti librans* [“balancing”],  
*ita ad aethera fatur*

*quam* here seems a bit redundant to me. You could say “as he...” in which case it would have to be “balances” or you can leave it out and use “balancing”. *Aethera* is “to the air” i.e. “to the heavens” i.e. Metabus is praying.

Translate then look at the next page.

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<sup>8</sup> Deponent verbs are covered in Y2T3W5D3 and Y2T3W6D1

Balancing it in his huge right hand he says to the heavens:

Find the verb. Remember Metabus is speaking now so it will be “I...”. He describes himself as

*pater*:

*alma* [“kind” or “nursing” vocative], *tibi hanc*, *nemorum*

[“woods” genitive] *cultrix* [“inhabitant” vocative], *Latonia virgo*

[vocative],

*ipse pater famulam* [“maid servant” accusative] *voveo* [*vovere* “to dedicate”];

Translate and compare with my version on the next page.

O kind inhabitant of the woods, virgin Latonia/Diana to you I, her father, dedicate this maidservant  
or  
To you, kind inhabitant of the woods, O virgin Latonia/Diana I, her father, dedicate this  
maidservant.

Next:

Notice the person of the verb at the end of the sentence. He is no longer talking about his actions but describing those of Camilla, whom he calls [her i.e. Diana's] suppliant (*supplex*). *Per auras* tells where she is fleeing. *Tua prima tela* goes together. See what you can make of it. My translation is on the next page.

*tua prima per auras* [“breezes, air(s)”] *tela tenens supplex hostem*

*fugit.*

The suppliant flees through the air holding your first spear.

That is:

yours is the first spear she clasps, a suppliant, as she flees through the air.

*Testor* is deponent. It looks passive but is active, “I testify” perhaps best translated “I pray” here. Can you find a real passive verb here (look for that *ur* ending)? Who is being addressed? Notice the ending of *tuam*. It can't go with *diva* it is not the same case. It is being used as an object even though it is just the pronoun “yours” you can use just “yours” or you can explain by saying “that which is yours”. *Dubiis* goes with *auris*.

*Accipe* [imperative<sup>9</sup>], *testor*, *diva tuam*,

*quae nunc dubiis* [“doubtful”] *committitur* *auris*.

Have a try and see what you can make of it. My version is on the next page.

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9 See *Latin Without Tears* pages 219-222a see Y2T2W6D1.

Receive, Goddess, I pray, that which is yours which is now committed to the doubtful breezes.

Well done. Don't worry if you didn't get much correct. You can't be expected to translate this hard stuff unaided. BUT now you have a translation, make sure it is correct on your flashcards and **learn** it so that when you see the Latin you can give the English.

What do you think of the medieval illustration at the beginning now you know what it is all about?