

## AMORES I. 12

Flete meos casus: tristes rediere tabellae;  
 infelix hodie littera posse negat.  
 omina sunt aliquid: modo cum discedere vellet,  
 ad limen digitos restitit icta Nape.  
 5 missa foras iterum limen transire memento  
 cautius atque alte sobria ferre pedem.



- 1 **flete:** the appeal for sympathy in an otherwise lighthearted treatment establishes exaggerated emotional outburst as the poet's main device in this poem.  
**rediere:** the 3rd person plural perfect active alternate form.  
**tabella, -ae (f.):** *writing tablet.*
- 2 **infelix, -icis:** *unhappy, ill-fated.*  
**littera:** the singular is used here to denote the whole of the writing.  
**posse negat:** an indirect statement with the subject understood.
- 3 **modo (adv.):** *just now, recently.*  
**vellet:** imperfect subjunctive used in a *cum*-circumstantial clause. Here it means "starting to."
- 4 **ad . . . Nape:** the unusual initial SPONDEE and the repetitions of *i* and *t* mimic and intensify Nape's stumbling.  
**digitos:** a Greek accusative (used of the part of the body affected, i.e., the toes) with the perfect participle *icta*.  
**restō, -āre, -itī:** *to linger, remain; to stop.*  
**iciō, -ere, īcī, ictum:** *to strike.*
- 5 **memento:** a future active imperative which, with this verb, will translate as the present tense.
- 6 **altē (adv.):** *at a great height.*  
**sōbrius, -a, -um:** *sober, not intoxicated.* Perhaps the first time Nape set out on her mission she was not completely sober. If so, her tripping on the threshold would more likely suggest human frailty rather than divine intervention. Ovid here paints a quite different picture of this same maid from that of I. 11.

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- ite hinc, difficiles, funebria ligna, tabellae,  
 tuque, negaturis cera referta notis,  
 quam, puto, de longae collectam flore cicuta  
 10 melle sub infami Corsica misit apis.  
 at tamquam minio penitus medicata rubebas:



- 7 **hinc**: *from here, from this place*.  
**difficiles . . . tabellae**: two vocative plural pairs in CHIASTIC word order personifying the tablets.  
**lignum, -ī (n.)**: *wood*.
- 8 **tuque**: vocative singular personifying the *cera referta*.  
**negaturis . . . notis**: Ovid continues the vocative reprimand in CHIASTIC word order intensifying his displeasure by the use of ASSONANCE.  
**cēra, -ae (f.)**: *wax*.  
**nota, -ae (f.)**: *note, mark*.  
**cera referta**: vocative singular.
- 9 **puto**: suggests that Ovid may not be completely serious in what he says about the wax. Note the SYSTOLE in this metrical foot which scans as a DACTYL.  
**colligō, -ere, -lēgī, -lectum**: *to gather together, collect*.  
**cicūta, -ae (f.)**: *poisonous hemlock (Conium maculatum)*. Hemlock was given to criminals as poison. The most well-known individual to die from hemlock poisoning was Socrates. The plant was also considered to be an antaphrodisiac and thus might have contributed to the cause of Corinna's refusal.
- 10 **mel, mellis (n.)**: *honey*.  
**infāmis, -e**: *infamous, disgraced*. Corsican honey was infamous for being bitter, due, according to ancient sources, to the large number of box trees, yew trees, and thyme on the island (McKeown, 328).  
**Corsicus, -a, -um**: *of or belonging to the island of Corsica* off the western coast of Italy, north of Sardinia.  
**apis, -is (f.)**: *a bee*.
- 11 **minium, -ī (n.)**: *cinnabar, a bright red dye*.  
**medicō, -āre, -āvī, -ātum**: *to dye*.  
**rubeō, -ēre**: *to turn bright red*. Directed to the wax which, unlike ordinary wax that was dyed black, was red.

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- ille color vere sanguulentus erat.  
 proiectae triviis iaceatis, inutile lignum,  
 vosque rotae frangat praetereuntis onus.  
 15 illum etiam, qui vos ex arbore vertit in usum,  
 convincam puras non habuisse manus.  
 praebuit illa arbor misero suspendia collo,  
 carnifici diras praebuit illa cruces;  
 illa dedit turpes raucis bubonibus umbras,



- 12 **color, -ōris (m.):** *color, pigment.*  
**vērē (adv.):** *truly, indeed.*  
**sanguulentus, -a, -um:** *blood-red, crimson.* This adjective is suggestive of the deadly power of these tablets already mentioned, *funebria ligna* (7).
- 13 **prōiciō, -ere, -iēcī, -iectum:** *to fling to the ground.* There is no expressed noun in this couplet for this adjective to modify. Supply a missing *tabellae*.  
**trivium, -ī (n.):** *the meeting place of three roads; a crossroads.*  
**iaceatis:** addresses the supplied *tabellae* in a jussive subjunctive. A continuation of the PERSONIFICATION.  
**inūtilis, -e:** *useless.*
- 14 **frangat:** another jussive subjunctive.
- 16 **convincō, -ere, -vīcī, -victum:** *to prove, demonstrate.*
- 17 **suspendium, -ī (n.):** *hanging* (as a means of execution or suicide.)  
**collum, -ī (n.):** *the neck.*
- 18 **carnifex, -ficus (m.):** *an executioner.*  
**dīrus, -a, -um:** *awful, dreadful, frightful.*  
**crux, -ucis (f.):** *a wooden frame or cross on which criminals were hanged or impaled.*
- 19 **turpis, -e:** *loathsome, repulsive, shameful.*  
**turpes . . . umbras:** CHIASTIC word order.  
**raucus, -a, -um:** *harsh-sounding, raucous.*  
**būbō, -ōnis (m.):** *the horned owl;* its call sounded funereal and was considered a bad omen.

- 20 vulturis in ramis et strigis ova tulit,  
 his ego commisi nostros insanus amores  
 molliaque ad dominam verba ferenda dedi?  
 aptius hae capiant vadimonia garrula cerae,  
 quas aliquis duro cognitor ore legat;
- 25 inter ephemeridas melius tabulasque iacerent,  
 in quibus absumptas fleret avarus opes.  
 ergo ego vos rebus duplices pro nomine sensi:



- 20 **vultur, -uris (m.):** a *vulture*. These are birds of prey and hence were believed to be evil.  
**rāmus, -ī (m.):** a *branch*.  
**strix, -igis (f.):** an *owl, screech-owl*. The Romans believed these birds attacked infants in their cradles (Barsby, 137).
- 21 **his:** note the first position prominence in this clause.  
**nostros . . . amores:** poetic use of the plural.  
**insānus, -a, -um:** *frenzied, mad*.
- 23 **aptus, -a, -um:** (+ dat.) *fit, suitable, appropriate*.  
**capiant:** a potential subjunctive.  
**vadimōnium, -ī (n.):** a *legal term referring to an agreement of both parties in a legal suit to appear in court on an appointed day*.  
**garrulus, -a, -um:** *loquacious*. This word contrasts with the one-word reply Ovid had hoped for in I. 11.
- 24 **aliquis . . . ore:** INTERLOCKED WORD ORDER (SYNCHESIS).  
**cognitor, -ōris (m.):** a *legal representative, attorney*.  
**legat:** subjunctive by attraction, dependent on the subjunctive in line 23.
- 25 **ephēmeris, -idos (f.):** a *record book, day book*.  
**iacerent:** a potential subjunctive expressing past time.
- 26 **absumō, -ere, -sumpsī, -sumptum:** *to use up, spend, squander*.  
**fleret:** imperfect subjunctive again by attraction, dependent on *iacerent* (25).  
**avārus, -a, -um:** *greedy, avaricious, miserly*.
- 27 **duplex, -icis:** *two-faced, deceitful*. The adjective is used here both in its figurative sense in that the tablets have not delivered the message the poet had hoped for and in its literal sense since there are two halves to the tablets.

auspicii numerus non erat ipse boni.

quid precer iratus, nisi vos cariōsa senectus

30

rodāt, et immundo cera sit alba situ?



28 **auspicium**, -ī (n.): *portent, fortune, luck*—with *boni*, a genitive of quality (descriptive genitive).

29 **precor**, -ārī, -ātus: *to pray for, implore, beg*. Here, a deliberative subjunctive.

**cariōsus**, -a, -um: *decayed*.

**senectūs**, -ūtis (f.): *old age*.

30 **rōdō**, -ere, rōsī, -sum: *to eat away, erode*. Here, an optative subjunctive, as is *sit*.

**immundus**, -a, -um: *unclean, foul*.



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