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REMEDIES FOR LOVE

By Publius Ovidius Naso

LEGERAT HUIUS AMOR titulum nomenque libelli:
“Bella mihi, video, bella parantur” ait.

“Parce tuum vatem sceleris damnare, Cupido,
tradita qui toties te duce signa tuli!
Non ego Tydides, a quo tua saucia mater 5
in liquidum rediit aethera Martis equis.
Saepe tepent alii iuvenes; ego semper amavi,
et si, quid faciam, nunc quoque, quaeris, amo.

PRELUDE

A CLOSE CALL

LOVE GOT A PEEK at the title and name that I'd picked for this guidebook. "War!" He gasped, "so I see! Plans for a war . . . against *me!*"

THE POET DEFENDS HIMSELF

"Perish the thought! Cupid, don't accuse me—Your *apostle!*—of sinning. Don't forget, I'm the one who carried the banner for You. I'm not some Diomedes, who wounded Your mother and sent Her clear to the sky in retreat, borrowing horses from Mars. Typically, other young men lose heat, but I'm always a lover. (Even right now, if you ask—yes, I'm ready for love.)

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Quin etiam docui qua possis arte parari,
et quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit. 10
Nec te, blande puer, nec nostras prodimus artes,
nec nova praeteritum Musa retexit opus.
Siquis amat quod amare iuvat, feliciter ardens
gaudeat, et vento naviget ille suo;

at siquis male fert indignae regna puellae, 15
ne pereat, nostrae sentiat artis opem.

¿Cur aliquis laqueo collum nodatus amator
a trabe sublimi triste pependit onus?
¿Cur aliquis rigido fodit sua pectora ferro?
Invidiam caedis, pacis amator, habes. 20

Qui, nisi desierit, misero periturus amore est,
desinat; et nulli funeris auctor eris.
Et puer es, nec te quicquam nisi ludere oportet:

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Let's get real: I even taught a whole *method* to get You! Once it was all hit-or-miss; now it's turned into an art. I'm no traitor to You, little cherub, or to my own system; this new poem doesn't undo all of that previous work. Someone's in love? And likes what he loves? Terrific! Keep going! It's smooth sailing for him. (Have a great time, lucky guy!)

If, though, a man's chafing under the yoke, if his girlfriend's a tyrant, there's no need to die! Show him this book—it'll help:

Why have some men in love turned a lasso
into a necktie? And, sad sacks that they
are, hung themselves from a high beam?
Why have some men in love stabbed them-
selves in the chest with a knife thrust?

Well, Mr. 'I-Promote-Peace,' *You're* getting blamed for their deaths!¹¹

Somebody can't quit love? He'll literally *die* of it? Let him quit: Fine! You're off the hook—guilty of nobody's death. You're just a kid; Your only job is to play and be happy. Play, then!

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lude; decent annos mollia regna tuos.	24
Vitricus et gladiis et acuta dimicet hasta,	27
et victor multa caede cruentus eat;	
tu cole maternas, tutò quibus utimur, artes,	
et quarum vitio nulla fit orba parens.	30

Effice nocturna frangatur ianua rixa,
et tegat ornatas multa corona fores;
fac coeant furtim iuvenes timidaeque puellae,
verbaque dent cauto qualibet arte viro;
et modo blanditias rigido, modo iurgia, posti 35
dicat et exclusus flebile cantet amans.
His lacrimis contentus eris sine crimine mortis;
non tua fax avidos digna subire rogos.”

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Simple concerns suit You at this stage of life. Let Your stepfather, Mars, brandish weapons—the swords and the sharp spears. He can go decimate foes, triumph, all covered in blood; You ought to practice Your *mother's* arts. We can handle those safely, and there's no risk of misfire leaving a parent bereft:

Rival suitors should bust down the door when they brawl, serenading! Make them! And make their festoons curtain the jambs of the door!¹²

Help a young man and his nervous girlfriend get together in secret! Help them cheat on her man, skirt him however they can!

Sometimes, a lover gets blocked and boxed out. Have him try different tactics: flattery, verbal abuse, croon a sad song to the door.

Be content with those tears, and no one'll call You a murderer. Your torch shouldn't produce flames for a funeral pyre!"

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—Haec ego; movit Amor gemmatas aureus alas,
et mihi “propositum perforce” dixit “opus.” 40

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That's what I said. Love spread His wings, a halo appearing, glittering. "Fine," He allowed. "Finish the work you propose."

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