

Closing Argument of Mr. Themis, Attorney for Defendant Aeneas

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Your Honor, Judge Democritus, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Queen Dido was an exceptional woman. Not only was she intelligent, clever, and beautiful, Dido was noble and generous. She led Tyrians from their homeland and founded the great city of Carthage. She was also a woman who was strong-willed, proud, and determined. To portray her, as the prosecution has, as a weak woman who was abandoned is unthinkable and dishonors her memory.

The prosecution has the burden of proof and must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Aeneas intended to abandon Dido. The evidence presented by the prosecution, however, does not demonstrate that Aeneas promised Dido that he would remain in Carthage and marry her or that he would not fulfill his mission to establish a new kingdom in Nova Troia. Since Aeneas never committed himself to Dido, he cannot be found guilty of abandoning her. From the beginning, Aeneas made it clear to Dido that his future was preordained. Under oath to Zeus, Apollo, and Demeter, Aeneas testified that when he first addressed Dido to offer his thanks for providing him refuge, he ended by saying,

“While trees the mountain tops with shades supply,

Your honor, name, and praise shall never die.

Whate'er abode my fortune has assign'd,

Your image shall be present in my mind”

(Dryden Translation: I, 607-610).

Aeneas stated that he never offered Dido anything other than to keep her image in his mind wherever he traveled. Aeneas's words, "Whate'er abode my fortune has assign'd," told Dido that he would eventually leave Carthage (Dryden Translation: I, 609). While you heard witnesses referring to gifts that Aeneas gave Dido, to the fact that Aeneas had forgotten his mission, and to his enjoyment of Dido's love, not one witness testified that Aeneas pledged to marry Dido or to remain in Carthage. This supports Aeneas's own testimony. Because the prosecution has not satisfied its burden, I ask you to find Aeneas not guilty of abandoning Queen Dido and of causing her to commit suicide.

Let us now examine the evidence in more detail. Dido was not a naïve, young girl from Tyre when she first met Aeneas. She was a sophisticated woman who led her people to establish and to protect the great city of Carthage. Both her family history and her experience as a leader taught her that duty comes before personal happiness. Dido was the daughter of Belus, king of Tyre in Phoenicia. As a young woman, Dido learned that leaders may act callously or even ruthlessly in order to accomplish an end. While living in Tyre, Dido married Sychaeus, a wealthy man with a high position among the Phoenicians. After Pygmalion, Dido's cruel-hearted brother with a lust for gold, assumed the throne, he secretly murdered Sychaeus in an effort to steal his treasure. Pygmalion then attempted to keep the murder a secret from his sister. Ladies and gentlemen, Aeneas leaving Carthage to fulfill his destiny is not a callous or ruthless act. However, it is an act that Dido, from her experience, should have understood that Aeneas was compelled to do as a leader.

You heard testimony from Dido's sister, Anna, about the events that occurred after the murder of Dido's husband. This testimony demonstrated that Dido understood that a leader *must* place duty before personal desires. Sychaeus's ghost visited Dido and revealed the circumstances

of his murder. He then told Dido where to find his treasure and urged her to flee the country. Ignoring personal safety, Dido organized the escape of all those who opposed Pygmalion and fled the country in ships loaded with gold and silver. Dido risked danger for the benefit of her followers and did not abdicate her responsibility. Can Aeneas be found guilty of abandoning Dido, because he chose to conform to the wishes of the gods as fully as possible and travel to Nova Troia?

You also heard testimony from Iarbas, the Berber king, about Dido's shrewdness in dealing with him. When Dido arrived on the coast of Libya, Dido asked Iarbas for a small plot of land to serve as a temporary refuge for her followers. She requested only as much land as could be enclosed within a bull's hide, and Iarbas granted the request. Carefully slicing the hide into fine strips, Dido had enough material to circle an entire hill. Dido's ability to maximize the amount of land was celebrated not only by the Tyrians but also by modern mathematicians. The "isoperimetric problem" of enclosing the maximum area within a fixed boundary is often called the "Dido Problem." Ladies and gentlemen, I submit that a woman who, under great pressure, can outwit a king was savvy enough to understand that Aeneas's destiny would be of greater importance to him than a romantic relationship.

With the land that she cunningly tricked Iarbas into providing, Dido founded the great city of Carthage. Under her leadership, the citizens of Carthage created institutions of government with elected magistrates and a parliament. They also built magnificent buildings and towers, paved the streets, dug a harbor basin, and laid the foundations for a theater. These accomplishments demonstrate that Dido was extremely intelligent and exercised complete control over Carthage. It was Dido who granted permission to Aeneas and his shipmates to enter

Carthage. Yet, the prosecution would like you to believe that it was Aeneas who was in the position of control and who abandoned Dido.

In supporting the claim that Aeneas abandoned Dido, the prosecution called Dido's servants who testified that once inside the royal palace, Aeneas showered Dido with expensive gifts. While it is true that Aeneas presented Dido with a gold brocade robe and veil once belonging to Helen of Troy as well as other gifts, these were simply offerings to the queen for her hospitality. Indeed, upon meeting Dido, Aeneas tells her that, "Dido, we have not the means to repay your goodness" (Lewis Translation: I, 601).

The real cause of Dido's problems was Aeneas's mother, Aphrodite. Like many mothers, Aphrodite couldn't help herself from interfering in her son's life. Wanting Dido to help Aeneas fulfill his destiny in Italy, Aphrodite asked another son, Eros, to light the fire of love in Dido. Thus, Aphrodite is to blame for Dido's misery, not Aeneas. Aeneas simply left Carthage to follow the orders of Zeus. The prosecution wanted to charge *someone* for Dido's death, and they picked Aeneas as the scapegoat. The prosecution should have had the courage to charge Aphrodite for trickery resulting in suicide rather than Aeneas with abandonment.

Anna's testimony also demonstrates that Dido realized the difficulties of a relationship with Aeneas. After Dido confided her feelings to Anna, their conversation showed that they both had concerns that Aeneas would fulfill his destiny and not remain long in Carthage. Anna testified that she suggested devising ways for prolonging Aeneas's stay, telling Dido:

"Only solicit the gods' favour, perform the due rites,
And plying our guest with attentions, spin a web to delay him,
While out at sea the winter runs wild and Orion is stormy,
While his ships are in bad repair, while the weather is unacquiescent"

(Lewis Translation: IV, 50-53).

Dido realized from the beginning that the union was doomed and that she was pitting love against the power of the gods. Since Dido knew from the start that her relationship with Aeneas was ill-fated, the prosecution cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Aeneas abandoned her.

The evidence also shows that Dido did not become involved with Aeneas merely for love. Anna's testimony about her conversation with Dido demonstrates that Dido manipulated Aeneas for the benefit of Carthage. Dido's love turned from a spark to a blaze only after Anna suggested the practical military advantages from an alliance with Aeneas. Seeking to protect the city that she founded, Dido understood that Aeneas and his followers could serve to reinforce Carthage, a city surrounded by hostile nations and subject to threats by Dido's brother in Tyre. Dido's central concern was the military advantages that Aeneas could bring to Carthage, and her decision to become involved with Aeneas was tactical. Ladies and gentlemen, is this consistent with a woman whom the prosecution claims was abandoned?

Although it is true that Dido and Aeneas spent time together, their relationship remained largely platonic. It was Hera's interference that changed this. You will remember that at first, Hera, who hated the Trojans, refused to testify when the defense called her as a witness. Eventually, she took the stand and admitted that she wanted Aeneas to stay in Carthage and provided an opportunity for Dido and Aeneas to become intimate. During a hunt, Hera sent a deluge of rain, forcing Dido and Aeneas to seek refuge in a cave. Although Dido referred to their union in the cave as a "marriage," there is absolutely not one shred of evidence that Aeneas ever used that term or referred to Dido as his wife. If the prosecution could have produced even one witness to testify that Aeneas had said that he was married to Dido or that she was his wife, they

would have. Again, the prosecution should have charged Hera with trickery resulting in suicide rather than Aeneas with abandonment.

Aeneas testified that he understood his responsibility to the gods to establish a new kingdom in Nova Troia and to secure the future of his son Ascanius. Zeus sent Hermes to remind Aeneas of his destiny, and after Hermes's visit, there was no doubt in Aeneas's mind as to what he needed to do. Aeneas was always aware of his destiny which is why there is absolutely no evidence that Aeneas promised Dido to stay in Carthage or to marry her.

Aeneas is not an insensitive man, and as he made preparations to leave Carthage, he contemplated how to tell Dido that he must leave. Unfortunately, before Aeneas had an opportunity to speak to Dido, she learned that the fleet was preparing to sail. Dido found Aeneas and begged him:

“[B]y our union of hearts, by our marriage hardly begun,
If I have ever helped you at all, if anything
About me pleased you, be sad for our broken home, forgo
Your purpose, I beg you, unless it is too late for prayers of mine!”

(Lewis Translation: IV, 316-319).

By her own words, Dido understood that Aeneas had from the beginning a “purpose” which he could not forgo. Again, although Dido refers to their marriage, there is not a single witness who has testified that Aeneas had ever pledged marriage to Dido or represented that he was married to Dido. In fact, Aeneas testified that after he told Dido that he had no intention of concealing his departure, he repeated that he had made no promise to her, saying:

“I did not look to make off from here
In secret – do not suppose it; nor did I offer you marriage

At any time or consent to be bound by a marriage contract”

(Lewis Translation: IV, 338-340).

Not a single witness from either the prosecution or the defense contradicted Aeneas’s statements to Dido.

Finally, we arrive at the real reason for Dido’s despair. The defense called workers in Carthage who testified that as Dido became obsessed with Aeneas, she became negligent in fulfilling her responsibilities as the leader of Carthage. The city’s public servants then lost their motivation to construct buildings, defend the city, enforce regulations, and attend to administrative issues. Dido’s inattentiveness to Carthage turned it from a great city to a ruin.

It was also surrounded by enemies. Iarbus testified that he was furious over Dido’s relationship with Aeneas. While he might have served as a barrier between Dido and her murderous brother, he became her enemy, and the Libyan tribes were under his influence. The Tyrians in Tyre, led by Pygmalion, were also a threat. And the Tyrians in Carthage resented that Dido gave her undivided attention to Aeneas, a foreigner. Dido’s inattentiveness to her responsibilities placed Carthage at risk of attack and resulted in unrest both inside and outside of the city. If Aeneas and his warriors left, no one would be available to defend Dido. Dido realized that the only way she could restore stability to Carthage was by committing suicide. A new leader could then assume control and inspire confidence among the citizens. It would be unjust to punish Aeneas, because Dido failed in her responsibilities as a leader and viewed suicide as the only way to restore order in Carthage.

The prosecution now asks you to convict Aeneas for abandonment. They have not proven, however, beyond a reasonable doubt that Aeneas intended to abandon Dido. In fact, all the evidence presented shows that Aeneas was honest about his destiny and that his mission was

more important to him than love. Throughout their time together, Aeneas made only one vow to Dido. At their first meeting, Aeneas told Dido:

“Whate'er abode my fortune has assign'd,
Your image shall be present in my mind”

(Dryden Translation: I, 609-610).

And this one vow he kept. When Dido confronts Aeneas about his plan to leave Carthage, Aeneas reiterated his earlier vow.

“Fair queen, you never can enough repeat
Your boundless favors, or I own my debt;
Nor can my mind forget Eliza's name,
While vital breath inspires this mortal frame”

(Dryden Translation: IV, 333-336).

Dido's life experiences as well as Aeneas's conduct towards her demonstrate that Dido understood that Aeneas could not and would not abdicate his responsibility to establish a new kingdom in Nova Troia as ordered by the gods. Without a vow from Aeneas, other than to remember her, Dido had nothing to tie her hopes to for a happy life with Aeneas. And without a vow to remain in Carthage or to marry Dido, Aeneas was a free agent. If Dido were alive, she could not claim that Aeneas had abandoned her. For this reason, the prosecution's charge of abandonment must fail, and you must find Aeneas not guilty.

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