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PART I SPQR

Chapter One

THE FOUNDING FATHERS

- ① READ AND SUMMARIZE PP 1–2
- ② READ AND SUMMARIZE OUTLINED PART OF PAGE 3
- ③ DEFINE UNDERLINED WORDS ON PP 4–12

ROME'S BEGINNINGS IN ASIA

The story begins at Troy.

It is the tenth year of the Trojan War. Both the Greeks and the Trojans, the besiegers and the besieged, are exhausted. Even though the Trojans' best fighter, Hector, has recently been killed in single combat by the Greek champion Achilles, Troy still stands.

A blockade has not worked, nor has frontal assault. Only a trick, perhaps, can bring the city down. And so the clever deception of the wooden horse is devised by Odysseus. A huge hollow creature made of wood, its belly filled with armed Greek soldiers, is left conspicuously outside the walls of Troy, while the Greeks ostentatiously put out to sea. The Trojans are perplexed. Where have the Greeks gone? Why have they left behind the horse? What is the horse for? Is it some kind of offering to the Trojan gods? Some want to bring it inside the city, but Laocoön, Neptune's high priest in Troy, is highly suspicious. "I fear the Greeks," he says, "especially when they bring gifts."

However, at that very moment a pair of serpents come writhing out of the sea onto the beach, wind themselves around Laocoön, and crush him to death. Their message is clear. No one should listen to advice against welcoming the horse; anyone who gives such advice is doomed. Thus the horse, clanking occasionally, is dragged inside the city. The Trojans seize upon this event as an excuse to celebrate. By the

- ④ COPY LIST OF GODS ON PAGE 121



1.1 Greek vase-painting: Aeneas escaping from Troy with his father on his back, and with his wife Creusa following him. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

small hours of the morning, after much singing and drinking and dancing, all the Trojans were asleep.

The Greek soldiers climb down from the belly of the horse. Through the darkness they flash a signal, and the Greek fleet silently rows back to the beach. Then the bolts on the city gates are drawn back and the Greek forces burst in.

The Trojans, still half-asleep and dazed, offer no resistance. Murder, looting, and arson ensue. The city is destroyed, its women and children are sold into slavery, and only a handful of the men escape. Among them is a certain Aeneas, who, with his father, his wife, his son and a few companions, makes his way through burning streets to seek safety in the nearby mountains. Although Aeneas's wife is lost during their flight, he is encouraged by his mother, the goddess Venus, to make his way westward and found a new city, at a spot under a grove of oaks where he will find a huge white sow with thirty piglets sucking at her udder.

Obediently Aeneas sets out. But on the way he has many adventures on the high seas and in foreign lands. He visits the Cyclopes in Sicily; he crosses the river Styx to the underworld, where he meets the ghosts of heroes of the past and the future; he is shipwrecked in Africa, and delayed there by the blandishments of Dido, Queen of Carthage (a city one day to be famous in Roman history). But the gods will not let Aeneas stay with her, and he departs for his final stopping place in western Italy, on the banks of the river Tiber, where he comes upon the white sow and her litter at last.

The region is called Latium, its people and its language Latin. The local chief welcomes Aeneas and promises him the hand of his daughter Lavinia in marriage. After a brief war with Lavinia's ex-fiancé, Aeneas marries her and founds a city, which he names Lavinium in her honor. Later his son Ascanius founds another city, Alba Longa, which thereafter is ruled for many generations by a dynasty of admirable kings.

ROMULUS AND REMUS

One day, there was a crisis in Alba Longa. King Numitor had been driven out of the city by his brother Amulius, and the king's daughter, Rhea Silvia, was locked up in order that she might produce no heirs to threaten the throne that Amulius had now usurped. Nevertheless, mysteriously and scandalously, she became pregnant by Mars, the god of war, and gave birth to twin sons, Romulus and Remus. Amulius then decided that the babies must be gotten rid of, yet their deaths must not seem to be his fault. He carefully placed them in a box, setting it afloat down the river, which was at that moment in flood. When the flood receded, the box was left high and dry and the twins were rescued by a wolf, who reared them until they were discovered by a neighboring farmer, who then brought them up in his house.

When the twins were grown, they joined a group of local teenagers where their qualities of leadership were so marked that it became clear that they were really of royal blood. Thus they were able to take charge of their group and lead it in rebellion against Alba Longa. They killed their wicked uncle and then restored Numitor to his throne. However, this first taste of power did not satisfy them. They resolved to establish their own city, which they founded at a bend in the Tiber on seven low-lying hills.

The construction of the new city was soon completed, except for the surrounding defensive walls. At this point an acrimonious discussion began between the brothers about which of them the new city should be named after. To settle their argument they sought the advice of the gods, which they believed would be revealed to them by the behavior of vultures flying high in the sky. But when the vultures eventually appeared, the brothers argued bitterly about how to interpret the meaning of their flight. In the end, Remus taunted Romulus by jumping over his half of the unfinished defensive wall. Romulus then lost his temper, picked up a rake, and killed his brother. So the city was called Rome, and this was the moment from which the Romans would calculate all subsequent dates in their history. In the modern system of recording historical events, the date was 753 B.C.

The city of Rome was filled at first by fugitives, refugees and outcasts—everyone who wanted to make a fresh start in life under a



1.2 Bronze statue: Romulus and Remus nursed by the wolf. The figure of the wolf is Etruscan, but the twins were added later. (Art Resource)

new regime. Romulus governed fairly with the advice of a group of a hundred older men, the fathers of the first hundred families he had accepted into his settlement. The group was called the Senate—or the *patres conscripti*—and from then on it functioned, with modifications, as the central institution of the Roman government. Under this system all went well until Romulus's sudden realization that there were too few women among his subjects—and women were essential to keep up the population. Therefore he decided to stage a festival to celebrate the anniversary of Rome's founding, and he invited the people of a nearby tribe, the Sabines, to attend. When everyone was absorbed in the celebration, Romulus gave a signal, and each Roman man seized a Sabine woman. The Sabine husbands were hustled away without a protest, and the population problem was soon solved.

That, at any rate, was the story. Although the Romans certainly enjoyed believing most of what they were told about Romulus, they did not accept all of it. For example, most Romans viewed the rape of the Sabine women as a myth. Nor was the tale of the twins' rescue by the wolf taken very seriously. It was probably invented to give Romulus the same kind of legendary respectability as figures like Oedipus, King of Thebes, and Cyrus the Great of Persia, who were also said to have been abandoned as infants and brought up by animals or shepherds. (At the other end of the Mediterranean, the Hebrews told a similar story about their heroic forebear Moses, who had been floated down the Nile and rescued from the bullrushes by an Egyptian princess.) Perhaps Romulus never existed—though a recently discovered inscription suggests that he did. It is clear, however—and supported by archaeological

findings—that Rome began as a small village in Latium, and only very gradually became larger and more important than its neighbors.

Reading

Romulus Prophesies Rome's Future Glory (Livy: History, i. 16)

One day, when Romulus was inspecting the army on the Campus Martius . . . there was suddenly a violent thunderstorm and he was completely hidden from sight by a thick cloud, and from that time on he was never seen again.

The soldiers, who had been alarmed by the storm, recovered their nerve when the sun reappeared; but Romulus's throne was empty. The senators, who had been standing by him, said that he had been carried up by a whirlwind; the soldiers believed this story. Nevertheless they felt like children who had lost their father, and they stood for a long time in sad silence. Then some began to claim that Romulus had gone to heaven, and in the end everyone agreed that since he was the son of a god he was a god himself, and they prayed that he would forever be kind to them and protect them . . .

A man called Proculus later addressed the assembly, and he told the people that Romulus had left him the following message: "By the wish of the gods, my city will be the capital of the world. Let my people learn to fight. Let them be assured, and let their children be assured, that there is no earthly power that can ever resist the Romans."

LATINS AND ETRUSCANS

The inhabitants of early Italy were the descendants of Neolithic farmers. Their lives were difficult and demanding. They had to endure hardships of all kinds. They survived by displaying those characteristics that the Romans later always greatly valued in themselves—tenacity, seriousness of purpose, and the ability to put up with the worst in order to achieve the best.

However, the Latins of Latium were probably later arrivals, part of the major migrations into Italy that took place around 1000 B.C. Perhaps they were of the same stock as the Dorians, who at about the same time had made their way into Greece and occupied most of the Mycenaean citadels. The Latins settled in the west-central part of Italy, whenever possible in sites on hilltops, as a defense against enemies. The site of Rome—pigs and oak trees aside—was an especially advan-

tageous one because it lay along a ford of the Tiber, and thus could control the north-south route which crossed the river as well as boat traffic up and down it. The Tiber was indeed one of the few navigable rivers in Italy, and because its mouth, at Ostia, was not regularly silted up, it could be used as a port.

At roughly the same time as the Latins were settling in Latium, another people were gathering just to the north, in Etruria (modern Tuscany). These people would later be called Etruscans. They may or may not have come originally from Asia, but there is no doubt that they grew very prosperous. The Etruscans were later to have a significant influence on the growth of Roman society. They were highly sophisticated and founded towns in which they developed an elaborate art and architecture. They sailed fast-moving ships and drove chariots. The Etruscans invented a system of writing for their language that used the Greek alphabet, and so can more or less be sounded out—although it has not yet been translated.

THE TARQUINS AND LUCRETIA

The story of Rome, according to the legends the Romans believed, continued happily after the disappearance of Romulus, who did not die but rather was snatched up into heaven (like the prophet Elijah). After him a sequence of seven kings—here the story is part legend and part history—ruled for two hundred and fifty years with varying degrees of benevolence. First came Titus Tatius, a Sabine who some say may have ruled jointly for a while with Romulus. After him came Numa Pompilius, a priest as well as a king, who organized Rome's religious calendar and oversaw a long period of peace. He was succeeded by the belligerent Tullus Hostilius, who first repulsed an attack from Alba Longa and then destroyed it. Tullus was followed by Ancius Martius, who spread Roman influence down the Tiber to Ostia. As a result perhaps of a subsequent alliance with the Etruscans or of Roman women marrying into the Etruscan royal family, the three last kings came from Etruria: Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud).

There is archaeological evidence that the Romans early came under the cultural influence of the Etruscans, and were at least occasionally dominated by them politically, too. Much of the architecture of early Rome had Etruscan features—bridges, arches, and the main drain called the Cloaca Maxima (which still exists). The Romans also borrowed from Etruria the long, draped mantle called the toga, which Roman men always wore on formal occasions, as well as the fascies, or ceremonial bundles of sticks with an axe protruding from them. The fascies were carried by the lictors, the escorts of the Roman magistrates,

and they represented the original power of the magistrates to inflict corporal or capital punishment. Many Etruscan gods, too, became the gods of Rome, and retained their Etruscan names even after they later became identified with the gods of Greece. The Romans also accepted the Etruscans' practice of seeking the will of the gods by augury—that is, by reading omens in thunder and lightning, in the behavior of birds, or in the arrangement of internal organs in sacrificed animals.

The last of the kings of Rome was the Etruscan Tarquinius Superbus. Unlike any of his predecessors, Tarquin was hated for his harsh edicts, his arbitrary cruelty, and in particular for the excesses of his son, Sextus Tarquinius. Sextus is supposed to have raped a woman called Lucretia, while her husband Collatinus was away at war. Lucretia, in mortification, stabbed herself to death, leaving Collatinus a vengeful widower. With three companions Collatinus swore an oath to expel the king. In 509 B.C., a bloody revolution broke out in the streets of the city, and Tarquin and his family fled to the Etruscan capital of Clusium.

The Romans then promised themselves that never again would they be ruled by a king, and in place of the monarchy a republic was established. Under the republic the city would be ruled by magistrates who were to be elected annually by all citizens—or rather, by all male citizens over the age of eighteen. The two chief administrative officers were called consuls. The first consuls were Collatinus himself and Lucius Junius Brutus, who ever after was popularly revered as the founder of the Roman republic.