

When Python fell, the woods shook off their serpent fetters. Now, a second Python rises.

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A Universe Governed by Design or Drifting Atoms?

The Philosophical Crisis: The narrator observes the fixed laws of stars and seasons, implying a Creator. Yet, in human affairs, the wicked prosper while the good suffer.



The Doubt: This injustice tempts the mind toward the philosophy of Epicurus: that atoms atoms drift in purposeless motion, shaped only by chance.

The unchecked rise of the villain Rufinus is the source of this doubt. His fall is the only proof required to clear the gods of apathy.

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The Council of the Nether-World Sisters

Deep in the foul palace gates, the Fury Allecto summons a council, enraged by the peace of the Golden Age.



DISCORD:
Mother of War



IMPERIOUS HUNGER:
Neighbor to Death



ENVY: Brooks not another's prosperity



AVARICE: Mother of sleepless Cares

The Goal: To shroud the stars in Stygian darkness and break the bonds of the universe.

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A Monster Worse than the Hydra

The Proposal:

The Fury Megaera rises. She rejects open war against the gods but proposes a single human weapon capable of destroying the world.

Candidate Profile: MEGAERA

Role: Mistress of Madness

Past Achievements: Guided the arrow of Athamas; led Oedipus to his mother.

Secret Weapon: She claims to have nursed a human child on snakes, teaching him guile, treachery, and concealment.



"I have a monster more savage than the hydra brood... Rufinus."

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The Transformation at Elusa



The Temptation: Megaera offers lordship of the world. To prove her power, she transforms his home: “The white pillars began to turn into gold and the beams of of a sudden to shine with metal.”

The Pledge: “Whithersoever thou summonest I follow, be thou man or god.”

THE HISTORICAL TRUTH

While Claudian depicts a supernatural recruitment, this refers to Rufinus leaving his obscure birthplace in Elusa (modern Eauze, France) to seek his fortune in the imperial court of Constantinople.

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Classical Editorial

The Bottomless Ocean of Greed



"Should he drink all Hermus' stream he would parch with the greedier thirst."

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THE GREEDY MAN IS ALWAYS POOR

The Vice of Rufinus

Tyrian dyes and patterned purple clothes.

Beds piled on glittering steads.

Anxiety and fear of the future.



The Virtue of the Poor



Sleep on soft grass.

Nature's varied hues and song of birds.

A banquet for which is nought to pay.

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Classical Editorial

A Reign of Terror Beyond Myth

Greed turns to bloodlust. Rufinus demands torture—the rack, the chain, the lightless cell. He grants life only to prolong agony.

THE SCALE OF TYRANNY



1. SINIS (The Pine-Bender)
2. SCIRON (The Cliff-Thrower)
3. PHALARIS (The Brazen Bull)
4. SULLA (The Dictator)



RUFINUS

THE HISTORICAL TRUTH

Rufinus used treacherous charges to act as both accuser and judge, purging the Senate and consolidating power by eliminating political rivals under the guise of law.

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THE SHIELD OF ROME STANDS ALONE

Amidst the general terror, only one man dares to resist.

The Metaphor: Stilicho is not a winged attacker like Perseus, but a sanctuary. He is a ‘shield out-held’ and a “star to frightened mariners”.

The Contrast: Unlike Rufinus who relies on monsters (Hydra/Gorgon), Stilicho relies on no magic—only the salvation of Rome.



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THE ALLIANCE WITH THE BARBARIANS

Facing defeat, Rufinus betrays Rome by calling upon the enemies of the state: the Getae, Sarmatians, and the Huns.

- Most infamous children of the north
- Live on the chase, eat raw meat
- Love to slash their faces



THE HISTORICAL TRUTH

This refers to the suspicion that Rufinus invited Alaric's Visigoths and the Huns into Roman territory to distract Stilicho and prevent him from marching on Constantinople.

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Classical Editorial

Mars Descends at Hebrus



The Prayer: Stilicho stands at the river Hebrus and prays to Mars to defend his own land of Thrace.

Deep Charcoal Crimson Text, nn. Stilicho, depilated his exact more Roman, [illegible] and was striking; so sowe to fear and shot land to thrace wits great battle.

The Intervention: Mars hears the prayer. He orders Bellona to bring his helmet and Fear to harness his chariot. God and General fight side-by-side.

Deep Charcoal Crimson Text forced the river, Stilicho rarnses the scorzan ofivine battles which send fights to dealine the exact roaling of the herıland of Hebrus.

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Classical Editorial

Justice Returns to the Stars

The Prophecy

Justice declares Rufinus's time is over. He is cast into the nethermost pit.

The Restoration

Under the coming reign of Honorius, the earth shall give food without plowing, oaks shall drip honey, and flocks shall bear wool naturally dyed red.



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Classical Editorial

The Doubt Dispelled



The fall of Rufinus answers the question.
The universe is not a drift of atoms; it is governed by a just God.

No longer can I complain that the unrighteous man reaches the highest pinnacle of success. He is raised aloft that he may be hurled down in more headlong ruin.

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