

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus

NERO

37–68 CE

Emperor 54–68 CE

Translated by Donna W. Hurley

Tiberius Claudius Nero Caesar (Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus before his adoption by Claudius) became emperor at the age of sixteen. He succeeded to the throne by inheriting it, insofar as it was possible to inherit a role that lacked a definition, from his adoptive father. However, he was also a direct descendant of Augustus, his great-great-grandfather, through his mother Agrippina the Younger. Agrippina's marriage to Claudius had maneuvered Nero into a position that enabled him to accede to the principate.

During the first years of the young prince's reign, he was guided by the experience of his tutor Seneca and the praetorian prefect Burrus, and the business of the empire went forward. He did, however, eliminate Claudius' other son Britannicus and rid himself of what he considered his mother's overbearing influence. As time passed, he became even bolder in his role. He had his mother killed, divested himself of his mentors, and divorced his wife, Claudius' daughter Octavia, who had provided a link to the previous reign.

Nero was always interested in the arts broadly defined: lyre playing, singing, acting, chariot racing, architecture, spectacle, and even himself as an art object. This passion pleased those who enjoyed his lavish entertainments, but critics focused on his un-Roman self-indulgence and on the extravagance necessary to bring it about. His confidence as a performer grew, and these interests occupied him until his death. Additional charges of sexual ingenuity and cruelty brought the notoriety that came to be associated with his rule.

Distracted by such nongovernmental interests, Nero lacked the resolution to deal with the uncertain loyalty of his generals in the provinces, and he caved quickly when he was challenged. Suetonius presents a gripping narrative of his flight and suicide. But something of Nero's popular appeal survived. Ordinary people put flowers on his grave; two emperors, Otho and Vitellius, identified themselves with him; and three impersonators appeared in the course of the next twenty years.

[1.1] In the Domitian clan, there have been two important families, the Calvini and the Ahenobarbi. Lucius Domitius was the founder of the Ahenobarbi and was also responsible for the cognomen. Legend holds that once when he was returning from the country, he was met by twin youths of dazzling beauty and ordered to announce to the senate and the people a Roman victory in a battle in which the outcome was still uncertain.¹ To prove to him that they were divine, they rubbed his cheeks, and this turned his beard from black to red and made it the color of bronze. The special mark survived in his descendants, most of whom had red beards.² [1.2] All the Domitii kept this same cognomen while they held seven consulships, a triumph, and two censorships and were admitted to the body of patricians. The only first names they used were

¹ The battle of Lake Regillus in the early fifth century BCE.

² The youths were the twin demigods Castor and Pollux. Ahenobarbus means "bronze beard."

Gnaeus and Lucius, and these they allocated in a particular order: first one or the other was assigned to three individuals in succession, then the names alternated with each generation. For we know that the first, second, and third Ahenobarbi were named Lucius, and then the next three in order were Gnaeus, and after that it was always first Lucius, then Gnaeus, in turn. I think it appropriate to introduce here a number of family members so that it can be more clearly seen that although Nero discarded the virtues of his forefathers, he nonetheless perpetuated the vices of each of them as if they were inherited and a part of him from birth.

[2.1] And so to go back some distance, his great-great-great-grandfather Gnaeus Domitius, when he was tribune,³ felt insulted when the priests chose someone other than himself to fill his father's place, and he reassigned the right of electing successor priests from the colleges to the people. And when in his consulship he had subdued the Allobroges and the Arverni,⁴ he rode through the province on an elephant escorted by a throng of soldiers as if celebrating a proper triumph. [2.2] This was the man about whom the orator Licinius Crassus said, "No wonder he has a bronze beard. His face is iron and his heart is lead."⁵ His son, when he was praetor, called Gaius Caesar to account before the senate as Caesar was leaving his consulship, because it was thought that he had executed the office contrary to his mandate and to the law. Then as consul, he tried to divest Caesar of his command over the armies in Gaul, and his party named him Caesar's successor.⁶ He was captured at Corfinium at the beginning of the civil war. [2.3] Released, he went to Massilia where his arrival brought heart to the inhabitants who were suffering under siege, but he left them suddenly and finally fell at the battle of Pharsalus.⁷ An irresolute man with a vicious temperament, he was so afraid to die that when fear and desperation almost drove him to suicide, he changed his mind and vomited up the poison that he had drunk and gave his doctor his freedom.⁸ (The physician was a wary man who knew his master well and had intentionally mixed a less than lethal poison.) Also, when Pompey sought advice about what to do with those who had remained neutral and had not taken sides in the civil conflict, Ahenobarbus was the only one who took the position that they should be designated enemies of the state.

[3.1] He left a son⁹ who was, beyond doubt, the best of all the rest of his family. Although innocent, he was condemned to death under the Pedian law¹⁰ among the conspirators responsible for Caesar's death and joined the cause of his close relations Cassius and Brutus. After both of them were dead, he retained command of the fleet that had been entrusted to him earlier, increased its size, and, after his party had met total defeat, handed it over to Mark Antony. But he did this voluntarily, as if he were bestowing a significant favor. [3.2] Of all those found guilty under the Pedian law, he was the only one who got back his rights as a Roman citizen, and he moved quickly

³ In 104 BCE. The Domitii Ahenobarbi clan was still plebeian at that time.

⁴ Tribes in southeastern Gaul.

⁵ Lucius Licinius Crassus and this Gnaeus Ahenobarbus shared the censorship in 95 BCE.

⁶ This Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, a staunch adversary of Julius Caesar, was praetor in 58 BCE and consul in 54.

⁷ Corfinium, in central Italy, and Massilia fell to Caesar in 49 BCE; see Jul. 34. Pompey's force was defeated at Pharsalus in 48.

⁸ Doctors were slaves or freedmen.

⁹ Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, consul in 32 BCE.

¹⁰ A law that required that the assassins of Julius Caesar be brought to trial.

through the highest offices. When civil conflict was renewed and he was serving as an officer under Antony, he was offered supreme command by those who were ashamed of their leader's association with Cleopatra. But he fell ill suddenly and for that reason lacked the confidence either to accept the assignment or reject it. He went over to Augustus and was dead within a few days. But even that Domitius Ahenobarbus had his reputation tarnished, for Antony clearly made it known that he had changed sides because he wanted to be with his mistress Servilia Nais.

[4] His son was the Domitius¹¹ who gained notoriety because Augustus named him executor in his will. He was as celebrated for his skill in racing chariots when he was young as he was later for the triumphal regalia that he earned in the war in Germany. But he was arrogant, extravagant, and pitiless. When he was aedile he forced the censor Lucius Plancus to step aside for him in the street. When he was praetor and consul he put Roman knights and respectable women on the stage to act in a mime. He sponsored beast hunts in the Circus and in all the city neighborhoods and also a gladiatorial show, but one so savage that Augustus had to issue an edict to keep him in line after private warnings did no good.

[5.1] With Antonia Major he fathered the father of Nero,¹² who was a vile man in every respect. When he went to the East as a companion of young Gaius Caesar,¹³ he killed his own freedman because he refused to drink as much as he was ordered. He was dismissed from Gaius' circle, but his behavior continued to be just as undisciplined. In a village on the Appian Way he suddenly whipped up his team and intentionally ran over a boy, and at Rome, in the middle of the Forum, he gouged out the eye of a Roman knight who was arguing with him too vigorously. [5.2] He was so very corrupt that he not only defrauded the bankers on the price of items he had purchased but also, as praetor, cheated the chariot drivers of their prize money. His sister¹⁴ told a joke that made these actions notorious, and when the managers of the racing factions complained, he issued an edict that in the future the prizes should be paid on the spot. Just before Tiberius died, Domitius was put on trial for treason and also for adultery and incest with his sister Lepida, but with the change of regime he got off. He died from retention of fluid in his body at Pyrgi¹⁵ after he had acknowledged his son Nero, to whom Agrippina, the daughter of Germanicus, gave birth.

[6.1] Nero was born at Antium nine months after Tiberius died, on the eighteenth day before the Kalends of January,¹⁶ just as the sun rose, so that he was touched by its rays almost before he was touched by the earth. Many quickly conjectured about the quantity of frightening details in his horoscope, and the words of his father Domitius

¹¹ Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, consul in 16 BCE, an important military commander under Augustus.

¹² Antonia Major was the elder daughter of Mark Antony and Augustus' sister Octavia. The Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus who was the emperor's father was consul in 32 CE.

¹³ Ostensibly Gaius Julius Caesar, the adopted son of Augustus; see Aug. 64.1. This is an error, however, since the Domitius in question would have been too young to accompany Gaius.

¹⁴ Domitius had two sisters. The elder, Domitia, is plausibly meant here because her sister (Domitia) Lepida is named below. She was married to Passienus Crispus (6.3), who became Agrippina's second husband and Nero's stepfather. She reappears at 34.5. Lepida also appears at 6.3 and 7.1.

¹⁵ On the coast north of Rome.

¹⁶ December 15, 37 CE.

were ominous as well. When friends offered their congratulations, he said, "Nothing could be born of Agrippina and me that is not vile and a portent of evil for the state." [6.2] A clear sign of the boy's unhappy future was manifest on his naming day:¹⁷ When Gaius Caesar was asked by his sister to give the baby any name he wished,¹⁸ he looked at his uncle Claudius (who would later adopt Nero) and said he would give him his. He was not serious but said it as a joke, and Agrippina rejected the idea, because at that time Claudius was the laughingstock of the court. [6.3] Nero lost his father when he was three. Heir to a third of his estate, he did not receive even the whole of that amount because all of his property was seized by his co-heir Gaius. His mother was soon exiled, and he was left without resources and in need. He was reared in the home of his aunt Lepida under the care of two tutors, a dancer and a barber. But when Claudius became emperor, Nero not only received his father's estate but was also made rich by inheritance from his stepfather Crispus Passienus. [6.4] When his mother was recalled and restored to her former position, he flourished so well under her protection and power that the story spread among the populace that Claudius' wife Messallina had sent agents to strangle him when he was taking a nap because she thought he was a rival of Britannicus.¹⁹ An addendum to the tale has the would-be assassins fleeing in terror when a snake crept out from under the boy's pillow; the origin of the story lay in snake skins that were found twined around the neck rest in his bed. Despite this scant evidence, his mother had them encased in a golden bracelet that he wore on his right arm for a long time. Finally, when he wanted to forget about his mother, he threw it away, but when his position became desperate, he looked for it again and could not find it.

[7.1] As a young boy, not yet grown, he took part with considerable poise in the Game of Troy held in the Circus, and his performance was favorably received. Claudius adopted him when he was eleven and entrusted his education to Annaeus Seneca,²⁰ who was already a senator at that time. They say that Seneca dreamed the very next night that he was teaching Gaius Caesar, and Nero quickly turned the dream into reality, revealing his monstrous character by providing examples of it as quickly as he could. Because his brother Britannicus reverted to habit and called him Ahenobarbus after his adoption, he tried to make the case to his father that Britannicus was not really his son. And when his aunt Lepida was on trial, he gave public testimony against her in order to please his mother, who was trying to have her convicted. [7.2] When he was introduced in the Forum for the first time, he announced a money gift for the people and a bonus for the soldiers, and he arranged a military exercise for the praetorians and led it with a shield in his hand. He then offered thanks to his father in the senate. And when Claudius was consul, Nero spoke before him, in Latin on behalf of the citizens of Bononia,²¹ in Greek on behalf of the citizens of Rhodes and Ilium. He heard his first legal cases when he served as city prefect during the Latin festival. At that time the most renowned of the court pleaders competed to put before him large numbers of very important petitions instead of the usual short, inconsequential ones, although Claudius

¹⁷ The ninth day after birth.

¹⁸ Gaius Caesar is the emperor sometimes known as Caligula. Nero's mother Agrippina the Younger was one of his sisters.

¹⁹ The young son of Claudius and Messallina; see Cl. 27.1–2.

²⁰ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, writer and philosopher.

²¹ Modern Bologna.

had forbidden them to do this. Shortly thereafter he married Octavia²² and sponsored circus games and a beast hunt dedicated to the well-being of Claudius.

[8] Nero was seventeen when Claudius' death was announced to the public. He appeared before the guards on duty between the sixth and seventh hours since that time had seemed best for a new beginning on a day filled with ill omens.²³ He was saluted as imperator on the steps of the Palatine and carried in a litter to the praetorian camp, and after addressing the soldiers there, he quickly went on to the senate house. It was already evening when he left there, and of the great number of honors heaped on him he refused only one, the title Father of His Country, and that because of his age.

[9] Beginning then with a show of piety, he buried Claudius with elaborate funeral arrangements, spoke his eulogy, and enrolled him among the gods. To the memory of his father Domitius he offered the highest honors. To his mother he allowed the running of his affairs, private and public; he gave the watchword, "Best of Mothers," to the tribune of his bodyguard on the first day of his principate, and later on he was often carried through the streets with her in her litter. He founded a colony at Antium for veterans of the praetorians and added the wealthiest of the *primipilares* to their number by making a change of their place of residence. He built a port there at great expense.

[10.1] So as to reveal still more clearly what sort of person he was, he declared that he would rule according to Augustan precedent, and he neglected no opportunity to display generosity, mercy, or even affability. The heavier taxes he either abolished or decreased. He reduced the rewards to a quarter of what they had been for those who gave evidence against people disobeying the *lex Papia Poppaea*.²⁴ He distributed 400 sesterces each to the populace and established an annual salary for distinguished senators who lacked financial resources, 500,000 sesterces for some of them. He provided the monthly grain supply free to the praetorian cohorts. [10.2] And when he was asked to sign, as was customary, the execution order for someone who had been condemned to death, he said, "How I wish that I didn't know how to write." He always greeted members of all of the orders immediately and by name. When the senate offered him thanks, he responded, "When I shall have deserved them." He invited even commoners to watch him exercise in the Campus Martius, and he declaimed in public often. He recited his poetry not only at home but in the theater, too, and this gave everyone so very much pleasure that a day of thanksgiving was decreed to honor his recitation, and the parts of the poems that he had read were inscribed in golden letters and dedicated to the Capitoline Jupiter.

[11.1] He gave many entertainments of various kinds: the *Juvenalia*,²⁵ circus games, theatrical productions, and a gladiatorial combat. He invited elderly men of consular rank and aging matrons to take part in the *Juvenalia*. In the Circus he assigned the knights seats separate from those of the other spectators and arranged for competitions of chariots drawn by four camels. [11.2] At the games that he wanted to be called *Ludi*

²² Daughter of Claudius and Messallina.

²³ Since Claudius died on October 13, 54 CE, Nero would not be seventeen for two more months; see Cl. 45. Astrologers determined that the best time for announcing the change of regime was between twelve noon and one o'clock.

²⁴ Augustus' law that encouraged marriage; see Cl. 19, 23.1.

²⁵ Private games that celebrated the rite of the first shaving of his beard, 59 CE.

Maximi,²⁶ staged for the “Eternity of the Empire,” many of each class and gender took their places on the stage. A distinguished Roman knight rode an elephant making a circuit of the roped-off enclosure. In a comedy by Afranius²⁷ titled *The Fire*, the actors were allowed to carry furniture out of the burning house and keep it for themselves. Every day, tokens good for all kinds of prizes were showered on the people: there were daily tokens for a thousand birds of every kind, for all manner of food and vouchers for grain and tokens for clothing, gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, paintings, slaves, mules, and even for tamed beasts, and finally, for ships, apartment houses, and land.

[12.1] Nero watched these games from a post above the stage. He held a gladiatorial show in a wooden amphitheater that was built in the region of the Campus Martius during the course of a year,²⁸ but he killed no one, not even condemned criminals. He also exhibited four hundred senators and six hundred Roman knights at the combats, some of them wealthy and with exemplary reputations. And those who fought the wild beasts and filled various jobs at the arena came from the same orders. He presented a naval battle in salt water with sea monsters swimming about and Pyrrhic dances²⁹ performed by young men from Greece, to all of whom he gave certificates of Roman citizenship at the end of their performance. [12.2] Among the subjects enacted in their dance was a bull mounting Pasiphae, who was hidden away in a wooden replica of a heifer³⁰ —or so many of those watching believed. As soon as Icarus tried to fly,³¹ he fell and landed next to the emperor’s private box and spattered him with blood, for Nero rarely presided but was in the habit of reclining while he watched. At first he peered out through small apertures but then had the entire wall surrounding his platform opened up. [12.3] He was also the very first to establish quinquennial games at Rome; these had three divisions in accordance with Greek custom: musical, gymnastic, and equestrian events.³² He called these games the Neronia. At the dedication of his baths and gymnasium he gave oil to the senators and the knights.³³ Instead of putting praetors in charge of the competition as a whole, he assigned men of consular rank who were chosen by lot. Then he went down into the orchestra where the senate was sitting and accepted the crown for Latin oratory and poetry; despite the fact that all of the most distinguished men had competed for it, it was granted him by common consent. But he treated with religious awe the crown that the judges awarded him as a citharode³⁴ and ordered it brought to the statue of Augustus. [12.4] At the gymnastic contest he gave in the Saepta, he trimmed his first beard while oxen were being sacrificed, placed it in a golden casket decorated with costly pearls, and dedicated it on the Capitoline. He invited even the Vestal Virgins to the athletic games because the priestesses of Ceres had been allowed to watch at Olympia.³⁵

²⁶ “Greatest Games,” 59 CE.

²⁷ Lucius Afranius wrote comedies of domestic Roman life in the second century BCE.

²⁸ 57 CE.

²⁹ Originally war dances but evidently evolved to include the enactment of myth; see Jul. 39.1.

³⁰ The Minotaur was the issue of a bull and the woman Pasiphae.

³¹ When Icarus tried to escape Crete on wings attached by wax, he flew too near the sun, the wax melted, and he fell.

³² A Greek competition, to be held every five years, first in 60 CE.

³³ In 60 or 61 CE. Evidently for the baths.

³⁴ A performer who sang while accompanying himself on the lyre.

³⁵ In the western Peloponnese, the site of a sanctuary to Jupiter and of games in which Nero was eager to compete; see 23.1, 24.2, 25.1, 53.

[13.1] My decision to report the entrance of Tiridates into the city as one of Nero's entertainments should not be thought ill advised. Tiridates was the king of Armenia whom Nero enticed to Rome with the promise that he would be received as an important personage. Bad weather caused him to postpone presenting Tiridates to the people on the day that had been announced by edict, but he brought him forward at the first good opportunity. Armed cohorts were stationed around the temples in the Forum, and he himself sat on the curule chair on the rostra, in the garments of a triumphing general, surrounded by military standards and flags. [13.2] Tiridates approached across an inclined platform, and when he fell at Nero's knees, the emperor received him and lifted him up with his right hand and kissed him. Then as Tiridates paid homage before him, Nero removed the king's headdress and exchanged it for a diadem, while a man of praetorian rank translated the suppliant's words and relayed them to the crowd. From there Tiridates was escorted to the theater, and after he had paid homage a second time, Nero seated him next to him on his right. As a result, Nero was saluted as imperator, and he took victory laurels to the Capitoline and closed the twin gates of the temple of Janus³⁶ since there was no more war.

[14] Nero held four consulships: the first for two months, the second and last for six, and the third for four.³⁷ The middle two came in sequence; the others were spaced with a year in between.

[15.1] When he dispensed justice, he rarely handed down decisions to plaintiffs except on the following day and in writing. This was how he heard cases: he did away with arguments that proceeded from beginning to end and had each pleader argue his individual points in turn. Whenever he withdrew to deliberate, he did not consult with others as a body or consider the questions openly. He had each of his advisers submit written opinions, which he read quietly by himself, and then he ruled as he pleased, although he made it appear that a large number of them had concurred with his decision. [15.2] For a long time he did not allow the sons of freedmen to enter the senate, nor could those whom earlier emperors had admitted hold elected office. When there were more candidates for an office than there were places, he put the extras in command of legions to compensate for postponement and delay. He usually awarded consulships for six-month periods. When one of the two consuls died just before the Kalends of January, he did not name a substitute, since he disapproved of the example of Caninius Rebilus, who had been consul for a single day.³⁸ He awarded triumphal regalia even to those with the rank of quaestor and to some equestrians, although not necessarily for military service. Often when he sent speeches to the senate on some subject or other, he had them read aloud by a consul, bypassing the services of his quaestor.

[16.1] He devised a new type of building for the city; apartment blocks and houses were to have porticoes in front so that fires could be fought from their roofs, and these he built with his own money. He planned to extend the city walls as far as Ostia and bring the sea in from there to the old city through a canal. [16.2] Many crimes were punished rigorously during his reign, many practices were restricted, and an equal number of new regulations were put in place: A limit was set on expenditures. Public banquets

³⁶ The gates were open when Rome was at war, closed when it was not.

³⁷ 55, 57, 58, and 60 CE.

³⁸ In 45 BCE.

were reduced to handouts of food. Cooked food, except for legumes and vegetables, was prohibited in taverns, although every kind of delicacy had been available earlier. Punishment was inflicted on Christians, a class of persons who were following a pernicious new cult. Chariot drivers were forbidden to run wild, to roam about cheating and robbing for amusement, a freedom that they had long enjoyed. The fans of the pantomime actors were banished along with the actors themselves.

[17] A defense against forgers was devised then for the first time: no documents were to have seals affixed unless they were punched through and a cord drawn through the holes three times. In the case of wills, a law provided that the first two pages be shown to the witnesses empty of everything but the name of the testator. And no one who wrote a will for someone else was to write in a bequest for himself. People involved in lawsuits were to pay a firm price that had been agreed on for their defense but nothing at all for court expenses; the state treasury covered these free of charge. Cases that involved the treasury were to be transferred to the Forum³⁹ and to a board of assessors, and all appeals from juries were to be made to the senate.

[18] Nero never had the least desire or intention to expand the empire and enlarge its boundaries. He even considered withdrawing the army from Britain and refrained only out of deference, not wanting to appear disparaging of his father's glory. The only exceptions were for the kingdom of Pontus, which he had made into a province when Polemon ceded it, and Cottius' territory in the Alps when the king died.⁴⁰

[19.1] He planned a total of two trips abroad, one to Alexandria and one to Achaia. But he canceled the trip to Alexandria on the very day on which he was to set out because he had been made uneasy by a sign from the heavens that foretold danger: after he had visited the other temples, he took his seat in the temple of Vesta, and when he stood up, first the border of his toga caught and then such a dark mist came over him that he was unable to see clearly. [19.2] In Achaia he attempted to dig through the Isthmus.⁴¹ He assembled the praetorians and urged them to begin work, and when the trumpet sounded, he made the first dig into the earth with a pickax and carried off the dirt piled in a basket on his shoulders. He prepared to make an expedition to the Caspian Gates⁴² with a new legion of recruits drafted from Italy; they were six feet tall, and he called it his Phalanx of Alexander the Great. [19.3] I have collected here these actions of his, some of them irreproachable, others worthy of praise to some degree, in order to separate them from his disgusting acts and criminal deeds, which I shall relate from this point on.

[20.1] Music was one of the studies to which Nero was introduced when he was a boy, and as soon as he came to power, he summoned Terpnus, the preeminent citharode at that time, and for days on end sat next to him after dinner as he sang late into the night. And little by little he began to practice and rehearse, neglecting none of the things that artists of this sort usually do to care for the voice or to strengthen it. He even lay on his back with a sheet of lead on his chest, and he purged with enemas and vomiting and abstained from fruit and harmful foods. Delighted with his progress despite a voice that was thin and husky, he conceived the desire of appearing on stage, and he often tossed

³⁹ That is, they were subject to normal judiciary procedure.

⁴⁰ Pontus was on the Black Sea. Cottius governed a small territory in the Alps; see Tib. 37.3.

⁴¹ A canal through the Isthmus of Corinth.

⁴² A mountain pass in the Caucasus.

this Greek proverb around among his friends: "Hidden music earns no regard." [20.2] He appeared for the first time in Naples,⁴³ and he did not stop singing until he finished the song he had begun, even when an earthquake suddenly shook the theater. He sang there often over a period of several days, and when he took a brief time off to revive his voice, he could not tolerate being out of the public eye but went from the baths to the theater and dined in the orchestra crowded with people; he promised in Greek, "Once I have drunk a bit, I will let something stirring ring out." [20.3] Much taken with the rhythmic applause of some Alexandrians, who had converged on Naples from a recently arrived fleet, he summoned more of them to come from Alexandria. He quickly chose young men of equestrian rank and more than five thousand vigorous young commoners from all over and divided them into clagues to learn methods of clapping (their clapping had names like "bees," "tiles," and "bricks") and to use their skill energetically when he sang. They were conspicuous because of their thick hair and elegant dress, and their left hands were bare, without rings. Their leaders were each paid 400,000 sesterces.

[21.1] Once he had decided that it was important for him to sing in Rome as well, he revived the Neronia earlier than had been planned,⁴⁴ and when everyone clamored for his divine voice, he replied, "I will give everyone who wishes to hear me the opportunity to do so in my gardens." But when the detachment on guard duty added their appeals to those of the crowd, he happily promised that he would satisfy them on the spot. He ordered his name posted on the notice board where citharodes declared their readiness to compete and placed the token with his name on it in the urn with the others. When his turn came, he entered, followed by the praetorian prefects carrying his lyre, then the military tribunes, and after that his closest friends. [21.2] And when he took his place on stage and had finished his introduction, he had the consular Cluvius Rufus⁴⁵ announce that he would sing the role of Niobe. He kept on with it until almost the tenth hour and postponed the awarding of the crown for this and the rest of the competition until the following year so that he would have the opportunity to sing more often. When this seemed too long to wait, he continued to appear before the public at frequent intervals. He even considered taking part in private performances as an actor when one of the praetors offered him a million sesterces. [21.3] He wore the masks of heroes and gods and sang tragic roles—he even wore the masks of heroines and goddesses. These were made to look like him or like any woman with whom he happened to be enamored. Among other roles, he sang Canace giving birth, Orestes the matricide, Oedipus blinded, and Hercules insane. There is a story that when he sang the story of Hercules, a newly recruited soldier stationed as a guard at the theater entrance ran forward to help him when he saw him bound in chains as the plot required.

[22.1] Nero took a deep interest in horses from an early age and talked constantly about the races in the Circus, even though he had been instructed not to. Once when he was complaining with his fellow students about the driver of the Greens,⁴⁶ who had been dragged behind his chariot, his tutor objected, but he lied and said he was talking about

⁴³ His first performance before the public was in 64 CE.

⁴⁴ 64 or 65 CE. The date of this revival is uncertain.

⁴⁵ A member of Nero's court but also a historian whose work (now lost) Suetonius used as a source in some of his *Caesars*.

⁴⁶ For the racing factions, see Cal. 18.3, 55.2; Vit. 7.1; Dom. 7.1. Nero, like Gaius, was a fan of the Greens.

Hector. At the beginning of his reign, he played with ivory chariots on a game board every day, and he came in from the country to attend all the racing events, even the least significant. He did this secretly at first but later openly so that everyone knew for certain that he would be in Rome that day. [22.2] Nor did he make any pretense about wanting the number of prizes increased. He added to the number of races and extended the entertainment until late in the day, and the faction managers did not think it worthwhile to bring out their horses unless there was to be a whole day's racing. Nero soon wanted to drive himself and to put himself often before the public. After a first experience in his gardens with slaves and the lower classes watching, he showed himself to the eyes of all in the Circus Maximus.⁴⁷ A freedman stood where a magistrate usually stood and dropped the handkerchief for the start of the race. [22.3] Not satisfied with showing off these skills at Rome, Nero went to Achaia (as we said)⁴⁸ with the following in particular in mind: the cities that regularly held competitions in music had decided to award him all the prizes given to citharodes. He was so happy to be given these crowns that he not only welcomed like leading citizens the representatives who brought them but even seated them at the table among his closest friends. When some of them asked him to sing after dinner and he accepted enthusiastically, he said, "The Greeks alone know how to listen, and they alone are worthy of me and my skills." He left Rome at once and sang first on his arrival at Cassiope⁴⁹ before the altar of Jupiter Cassius and then proceeded to enter every one of the competitions.

[23.1] He could do this because he had ordered all of the contests crowded into a single year, even when there were long intervals between their dates, and some of them were held twice. At Olympia he arranged for an additional competition in music, not normally part of the festival. So that nothing would distract him or divert him when he was busy with these pursuits, he made this reply to his freedman Helios, when Helios advised him that his presence was required to deal with affairs in the city: "Although you advise me to return now and wish me to do so quickly, you should instead urge and desire that I return in a way proper for Nero." [23.2] No one was permitted to leave the theater while he was singing, not even out of necessity. And so it was said that some women gave birth during his performances and that many, when they grew tired of listening to him and applauding for him, slipped out over the wall since the entrances were closed. Or they pretended to be dead and were carried out in a funeral procession. It is almost beyond belief how very nervous and timid he was when he competed, how jealous he was of his rivals, how frightened of the judges. He pretended that he and his rivals were in a real competition, and he would observe them, try to ingratiate himself with them, defame them behind their backs, curse them sometimes if he encountered them, and if any were more accomplished than he, he would bribe them. [23.3] He would address the judges with the utmost respect before he began: "I have done all that had to be done, but the outcome is in the hands of Fortune. But you, wise and learned men that you are, ought to disregard the vagaries of chance." They urged him to take heart, and he left them with peace of mind, but he still did not stop worrying. He maintained that the quiet demeanor and sense of propriety that some of them displayed was really ill humor and malice and that he did not trust them.

⁴⁷ 64 CE.

⁴⁸ See 19.1; the Greek trip was in 66 and 67 CE.

⁴⁹ On the Greek island of Corfu.

[24.1] When he competed, he obeyed the rules so very carefully that he never dared spit or use his arm to wipe the sweat from his brow. Once when he was acting a tragic scene and dropped his scepter and quickly picked it up again, he was aghast and afraid that he would be eliminated from the competition. He got his courage back only when his fellow performer swore that this slip had not been noticed in all the shouting and acclamation from the audience. He himself made the announcement when he won and for this reason entered the competitions for heralds wherever they were held. So as to erase all remembrance of other winners without a trace, he ordered the statues and busts of all of them toppled and dragged away with hooks and thrown into latrines.

[24.2] He also drove his chariot at many sites, even a team of ten horses at the Olympic Games, although he had criticized King Mithridates⁵⁰ in one of his poems for doing this very thing. He was thrown from the chariot and put back in again but was unable to continue and stopped before the finish; he won the crown nonetheless. When he left, he awarded the entire province self-government and at the same time gave the judges Roman citizenship and a substantial amount of money. He announced these rewards himself, standing in the middle of the stadium at the Isthmian Games.

[25.1] On his way back from Greece, he went to Naples because it was there that he had first put his artistry on display.⁵¹ As was usual for winners in Greek games, he entered the city in a chariot pulled by white horses through a section of the wall that had been broken down. He entered Antium in the same way and from there, his Alban villa and from there, Rome. But when he entered Rome it was in the same chariot with which Augustus had once staged his triumph, and he wore a purple robe and a cloak embroidered with gold stars. He wore the Olympian crown on his head and carried the Pythian crown in his right hand. In the parade that preceded him placards described his other crowns, where he had won them and over whom, and the content of his songs and performances. His claque followed behind his chariot like attendants in a triumphant parade, shouting, "We are the Augustiani, the soldiers of his triumph."

[25.2] He circled the Circus Maximus (the entrance arch had been torn down for him) and passed through the Velabrum⁵² and the Forum on his way to the Palatine and the temple of Apollo. Everywhere he went, victims were slaughtered, saffron was repeatedly sprinkled on the streets, and birds and garlands and sweets were showered on him. He placed the sacred crowns among the couches in his private chambers along with statues of himself dressed as a citharode. He also struck coinage that carried this image of himself. [25.3] Following this triumphant entrance, his enthusiasm was so little diminished and his attention to his craft so little lessened that to preserve his voice he never addressed the soldiers except by written communication or with someone else speaking his words. Nor did he deal with any matter either seriously or in jest without his singing teacher by his side warning him to spare his vocal cords and to put a handkerchief over his mouth. He was friendly to many or quarreled with others accordingly, as each praised him generously or sparingly.

[26.1] Insolence, lust, extravagance, greed, cruelty— these are the qualities that he exhibited. In the beginning they emerged gradually and furtively, as if derived from youthful error, but even then they were such that no one doubted that they were failings of character, not of age. When it grew dark, Nero would immediately grab a

⁵⁰ See Jul. 4.2.

⁵¹ See 20.2.

⁵² A market area in Rome.

freedman's cap or a wig and go into cheap cookshops and wander around the neighborhoods looking for amusement. But this was not harmless fun, for he would beat men who were returning home after dinner, injuring them if they fought back and pushing them into the sewers. He even broke into shops and robbed them and then set up a marketplace at home where he parceled out the booty, auctioned it off, and squandered the proceeds. [26.2] He often risked having his eyes gouged out in street brawls of this sort, and his life came into danger when he was almost beaten to death by a man of senatorial rank whose wife he had molested. After that he never went out in public at that hour without tribunes of the guard following at a discreet distance. In the daytime he was carried secretly into the theater in a sedan chair, and from his place over the stage, he provoked the riots that involved the pantomime actors and then watched them unfold. And when the disturbance escalated to a brawl and there was fighting with stones and fragments of benches, he threw things at the people himself and even injured a praetor on the head.

[27.1] As his vices gradually gained strength and he abandoned jokes and secrecy and stopped wanting to pretend, he broke out into the open with worse crimes. [27.2] He had his feasts last from midday to midnight, often reviving himself in hot pools or, in the summer, in pools cooled with snow. He sometimes dined where the populace could watch him, in the artificial lake that he drained or in the Campus Martius or in the Circus Maximus, and he was served by prostitutes, male and female, brought in from all over the city. [27.3] Whenever he drifted down the Tiber to Ostia or sailed around the bay at Baiae, arranged along the shores and banks were taverns with private chambers, notorious for dissipation and infamous for their proprietors, who were respectable women pretending to be dancing girls and who urged him to step ashore on one side or the other. He made his close friends give dinners for him. One of them provided a banquet at a cost of 4 million sesterces where the guests wore silk headdresses, and another a "rose banquet" that cost considerably more.

[28.1] In addition to corrupting freeborn boys and sleeping with young matrons, he assaulted Rubria, a Vestal Virgin. He came close to contracting a legal marriage with the freedwoman Acte⁵³ after some former consuls were found willing to perjure themselves by swearing that she was of royal lineage. He tried to turn the slave boy Sporus into a woman by cutting off his testicles, and he had him conducted to him before many witnesses as his wife in a proper ceremony with dowry and red veil. Someone told a clever joke that has persisted: "Things could have gone well in human affairs if his father Domitius had had a wife like that." [28.2] Nero was seen with this Sporus in the public places and markets of Greece and later on in the Sigillaria in Rome. Sporus wore the jewelry and clothing of the imperial women and was carried about in a litter; Nero kissed him constantly. Everyone knew that Nero wanted to sleep with his mother but that those who did not like her restrained him because they feared that a relationship of this sort would give the strong, aggressive woman the upper hand. They were especially alarmed after he introduced among his mistresses a prostitute who was said to look very much like Agrippina. Even before that, so they say, whenever he was carried about in a litter with his mother, he satisfied his lust incestuously, and this was manifest by the stains on his clothing.

⁵³ His mistress early in his reign.

[29] Indeed, he fouled any sense of sexual decency that he had, until finally, after he had contaminated just about the whole of his body, he thought up what might be called a new kind of game. Covered with a wild animal skin and let loose from a cage, he attacked the genitals of men and women bound to stakes, and when he had satisfied his frenzy sufficiently, his freedman Doryphorus finished him off. Nero was given in marriage to this freedman, just as Sporus had been married to him, and he imitated the cries and shrieks of virgins being raped. Some have told me that he was totally convinced that no part of any man's body was pure and chaste but that most men pretended that they were uncorrupted and cleverly concealed their vice. He was so sure of this that he forgave other misdeeds in those who confessed their obscene behavior to him.

[30.1] Nero thought that the only pleasure to be had from wealth and riches was extravagant spending. He thought that people who kept a reckoning of their expenses were vulgar and cheap but that those who exhausted their resources and frittered them away were wondrously generous and truly magnificent creatures. He praised his maternal uncle Gaius and stood in awe of him simply because he had squandered the huge resources left by Tiberius so very quickly. [30.2] He therefore put no limits on giving away his money or spending it. On Tiridates (this seems almost unbelievable) he spent 800,000 sesterces every day,⁵⁴ and when the king departed, he gave him more than 100 million. On Menecrates, a citharode, and on Spiculus, a murmillio, he conferred fortunes and houses appropriate for men who had earned triumphs. He made the monkeylike⁵⁵ moneylender Paneros rich with city and country properties and buried him with almost regal pomp. He never wore the same clothes twice. [30.3] He played dice for 400,000 sesterces a point. He fished with a golden net whose cords were braided with purple and red. It is said that he never made a journey with fewer than a thousand traveling vans and that his mules had silver shoes, his mule drivers were dressed in wool from Canusium,⁵⁶ and his escort of cavalry and footmen were Mazaces,⁵⁷ who wore armbands and collars.

[31.1] But what damaged his finances most was the building of a house that extended from the Palatine to the Esquiline Hill. He first called it the Passageway House, but after it burned and he restored it, he named it the Golden House. The following facts will be sufficient to indicate its size and decoration: It had a vestibule large enough to contain a colossal statue of himself 120 feet tall. The house's proportions were so generous that its triple arcade was a mile long. It had a pond as big as a sea surrounded by buildings that seemed like cities, and it had a park with open fields, vineyards, pastures, woods, and a large number of animals of all sorts, domestic and wild. [31.2] In the rest of the house everything was covered with gold and decorated with gemstones and mother-of-pearl. The dining rooms had coffered ceilings with ivory panels that rotated so that flowers could be scattered down, and these were fitted with tubes through which perfumes showered from above. The most important of the dining rooms was round and rotated continuously all day and night in replication of the world. The baths held seawater and water from a spring near Tibur. After his house was finished in this manner and he was dedicating it, he expressed his approval only so far as to say, "I have finally begun to

⁵⁴ On his visit to Rome; see 13.1.

⁵⁵ "Monkey" was evidently a term of abuse.

⁵⁶ A town in northern Italy, famous for its wool.

⁵⁷ Horsemen from Mauretania.

live like a human being.” [31.3] He also started to construct a pool from Misenum to Lake Avernus⁵⁸ to be roofed over and surrounded by colonnades, and into it he intended to divert the waters of all the hot springs near Baiae. He began a canal from Avernus all the way to Ostia so that travel could take place without ships venturing out onto the sea. It was to be 160 miles long and wide enough for large galleys going in opposite directions to pass. To complete these projects he ordered that all prisoners everywhere be brought to Italy and that criminals be sentenced to no labor force other than this. [31.4] To support his mad extravagance— in addition to relying on the resources of the empire— he was unexpectedly driven to hope for immense hidden riches. He learned of their existence from a Roman knight who promised it as fact that an ancient treasure, brought from Tyre by Queen Dido⁵⁹ when she fled, was hidden in vast caverns in Africa and could be unearthed with very little effort.

[32.1] When this hope proved false and Nero was left desperate and so lacking in resources that the soldiers’ pay had to be parceled out and the veterans’ bonuses postponed, he turned to false accusations and plunder. [32.2] First he directed that five-sixths instead of half of the property of deceased freedmen fall to him if they carried the name of a family to whom he himself was related but a name to which they had no right; next, that the assets of men who showed themselves ungrateful to the emperor⁶⁰ pass to the imperial purse and that the legal experts who had written or dictated their wills be punished; then, that deeds and words be liable to prosecution under the treason law if there was an informer present as a witness. [32.3] He took back the money that he had paid for the crowns that any of the states had conferred on him in the competitions. After he had outlawed the use of the color of amethysts and Tyrian purple,⁶¹ he sent someone on the sly to sell a few ounces of the dye on market day and shut down all the traders. And even while he was singing, he is said to have pointed out to his agents a woman who was wearing the forbidden purple at the games. She was seized on the spot and stripped not only of her clothing but of her property, too. [32.4] He never charged anyone with a task without adding, “You know what I need,” and, “Let’s manage this so that no one has anything left.” Finally, he removed offerings from a large number of temples and melted down statues made of gold and silver, among them statues of the Penates. Galba restored them later.

[33.1] Nero began the killings of family members and murders with Claudius. Although he was not the one who planned his death, he nonetheless knew about it and did not pretend otherwise. As time went on, he made it his habit to praise mushrooms with a phrase from a Greek proverb, calling them the “food of the gods.” (The poison that Claudius consumed was served him in mushrooms.)⁶² Without question he attacked him after he was dead with all manner of insult, actions and words. At one moment he would charge him with stupidity and at another with cruelty. He would joke that Claudius had stopped “lingering” among his fellow men, lengthening the first syllable of the verb.⁶³ He held that many of the things that Claudius had decreed or instituted

⁵⁸ A lake near the Bay of Naples.

⁵⁹ The legendary queen of Tyre, a character in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

⁶⁰ They did not name him in their wills or did so only sparingly.

⁶¹ The color purple was reserved largely for the emperor.

⁶² See Cl. 44.2.

⁶³ The Latin word for “linger” differs in sound from the Greek word for “play the fool” only in the length of its first vowel.

were not binding because they had issued from a foolish and deranged man. As a final insult, he neglected to fence Claudius' grave mound with anything more substantial than a flimsy, low wall. [33.2] Nero poisoned Britannicus as much because he envied his voice (it happened to be more pleasing than his own) as from the fear that the memory of his father Claudius would someday earn him greater favor in men's eyes. He got the poison from an expert poisoner named Lucusta, and when the process did not go forward as quickly as he thought it should (Britannicus merely suffered bowel problems), he summoned the woman and beat her with his own hand, charging that she had given him an antidote instead of a poison. When she made the excuse that she had given a less potent dose in order to conceal the criminality behind the action, he said, "Of course! I'm afraid of the Julian law."⁶⁴ And he compelled her to concoct, in his private quarters as he watched, the quickest-acting poison that she could. [33.3] He tried it on a kid, but when the kid lived for five hours, he had her mix the potion again and yet again, and he offered it to a suckling pig. When the pig expired on the spot, he ordered it brought into the dining room and given to Britannicus, who was dining with him. When the boy fell dead at the first taste, he lied to his table companions, telling them that Britannicus had suffered an epileptic seizure as he often did. He buried him quickly the next day during a heavy rainstorm with no more than ordinary ceremony. To Lucusta he gave immunity and a generous reward for her skilled services. He sent her pupils as well.

[34.1] He found his mother annoying when she pried too insistently into what he did and said and when she found fault with him. In the beginning his irritation was such that he did no more than make her unpopular by constantly threatening that he was going to give up the principate and go off to Rhodes.⁶⁵ Then he deprived her of all her honors and her power, took away her guard detail of praetorians and Germans, and forced her out of his private quarters and off the Palatine as well. Nothing was too much bother when it came to making things difficult for her. He enlisted people to harass her with lawsuits while she remained in Rome, and when she retired to the country, to badger her with insults and ridicule whenever they were nearby on land and sea. [34.2] But her violent threats frightened him, and he decided to kill her. He tried poison three times but realized that she had protected herself with antidotes. He arranged for a mechanism to loosen the ceiling panels in her bedchamber and make them fall on her at night as she slept, but those who knew about the plan did not keep it very secret. And so he engineered a ship that would fall apart and cause her to die in a shipwreck or by the collapse of her cabin. He pretended to be reconciled with her and wrote her an extremely affectionate letter inviting her to celebrate the Quinquatria with him. He gave his trireme commanders the task of staging a chance collision and destroying the galley in which she had come. He made the banquet last a long time, and when she wanted to return to Bauli,⁶⁶ he offered her the tricked-out vessel instead of the one that had been damaged. He escorted her to it in high spirits and kissed her breasts when she left. [34.3] The rest of the night he lay awake and worried while he waited to hear how his plan had turned out. But when he learned that what had happened was not what had been intended and that she had escaped by swimming, he did not know

⁶⁴ Evidently a law forbidding assassination.

⁶⁵ A reference to Tiberius' retirement to Capri that was blamed on discord between him and his mother Livia; see Tib. 40, 51.1.

⁶⁶ A small town on the coast not far from Baiae.

what to do. When her freedman Lucius Agermus arrived and gave the happy report that she was safe and unharmed, Nero ordered him seized and bound. A dagger was surreptitiously thrown down next to him so that it would appear that he had been enlisted to assassinate the emperor, and Nero ordered his mother killed, making it look as if she had anticipated her arrest for the crime by taking her own life. [34.4] Reliable authors have added further disgusting details: they say that Nero hurried to view the murdered woman's corpse, fondled her limbs, disparaging some parts of her body and praising others, and that while doing this, he had grown thirsty and taken a drink. But he could not live with the bad conscience that this crime left him, not at the time or ever in the future, despite the reassurance given him by the soldiers' congratulations and those of the senate and the people. He often let it be known that he was pursued by his mother's ghost and by the whips and burning torches of the Furies.⁶⁷ He even tried to summon forth the spirit of the dead and appease it in a sacred rite performed by the Magi.⁶⁸ He did not dare attend the Eleusinian mysteries on his Greek tour,⁶⁹ for a herald warned away all who were sacrilegious and criminal before the rites began. [34.5] Nero added the death of his aunt⁷⁰ to the murder of his mother. When he went to see her while she was in bed suffering from constipation, she stroked his soft beard as she often did (he was now grown) and chanced to say in the course of their pleasant conversation, "As soon as I receive this, I am willing to die."⁷¹ He turned to his companions and said with a laugh, "I'll shave it at once," and he told her doctors to purge the sick woman aggressively. He suppressed her will and raided her estate even before she was dead so as to lose nothing.

[35.1] After Octavia, he married two more wives: Poppaea Sabina, whose father reached the rank of quaestor and who had earlier been married to a Roman knight, and then Statilia Messallina, the great-great-granddaughter of Taurus, twice consul and a triumphing general.⁷² In order to marry Statilia, he killed her husband Atticus Vestinus while he was consul. Nero had quickly grown tired of sleeping with Octavia and replied to his friends when they reproached him about this, "It ought to be enough for her that she has the trappings of a wife." [35.2] After a number of desultory attempts to strangle her, he divorced her on the grounds that she was sterile. But when the populace objected to the divorce and mounted an angry protest, he added banishment. In the end he killed her on a charge of adultery that was so barefaced and untrue that when everyone persistently denied the allegations during the inquiry, he had to produce his former tutor, Anicetus, as a witness and have him lie and confess that he had tricked her and forced her to have sex with him. [35.3] Nero married Poppaea, his one true love, twelve days after he divorced Octavia, but he killed her, too. He kicked her because she scolded him for coming home late from the races when she was pregnant and ill. His daughter by her, Claudia Augusta, died as a baby. [35.4] No relation of any remove escaped his villainy: Claudius' daughter Antonia,⁷³ when she refused to marry him after the death of Poppaea, he killed on the grounds that she was plotting revolution, and he did the same to others related to him by marriage or by

⁶⁷ Avenging spirits from Greek tragedy.

⁶⁸ Learned men from Persia, sometimes magicians.

⁶⁹ The cult of Ceres at Eleusis near Athens; see Cl. 25.5.

⁷⁰ Domitia, not Domitia Lepida; see note on 5.2.

⁷¹ Shaving the first beard and preserving it was the rite of passage to full manhood.

⁷² Titus Statilius Taurus, general and supporter of Augustus; see Aug. 29.5.

⁷³ By Aelia Paetina; see Cl. 27.1.

blood. Among these was Aulus Plautius,⁷⁴ a young man whom he raped before his death; “Now let my mother come and kiss my successor,” he said, charging that Plautius had been Agrippina’s lover and had been seduced by a hope for power. [35.5] His stepson Rufrius Crispinus, Poppaea’s young son, he had the boy’s own slaves drown in the sea when he was fishing because of a report that he played a game in which he was a general and an emperor. His nurse’s son Tuscus he banished because as procurator of Egypt he had bathed in the baths that had been built for the emperor’s visit there. His teacher Seneca he forced to suicide, despite the fact that when Seneca asked permission to retire and offered to surrender his property, he had given his most solemn assurance that Seneca was wrong to distrust him and that he would perish before he would do him harm. To his praetorian prefect Burrus⁷⁵ he sent poison instead of the throat remedy that he had promised. Wealthy old freedmen who had once helped him, first with his adoption and later to come to rule, he killed with poison; he introduced it into the food of some, into the drink of others.

[36.1] Nero was just as brutal abroad, against those not of his household. A comet, a sign commonly thought to portend the downfall of mighty rulers, began to appear in the sky several nights in succession. This worried him, and when he learned from the astrologer Balbillus that it was the practice of kings to avert omens like this with the death of some important person, to remove them from their own heads onto the heads of nobles, he planned death for all of the most distinguished men in Rome. He did this with greater confidence and with apparent justification after the discovery of two conspiracies. The first and more serious, that of Piso, was planned and uncovered at Rome; the second, that of Vinicius, at Beneventum.⁷⁶ [36.2] The conspirators pleaded their case in chains bound around them three times. Some confessed their guilt unprompted while others even claimed it to their merit, as if death were the only way they could bring relief to this man who had disgraced himself by every kind of shameful deed. The children of the condemned were driven from the city and poisoned or starved to death. Some are known to have been killed together with their tutors and personal slaves at a single meal and others to have been kept from earning the necessities of daily life.

[37.1] After this, Nero’s killing continued without discrimination or limit. He killed whomever he wanted for any reason whatsoever. To give only a few examples: Salvidianus Orfitus was charged because he had rented three shops that were part of his house near the Forum to foreign nations to use as their headquarters in Rome; Cassius Longinus, a blind jurist, because he had kept likenesses of Caesar’s assassin Gaius Cassius within his ancient family tree; Paetus Thrasea, because of a gloomy expression that made him look like a disapproving mentor. [37.2] He gave those whom he ordered to kill themselves no more than an hour in which to do it, and to prevent delay, he prompted doctors immediately to “take care of” (his expression for slitting veins to cause death) those putting it off. It is believed that he even wanted to throw living men to a certain omnivorous fiend from Egypt who would chew on raw meat and anything that was given him, because he wanted them torn limb from limb and devoured. [37.3] He considered these heinous actions his successes. They gave him

⁷⁴ Perhaps related through Claudius’ first wife, Plautia Urgulanilla; see Cl. 26.2.

⁷⁵ Sextus Afranius Burrus, an influential adviser along with Seneca.

⁷⁶ It was evidently the intention to make Gaius Calpurnius Piso emperor in 65 CE; see Cal. 25.1. Nothing more is known of the second conspiracy.

confidence and made him feel invincible, and he said that no previous emperor had known what he could get away with. He often gave clear signs that he would not spare even the senators who were left alive and that he would one day banish the order from the state and entrust the provinces and the armies to equestrians and freedmen. What is certain is that he did not exchange kisses with any senator, either on arrival or departure, or even return their greetings. And when he began work on the Isthmus,⁷⁷ he expressed this wish, stating it in a loud voice before a large crowd: "I hope that this undertaking will be a success for me and for the Roman people." He made no mention of the senate.

[38.1] But Nero spared neither the people of his native city nor its walls. Someone quoted him this line in the course of a conversation: "When I am dead, let the earth be consumed by fire."⁷⁸ "On the contrary," said Nero, "while I'm alive." And he made it happen. On the excuse that he disliked the ugly old buildings and the narrow twisting streets of the city neighborhoods, he set fire to the city so brazenly that many men of consular rank did not arrest his house slaves when they were caught on their property with tinder and torches. And some granaries near the Golden House (he especially coveted the ground on which they stood) were knocked down by military devices and were burned because they had been built with stone walls. [38.2] For six days and seven nights the conflagration raged, and the common people were compelled to take shelter among monuments and tombs. There burned at that time, in addition to the huge number of apartment blocks, the homes of Rome's earliest generals, which were still decked with enemy spoils, and the temples of the gods that had been promised and dedicated by the kings and later on in the Punic and Gallic wars, and everything else worth seeing and remarkable that had endured from ancient times. Nero watched the fire from the tower of Maecenas,⁷⁹ taking pleasure in the "beauty of the flames," as he said, and he sang "The Fall of Troy" dressed in his stage costume. [38.3] To gain the added benefit of getting his hands on as much loot as he could from this disaster (his due as commander in chief), he promised to remove the bodies and clear the rubble at his own expense and allowed no one to approach the ruins on his own property. He came close to bankrupting provinces and private individuals with the contributions that he not only received but even demanded.

[39.1] Chance misfortunes were added to the dreadful evils and scandals for which the emperor was responsible: A plague caused thirty thousand deaths to be entered in the register of the temple of Libitina⁸⁰ in a single autumn. A disaster occurred in Britain when two important towns were plundered with great loss of life to Romans and their allies. Humiliation met the legions stationed in the East when they were sent under the yoke⁸¹ in Armenia, and Syria barely remained under Roman control. What is strange and worth pointing out is that in the midst of all this there was nothing he tolerated with greater patience than the curses and mockery directed against him, nor was he more forgiving to any than to those who abused him verbally and in verse. [39.2] Many verses (Greek and Latin) were posted and circulated widely, such as these:

⁷⁷ The Corinthian canal; see 19.2.

⁷⁸ A well-known but anonymous line from Greek tragedy.

⁷⁹ In the gardens of Maecenas, on the Esquiline Hill.

⁸⁰ The goddess of corpses, 65 CE.

⁸¹ Captured troops were forced to pass under a bridge of spears.

Nero Orestes Alcmeon, matricide.⁸²

A new calculation: Nero killed his mother.⁸³

Who says that Nero comes not from Aeneas' line?

The one took his mother's life; the other took up his father.⁸⁴

Since our Roman tunes his lyre and the Parthian bends his bow,
Ours will be Apollo Paean; theirs, Apollo Hecatebeletes.⁸⁵

Rome is turning into a house. Go live in Veii, Romans—
If the house does not cover Veii, too!⁸⁶

But he did not go looking for the authors, nor did he allow too harsh a punishment to fall on those on whom a spy had informed to the senate. [39.3] When he passed by the Cynic philosopher Isidorus, the man taunted him in a loud voice so that all could hear: Nero had sung the evil deeds of Nauplius⁸⁷ well but managed his own fortune badly. Datus, an actor in Atellan farces, chanted, "Farewell, Father. Farewell, Mother," as he mimed drinking and swimming, clearly indicating the deaths of Claudius and Agrippina. And with the last verse, "Orcus⁸⁸ guides your steps," he pointed to the senate. Nero merely banished the actor and philosopher from Rome and Italy. He either felt that all insults were beneath contempt or did not want to encourage their talents by confessing his hurt.

[40.1] After almost fourteen years of suffering, the world finally rid itself of such an emperor. It began with the Gallic leader Julius Vindex,⁸⁹ who was governing that province as a *propraetor* at the time. [40.2] Astrologers had once predicted to Nero that he would one day be thrown aside, and this led to a saying that he repeated often: "Art earns us our keep." It gave him an excuse to practice the citharode's art that served as entertainment for the emperor but was a livelihood for a private citizen. Some astrologers, however, had promised him dominion over the East after his support disappeared in Rome and others kingship in Jerusalem specifically, and many promised the restoration of all his earlier fortunes. He relied on this hope, for once Britain and Armenia had been lost but were both recovered again, he thought himself immune to the evils that had been foretold. [40.3] And when he consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi⁹⁰ and learned that he must beware the seventy-third year, he thought it the year when he would finally die. He did not think about Galba's age. He was so sure not only

⁸² He is given the usual three-part Roman name, but the second and third names are those of figures from Greek mythology who killed their mothers.

⁸³ In Greek, numbers were expressed by letters; the value of those in "Nero" are equal to those in the rest of the sentence.

⁸⁴ Aeneas took his father on his shoulders when he escaped from Troy. The Latin verb allows a pun; it means both "get rid of" and "lift up." The same pun appears at Aug. 12.

⁸⁵ The god Apollo, both a musician and an archer, had different names in his different aspects. The Parthians were known for their skill with bow and arrow.

⁸⁶ A reference to Nero's huge Golden House encroaching on Rome; see 31.1–2. Veii was about ten miles north of the city.

⁸⁷ Nauplius tried to destroy the Greek fleet returning from Troy. Nero had acted the role.

⁸⁸ The lord of the underworld. He was suggesting that Nero murdered senators as well.

⁸⁹ Gaius Julius Vindex, a Romanized Gaul; his family had been given citizenship either by Julius Caesar or by Augustus.

⁹⁰ A well-known site of an oracle in Greece.

that he would live to old age but also that he would enjoy remarkable and everlasting good fortune that when he lost possessions of great value in a shipwreck, he immediately said to his friends, "The fish will return them to me." [40.4] He was in Naples when he learned that the Gallic provinces were in revolt. It was the anniversary of the day on which he had killed his mother. He received the news so calmly and with so little concern that he invited the suspicion that he was happy because the rules of war were presenting him with an opportunity to plunder the richest of the provinces. He immediately set out for the gymnasium and watched with particular enthusiasm as athletes competed. He received a more upsetting letter at dinner and grew angry but only to the point of threatening to harm the renegades. Then for the next eight days he made no attempt to reply to anyone or appoint any agents or give any command but ignored the crisis in silence.

[41.1] The insulting edicts that Vindex kept issuing at frequent intervals finally irritated him, and he wrote a letter to the senate urging them to avenge both himself and the state. He blamed his sluggish response on throat trouble that was keeping him away. But the insults that caused him the most distress were criticism of him as an incompetent citharode and being called Ahenobarbus instead of Nero. He announced that he would get rid of his adoptive name and retrieve the family name that was being used to humiliate him. He refuted the other deriding remarks, saying that they were incorrect, but he offered no evidence other than that he was being criticized for knowing nothing of an art that his hard work had refined and brought to perfection. He was constantly asking individuals, "Do you know anyone better than I?" [41.2] But when urgent messages followed one after another, he returned to Rome in a panic. An insignificant sign that he met on the way provided some slight encouragement: he noticed a monument with a carving of a Gallic soldier being overpowered by a Roman horseman and being dragged along by the hair, and he jumped for joy at the sight and blessed heaven. But not even then did he address the senate or the populace in person. Instead, he summoned some of the leading men to his house and after discussing the problem briefly, he spent the rest of the day showing them his water organs that had been manufactured with the most recent innovations, pointing out their features and explaining how each worked and the difficulties with each. He even promised, "I will soon demonstrate all of them in the theater— if Vindex lets me."

[42.1] After he learned that Galba⁹¹ and the Spanish provinces were also in revolt, he collapsed in a faint and lay unconscious for a long time, unable to speak. When he came to his senses, he tore his clothing, battered his head, and declared, "I am finished." When his old nurse tried to comfort him by reminding him that things like this had happened to other emperors in the past, he replied, "My suffering outstrips theirs, since I endure things unheard of and never imagined. I am losing supreme power while I yet live." [42.2] But he did not abandon the extravagant and indolent life that he had always lived or retrench in any way. In fact, whenever good news arrived from the provinces, he gave banquets sumptuous in their excess and mimed obscene songs that mocked the leaders of the revolt, songs that became notorious. When he had been carried secretly into a theater, he sent this message to a popular actor: "You are taking advantage of me while I am busy with other concerns."

⁹¹ Servius Sulpicius Galba, the next emperor, was governor in Spain with a legion under his command in the spring of 68 CE.

[43.1] It is believed that when the uprising first began, he made plans to do many things that were brutal but not inconsistent with his character: He planned to replace the commanders of the armies and the governors of the provinces on the assumption that they were all of one mind and conspiring against him, and he sent assassins to kill them. He planned to butcher all exiles everywhere and all of the Gauls in the city, the former so that they would not join the dissidents, the latter because he thought they were in league with their countrymen and supported their cause. And he planned to allow the armies to ravage the Gallic provinces, to poison the entire senate at banquets, and to set fire to the city after letting loose wild animals so that it would be more difficult for the people to protect themselves. [43.2] It was not so much a change of heart that deterred him from these actions as that he despaired of carrying them out. In the belief that a military operation was necessary, he relieved the consuls of office before their terms were up and entered the consulship alone, taking the places of both on the grounds that it was fated that only a consul could bring the Gallic provinces to total submission. He took office, and as he was leaving the dining room after a banquet, leaning on the shoulders of his close associates, he announced, "As soon as I have reached the province, I shall appear unarmed before the armies and do nothing but weep. And when I have made the rebels regret their action, I shall, the very next day, rejoice along with them as they rejoice, and I shall sing victory songs . . . I ought to be writing them this very moment!"

[44.1] His first concerns in readying his expedition were the choice of wagons to transport his stage machinery, masculine haircuts for the concubines he was taking with him, and the Amazon⁹² battle-axes and shields with which he was outfitting them. Then he summoned the city tribes to take the military oath, and when no suitable candidates appeared, he obliged each slave owner to make available a specified number of slaves, and he selected the very best from each household with no exceptions even for stewards and secretaries. [44.2] He ordered men of every rank to contribute a portion of their wealth and compelled tenants who lived in private houses and apartments to pay their annual rent to the imperial treasury at once. He insisted that payment be made in newly minted coins of pure silver and tested gold. This stipulation caused many to refuse openly to pay any part of their contribution, and they demanded that rewards for informers be revoked instead.

[45.1] He was hated more and more because of the profit he made from the high price of grain. It happened that when the people were suffering from famine, a ship was reported on its way from Alexandria with sand for the court wrestlers. [45.2] And so, as the loathing that everyone felt for him intensified, there was no humiliation that he did not endure: a lock of hair was placed on the head of his statue with a Greek legend, "Now, finally, you have competition, and you must concede at last."⁹³ Around the neck of another statue was tied a leather bag and with it a note: "What could I do?" "But you have earned the sack."⁹⁴ Graffiti scribbled on columns claimed that his singing had

⁹² Amazons were mythical female warriors.

⁹³ Nero wore his hair long in back; see 51.

⁹⁴ The meaning is uncertain. Nero may be imagined asking what choice he had about killing his mother. The answer is that he still deserves the sack, the archaic punishment for parricides; see Aug. 33.1.

awakened even the Gauls. At night, many pretended to be fighting with their slaves and kept calling for a “defender.”⁹⁵

[46.1] Nero was also frightened by portents that came to him in dreams and by auguries and omens, some that had appeared long before, others more recently. He had never in the past been accustomed to dream, but after his mother had been killed, he saw himself in his sleep at the helm of a ship, and the tiller was wrenched from him, and his wife Octavia was dragging him into the confines of darkness. At one point he saw himself crawling with a great mass of winged ants, another time surrounded by the statues of the conquered nations that had been dedicated at the theater of Pompey, and they kept him from moving forward. And he dreamed that the back quarters of his Asturian horse,⁹⁶ his great favorite, had been transformed into those of a monkey and that only its head was unchanged. But it whinnied in tune. [46.2] The doors of the Mausoleum flew open on their own, and a voice was heard calling his name. On the Kalends of January the Lares⁹⁷ that were decorated in preparation for the sacrifice toppled to the ground. When he was taking the auspices, Sporus offered him the gift of a ring that had the rape of Proserpina carved in its gemstone.⁹⁸ At the solemn proclamation of the vows,⁹⁹ when a large crowd of all classes had already gathered, there was difficulty finding the keys to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline. [46.3] When the speech in which he was making his case against Vindex was being read aloud in the senate, and these words came up, “The wicked will be punished and will soon meet the death that they deserve,” everyone shouted together, “It will be you, Augustus, who does that!” And it was noticed that the last narrative that he sang in public was “Oedipus, the Exile,” and that he ended with this verse: “Wife, mother, father, drive me to my death!”

[47.1] While these ominous signs were appearing, he learned that the rest of his armies had also defected. He tore up a letter that was given to him at his midday meal, overturned the table, and smashed to the ground two large goblets that he particularly liked. (He called them his Homeric goblets because they were incised with scenes from the Homeric poems.) He got poison from Lucusta, put it in a small golden box, and went to the Servilian gardens.¹⁰⁰ He sent his most trusted freedmen ahead to Ostia to get the fleet ready, and at the gardens he tried to persuade the tribunes and centurions of the praetorian guard to go with him when he fled. [47.2] But when some were reluctant and others openly refused, one of them even shouting, “Is it so very wretched a thing to die?”¹⁰¹ he pondered his options: Should he go begging to the Parthians or to Galba, or should he appear to the public on the rostra dressed in mourning and beg forgiveness for his past actions as piteously as he possibly could? And if he failed to change their minds, should he ask that the prefecture of Egypt be awarded him? There was found later in his writing box the speech that had been written for this occasion, but it is thought that he was afraid that he would be torn to pieces before he reached the Forum. [47.3] And so he put off his decision until the following day. But at about midnight he

⁹⁵ A pun on the name of the leader of the uprising; vindex means “champion,” “avenger.”

⁹⁶ From a region in Spain.

⁹⁷ Presumably January 1, 68 CE. Lares were the city’s protective deities.

⁹⁸ Proserpina (Persephone) was carried off into the underworld.

⁹⁹ Prayers for the safety and preservation of the emperor on January 3.

¹⁰⁰ An imperial property.

¹⁰¹ Virgil, *Aeneid* 12.646.

awoke to learn that his military guard had withdrawn. He jumped out of bed and sent for his friends, and when they did not respond, he took a few attendants and went to their quarters in the palace. But all of their doors were closed and no one answered him, and so he went back to his chamber where he found that his personal guards had by then fled as well, stealing even his bedclothes and taking the small box of poison. He immediately tried to find the murmillio Spiculus or any other executioner at whose hand he might perish. And when he found no one, he said, "So. Have I neither friend nor foe?" And he ran out as if to throw himself headlong into the Tiber.

[48.1] But again he changed his mind and looked for an obscure hiding place of some sort where he could collect his thoughts. When his freedman Phaon offered his suburban house, which was near the fourth milestone from Rome between the Salarian and Nomentanan roads, he mounted a horse, just as he was, barefoot and wearing a tunic, throwing on top a dingy cloak with a hood and with his head covered and a cloth held across his face.¹⁰² He had only four companions, Sporus among them. [48.2] He was immediately terrified by a shaking of the earth and a flash of lightning full in his face, and he heard soldiers shouting from the nearby camp, foretelling misfortune for himself and good prospects for Galba. He heard one of the travelers that they met say, "These men are hunting for Nero," and another asked, "What news in the city about Nero?" His horse was frightened by the smell of a corpse that had been left on the road, his face came uncovered, and a discharged praetorian recognized him and saluted him. [48.3] They reached a turning and let their horses go, and Nero made his way through thickets and thornbushes along a path in the reeds to the back wall of the villa. This was difficult for him, and he had to have a garment spread beneath his feet. When he got there, Phaon, who had offered him the house, urged him to hide in a hollowed-out place where sand had been dug, but Nero said that he would not go into the earth while he still lived. He waited for a time until a secret entrance was opened into the house, and he took water in his hand from a nearby pool and drank it, saying, "This is Nero's distillation."¹⁰³ [48.4] Then he pulled out the twigs stuck in his cloak, which had been torn by the thorns, and like an animal he inched through the narrow passage that had been dug into the first small room. There he lay down on a bed with an ordinary mattress and an old cloak spread on top. Suffering from hunger and also from thirst, he rejected a bit of coarse bread that was offered to him but drank a small amount of tepid water.

[49.1] Then, as each and every one of his companions pressed him to save himself as soon as possible from the ill treatment that was waiting for him, he ordered a hole, measured to the dimensions of his body, to be dug while he watched. At the same time he ordered bits of marble to be collected, if there were any to be found, and water and wood brought for taking care of the corpse after the event. He wept as these things were being done and kept saying over and over, "What an artist dies with me!" [49.2] As he hesitated, he grabbed a letter that a courier had brought to Phaon and read that he had been declared an enemy of the state by the senate and was being hunted down so that he could be punished in the traditional manner. When he asked what kind of punishment that was, he learned that a man was stripped naked and his neck put into a

¹⁰² His route led away from the coast. It passed near the praetorian camp on the way out of the city.

¹⁰³ He supposedly liked his water boiled and then cooled in snow.

fork and that he was beaten to death with rods,¹⁰⁴ and he was horrified. He seized the two daggers that he had brought with him and tested the blade of each but put them away again with the excuse, "The fatal hour is not yet come." [49.3] At one moment he would encourage Sporus to grieve and mourn him; at another he would beg someone to help him take his life by setting an example. At the same time, he found fault with his own inaction in these words: "I live hideously, shamefully— it is not right for Nero, not right— one must control oneself in matters like this— come, stir yourself!" Now the horsemen who had been commissioned to bring him back alive were drawing near. When he grasped this, he said in terror, "The thunder of swift-footed horses strikes upon my ear."¹⁰⁵ Epaphroditus, his secretary for petitions, helped him drive a dagger into his throat. [49.4] He was still half alive when a centurion burst in pretending that he had come to help and put a cloak over the wound. Nero said to him, "Too late," and, "This is loyalty." With those words, he died, his eyes protruding and fixed, to the horror and dread of those who saw him. The most important promises that he exacted from his companions were that they allow no one to get possession of his head and that they find some way for his body to be cremated intact. Icelus, a freedman of Galba,¹⁰⁶ gave permission for this soon after he was freed from the chains with which he had been bound at the beginning of the uprising.

[50] Nero was buried in the white robes interwoven with gold threads that he had worn on the Kalends of January¹⁰⁷ at a cost of 200,000 sesterces. His nurses Egloge and Alexandria, together with his mistress Acte, placed his remains in the tomb of the Domitian family that had been built on the Hill of the Gardens and was visible from the Campus Martius. His sarcophagus inside the tomb was of porphyry, the altar above it of marble from Luna, and it was fenced around with stone from Thasos.¹⁰⁸

[51] Nero was of about average height. His body was covered with spots and smelled bad. He had light-brown hair and a face that was handsome rather than pleasant. His eyes were gray-blue and rather weak. He had a fat neck, a stomach that stuck out, and skinny legs. He enjoyed excellent health; this man whose profligacy knew no bounds was unwell only three times during his fourteen-year reign and even then not so ill as to forgo wine or alter his other habits. He was so inappropriately obsessed with his grooming and his clothes that he always piled his hair up in tiers, and on his journey around Greece he let it hang down the back of his head. On many occasions he appeared in public unbelted and shoeless, wearing a loose robe and a handkerchief tied around his neck.

[52] As a boy Nero touched on almost all of the liberal subjects, but his mother steered him away from philosophy, warning that it was an inappropriate discipline for someone meant to rule. His tutor Seneca steered him away from familiarity with the orators of the past so that he himself would continue to be the object of the boy's admiration. As a consequence, Nero turned to poetry and wrote poems effortlessly for his pleasure. But he did not, as some think,¹⁰⁹ pass off the work of others as his own. Writing tablets and notebooks have come into my hands that contain very well-known

¹⁰⁴ See Cl. 34.1, Dom. 11.2.

¹⁰⁵ Homer, *Iliad* 10.535.

¹⁰⁶ See Gal. 14.2.

¹⁰⁷ The New Year's Day holiday.

¹⁰⁸ A town in northern Etruria and an island in the Aegean.

¹⁰⁹ The historian Tacitus cast doubt on the originality of Nero's poetry.

verses of his written in his own handwriting. These make it obvious that they were not copied or taken down from dictation but clearly penned by someone as he was thinking and composing; that is, they contain many erasures, insertions, and superscriptions. Nero also took serious interest in painting and sculpture.

[53] But he was totally infatuated with a desire to be famous, and he made himself the rival of anyone who caught the interest of the people for any reason at all. It was thought that, after winning crowns on the stage, he would compete with the athletes at the next Olympic Games. He was constantly practicing his wrestling, and he always viewed the gymnastic games given anywhere in Greece like an umpire sitting on the ground in the stadium. And if any of the pairs moved too far away, he pushed them into the middle with his hands. He had also decided, since he was considered the equal of Apollo in singing and of Apollo as the sun god when he drove his chariot, to emulate the deeds of Hercules as well. They say that a lion had been made ready for him to crush with a club or in the grip of his arms, naked, as the people watched in the arena of the amphitheater.

[54] Near the time of his death he vowed publicly that if he remained emperor and was unharmed, he would perform at the games that celebrated his victory by playing the water organ, the reed pipe, and the bagpipes and that on the last day he would appear as an actor and dance the role of Virgil's Turnus. Some say that he killed the actor Paris because he was his serious competition.

[55] He wanted to live forever and for his fame to be lasting, but his desire was not coherently conceived. It was for this reason that he took away the old names of many things and places and gave them new names derived from his own. He called the month of April Neroneus and had decided to name Rome Neropolis.

[56] He had no use whatsoever for religious practices, with a single exception: the worship of the Syrian goddess.¹¹⁰ But later he rejected her so vehemently that he defiled her statue by urinating on it. He had been caught up in a different obsession, the only one to which he clung stubbornly. This was his trust in the statuette of a girl that had been given to him by an unidentified commoner to protect him against conspiracies. A plot was discovered soon after he received it, and so he continued to revere it as his supreme guardian and to sacrifice to it three times a day. He wanted it believed that her warnings gave him knowledge of the future. A few months before he died, he attended an examination of entrails but never obtained a favorable reading.

[57.1] Nero died in his thirty-second year on the anniversary of the day on which he had killed Octavia. His death gave everyone such joy that the people ran all about the city wearing freedom caps.¹¹¹ But there were those who continued for a long time to decorate his tomb with flowers in the spring and summer. They sometimes displayed statues of him on the rostra wearing the toga praetextata, and they produced edicts from him as though he were still alive and soon to return to do his enemies harm. [57.2] When Vologaesius, king of the Parthians, sent representatives to the senate to renew their alliance, he asked most earnestly that Nero's memory be cherished as well. And finally, twenty years later, when I was a young man, someone of obscure origin appeared and

¹¹⁰ Cybele or the Magna Mater, worshiped in the eastern part of the empire. See note on Tib. 2.3.

¹¹¹ Small caps worn by slaves who were newly freed.

bragged that he was Nero. This name was in such favor with the Parthians that they welcomed the imposter enthusiastically and were reluctant to surrender him.

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