

VANNIUS DEPOSED

from the Latin of Publius Pomponius Tertius, Suebiad 264

Goodbye Vannius, you must sail off to Pannonia,
never to return. Your power in Suebia is history.
Black water laps at the stern of your battered vessel

and the wind wanders fecklessly across its canvas.
Vannius, you were foolish to put any faith
in your Sarmatian cavalry from the Jazyges!
Their horses wandered feckless as wind on the Danube

till the roaring throngs of the Lugii and Hermunduri
charged upon them with a dozen spears for every rider.
Vannius, what did your lipsmacking spirit expect?

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There are always more Lugii, Vannius!
And always more Hermunduri! The earth produces them
like a million burning cabbages from grotty hell
and cherishes no silver candle for a thick little king

such as you, Vannius, you of the bulging eyes
and the taste for green-flecked Suebian cheeses!
Now your throne is shared by those sweaty pips,

Vangio and Sido, hard-handed sons of your feckless sister.
Vannius, goodbye. Wail temperately on your ship forlorn,
as wailing changes nothing, except to obscure a strummed harp.
From the black earth upspring ever new Vangios and Sidos.

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