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[Editorial note: This is an inscription that records a speech in honor of the deceased wife of an upper-class Roman, possibly of Turia the wife of Quintus Lucretius Vespillo (lived during the first century BCE). It is written in the voice of the deceased woman’s husband; from what it says, it appears that the woman’s parents were murdered around 49 BCE and that she protected her husband when he was being politically and legally persecuted.]

[319] You were suddenly orphaned before the day of our marriage, when both your parents were murdered together in a lonely part of the countryside. It was mainly through you, since I was on my way to Macedonia and your sister’s husband Gaius Cluvius on his way to the province of Africa, that the death of your parents did not go unavenged. You put so much energetic work into this act of duty in asking questions and demanding punishment that we would not have been able to do any more, even had we been there. The credit is due to you and that most devoted lady your sister.

While you were involved in this and ensured that the guilty be punished, you left your father’s house in order to protect your virtue and took yourself to my mother’s house, where you awaited my return. Both of you were then pressured to state that your father’s will, in which we were both heirs, had been invalidated since he married his wife by *coemptio*,¹ which would have made it necessary for you, with all your father’s property, to pass into the guardianship of those who were bringing the case. Your sister would have got no share at all, because she had passed into the *manus* of Cluvius,² and, although I was not there, I heard about the courage with

¹ A marriage by “purchase,” in which a token price was paid to the father of the bride. It was a type of marriage made by *plebians* (lower-class Romans) that would have been seen as proof that Turia was of lower status and must be placed under the guardianship of relatives rather than be allowed to freely marry Q. Lucretius Vespillo. Her (unnamed) relatives may have done this in an attempt to hold on to the family property that she would inherit and control as her father’s heir.

² If Turia’s sister was of low status, as her relatives appear to have argued, then she would have been legally adopted into her husband’s family after their marriage and would not inherit anything upon her father’s death. It appears from this that Turia’s sister and Gaius Cluvius, and likely Turia and Q. Lucretius Vespillo as well, were married *sine manu*, which means that she remained a part of her father’s family and

which you heard their proposals and the presence of mind with which you resisted them.

You defended our common interests by the truth: that the will had not been invalidated, and in order that we both be the heirs, rather than you alone possessing the entire property, you were determined to uphold your father's actions in the same way that, if you had not won your point, you intended to share with your sister and were not going to let yourself pass into the guardianship of someone who had no legal right over you, and for whom no relationship of clan (*gens*) with your own family could be proved, which might force you to do that. For even if your father's will had been invalidated, nevertheless that right did not belong to those who claimed it, since they did not belong to the same clan. Because of your persistence they gave up and did not take the case any further; by this deed of duty towards your father, devotion towards your sister, and loyalty to me, you single-handedly succeeded in the defense you had undertaken.

[320] Marriages of such length, which are ended by death and not broken by divorce, are rare. In our case our marriage lasted till its forty-first year without a disagreement. Would that the final ending had come about through me instead, since it would have been more appropriate for me, as the elder, to yield to fate!

Why should I mention your domestic virtues—your modesty, obedience, kindness, good nature, dedication to wool-making, piety without superstition, inconspicuous dress and understated elegance. Why speak about your affection for your relatives and your devotion towards your family, for you looked after my mother just you did your own parents and gave her the same care, you who have innumerable other merits which you share with all matrons who care for their reputation? The merits which I claim for you are your very own, and few women have encountered such situations in which that have had to undergo such trials or demonstrate such merits: fortunately, fate has ensured that women rarely face these.

We have preserved all the patrimony you received from your parents with mutual diligence, for you did not want to make your own what you had transferred completely to me. We divided our duties so that I had guardianship of your property, and you the preservation of mine. On this subject I shall omit much so that I do not take a share in what is properly yours. Let it be enough that I have indicated your feelings on this matter.

Your generosity has been demonstrated both to your numerous intimates and especially to your beloved family. One could praise by name other women on this same count, but your sister is the only real equal you have had, for you brought up your own female relatives who deserved such treatment in our own household. So that they might make marriages worthy of your family, you presented them with dowries, and when you had decided on these I and Gaius Cluvius by common consent took it upon ourselves to pay them, as we approved of your generosity, but so that your patrimony did not suffer we made use of our own properties and gave our own estates as dowries. I have not mentioned this to glorify ourselves, but so it is clear that we considered it a matter of honour to carry out the plans which stemmed from your liberality and devotion to your family.

kept control of her own property. This type of marriage was practice almost entirely by *patricians* (upper-class Romans).

I have decided to pass over many other examples of your generosity ... [several lines are missing here]

You provided many kinds of immense support during my exile and bestowed ornaments on me when you gave me gold and jewelry taken from your body, and then, after outwitting the guards posted by our opponents, continually enriched my absence with slaves, money and provisions. Your courage urged you to beg for my life in my absence, and, overcome by your words, the clemency of those for whom you prepared them protected me. Whatever you said was always uttered with firmness of mind. Meanwhile, when a troop of men collected by Milo, whose house I had purchased when he was in exile, tried to make the most of the opportunities of civil war to break in and loot, you successfully resisted and defended our house ... [several lines missing]

... that I was brought back to my homeland by him, for, if you had not by taking care for my safety kept something he might save, he would have

[321] promised his help in vain. And so, I owe my life no less to your devotion than to Caesar.