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| **Tristia 4.4a**  O qui, nominibus cum sis generosus avorum,      exsuperas morum nobilitate genus, cuius inest animo atria candoris imago,      non careat nervis candor ut iste suis, cuius in ingenio est patriae facundia linguae,       05      qua prior in Latio non fuit ulla foro─ quod minime volui, positis pro nomine signis      dictus es: ignoscas laudibus ipse tuis. nil ego peccavi; tua te bona cognita produnt;      si, quod es, appares, culpa soluta mea est.                    10 nec tamen officium nostro tibi carmine factum      principe tam iusto posse nocere puto. ipse pater patriae—quid enim est civilius illo?—      sustinet in nostro carmine saepe legi; nec prohibere potest, quia res est publica Caesar,              15      et de communi pars quoque nostra bono est. Iuppiter ingeniis praebet sua numina vatum,      seque celebrari quolibet ore sinit. causa tua exemplo superorum tuta duorum est,  quorum hic aspicitur, creditur ille deus.    20 ut non debuerim, tamen hoc ego crimen habebo:  non fuit arbitrii littera nostra tui. nec nova, quod tecum loquor, est iniuria nostra,      incolumis cum quo saepe locutus eram. quo vereare minus ne sim tibi crimen amicus,                 25      invidiam, siqua est, auctor habere potest. nam tuus est primis cultus mihi semper ab annis—      hoc certe noli dissimulare—pater, ingeniumque meum (potes hoc meminisse) probabat      plus etiam quam me iudice dignus eram;                    30 deque meis illo referebat versibus ore,      in quo pars magnae nobilitatis erat. non igitur tibi nunc, quod me domus ista recepit,      sed prius auctori sunt data verba tuo. nec data sunt, mihi crede, tamen, sed in omnibus actis,   35      ultima si demas, vita tuenda mea est. hanc quoque, qua perii, culpam scelus esse negabis,      si tanti series sit tibi nota mali. aut timor aut error nobis, prius obfuit error.      ah! sine me fati non meminisse mei;                     40 neve retractando nondum coëuntia rumpam      vulnera: vix illis proderit ipsa quies. ergo ut iure damus poenas, sic afuit omne      peccato facinus consiliumque meo; idque deus sentit; pro quo nec lumen ademptum,          45      nec mihi detractas possidet alter opes. forsitan hanc ipsam, vivam modo, finiet olim,      tempore cum fuerit lenior ira, fugam. nunc precor hinc alio iubeat discedere, si non      nostra verecundo vota pudore carent.                     50 mitius exilium pauloque propinquius opto,       quique sit a saevo longius hoste locus. quantaque in Augusto clementia, si quis ab illo      hoc peteret pro me, forsitan ille daret. | You, who are made noble through the names of your ancestors, yet surpass your lineage in nobility of character, whose mind reflects your father’s brilliance, yet so that your own brilliance is not without accomplishment, and whose skill reflects your father’s eloquence, which no one in the Latin forum excelled─you are addressed, not at all as I wished, but with clues substituted for your name: pardon my praise of you.  I am not at fault; your excellence betrays you and reveals your identity. I am freed from blame if you appear to be what you are. Nevertheless, I think that homage paid to you by my poem is not able to harm you since the Princeps is so just. The Father of our Country himself—for who is milder than he?—tolerates that his name often is read in our poetry; nor can he prevent it because Caesar is the state, and I, too, have a share of the common good. Jupiter furnishes his godhead to the talent of poets, and allows himself to be celebrated by any lips. Your situation [of your excellence being celebrated] is assured safety by the example of the two gods, one seen, the other believed, to be a god.  Even though I should not, nevertheless I will bear this blame: you are not responsible for our letter. Nor is our offense new, that I speak with you, with whom I had often spoken when I was safe [i.e., before I was relegated]. Do not fear that your friendship with me is an object of blame; the author of the friendship [your father] incurred the odium, if there is any.  For I venerated your father from my earliest years—don’t conceal this at least—for he approved of my talent as a poet (you may remember this) even more than I deserved in my own opinion. He recited my verses with that customary eloquence of his in which part of his great nobility lay. In that your house made me welcome, not you now are misled, but previously your father was. Yet, he was not misled, believe me, but in all its acts, if you were to remove the very latest, my life is worthy of protection. This fault, too, by which I perished, you will say is not a crime, if you were to know the sequence of events of so great an evil. Either fear or a mistake—a mistake first—harmed me. Ah, allow me not to remember my misfortune.  May I not take hold again and break open wounds not yet closed: rest itself will scarcely heal them. Therefore, while we rightly pay the penalty, no evil act or intention was associated with my mistake. The god realizes that; accordingly, I was not deprived of my life, nor did another take possession of my property.  Perhaps this very exile, provided I live, will end one day, when over time his anger will become milder. Now I pray that he bid me to depart from here to another place if my prayers do not lack respectful humility. I hope for a milder exile, a place a little closer, and one which is farther from the savage enemy. How great a clemency Augustus possesses, if someone were to seek this from him for me, perhaps he would grant it. |