



Fabula<sup>1</sup> de Maria et Nauta  
[An actual Latin story]<sup>2</sup>

Maria et regina et poeta est. Mariane de forma et pecunia curam habebat. Non est [cura] sed reginae fere<sup>3</sup> curam de fama habebant. Maria maritum<sup>4</sup> non habet sed optat. Nauta Mariam amat<sup>5</sup> sed de forma reginae turbis non clamabit. Regina insulam videre optat. Regina cum amicis<sup>6</sup> e porta ambulabit. Maria necque<sup>7</sup> turbam necque turbas videre optabat. Turbae reginam cura implent.

Maria turbas timet. “Poenas dabatis” Maria turbis clamat. Turbae reginae clamant:

“poetae coronam non donabimus sed coronam feminae donabimus!” “Poeta et femina sum”

regina clamat et cum amicis in viam ambulat. Nauta Mariam videt et turbas taeda terret. Nauta

reginae clamat: “veni<sup>8</sup>, ad<sup>9</sup> aquam ambulamus!” Maria nautaque ad aquam ambulant. Maria et

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<sup>1</sup> fabula, fabulae F. “story”

<sup>2</sup> Yeah, right.

<sup>3</sup> fere “usually” (adverb).

<sup>4</sup> maritum (accusative singular of *maritus* “husband”).

<sup>5</sup> amo [1<sup>st</sup> conjugation] “to love”

<sup>6</sup> amica, amicae “friend (female)”

<sup>7</sup> necque...necque “neither...nor”

<sup>8</sup> veni “come” (imperative form of the verb *venio, venire, veni, ventus*)

<sup>9</sup> ad + accusative “towards”

nauta in naviculam<sup>10</sup> intrant<sup>11</sup>. Turbae reginam nautamque terrebant sed navicula vela facit.<sup>12</sup>

Regina nautaque insulam feminarum<sup>13</sup> intrant<sup>14</sup> sed feminae nautam reginamque non amant.<sup>15</sup>

Regina poemam<sup>16</sup> de taeda turbisque clamat. Feminae nautam et Mariam amabunt.<sup>17</sup> Maria

nautam amat et nauta Mariam amat. Feminae Mariam nautamque amant. Hooray!<sup>18</sup>

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Questions for serious consideration:

1. How can we explain the queen's aversion to crowds? Distaste for the *hoi polloi* ["commoners"]? Agoraphobia?
2. Can a poet who is unconcerned about beauty be a good poet? Or, is the queen making a distinction between personal beauty and beauty as a concept?
3. Why would a sailor, even an extroverted one, shout about his beloved's beauty *to a crowd*?
4. What penalty did Maria have in mind for the hostile crowd? (The recitation, perhaps, of a non-beautiful poem?) Are crowds interested in only beautiful poems or poems about beauty? Is it possible to write a beautiful poem about ugliness? Why do we say that a crowd is growing ugly?
5. Why would any queen, or poet for that matter, *begin* a shouting match when among a hostile crowd (or audience)? Were her girlfriend's armed — or to continue the train of thought advanced in question 4 — did they have their ears stopped up *cum cera*<sup>19</sup>?
6. Account for the crowd's hostility to a ruler/poet but not a ruler/woman? Had they previously heard the queen's poetry? If so, and assuming that the queen's poetry was bad, does this indicate that the "masses" were making a cultural (rather than an anti-intellectual) judgement? If the crowd was making a cultural statement, what does this say about the queen's educational system?
7. For the credibility of the story line, let's see if we can balance this equation:

$$1 \text{ sailor} + 1 \text{ torch} = 1 \text{ large hostile crowd}$$

Remember: even if we assume that "wonder boy" sailor confuses the crowd, the story says that the sailor and queen *walked* towards the ship. The story does make clear that, for whatever reason, the crowd

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<sup>10</sup> navicula, naviculae F. "boat"

<sup>11</sup> intro [1<sup>st</sup> conjugation] "to enter"

<sup>12</sup> vela facit, colloquial expression which translates literally as "makes sails" — thus "sails away"

<sup>13</sup> insula feminarum = Amazonia?

<sup>14</sup> intro [1<sup>st</sup> conjugation] "to enter"

<sup>15</sup> amo [1<sup>st</sup> conjugation] "to love"

<sup>16</sup> poema, poemae F. "poem"

<sup>17</sup> amo [1<sup>st</sup> conjugation] "to love"

<sup>18</sup> Did you really think that this was a Latin word?

<sup>19</sup> cera, cerae F. "wax"

regained its vigor and re-terrified the escaping couple. By the way, what happened to the queen's girlfriends?

8. At what time of the day does the story take place? If the action takes place at night, the sailor could confuse the crowd by extinguishing the torch and, in the dark, quietly walk away with the queen (didn't think of that one, did you?) However, why was the queen — with her girlfriends — walking around the city at night (especially a queen so interested in her *fama*)? Better yet, why was our love-struck sailor boy prowling the city streets at night? Shouldn't he have been on board his ship longingly gazing at a picture of the queen (for which he would have needed a torch)?
9. Account for the hostility of the Amazons to the escapees? Were the Amazons mad that the arriving ship contained a man? a man and a woman? a poet?
10. Is carrying a torch on a wooden sailing vessel as dangerous as smoking in bed? What are the health effects associated with second-hand nautical fires?
11. Explain the sudden mood swing of the bellicose Amazons — from hostility to friendship — upon hearing a poem about a torch and a crowd? Was Maria's poetry that good or were the Amazons' cultural tastes that bad? Did Maria immediately establish schools among the Amazons — an act that may have, in the end, been self-defeating (especially if these Xena wannabes learned what good poetry was)?
12. Does your Latin teacher “vitam habet?” If so, what is he doing up at 2:00 am writing stories?

