

Argives dedicated the helmet to  
Zeus as spoil won in battle from  
the Corinthians. A similar helmet  
is worn by the bronze warrior  
GR 1814 7-4 973

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# The Iliad

Homer

*Translated by Michael Heumann*

# **THE ILIAD**

**HOMER**

Translated by Michael Heumann



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# CONTENTS

<a href="#">Acknowledgements</a>	v
<a href="#">Introduction</a>	1
<a href="#">Translator's Note</a>	12
<a href="#">Book 1</a>	21
<a href="#">Book 2</a>	40
<a href="#">Book 3</a>	67
<a href="#">Book 4</a>	82
<a href="#">Book 5</a>	99
<a href="#">Book 6</a>	127
<a href="#">Book 7</a>	144
<a href="#">Book 8</a>	159
<a href="#">Book 9</a>	177
<a href="#">Book 10</a>	199
<a href="#">Book 11</a>	217
<a href="#">Book 12</a>	243
<a href="#">Book 13</a>	257

<a href="#">Book 14</a>	283
<a href="#">Book 15</a>	299
<a href="#">Book 16</a>	322
<a href="#">Book 17</a>	348
<a href="#">Book 18</a>	371
<a href="#">Book 19</a>	390
<a href="#">Book 20</a>	403
<a href="#">Book 21</a>	419
<a href="#">Book 22</a>	438
<a href="#">Book 23</a>	454
<a href="#">Book 24</a>	481
<a href="#">Glossary of Names and Places</a>	507
<a href="#">Bibliography</a>	549

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# INTRODUCTION

If the Trojan War ever took place, then it probably happened on or around 1180 BCE. This is the tail-end of the Late Bronze Age, just before most of the major Mediterranean civilizations (including the Hittite, Assyria, Babylonian, and Mycenaean) were wiped out by a combination of natural catastrophes, internal strife, and invasion from a group known from history only as the [Sea Peoples](#). One consequence of the collapse of these civilizations is that there are very few written records from the subsequent centuries. It is not until the 8th and 7th centuries BCE that the earliest writings from Greece and western Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) appeared—including and especially the two works attributed to Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which were written down sometime around 750 BCE but based upon an oral tradition that extended back centuries.

In the ancient world, there was no question that the Trojan War was a real event. This is particularly true for the Romans who claimed to be descended from the Trojan Aeneas, who supposedly survived the war and went on to lead a group of exiled Trojans to Italy, where they eventually founded Rome.

This story is retold in the *Aeneid* by Virgil, who wrote his epic during the reign of the first Roman emperor Augustus (27 BC-14 AD). During this time, Troy still existed, albeit in less regal terms than it did in the Bronze Age, and Augustus himself



made a pilgrimage to Troy, as did his uncle, Julius Caesar, the later Roman Emperor Hadrian, and the Persian King Xerxes I. No doubt each of these men looked at Troy and imagined himself as Achilles or Hector battling for ten long years over the most beautiful woman in the world.

In fact, Troy remained inhabited until about 600 CE, when it was finally abandoned. From that point until to the 19th century, the general assumption among scholars and intellectuals was that Troy and the Trojan War were just myths—not based on any historical facts but simply a product of Homer’s imagination.

This view changed in the Victorian era when businessmen and amateur archaeologists (or antiquarians, as they were then known) like Frank Calvert and Heinrich Schliemann visited Turkey in search of the mythic Troy. Calvert was the first to identify a particular hilly area a few miles south of the Dardanelles, called Hisarlik, as the most likely site of ancient Troy. He did not have enough money to do a proper excavation, but he shared his ideas with the wealthy Schliemann, who set about excavating the site, using dynamite to help dig down through many layers of archaeological finds until he reached what he thought was the “original” Troy of King Priam. However, what he thought was Priam’s Troy is actually now called Troy I, and there are at least eight other Troys, each on top of the other, that can be clearly identified above Troy I, along with dozens of sublayers. Excavations have continued to explore and analyze the various layers of Troy, and the general consensus among experts is that Troy VI or Troy VII are most likely to have been inhabited during the periods most closely associated with the Trojan War (approximately 1200 BCE).

So Troy itself was real, but what of the war? A number of finds discovered at Troy, such as pottery and figurines, bear similarities to items found in Mycenaean sites in Greece. More

interestingly, however, are a number of ancient Hittite administrative manuscripts that mention a Wilusa, which is very similar to Ilios, the name Homer regularly uses for Troy (and where the *Iliad* gets its name). One of the documents mentions a treaty between King Muwatalli II and Alaksandru of Wilusa—the latter name being tantalizingly similar to Alexander (or Paris) of Ilios.

There is another document called the Tawagalawa letter, which is a correspondence between a Hittite king and a king from a land called Ahhiyawa; in this letter, there is a mention that these two kings had once fought over Wilusa. Scholars suspect that the Ahhiyawa is a reference to some part of Mycenaean Greece, and thus this could possibly be a direct reference to the Trojan War (Villing, Fitton, Donnellan, Shapland 177-179).

In short, there is some historical evidence suggesting the Trojan War might have taken place. However, this is by no means definitive proof, and it is highly unlikely that we will ever truly know for certain if the war that Homer depicts actually took place or not.

But what of Homer himself? What do we know? As with Troy and the Trojan War, most people in the ancient world had no doubt that Homer was a real person. While some ancient commentators believed Homer was an eye-witness to the events of the Trojan War, most believed that he was a blind poet who was born on Chios,<sup>1</sup> a Greek island off the coast of Anatolia (though several other sites, including Athens, also made their own claims), and lived between 850-750 BCE. Further, ancient scholars generally believed Homer wrote not just the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but a whole slew of other epics about the Trojan War and its aftermath, along with a variety of other

1. The poet of the “Hymn to Apollo” (who was in classical times thought to be Homer) describes himself as “a blind man who lives in rocky Chios” (*Homeric Hymns* 85). Chios was also the base for the Homeridai, a well-known guild of rhapsodes, the title for poets/performers who would recite Homer’s epics.

works, including the works commonly referred to as the *Homeric Hymns*.

However, today much of this is considered suspect. In fact, the “Homeric Question”—the question of who Homer was, where he came from, or even if he existed in the first place—has dominated a subset of academic scholarship for centuries. The current assumption among experts is that Homer was not a single individual, since archaeological, linguistic, and geographic evidence in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* point to the likely conclusion that the two works were not written by the same person. Further, the epics are almost certainly the end-products of an oral tradition, meaning that the “Homer” who wrote these works was most likely putting into writing stories that had existed in oral form for centuries.

The epics themselves actually help support this last point, since both the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* contain detailed descriptions of both Bronze Age and Iron Age armor and other technologies. For example, “boar’s tusk helmets” and other weapons and armor that were known to exist in the Bronze Age circa 1200 BCE are described alongside references to armor, weapons, and sailing equipment that were not developed until the Iron Age in the 8th century or later. This suggests that the final written form that the epics took combined centuries-old knowledge of weapons and armor from the Bronze Age—information no doubt handed down from one singer to another—with contemporary technologies that would have been known and understood by Iron Age audiences.

Ultimately, though, all of this is speculation. All we really know for certain is what can be found within the two epics ascribed to Homer. But that is plenty! After all, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have been the foundational works of not only Greek culture but western culture for thousands of years, and they have spawned countless retellings and reimaginings in all forms of art, from

painting and sculpture to poetry and plays to novels and movies.

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There are many aspects of the Trojan War that have become common knowledge for much of the western world: the Judgment of Paris, Helen of Troy, “the face that launched 1,000 ships,” the Trojan Horse, Achilles’ heel, and so forth. For first-time readers of Homer’s *Iliad*, it comes as a shock to learn how few of these are present in the work itself.

Although the Trojan War is said to have lasted ten years, Homer’s *Iliad* focuses on only a few weeks in the final year of the war—though not, significantly, the end itself or the sacking of Troy. The epic begins when Agamemnon, the Mycenaean king and commander of the Achaean (Greek) army, spurns the entreaties of Chryses, a priest of Apollo who seeks the return of his daughter, Chryseis, who was captured during a raid and given to Agamemnon to serve as his concubine. Chryses then prays to Apollo asking for retribution, and Apollo complies, sending a plague to the Achaean camp that decimates the army.

After nine days, Achilles, the greatest Achaean fighter, calls a war cabinet to determine what must be done. A seer, Calchas, says what everyone already knew: the plague was Agamemnon’s fault, and in order to end the plague he needs to return the priest’s daughter and offer tribute to Apollo. Agamemnon at first refuses, and Achilles criticizes him for his foolishness. Enraged by Achilles’ insolent behavior, Agamemnon insults Achilles back. Eventually, Agamemnon does agree to give up Chryseis—but only after insisting that Achilles surrender Briseïs, his own concubine, to him. Furious at this turn of events, Achilles declares that he will no longer fight for the Achaeans. He retreats to his tents and asks his mother, the nymph Thetis, to go to Zeus and persuade him to

punish the Achaeans for Agamemnon's treatment of him. She does this, and Zeus agrees.

All this happens in Book 1. For the next fourteen books, the will of Zeus plays out as he promised: the Trojans eventually decimate the Achaeans until they reach the ships and are ready to set them on fire. Even at the point when his own ships are threatened, however, Achilles refuses to return to battle. In book 16, however, he allows his best friend Patroclus to wear Achilles' armor and lead the Myrmidons into battle to force the Trojans to retreat. This Patroclus does to remarkable effect. The Trojans do, indeed, flee back to the walls of Troy. However, Patroclus gets greedy and chases after them; as a result, he is killed by Hector, oldest son of King Priam of Troy, heir to the kingdom of Troy, and commander of the Trojan forces.

Achilles becomes enraged at Hector for killing his friend and vows to destroy him, and so Achilles does, though not before also killing many other Trojans along the way. After Hector's death, Achilles refuses to relinquish Hector's body to his family, treating it with contempt by dragging it behind his chariot around the city walls. Eventually, King Priam goes to Achilles' tent to beg the warrior to return his son to him. Achilles agrees, and Hector is buried.

This is where the *Iliad* ends. We do not see the death of Achilles (which is foretold on numerous occasions in Homer's work) or the Trojan horse or the sack of Troy. There is, however, a good reason for this: Homer's *Iliad*, along with Homer's other epic, the *Odyssey*, are part of a cycle of epics focusing on the Trojan War, each one telling a piece of the story.

Sadly, only summaries and fragments of the others have survived to the present day, though we know enough about them to know that none of the other works were a match for

Homer's artistry (one of the reasons Homer's epics survived and the others did not). In all, the cycle contained eight epics:<sup>2</sup>

1. *Cypria* (Κύπρια): 11 books long, focusing on events leading up to the Trojan War like the Judgement of Paris, the abduction of Helen, the marshaling of the Achaean fleet, and the first nine years of the war.
2. *Iliad*: 24 books long
3. *Aethiopis* (Αἰθιοπίς): 5 books long, focusing on events after Hector's funeral up to the death of Achilles.
4. *Little Iliad* (Ιλιάς μικρά): 4 books long, focusing on events after Achilles' death, the awarding of Achilles' armor to Odysseus, the suicide of Telamonian Ajax, and the building of the Trojan horse.
5. *Sack of Troy* (Ιλίου πέρσις): 2 books long, focusing on the destruction of the Trojan city and its people.
6. *Nostoi* or *Return* (Νόστοι): 5 books, focusing on the return home of the Achaeans (other than Odysseus); includes the murder of Agamemnon and the wanderings of Menelaus and Helen (both of which are also described in the *Odyssey*).
7. *Odyssey*: 24 books long
8. *Telegony* (Τηλεγονεία): 2 books long, focusing on further adventures of Odysseus and his death at the hands of Telegonus, his illegitimate son, who was born to Circe after Odysseus visited her island.

2. One of the main sources of evidence for this epic cycle comes from the preface to a 10th century (CE) manuscript of the *Iliad* that is referred to by scholars as [Venetus A](#). Additionally, Aristotle mentions the *Cypria* and *Little Iliad* in his *Poetics* (1459a-b), though mainly to complain that they are inferior to Homer's works.

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While the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do not provide a full narrative account of the Trojan War, they do provide us detailed studies of its major participants. However, readers new to Homer are often perplexed by the mindsets and behavior of these Bronze Age men, particularly Agamemnon and Achilles. Why, for example, is Agamemnon so furious when told that he must give back Chriseis? Why does Achilles go to such great lengths to avenge on Agamemnon's words and actions?

In order to understand why the characters behave the way that they do, it is important to understand three important Greek words: *kleos* (κλέος), *timê* (τιμή), and *geras* (γέρας).

In book 12 of the *Iliad*, Sarpedon, son of Zeus and leader of the Lycians who fought for the Trojans, tells his comrade Glaucus,

Friend, if we fled this fight and were able  
to live forever, being ageless and immortal,  
then I would not fight among the finest,  
nor would I send you to win glory in battle;  
but now the goddess of death is all around us,  
and since no mortal can escape or avoid it,  
let us go and gain glory or give it to another. (12.322-328)

In these lines, Sarpedon crystallizes the Greek concept of *kleos* (κλέος), which roughly translates as “fame, glory, or honor,” as in something that brings fame or honor or confers distinction. *Kleos* is different from the English idea of “honor,” however, for it is related to the Greek word κλύον, “to hear,” suggesting that the honor embodied by the word *kleos* is not merely the honors that a person may receive (like the “honor” of winning a Nobel Prize) but the honor of being spoken about by others. Unlike the gods, mortals die; the only way to become immortal is to be remembered and talked about after one's death. By venturing into the fighting (either to become a victor or victim), Sarpedon

can become part of a song that will live on forever—which, indeed, is what happens.

Living on in the songs of those who come after you was at the existential heart of Bronze Age warrior culture: the ultimate justification for their actions. In everyday life, however, two other components were at least of equal importance: *timê* and *geras*. *Geras* is a prize given during the division of spoils after a raid or battle, and *timê* is the honor granted to warriors from receiving that prize. Hence, *geras* is the physical embodiment of a warrior's *timê*: the more *geras*, the greater the *timê*.

These two concepts are at the core of Achilles's rage. Briseïs is Achilles's *geras*, and her presence in his camp, as his slave, was the embodiment of his *timê*, his honor and reputation. When Agamemnon takes her from Achilles, he is not simply taking Achilles' concubine; he is taking his *timê*. Once Achilles loses this *timê*, he loses the motivation to fight. This is revealed to us in book 9. Agamemnon sends a group of leaders to Achilles' tent to beg him to return to the fight, offering not only the return of Briseïs but numerous other tributes as well. Achilles, however, rejects the offer out of hand. In explaining this rejection, Achilles details the effect Agamemnon's insult has had on his desire to fight:

An equal fate awaits both the coward holding  
back and the hero fighting hardest, and death  
comes both to the idle man and the busy.  
It has not brought me profit for my heart  
to suffer by always risking my life in battle. (9.318-322)

Agamemnon can offer Achilles all the *geras* in the world, but those promised prizes are not enough for Achilles for they do not make up for the *timê* he lost in the first place. Moreover, the fact that Agamemnon took away Achilles's *geras* means that any promise of future *geras* is suspect. What does it matter if Agamemnon offers half his kingdom to Achilles if, as in the



case of Briseïs, those prizes can be taken back? Why risk one's life for *timê* that can be stripped away at a moment's notice?

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Another concept central both to the *Iliad* and to Bronze Age culture in general is ξενία (*xenia*), which roughly translates as “guest friendship.” During this period, when a guest or stranger (*xenos*) comes to a person's house, that person becomes the host's friend, and the host is obligated to provide numerous accommodations based upon particular rituals. In turn, the stranger promises to return the generous offers of friendship. This friendship does not end at the death of the host or stranger, either; the sons and grandsons of both men would be honor-bound to maintain this alliance.

The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* notes that, in guest friendships, “friends provided services analogous to those provided by bankers, lawyers, hotel owners, insurers, and others today” (591). A host offered a guest a place to stay, gifts in the form of money or commerce, and assistance with any legal or tax issues that might have brought the visitor to this new place.

A window into *xenia* can be found in book 6 when Diomedes of Argos meet Glaucus of Lycia in battle. As is the custom in numerous occasions in the *Iliad*, the two talk to one another before engaging in battle. In this case, Glaucus mentions his heroic ancestor Bellerophon; hearing this, Diomedes exclaims:

Then you are a friend of my father's house  
for noble Oeneus once hosted blameless  
Bellerophon in his great hall for twenty days. (6.215-16)

Recognizing a guest friendship between their paternal grandfathers suddenly makes Glaucus not an enemy in battle but a long-lost friend. Diomedes expands on this later:

So now I am your host when you are in Argos,

and you to me in Lycia when I visit the land.  
Let us leave our spears, even in this throng;  
there are other Trojans and their allies to slay,  
either sent by the gods or overcome by foot,  
and many Achaeans for you to slay, if you can.  
And let us exchange armor, so others may know  
we are guest-friends from our fathers' days. (6.224-231)

From here, Diomedes and Glaucus swap armor and go away from battle to talk more about their shared *xenia*.

On the opposite end of *xenia* is the event that precipitated the Trojan War itself. Paris was a guest friend of Menelaus in Sparta when he abducted Helen and took numerous prizes from Menelaus' palace. This grave violation of *xenia* was seen as an offense to both mortals and gods, for to violate *xenia* was to offend Zeus himself.

This offense instigated the war, and it is recalled numerous times throughout the *Iliad*, right up to the end. In book 24, Zeus (through his messenger Iris) tells Priam to visit Achilles' tent and beg for his son's body. Zeus assures Priam that he would be safe from harm in this endeavor because Achilles, unlike Paris, respects the gods and abides by their laws:

And after he has arrived in Achilles' tent,  
neither Achilles nor anyone else will kill him,  
for the man is not foolish, impulsive, or sinful  
and will kindly protect a suppliant man." (24.155-158)

Hence, although the *Iliad* does not end with the sacking of Troy, it does end with a symbolic reconciliation between Hector and Priam and between mortals and immortals.

# TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In his work *On the Translation of Homer*, the great Victorian art critic Matthew Arnold stated:

[T]he translator of Homer should above all be penetrated by a sense of four qualities of his author:—that he be eminently rapid; that he is eminently plain and direct both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it, that is, both in his syntax and in his words; that he is eminently plain and direct in the substance of his thought, that is, in his matter and ideas; and, finally, that he is eminently noble. (Arnold 9-10)

Does this translation of Homer's *Iliad* possess all four of these qualities? Is it a swift read that uses plain and direct language, and tells the story in a straightforward manner while maintaining the “nobility” and “epic” quality of the original? That is not for me to say. I can say, however, that although this translation has the same number of lines as Homer's original—15,693—it was not my intention to create a literal, line-for-line translation. Instead, I wanted to strike a balance between staying as close as possible to Homer's original Greek while still maintaining English syntax and overall readability, especially for first-time readers. If these two things were in conflict with one another—that is, if staying close to the Greek meant making the translation more difficult to understand—then I generally sided with readability.

A small example of this occurs in book 16 (lines 139-144),

which describes Patroclus, Achilles' closest companion, arming for battle. First, here is the passage in Homer's original Greek:

εἴλετο δ' ἄλκιμα δοῦρε, τὰ οἱ παλάμηφιν ἀρήρει.  
 ἔγχος δ' οὐχ ἔλετ' οἷον ἀμύμονος Αἰακίδαο  
 βριθὺ μέγα στιβαρόν· τὸ μὲν οὐ δύνατ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν  
 πάλλειν, ἀλλὰ μιν οἷος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι Ἀχιλλεὺς  
 Πηλιάδα μελίην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλῳ πόρε Χείρων  
 Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς, φόνον ἔμμεναι ἠρώεσσιν.

In Samuel Butler's 1898 translation, the passage reads:

He grasped two redoubtable spears that suited his hands, but he did not take the spear of noble Achilles, so stout and strong, for none other of the Achaeans could wield it, though Achilles could do so easily. This was the ashen spear from Mount Pelion, which Chiron had cut upon a mountain top and had given to Peleus, wherewith to deal out death among heroes.

In the Loeb Classical edition of *The Iliad*, translated into prose by A.T. Murray in 1924 and revised by William F. Wyatt in 1999, the passage reads:

and he took two valiant spears that fitted his grasp. Only the spear of the incomparable son of Aeacus he took not, the spear heavy and huge and strong; this no other of the Achaeans could wield, but Achilles alone was skilled to wield it, the Pelian spear of ash, that Cheiron had given to his dear father from the peak of Pelion, to be used for the slaying of warriors.

In Richard Lattimore's 1951 poetic translation, the passage reads:

He took up two powerful spears that fitted his hand's grip,  
 only he did not take the spear of blameless Aiakides,  
 huge, heavy, thick, which no one else of all the Achaeans  
 could handle, but Achilleus alone knew how to wield it;  
 the Pelian ash spear which Cheiron had brought to his father  
 from high on Pelion to be death for fighters. (355)

In Robert Fagles more modernized poetic translation from 1990, the passage reads:

and he took two rugged spears that fit his grip.  
 And Achilles' only weapon Patroclus did not take  
 was the great man's spear, weighted, heavy, though.  
 No other Achaean fighter could heft that shaft,  
 only Achilles had the skill to wield it well:  
 Pelian ash it was, a gift to his father Peleus  
 presented by Chiron once, hewn on Pelion's crest  
 to be the death of heroes. (417)

In Stanley Lombardo's 1997 translation, it reads:

He took two spears of the proper heft,  
 But left behind the massive battle pike  
 Of Aeacus' incomparable grandson.  
 No one but Achilles could handle this spear,  
 Made of ash, which the centaur Chiron  
 Had brought down from Mount Pelion and given  
 To Achilles' father to be the death of heroes.

Finally, in this translation, the passage reads:

Finally, he took two strong spears that fit his grasp  
 but left the large, heavy, and powerful spear  
 of Aeacus' noble grandson, for no other Achaean  
 was skilled enough to wield it but Achilles:  
 an ashen spear from Pelion's peaks that Chiron  
 gave his dear father, a gift for slaying heroes.

There are 44 words in the original Greek passage, 66 in Butler's, 71 in the Loeb Classical edition, 62 in Lattimore, 67 in Fables, 51 in Lombardo, and 52 in this translation. In other words, this translation is shorter than all but Lombardo's and closer in length to the original. That does not, however, mean this translation is more accurate—merely more economical.

Lattimore's translation hews extremely close to the Greek

original; each line corresponds more or less to the original Greek line. Most of the other translations are also fairly consistent with the Greek, in that they maintain the basic line-by-line structure and include much of the repetition found in the original. This translation, like Lombardo's, eliminates some of the repetition that works in Homer's original but reads awkwardly in English, and rearranges some word order to improve clarity and readability.

For example, the first line is basically identical in each translation: Patroclus picked up two spears. The next few lines of the other translations mostly follow the Greek, first noting that Patroclus did not take Achilles' spear, then noting that spear's length and weight and the fact that, of all the Achaeans, only Achilles could wield such a weapon. This translation includes all of this information but reverses the order a bit, putting the "large, heavy, and powerful" aspects of the spear ahead of the owner's name. This change was made for the sake of readability because putting the description of the spear (the reasons why Patroclus did not pick it up) in the third line and not the second renders it an awkward afterthought between the two mentions of Achilles rather than the crucial piece of information that it actually is.

Similarly, in the end of the original Greek passage, Mount Pelion is mentioned twice—once to describe the type of wood the spear is made from and again to identify where the famous centaur Chiron (presumably) made the weapon. Most of the other translations also mention Pelion twice, but this translation (like Lattimore's and Lombardo's) only mentions it once and rearranges the order a bit by mentioning mount Pelion before Chiron. Again, this is done for brevity, taking several pieces of information from the original (naming the spear, identifying where the weapon came from, identifying it as a gift from Chiron to Peleus, and noting its use to kill heroes) and combining them in a clear and simple manner.

There are a few pieces of information not found in the original that are added by some of the translations. First, Homer's original does not state outright that Chiron made the weapon; it merely states that it came from Mt. Pelion and was given to Peleus by Chiron. However, Butler's translation notes that Chiron "had cut" the weapon on the mountain, and the Fagles translation notes the weapon was "hewn" on the mountain. The other translations, mine included, leave this information out.

Likewise, Homer does not, in this passage, state that Chiron is a centaur, but this fact is included in Lombardo's translation. This added information certainly helps those who might not know who Chiron is, but since it was not included in the original Greek, I left it out, as did the other translations I cited. Chiron was previously named in books 6 and 11, and in book 11 (11.831), Chiron is indeed identified as a centaur; hence, the repetition of the information, while helpful, was not, in my mind, necessary.

There is, however, another reason why I did not think adding "centaur" to this passage was necessary: unlike all the other translations mentioned above, my translation was written in the twenty-first century, in the age of Google and Wikipedia. Facts like this one are just a click away.

In fact, I have included links to Wikipedia articles on most of the character and place names mentioned throughout the epic. I only added these links at the first mention of each name—so the link to the Wikipedia page on Chiron can be found in book 6 but not in the subsequent mentions of the centaur. For those not reading the book digitally, I have also included a standard glossary of people and places at the end. The information in the glossary is obviously not as comprehensive as that found online, but it should suffice for most readers.

The names used in this translation are the ones Homer uses—and Homer's use of names can be tricky. Not only does Homer use different names to describe the same person or the same people, but he also regularly substitutes names with patronymics (“son of \_\_”) or epithets (like “ox-eyed”).

Homeric names conform to Indo-European patterns: one name only for men and women, but a patronymic (like “son of Atreus”) used in public. Men were usually “son of” their father, but often married women were referred to as “wife of \_\_”; Helen, for example is referred to as “wife of Paris,” though Paris was also referred to as “husband of Helen,” which is considered an insult to the least-liked character in the *Iliad*.

Since Greek uses a different alphabet than English, individual and place names in Homer are spelled a variety of ways depending upon the translation. Many modern translations utilize spellings that adhere closer to the Greek original words rather than Latinized names of the past. For example, in Richard Lattimore's translation, Achilles is spelled Achilleus (closer to the Greek original, Ἀχιλλεύς), Ajax is Aias (Αἴας), Hector is Hektor (Ἑκτορ), and so on. For this translation, I have decided to stick to the more common spellings of names in order to make the reading of this work as simple as possible, particularly for students new to Homer. Almost without exception, these are the spellings found in both A.T. Murray's Loeb Classical translation and the translation of Robert Fagles. Hence, in my translation, Achilles is Achilles, Ajax is Ajax, and Hector is Hector.

With all this in mind, here are a few additional notes to make reading easier:<sup>1</sup>

- Homer never refers to the Greeks as *Greek*. They are, instead, called Achaeans, Argives, Danaans, Hellenes,

1. A full list of all epithets can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epithets\\_in\\_Homer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epithets_in_Homer).



or Panhellenes. Their most common epithets are “well-greaved” or “of the hollowed ships.”

- The Trojans are generally called *Trojans*, but Troy itself is often referred to as *Ilios* (or Ilium or Ilion). The most common epithets used for the Trojans is “tamers of horses”
- Achilles is often described as “son of Peleus,” and he is also described as “swift-footed” and “godlike.”
- Agamemnon and his brother Menelaus are both “son(s) of Atreus.”
- Agamemnon, as the high king of the Achaeans, is called “ruler of many lands,” “ruler of men,” and “lord of men” (among others). Menelaus is called “great shouter” or “dear to Ares” (god of war).
- No one has more epithets than Odysseus, but the most common are “wise,” “clever,” “cunning,” and “resourceful.”
- Paris is generally called Alexander and only occasionally Paris.
- Numerous mortals are referred to as “godlike”—including Achilles, Odysseus, Helen, and Agamemnon—while others are called “beloved of Zeus,” “child of Zeus,” or “dear to Zeus.”
- Among the gods, Apollo is described as “Phoebus” (the bright or pure), “free-shooter,” or “sharpshooter.”
- Zeus goes by many names but the most common are “son of Cronos,” “cloud-gatherer,” “loud thundering,” and “far-seeing.”

- Hera is often “ox-eyed” and “white-armed”; Athena is “daughter of Zeus,” “Pallas,” and “owl-eyed”; and Aphrodite is “fair,” “heavenly,” and “golden.”



# BOOK 1

[Goddess](#), sing the rage of [Achilles](#), son of [Peleus](#), which brought countless woes to the [Achaean](#)s and sent the souls of many brave heroes to [Hades](#), their bodies made into a feast for dogs and crows all to carry out the unfathomable will of [Zeus](#). Begin from the time when they first quarreled: the warrior king, [son of Atreus](#), and godlike Achilles.

Which god brought these two together to fight?  
The son of [Leto and Zeus](#), angry at the king, sent a plague through the camp, decimating the army, for [Atreus](#)' son dishonored his priest [Chryses](#) after he came to the Achaean<sup>1</sup> swift ships to ransom [his daughter](#), carrying countless gifts, holding sharp-shooter Apollo's ribbon on a golden staff, and begging all Achaeans, especially Atreus' sons, marshalers of armies: "Sons of Atreus, other well-greaved<sup>2</sup> Achaeans, may the gods with homes on [Olympus](#) grant you to sack Priam's<sup>3</sup> city and to return home safely, but set my daughter free and accept these gifts in honor of sharp-shooter Apollo, son of Zeus."

1. Homer uses "Achaeans," "Argives," or "Danaans" (and sometimes "Hellenes" or "Panhellenes") when describing the Greek army as a whole.
2. A greave is a shin guard. This epithet is used regularly by Homer to describe the Achaeans.
3. Priam is king of Troy (or Ilios)

Then all Achaeans shouted their approval,  
to respect the priest and accept his noble  
ransom, but Agamemnon's heart was unmoved,  
and he dismissed the priest harshly, declaring:  
"I do not want to find you by the hollow ships,  
old man, either loitering now or returning later,  
and a god's staff and wreath will not help you.  
I will not free her; before that happens, she will be  
an old woman on [Argos](#), far from her fatherland,  
working her loom and sharing my bed. So go,  
anger me no further, and you may return safely."

This terrified the old man, who quickly obeyed,  
going quietly along the shore of the thundering  
sea. When he was alone, the old man prayed  
to lord Apollo, son of golden-haired Leto:  
"Hear me, lord of the silver bow, protector  
of Chryse and Cilla, and guardian of [Tenedos](#).  
Smintheus,<sup>4</sup> if ever I pleased you by building  
a temple or offering you burnt fat thigh-bones  
from bulls and goats, then grant me this wish:  
use your arrows and make the Danaans pay."

Phoebus<sup>5</sup> Apollo listened to the man's prayers;  
then, filled with rage, he left Olympus' peaks  
carrying his bow and quiver on his shoulders.  
The clanging of his arrows echoed with his anger  
as he pressed forward, moving like darkness itself.  
Seated far from the ships, he shot the first arrow,  
and a metallic clang rose from the silvery bow.  
First he targeted the mules and swift moving  
dogs, but soon after he started striking the soldiers,  
sending countless corpses to burn on the pyres.

For nine days arrows rained down on the soldiers,

4. Another name for Apollo (literally means "mouse killer")

5. "Bright" (φωῖβος); Apollo was the god of light.

but on the tenth, Achilles called an assembly,  
an idea white-armed [Hera](#) placed in his heart,  
for it pained her to see the Danaans dying.  
When the men had gathered for assembly,  
swift-footed Achilles stood up and spoke:  
“Son of Atreus, it seems we have been beaten  
and shall return home—if we can escape death,  
before the war and plague crush the Achaeans.  
But first, let us consult a soothsayer or priest  
or dream interpreter—for a dream is also  
from Zeus—to tell us why Phoebus Apollo is  
angry. Does he fault us for a broken vow or unfit  
hecatomb?<sup>6</sup> Will offerings of savory goat and lamb  
temper his anger and ward off destruction?”

So saying, he sat down and another stood:  
[Calchas](#), son of Thestor, greatest of soothsayers,  
who knew all things past, present, and future,  
and who guided the Achaean ships to Ilios  
using the gift of prophecy granted him by Apollo.  
He addressed the assembly with wise words:  
“Achilles, dear to Zeus, you order me to explain  
why free-shooter Apollo has aimed his wrath  
at us, so I will speak, but you must swear to me  
that you will support me in words and deeds,  
for I believe I will enrage a certain man who  
rules the Argives and is obeyed by all Achaeans.  
A king angered by an underling is dangerous;  
even if he suppresses his burning anger today,  
it will simmer in his chest until he gets revenge.  
Remember this if you are to protect me.”

To this, swift-footed Achilles quickly replied:  
“Fear not, Calchas, and tell us what you know,

6. Traditionally, a ritual sacrifice of 100 cattle, though often the number was much lower.

for I swear to you by Apollo, the god to whom you pray and by whom you receive your gifts, that as long as I live upon the earth, no one will lay hands upon you by the hollow ships: not I, not the other Danaans, not even Agamemnon, who often claims to be the noblest of us all.”

Then the noble seer took courage and spoke:  
“We suffer not because of a prayer or offering but because Agamemnon insulted a priest by refusing to free his daughter or accept his ransoms. This is why Apollo punishes the Danaans, and the punishment will not end until the priest’s daughter is returned, unransomed and unbought, and a hecatomb is sent to Chryse. Only this will appease the god.”

So he finished and sat down, and the heroic son of Atreus, King Agamemnon, stood to speak, his heart full of black bitterness and his eyes burning like a flaming fire. He fixed his angry gaze on Calchas and said:  
“Oracle of doom, your prophecies never favor me. You foretell disaster as if your heart craves it, and your words never bring us good fortune. Now here, among the Danaans, you declare our woes the work of free-shooter Apollo because I refused a shining ransom for Chryseis, as I prefer her to [Clytemnestra](#), my wife, and wish to keep her in my home since she is in no way inferior in beauty or character or mind or handiwork. Still, I will give her back if that is best, for I would prefer my army alive, not dead—but get me another gift right away. It would dishonor

me to be the only Argive without a prize,  
for all can see that my prize goes elsewhere.”

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him:  
“Son of Atreus, most glorious and most greedy,  
how can the brave Achaeans give you prizes now?  
No other treasures lie hidden in the common stock,  
and all spoils from sacked cities have been divided,  
so it is wrong to make the men return their rewards.  
Accept the god’s command and return the girl,  
for you will be repaid three or four times over  
when, Zeus willing, we sack well-walled Troy.”<sup>7</sup>

Answering him, lord Agamemnon replied:  
“You may be brave, godlike Achilles, but you will  
not deceive me with words or change my mind.  
You want to keep your prize but order me  
to give mine back, leaving me with nothing?  
Let the great-hearted Achaeans give me a prize  
that suits my heart and is equal to what I lost.  
But if they do not give me such a gift, then I will  
seize your own prize or [Ajax](#)’s or [Odysseus](#)’  
and carry it away, angering whomever I visit.  
But we can consider these things later, for now  
we must drag a black ship into the great salt sea,  
add the right number of rowers, bring aboard  
a hecatomb and beautiful Chryseis, and give  
command to a leader like Ajax or [Idomeneus](#)  
or lord Odysseus or you yourself, son of Peleus,  
the most feared man of them all, so you can  
offer our sacrifice and appease Apollo.”

With a scowl, swift-footed Achilles replied:  
“My god, how shamelessness and greed cloak you.  
How can any Achaean obey any order you give

7. Troy’s fortified walls and towers were the city’s main defenses and are frequently referenced in Homer.



to embark on a journey or to fight a powerful foe?  
The Trojans did not bring me to this place to fight,  
and they are not guilty of any crimes against me.  
They have never stolen my cattle or horses or gone  
to [Phthia](#), with its fertile soil that nurtures heroes,  
and ruined the harvests, for that place is far away,  
well past shadowy mountains and a thundering  
sea. No, you fool, we followed *you* here to please  
you and to help you and [Menelaus](#) preserve  
your honor against the Trojans. But do you care?  
Of course not. And now you threaten to take  
away the prize given me by Achaea's sons?  
I never receive prizes of honor equal to your own  
when the Achaeans sack a wealthy Trojan city.  
My hands bear the greater burden in these battles,  
but when the division of spoils comes, your share  
of the prizes is larger, while I take a small but dear  
ransom back to my ships when I am weary of war.  
So now I return to Pythia, for it is better to take  
my ships home than remain here dishonored,  
helping you gain more wealth and greater riches."

Then Agamemnon, ruler of men, answered him:  
"Fly away, then, if your soul desires it; I will not  
beg you to stay. There are others who honor  
me properly, including great counselor Zeus.  
I truly hate you more than any other, for you are  
obsessed with quarreling, warring, and fighting,  
and your strength is just a gift from the gods.  
Take your ships and men and go home to rule  
your [Myrmidons](#). I care nothing for you  
or your childish anger. But heed this warning:  
while Phoebus Apollo is taking Chryseis from me,  
as I send her home with my ship and my crew  
I will go myself to your tent and take your prize,  
the fair-cheeked [Briseïs](#), so you may learn how

much greater I am than you, and others will think twice before declaring themselves equal to me.”

Agamemnon’s words pained the son of Peleus, and within his chest his heart was divided in two. Should he stand up, pull out his sharp sword, race through the assembly, and slay Atreus’ son, or should he hold his rage and temper his burning soul? He considered this in his mind and heart and began to draw his great sword from its sheath, but then [Athena](#) came to him from heaven, sent by Hera, who loved both men and was concerned for them equally. Standing behind him, she grabbed fair-haired Achilles and revealed herself only to him. The son of Peleus turned, immediately recognized Pallas Athena and her terrible, blazing eyes, and asked her: “Why are *you* here, child of shield-bearer Zeus? Was it to see for yourself Agamemnon’s hubris? Then let me tell you what will happen: soon he will pay for his arrogance with his life.”

Then the owl-eyed goddess Athena said to him: “White-armed Hera sent me here from heaven to temper your rage, should you obey me, for she loves and cares for you both. So come, take your hand off your sword and end your quarrel, but revile him with words and assure him of future regret, for what I say will come to pass: you will be rewarded with three times as many gifts due to his hubris. So obey us and curb your rage.”

Hearing this, swift-footed Achilles replied: “Goddess, though it burns my heart to do so, I must obey your words. After all, the gods listen to the prayers of obedient men.”

So saying, he returned the sword's heavy silver hilt to its scabbard, eager to obey Athena—but she had already left for Olympus to join the other gods in the house of aegis-bearing Zeus.<sup>8</sup> Holding back none of his fury, the son of Peleus again addressed the son of Atreus: “You drunken, bitch-faced fool with a deer's heart, you never arm for war with your troops or prove your valor in an ambush with the best Achaeans, for you know it would be your death. Instead, you go scavenging through the camps and take a gift from one who speaks against you. You are a king who devours his own people; otherwise, this insult would be your last. But I swear this mighty oath to you now: by this scepter, which will never again sprout leaf and branch, having long ago left its stump on a mountain, shorn with bronze of leaf and limb, and which Achaeans now carry from hand to hand to dispense justice and uphold Zeus' laws, I swear to you that one day soon, the sons of Achaea will come begging for Achilles, and you will be awash with grief, unable to help as murderous [Hector](#) drives men to their deaths, and it will gnaw at your heart that you dishonored the best of the Achaeans.”

When Peleus' son finished, he threw down the golden-studded staff and sat opposite a still-smoldering son of Atreus. Then sweet-voiced [Nestor](#) of [Pylos](#) rose, the clear-toned orator whose words poured from his lips like honey. He had seen two generations perish, those born and raised long ago in holy Pylos,

8. The aegis is carried by Zeus and Athena; it is most likely a type of shield, but its exact nature is uncertain.

and now he ruled over the third. With noble intentions, he addressed the assembly:  
“Alas, great grief has come to the Achaeans! Clearly [Priam](#) and the sons of Priam will rejoice and all Trojan hearts will be filled with glee if they learn the story of this endless strife between the best of all Danaans in council and war. So listen to me, for you are both younger than I. I have associated with warriors who were greater than all of you, and not once did they slight me. I have never seen their like, not before or since, men like Peirithous and [Dryas](#), shepherd of men, [Caeneus](#) and Exadius, godlike [Polyphemus](#), and [Theseus](#), son of [Aegeus](#), equal to all immortals. These were the mightiest men ever born on earth, and they fought strong, savage beasts of the mountains and laid them to waste.<sup>9</sup> These men called for me to join them, though I came from Pylos, a land far away. I was a freelance fighter, but neither I nor any other mortal on earth could match these men in battle. Still, they listened to me and took my advice. So now you two must listen to my advice: noble lord, do not take the girl away, for the Achaean sons gave her to Achilles as a prize. And you, son of Peleus, do not quarrel with kings, for no one can match the honor and glory granted by Zeus to a [scepter](#)-bearing king. You are a mighty warrior and son of a goddess, but he is mightier and rules over more men. Son of Atreus, I beg you: quiet your rage and let go of your anger against Achilles, for he stands above all Achaeans as a mighty shield in this terrible war.”

9. Nestor here is referring to the Lapiths, an Aeolian tribe who lived in Thessaly near mount Pelion.

Then in response to him, lord Agamemnon spoke:  
“Indeed, old man, everything you say is true.  
But this person here wishes to be above all others:  
to be stronger than all, to order all, and to rule all.  
But there is one man, at least, who will not obey him.  
Does he have the right to hurl insults at me simply  
because the eternal gods made him a great warrior?”

Then godlike Achilles interrupted him and said:  
“Indeed, I would be called a worthless coward  
if I submitted to your every word in every matter.  
Command others to carry out your will, but do not  
expect this of me, for I will obey you no longer.  
And I will tell you another thing, and take it to heart:  
my hands will not fight you or any other for that girl,  
for you would only be taking back what you gave me.  
But nothing else I hold beside my swift black ships  
will be seized and carried away against my will.  
If you try to take anything, then all these men will  
watch your black blood flowing fast from my spear.”

When the two finished their war of words, they rose  
and dismissed the assembly by the Achaean ships.  
Achilles went to his tents and his well-balanced  
ships to join the son of [Menoetius](#) and his soldiers,  
and the son of Atreus launched a ship on the sea  
bearing twenty oarsmen, a hecatomb for sacrifice  
to Apollo, Chryses’ fair-cheeked daughter,  
and the wise and wily Odysseus as commander.

After they set sail, Agamemnon ordered his men  
to purify themselves. First, they washed away  
the pestilence and threw it into the sea; then  
they sacrificed a hecatomb of bulls and goats  
to Apollo by the barren shore, and the savory  
smoke spiraled up into the heavenly skies.

The army went about their duties, but nothing could quell Agamemnon's rage at Achilles.

So he called [Talthybius](#) and [Eurybates](#), his ever-ready attendants, and said to them: "Go to the tent of Peleus' son, Achilles, take the fair-cheeked Briseïs, and bring her here; if he refuses to give her up, then he will regret it, for I will bring my army and take her by force."

So he spoke and sent them on their way. They walked unwillingly along the barren sea shore and soon came to the camp of the Myrmidon. They found him sitting by his tent and black ship, clearly unhappy to see them approach. The two men revered the king and stood before him in fright, neither one daring to speak. But Achilles knew why they were there and said: "Greetings, heralds and Zeus' mortal messengers. Come closer. You are not to blame, for it was Agamemnon who sent you here for the girl, Briseïs. Come, [Patroclus](#), child of Zeus, bring her out so they can take her away; and let these two bear witness to the blessed gods, to mortal men, and to your reckless king, should a time come when I am needed to ward off shameful defeat. Clearly poison rage fills his mind, for he cannot look both ahead and behind to see how best to defend the Achaean ships."

So he spoke, and Patroclus obeyed his friend, bringing out fair-cheeked Briseïs and releasing her. As the two men returned to their ships, the woman an unwilling follower, Achilles burst into tears and left the others to sit by the sea and look on the wine-dark deep. Lifting his hands, he prayed to his divine mother:

“Mother, since you brought me into this world to live a short life, surely high-thundering Zeus owes me honor, yet no honor has been granted. Indeed, great lord Agamemnon dishonored me by seizing my prize and taking her away.”

His tears and prayers were heard by his [mother](#), who was seated in the salt sea beside her father, [the Old Man of the Sea](#). She rose like a fog emerged before him, sat down beside him, stroked him as he shed tears, and asked: “Child, why do you cry? Why so full of grief? Do not conceal your mind; share your thoughts.”

With a heavy groan, swift-footed Achilles replied: “You already know. Must I repeat it? We marched to [Thebes](#), the sacred city of [Eëtion](#), sacked that city and returned with the spoils. We divided the goods equally amongst ourselves, giving the fair-cheeked Chryseis to Atreus’ son. But Chryses, free-shooter Apollo’s priest, came to the swift ships of the bronze-clad Achaeans to ransom his daughter, carrying countless gifts, holding sharp-shooter Apollo’s ribbon on a golden staff, and begging all Achaeans, especially Atreus’ sons, marshalers of armies. Then all Achaeans shouted their approval, to respect the priest and accept his noble ransoms, but the heart of Agamemnon was unmoved, and he dismissed the priest harshly. The old man left fuming, but Apollo heard his beloved priest’s prayers and shot poisoned arrows at the Argives. Soon men began to die, one after the other, as his arrows rained down on the whole Achaean army. But the old seer revealed the reasons for the free-shooter’s rage.

I was the first to say we should appease the god,  
but rage consumed the son of Atreus; he stood  
and made his threats, which have come to pass.  
For the Achaeans are returning one girl to Chryse  
on a speedy ship loaded with gifts for Apollo,  
while two heralds took away the other girl, Briseïs,  
my prize from the Achaean sons. But you,  
mother, if you are able, protect your brave son:  
go to Olympus and beg Zeus to remember  
when you pleased his heart with word and deed,  
for in my father's great palace you often boasted  
that you alone of the immortals saved from ruin  
the son of [Cronos](#), lord of the black clouds,  
when he was to be bound in chains by the gods  
Hera and Poseidon and Pallas Athena.<sup>10</sup>  
But you came and freed him of those bonds  
by quickly calling for the hundred-handed,  
the one gods call Briareus but all men know as  
[Aegaeon](#), who is even stronger than his [father](#).  
He sat with Cronos' son, exulting in his glory,  
and the gods shrank in fear and did not bind him.  
Now sit with Zeus, clasp his knee, and remind  
him of all this, so he may aid the Trojans and drive  
the Achaeans to their ships and to the sea until  
they start to die. Then they will see their king  
for who he truly is, and Agamemnon will learn  
the folly of dishonoring the best of the Achaeans."

Tears poured from Thetis' eyes as she replied:  
"Why did I raise you, child born into sorrow?  
If only you could sit by your ships without tears  
or pain, for your time is short and there is little  
left. You are fated to a quick, miserable life, while  
I was fated to have borne you into our palace.  
Yet I will go to Olympus, repeat your words,

10. This event is not brought up in any other ancient account.



and seek to persuade Zeus who hurls thunderbolts.  
But you must sit beside your swift ships, continue  
to rage against the Achaeans, and cease battle.  
Yesterday, Zeus went to [Oceanus](#) for a banquet  
with the [Ethiopians](#), and all the gods followed him.  
But in twelve days, when he returns to Olympus,  
I will go to his house with its bronze threshold,  
clasp him by the knees, and try to persuade him.”

So saying, she departed, leaving him alone,  
his heart angered because a well-girdled woman  
was taken from him by force and against his will.  
Meanwhile, Odysseus arrived in Chryse with the holy  
hecatomb. They reached the harbor’s deep waters,  
removed the sails and stowed them in the ship,  
lowered the mast into place by the forestays,  
and used oars to row the ship to the anchor point.  
Once anchor stones were thrown out and bound  
with stern cables, the crew went ashore bearing  
the hecatomb for the free-shooter Apollo.  
Then Chryseis stepped out of the sea-going vessel.  
Wily Odysseus led her to the altar and placed  
her into her beloved father’s arms, saying to him:  
“Chryses, Agamemnon, ruler of men, sent me  
to return your child and sacrifice a hecatomb  
to Phoebus on behalf of the Danaans, thus appeasing  
the god who sent great sorrow to the Argives.”

Odysseus finished, and the priest embraced  
his beloved daughter. The men then quickly  
arranged the hecatomb around the altar to Apollo,  
purified their hands, and took the barleycorn.  
Chryses raised his hands and offered a prayer:  
“Hear me, god of the silver bow who protects  
Chryse and holy Cilla and rules Tenedos.  
Just as you heard my prayer and honored me

by bringing punishment to the Achaean army,  
now I ask you to honor my prayer once more:  
throw off the plague you sent to the Danaans.”

So he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him.  
After prayers were offered and barley scattered,  
they drew back the victims’ heads, slit their throats,  
flayed them, cut the meat from the thighs, wrapped  
them in a layer of fat, and placed raw meat on top.  
The old man burnt the meat on wood shards  
and poured wine over them as young men held  
five-pronged forks. When the bones were burnt  
and the innards eaten, they cut the rest into pieces,  
roasted them, and pulled them from the fire.  
Then they prepared the banquet and feasted,  
and there was enough for every hungry soul.  
When the meal was over, the mixing bowls were  
filled with drink, every cup was filled, and each  
man poured out the first drops in offering  
to the gods. All day long, the men appeased  
the free-worker with dancing and singing,  
and Apollo’s listened, his heart satisfied.

When the sun set and darkness approached,  
they rested by the stern-cables of the ship,  
but as [Dawn](#) first spread her rosy fingers,  
they set sail for the Achaean camp. Free-  
shooter Apollo provided a favorable wind,  
so they raised the ship’s mast and spread the sail.  
The wind blew, the dark red waves roared mightily  
against the stem, and the ship sailed speedily  
over the rushing water to its destination.  
When at last they reached the vast Achaean camp,  
they dragged the black ship to the mainland  
and onto the sandy beach, set props to secure it,  
and then scattered to their own tents and ships.

But the Zeus-sprung son of Peleus, Achilles, continued to rage as he sat by his ships. He did not go to the assembly where men grant glory, nor did he go to war, but instead he let his heart waste away, yearning for the cries of battle.

Twelve days later, as dawn rose in the sky, the eternal gods, led by Zeus, returned to Olympus. Thetis did not forget her son's request, so at first light she left the swelling sea and flew through the sky to Olympus where she found the far-seeing son of Cronos sitting away from others on the mountain's summit. She sat before him, held his knees with her left hand and his chin with her right, and prayed to Zeus, son of Cronos, saying: "Father Zeus, if there was a time when I aided you by word or deed, then grant this wish to me: honor my son, who is fated to live a short life, for he has been dishonored by Agamemnon, lord of men, who took and kept my son's prize. Atone for this, lord counselor of Olympus: give the Trojans victory until the Achaeans grant my son the exalted honor he deserves."

She finished, but cloud-gatherer Zeus said nothing for a long while. Thetis, still holding his knees, tightened her grip and asked again: "Bend your head and assent to my request or deny me; you have nothing to fear, but I must know if I am the most dishonored of all the gods."

Greatly worried, cloud-gatherer Zeus replied: "Your request is dangerous; it pits me against Hera, who torments me with wrathful words. She constantly quarrels with me among the gods,

saying that I help the Trojans in battle. So go now, in case Hera sees you, and I will consider how best to fulfill your request. But rest assured: I nod my head so you know that I assent. This is the surest pledge I can offer immortals, for once I nod my head, I cannot take it back, either through deception or inaction.”<sup>11</sup>

So he said, and the son of Cronos nodded his brow in assent, his [ambrosial](#) locks flowed from his immortal head, and all Olympus shook.

When their council finished, the two separated, Thetis jumping from Olympus to the deep salt sea and Zeus returning to his palace. Upon his arrival, all the gods stood to meet their father; none had the courage to sit, so all stood and faced him as he sat on his throne. But Hera knew silver-footed Thetis, daughter of the Old Man of the Sea, had met with Zeus and devised plans, so she quickly and bitterly addressed the son of Cronos: “With which of the gods have you been meeting, deceiver? You always love being apart from me, discussing things and making decisions in secret, but you never reveal your mind to me—that I know.”

Then the father of gods and mortals replied to her: “Hera, you cannot know my every word and thought. It would be too much even for you, my wife. If there is something suitable for you to hear, then no god or man will hear it before you. But if I wish to consider things away from the gods, then do not ask about them or seek to know them.”

11. According to Hesiod’s *Theogony* (lines 782-806), gods who are accused of breaking oaths must pour waters from the river Styx out of a golden jar. If the god did, in fact, break an oath, then as soon as the Stygian water is poured, the god will spend one year in a coma and then spend nine years exiled from the other gods.

Then Hera, the calm-eyed queen, replied to him:  
“Dreadful Zeus, what a story you have told! I have  
never before asked questions or sought answers,  
and you are free to consider all things as you wish.  
But my heart fears that Thetis, daughter of the Old  
Man of the Sea, has beguiled you, for at dawn  
she sat beside you, clasping your knees. I expect  
she convinced you to nod assent and honor  
Achilles by killing many Achaeans beside their ships.”

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus replied to her, saying:  
“Demon! You see everything. Nothing escapes you,  
yet all you are doing is pushing yourself further  
from my heart, and that is worse for you. If these  
things are as you say, then it is my own affair.  
Now go, sit down, be quiet, and obey my words,  
or all the gods of Olympus will be unable to stop me  
from attacking you with my invulnerable hands.”

He spoke, frightening calm-eyed queen Hera,  
who sat down in silence, her passions muted.  
Throughout Zeus’ palace, the gods worried.  
[Hephaestus](#), the famous craftsman, spoke first,  
hoping to comfort his mother, white-armed Hera:  
“This is a nasty affair, and it will become worse  
if you two quarrel over mere mortals and push  
the gods to violence. There will be no pleasure  
at the feast should baser passions prevail. I advise  
you, mother, though you know this already,  
to show kindness to father Zeus, so his anger  
will subside and our feast will not be ruined.  
If the hurler of lightning wished, he could strike  
us from our seats, for he is the strongest of us.  
But if you speak to him with gentle words, then  
straightaway the Olympian will turn kindly to us.”

Saying this, he got up and placed a two-handed goblet in his loving mother's hands and said to her: "Have courage, mother, and endure these troubles; you are dear to me, and I could not bear to see you harmed, for I would be full of grief but unable to help, since it is hopeless to oppose the Olympian. One time, while trying to protect you, he seized me by the foot and hurled me over the divine threshold. All day long I fell through the sky until, at sunset, I landed on [Lemnos](#) with little life left in me; there the [Sintians](#) cared for me until I was well."

He finished, and white-armed Hera smiled and took the goblet offered by her child. He then poured wine for the gods from left to right, drawing the sweet nectar<sup>12</sup> from the mixing bowl. Inextinguishable laughter arose from the happy gods who watched Hephaestus wobble around the palace.

And so they feasted all day long until the sun set, their hearts warmed by the unequalled banquet, Apollo's enchanting lyre, and the ethereal voices of the Muses as they sang in reply to one another.

As the brilliant light of the sun was setting, the immortals desired rest, so they departed to their homes, all skillfully and craftily created by Hephaestus, the renowned, bow-legged god. Thus Zeus, lord of lightning, went to bed, where he always went when sweet sleep fell on him, and he slept alongside Hera of the golden-throne.

12. Nectar, the drink of the gods, and ambrosia, the food of the gods, possess healing and restorative powers that allow the gods to remain immortal.

## BOOK 2

The other gods and the men who marshal chariots slept through the night, but sweet sleep evaded Zeus, for he debated in his mind how to honor Achilles and slay many beside the Achaean ships. He soon concluded that the best plan was to send a terrible dream to Atreus' son, Agamemnon, so he called to [Dream](#) with his winged words: "Go quickly, destructive Dream, to the swift ships of the Achaean, and there you will enter the tent of Agamemnon and whisper to him this message: tell him to quickly arm the long-haired Achaeans, for the time has come to seize Troy's wide streets. The gods with homes on Olympus are no longer divided, for Hera has bent their minds to her will, and Troy has been fated for sorrow and death."

So he spoke, and when Dream heard these words he quickly set off for the Achaean swift ships. When he reached Agamemnon's tent, he found the son of Atreus fast asleep in ambrosial slumber. He stood over him in the form of Nestor, son of [Neleus](#), whom Agamemnon honors above all others. In this guise divine Dream addressed him: "Why do you sleep, son of Atreus, tamer of horses? It is unwise to spend all night at rest when leading an army and making so many difficult decisions."

Now listen, for I bring word from Zeus, who,  
while far away, still cares for you and pities you.  
You must quickly arm the long-haired Achaeans,  
for the time has come to seize Troy's wide streets.  
The gods with homes on Olympus are no longer  
divided, for Hera has bent their minds to her will,  
and Troy has been fated for sorrow and death  
by Zeus' order. Remember these words; do not let  
them escape when you wake from sleep slumber."

Dream finished and departed, leaving the king  
to consider in his heart things that were never  
to be. He foolishly wished to attack Priam's city  
on this day, unaware that Zeus already had a plan  
to inflict great pain and suffering on both Trojans  
and Danaans by bringing them into violent conflict.  
He awoke from sleep with the divine voice pooling  
in his ears. He sat up straight, donned his soft,  
newly-made tunic, covered it with his large cloak,  
laced a pair of sandals to his shining feet, and hung  
his silver-studded sword over his shoulders. Then he  
seized his father's imperishable scepter and carried  
it over to the ships of the bronze-clad Achaeans.

When Dawn rose on high Olympus, declaring  
daylight's arrival to Zeus and the other immortals,  
Agamemnon ordered the clear-voiced herald  
to summon the long-haired Achaeans to assembly.  
The cry went out, and the army quickly gathered.

First, he called for the council of elders to sit  
beside the ship of Nestor, the king born in Pylos.  
When all had assembled, he revealed his plan:  
"Listen, friends. Last night while I slept, a dream  
from the gods came to me in a form that looked  
like noble Nestor in features and stature and build.



It stood over my head and spoke these words:  
‘Why do you sleep, son of Atreus, tamer of horses?  
It is unwise to spend all night at rest when leading  
an army and making so many difficult decisions.  
Now listen, for I bring word from Zeus, who,  
while far away, still cares for you and pities you.  
You must quickly arm the long-haired Achaeans,  
for the time has come to seize Troy’s wide streets.  
The gods with homes on Olympus are no longer  
divided, for Hera has bent their minds to her will,  
and Troy has been fated for sorrow and death  
by Zeus’ order. Remember these words.’ When  
finished, Dream left, and I awoke from sweet  
sleep. So let us go now and arm Achaea’s sons,  
but first I will test their mettle, as is tradition,  
and order them to take their ships and flee  
while the rest of you order them to hold back.”

When he finished, he returned to his seat,  
and Nestor, king of sandy Pylos, stood to address  
the assembly with the best of intentions, saying:  
“Friends, leaders, and rulers of the Argives,  
if any other Achaean had told us this dream,  
we would call it a lie and turn our backs on it.  
But he who claims to be the greatest Achaean  
saw it, so let us go and arm the Achaean sons.”

He finished and led the way out of the council.  
The scepter-bearing kings obediently followed  
their leader, and the soldiers hurried after them.  
In the same way that thick swarms of bees burst  
out of hollow rocks in ever-renewing waves  
and then fly in grape-like bunches over the spring  
flowers, some going this way, others going that  
way, so too did the troops march in formation  
from the ships and huts by the shore of the sea

to the place of assembly. With them was [Rumor](#), messenger of Zeus, inciting them like a blazing fire. The assembly was a riot of noise, the earth groaning under the men as they sat, and nine heralds trying to halt the men's cries so the Zeus-blessed king's words could be heard. The men eventually took their seats, and the noise dropped until all fell silent. Then Agamemnon stood and held the scepter forged by Hephaestus. Hephaestus had given it to lord Zeus, Cronos' son, who gave it to the swift appearing messenger; then [Hermes](#) gave it to [Pelops](#), driver of chariots, and Pelops gave it to Atreus, shepherd of men. When Atreus died, it was given to [Thyestes](#), rich in flocks, and Thyestes left it for Agamemnon to carry as he ruled many islands and all of Argos.

He leaned on the scepter and addressed the Argives:  
"Friends, heroes of Danaan, comrades of Ares, great Zeus, son of Cronos, has ensnared me in folly, for he promised me with a nod of assent that I would sack great Ilios before going home, but that was a foul trick, and now I must return to Argos in shame, having lost many men. Such are the pleasures of all-powerful Zeus, who has razed many cities and will destroy many more, for his strength is greatest of all. Those living in the days to come will learn of our shame, how a vast and brave Achaean army fought a fruitless battle against an outnumbered enemy in a war with no end in sight. If all Achaeans and Trojans were willing to swear oath-offerings and number both sides, and if all Trojans were counted, and if all Achaeans were arranged into troops of ten, and if each troop took a Trojan to pour our wine, then many

companies would be without a cup bearer.  
I tell you, this is how far the Achaeans outnumber  
the Trojans who live in the city. But they have  
spear-wielding allies from many foreign cities  
who fight me off, beat me back, and prevent  
me from sacking and pillaging crowded Ilios.  
Now nine years have passed for mighty Zeus.  
The timber on our ships decays, our cables rot,  
and our wives and children all sit in the great halls  
waiting for our return. Still, the task that brought  
us to this place still has not been accomplished.  
So this is my commandment for all to obey:  
let us sail back home to our beloved fatherlands,  
for we shall never capture Troy's wide streets."

So he spoke, stirring the souls of those not  
privy to the council's plans. And the assembly  
moved like the long waves of the [Icarian](#) sea,  
kindled by [East and South Winds](#) that swoop  
down from the clouds of Father Zeus. Just as  
the West Wind moves with a blustering rage  
over the deep standing corn, flattening the stalks,  
so also moved the assembly. As the men raced  
to their ships, their trampling feet lifted clouds  
of dust high into the air while calls rang out  
to fasten the ships and draw them into the sea.  
And as slipways were cleared and props removed,  
the cries for home reached up to the heavens.

And the Argives would have returned home before  
their fated time had Hera not said to Athena:  
"Alas, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, tireless one!  
Is this the way the Argives plan to flee over  
the broad back of the sea to their fatherlands?  
Are they leaving Priam and the Trojans to claim  
as triumph Argive [Helen](#), for whom so many

Achaean have perished in Troy, far from home?  
Go quickly through the Achaean army and use  
your soothing voice to hold back each man  
and to stop them from dragging their ships to the sea.”

So saying, gleaming-eyed Athena obeyed,  
quickly rushing down from the Olympian peaks  
to the nimble Achaean ships. There she found  
Odysseus, Zeus’ equal in counsel, standing  
at rest. He had not yet fastened his benched  
ships for his heart and soul were in pain.  
Bright-eyed Athena stood near him and said:  
“Son of [Laertes](#), sprung from Zeus, wily Odysseus,  
is this how you plan to return to your fatherland,  
jumping into your well-benched ships and fleeing?  
Are you leaving Priam and the Trojans to claim  
as triumph Argive Helen, for whom so many  
Achaean have perished in Troy, far from home?  
Go quickly through the Achaean army and use  
your soothing voice to hold back each man  
and to stop them from dragging their ships to the sea.”

Odysseus recognized Athena’s voice and set off  
quickly, discarding his cloak, which was collected  
by his attendant, the herald of Ithaca, Eurybates.  
Going straight to Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
he took from him his father’s imperishable scepter  
and headed for the bronze-clad Achaean ships.

When he came upon a king or distinguished man,  
he spoke to him with gentle words of restraint:  
“It is wrong to threaten you like a frightened fool,  
but sit down and make your men sit as well;  
you do not yet know the mind of Atreus’ son.  
He tests us now, but soon he will start to punish.  
Did we not hear all he said during council?

May his anger not cause harm to Achaea's sons.  
The wrath of kings is great, for their honor comes  
from Zeus, and counsellor Zeus cherishes them."

When he saw a commoner who was shouting,  
he struck the man with his staff and exclaimed:  
"Sit down, keep still, and listen to the words  
of braver men than you, for you are a worthless  
coward, useless both in combat and in council.  
It is impossible for every Achaeon to rule as king;  
too many lords is a disaster. Let us have one leader,  
one king, to whom the son of Cronos has granted  
the scepter and the right to rule his people justly."

So he expertly brought the army under control  
and they hurried noisily back to the place  
of assembly like a thundering wave that crashes  
onto a vast beach as deep waters rage below.

All sat down in their seats except for [Thersites](#),  
the blowhard whose disordered mind was filled  
with foul words, whose speech was a rambling,  
reckless roar against kings, and whose only goal  
was to win a laugh from the Argives. He was  
the ugliest of all who came to Ilios: bow-legged,  
lame in one foot, shoulders bent, body hunched  
over, and a sugar-loaf head sparsely covered  
with clumps of thin, wooly hair. He hated Achilles  
and Odysseus and often quarreled with them,  
but now Agamemnon was the focus of his shrill  
shouts; and with him the Achaeans also held  
violent anger and resentment in their hearts.  
With a great cry, he confronted Agamemnon:  
"Son of Atreus, what is wrong? What do you  
crave? Your tents are filled with bronze and many  
captured women, for we Achaeans grant you

first choice whenever we sack a city. Or do you desire gold, which some Trojan will bring out of Ilios to pay the ransom for a son who I or another Achaean bound and carried away? Or do you desire a young girl for your bed, one you can hide away from others? It is a disgrace for a lord to lead his troops into danger. So, all you weak, despicable Achaean women, let us head home in our ships, and leave this man here so he can enjoy his prized toys in Troy. Then he will learn if he really does need our help, for he dishonored Achilles, a greater man than he, by seizing the man's prize and taking it away. Lucky for you Achilles' heart is not filled with bile; otherwise, that insult would have been your last."<sup>1</sup>

So Thersites spoke his abuse to lord Agamemnon, but godlike Odysseus quickly pounced on the man, glaring at him harshly and scolding him, saying: "You may be a clever speaker, Thersites, but only a fool quarrels with a king by himself. I think you are the basest, most pathetic of all who came with the sons of Atreus to Ilios. So keep your mouth shut, say no more about kings, and quit looking for an easy way home. We do not know how this business will end, if the Achaean sons will win or lose, live or die. But here you sit, showering this leader of men, Agamemnon, with insults and abuse simply because the Danaans have granted him prizes. But let me tell you what is going to happen now.

1. In this passage, Thersites makes a very reasonable case for ending the war. However, Homer goes to great lengths to describe Thersites as ugly, arrogant, and obscene before he even utters a single word, and once he does speak, his words are immediately dismissed and he is punished. After reading this passage, the philosopher Hegel coined the term "Thersitism" to describe situations where an author purposely puts an otherwise rational argument in the mouth of a contemptuous character so as to minimize its impact (47).

If I discover you acting like a fool one more time, then may my head be ripped from my shoulders and let no man call me father of [Telemachus](#) if I do not grab you and strip off your clothes—cloak, tunic, and all—and leave you naked and ashamed; then I will beat you and kick you out of camp until you run crying to the swift ships.”

So saying, he took the golden scepter and beat Thersites until a swollen, bloody bruise covered his back and shoulders. Tears poured down as he doubled over in pain and fell, terrified, to the ground, trying in vain to dry his tears. Though troubled by the scene, the Achaeans still laughed and turned to each other, saying: “Amazing! Odysseus has performed countless good deeds, as a counselor and a strategist, but this is by far his greatest gift to the Argives, putting this worthless, babbling fool in his place. To be sure, he and his oversized ego are not likely to be back to challenge kings with violent words.”

So they said. Then Odysseus, sacker of cities, stood, scepter in hand, next to bright-eyed Athena who, in the guise of a herald, ordered the Achaeans, from those nearby to those far away, to be silent and to listen to his words and consider his advice. With noble intent he addressed the assembly: “Son of Atreus, my king, the Achaeans seem ready to make you the most despicable man in the world and to break the promise made before our journey from Argos, land of horses: that we not return home until we raze the walls and sack the city of Ilios. They act like children or old widows, whining to each other about going home. True, our troubles would make

anyone wish for home, and anyone away from his wife for just a month is vexed, especially when wintry winds and stormy seas hold him back. But we have been here for nine years already, and we are still here. I do not blame any Achaean for being impatient, but to remain so long and return home empty-handed would be a shame. So be patient, friends, and wait until we find out if Calchas' prophecies are true or not. We know the truth in our hearts, for we all witnessed it, those that death has not taken. It seems like only yesterday when we gathered at [Aulis](#), preparing to bring death to Priam and Troy. We were standing around a spring, preparing to offer a perfect hecatomb to the gods on a sacred altar near a plane-tree and a shining stream, when an omen appeared: a terrifying blood-red serpent, sent to the light of day by Zeus himself, that quickly darted away from the altar and towards the plane-tree. There, on a branch at the top of the tree, we saw eight baby sparrows hiding in the leaves, and the mother who gave them life was the ninth. Then the serpent ate the pitiful creatures, and as the mother flew around mourning her little ones, he grabbed her by the wings and ate her as she cried. But once the creature had eaten the baby sparrows and their mother, wily counselor Zeus turned him to stone, and we stood there, struck dumb by these terrible omens. But Calchas was quick to divine their meaning, saying to us: 'Why are long-haired Achaeans so silent? Great counselor Zeus has given us a glimpse of the future that will be long in coming but never forgotten. Just as the serpent devoured the sparrow's babies,



eight in all, along with the mother, the ninth,  
so we shall wage war in Troy for that many years;  
then, in the tenth, we will capture the city's streets.<sup>7</sup>  
And just as Calchas said, now this has come to be.  
So come, hold fast, all you well-greaved Achaeans,  
for soon enough we will capture the city of Priam."

So he spoke, and the Achaeans cheered heartily,  
the noise echoing all around the ships as they  
celebrated the words of godlike Odysseus.  
Then Nestor, horseman of [Gerenia](#), spoke:  
"Look now, you are all debating like little  
children who care nothing for the work of war.  
What happened to our compacts and our oaths?  
Why not throw in the fire our counsels, plans,  
wine-sealed vows, and handshakes sealed with trust?  
We have been too long arguing with useless words,  
but we are still unable to find any solutions. Son  
of Atreus, do not alter course. Hold to your will  
and maintain command of the Achaeans  
in battle. As for those few who disagree with us—  
let them waste away. Their plan will amount  
to nothing, and they will leave for Argos before  
learning if the vow made by aegis-bearing Zeus  
is a lie or not. For I say on the day the Argives  
boarded swift ships with weapons of destruction  
for Troy, Cronos' son nodded his head, sending  
lightning on our right and showing us favorable  
signs. Therefore no one should be eager to return  
home until each man has slept with a Trojan's  
wife as payment for our fighting over Helen.  
But if anyone desires to return home, then let him  
try to take a well-benched black ship so he may  
meet his death before the whole army. You, king,  
should listen and follow my counsel, for the advice  
I offer will be difficult to dismiss: divide the men

into tribes and clans, Agamemnon, so clans aid other clans and tribes other tribes. Should you do this and should the Achaeans obey, you will know which leaders and men are cowardly and which are brave, for each clan will fight for itself, and you will know if it is heaven's will that you not sack the city or the cowardice and folly of your men."

When he finished, Agamemnon, lord of men, replied:  
"Again, old man, your words outshine all others.  
If father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo granted me ten counselors like Nestor from among the Achaeans, then we would soon bend Priam's city to our will, seize it with our hands, and raze it to the ground. Instead, aegis-bearing Zeus has given me sorrow, fruitless feuds, and futile arguments. Now Achilles and I are exchanging violent words over some young girl, and I was the first to become angry. But if we ever united in purpose, then we would send death to Troy without delay. Now let each man go to his meal and then prepare for battle. Sharpen your spear, polish your shield, feed your swift-footed horses, examine your chariot on both sides, and get ready for a long, dreadful day of battle against a fierce foe. But be warned: no rest will come until darkness falls. Your chest will be bathed in sweat from the large shield strap, your hands will grow heavy holding your spear, and your horse will be foaming as it strains from the pull of your well-crafted chariot. But if any man chooses to loiter by the curved ships, far from the fighting, then his fate is sealed: he will become a feast for dogs and crows."

So he spoke, and the Argives roared like a wave crashing against a cliff when the south wind blows,

a jutting crag shaped by countless surges formed by untold winds coming from all directions. They stood and scattered to the ships, built fires by their tents, and ate their meals. Each man made a sacrifice to his tribe's immortal god, and all prayed for death to pass them over in battle. But lord Agamemnon offered a fat, five-year-old bull as sacrifice to the mighty son of Cronos and summoned all the noble Achaean leaders. Nestor was the first, followed by Idomeneus, the two Ajaxes<sup>2</sup>, the son of [Tydeus](#), and finally Odysseus, Zeus' equal in counsel. War-crier Menelaus came on his own accord for he knew what troubled his brother's heart. They took up barley grains and surrounded the bull as lord Agamemnon stood among them and prayed: "Great and glorious Zeus, lord of the black clouds, do not let the sun fall and darkness descend until I reduce Priam's palace to a smoldering ruin, burn his gates to the ground, rip Hector's tunic from his body, drive a sword through his chest, and make his many comrades fall head-first into the earth and bite the dust."

But Zeus did not answer his prayer right away; he accepted the sacrifices but intensified the war.

Once prayers had been said and barley thrown, they drew back the head, slaughtered and skinned the bull, cut out the thighs, enclosed them in fat, and finally placed raw meat upon them. They burned these over leafless billets, the entrails skewered on a spit and held over a blazing fire. When the thighs were burnt, they tasted the entrails. Then the rest was cut into pieces, put on spits,

2. Greater Ajax (or Telamonian Ajax) and Ajax the Lesser.

roasted carefully, and taken out of the fire.  
When the meal was ready, they feasted, and all  
were satisfied in equal measure. After every  
man's desire for food and drink was sated,  
Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, was first to speak:  
"Son of Atreus, Agamemnon, noblest of kings,  
the time for talking is over, for the task that Zeus  
has put into our hands can be delayed no longer.  
So let the heralds summon the bronze-clad  
Achaean soldiers to gather by the ships, and let  
us go as a group through the wide Achaean camp  
so we can quickly rouse the fierce god of war."

Agamemnon, ruler of men, heeded Nestor's  
advice and ordered the clear-voiced heralds  
to summon the long-haired Achaeans to battle;  
the men, hearing the call, gathered quickly.  
The kings near the Zeus-blessed son of Atreus  
marshaled their troops, and golden-eyed Athena  
followed them holding the eternal aegis, covered  
with a hundred tightly-woven tassels, each one  
made of gold and worth a hundred oxen. She  
rushed through the Achaean army urging them  
forward, and within each man's heart she placed  
the might and vigor for a long and bitter battle.  
Soon blood-lust replaced their desire to go back  
to the hollowed ships and go home to their families.

Just as a baneful fire burning up a boundless  
woods on a mountain peak is visible from afar,  
so the shine from the marching sea of bronze soldiers  
was so bright it could be seen from the heavens.

And just as flocks of winged birds, geese, cranes,  
and long-necked swans fly here and there across  
the meadows of Asia beside the river [Cayster](#),

delighting in the power of their wings and uttering cries as they move from one perch to the next, so the many tribes streamed from the ships and camps to the plains of the [Scamander](#) as the earth shook in terror from the trampling feet and hooves. They stood in the Scamander meadows in numbers as countless as the leaves and flowers of spring.

And just as many swarms of fluttering flies buzz about the shepherds' pens in springtime when the buckets are overflowing with milk, so the hordes of long-haired Achaeans stood in the plain before the Trojans, waiting anxiously to destroy them.

And just as goat-herders easily separate scattered goats when mingled together in the pasture, so the leaders marshaled their forces into formation for the coming battle, including lord Agamemnon, his eyes and head like Zeus who hurls thunderbolts, his waist like Ares, and his chest like [Poseidon](#). And just as a bull stands out among a herd of oxen when all are gathered together, so on this day did Zeus ensure that the son of Atreus would shine brighter than all other warriors.

Speak to me now, Muses who dwell on Olympus, for you goddesses know and see all while we mortals know nothing and hear only rumors: who were the lords and the leaders of the Danaans? For I could not speak their numbers or names, not even if I possessed ten tongues or ten mouths or a tireless voice or a heart made of bronze, unless the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus, send to my mind all those who gathered in Ilios. Now I will describe the many ships and their leaders.

The [Boeotians](#) were led by [Peneleos](#) and [Leitus](#),

along with [Arcesilaus](#), [Prothoenor](#), and Clonius. These men came from [Hyria](#), rocky Aulis, [Schoenus](#), [Scolus](#), mountainous [Eteonus](#), [Thespeia](#), [Graea](#), and the wide spaces of [Mycalessus](#); they dwelt in [Harma](#), [Eilesium](#), [Erythrae](#), [Eleon](#), [Hyle](#), [Peteon](#), [Ocalea](#), the well-built citadel at [Medeon](#), [Copae](#), [Eutresis](#), and [Thisbe](#), refuge for wild doves; they ruled [Coroneia](#) and the grasses of [Haliartus](#); they made homes in the lands of [Plataea](#), [Glisas](#), the well-built citadel of lower [Thebes](#), and holy [Onchestus](#), the splendid grove of [Poseidon](#); and they lived in [Arne](#) of the rich vines, [Mideia](#), sacred [Nisa](#), and [Anthedon](#) by the sea shore. In all, they set sail with fifty ships, each holding one hundred and twenty young Boeotians.

Those from [Aspledon](#) and [Orchomenus](#) of the [Minyan](#) were led by [Ascalaphus](#) and [Ialmenus](#), sons of Ares. The revered maiden Astyoche bore him in secret for the god of war when she retreated to her chambers in the palace of [Actor](#), son of Azeus. With them were thirty hollow ships.

The leaders of the [Phocians](#) were [Schedius](#) and [Epistrophus](#), sons of [Iphitus](#), great-hearted son of Naubolus. They ruled over [Cyparissus](#), rocky [Pytho](#), divine [Crisa](#), [Daulis](#), and [Panopeus](#); they called [Anemoreia](#) and [Hyampolis](#) home and lived along the heavenly river [Cephisus](#), where they held [Lilaea](#) beside the river's springs. They followed in a fleet of forty black ships, and they were marshaled into column formation and positioned to the left of the Boeotians.

The [Locrians](#) were led by [Little Ajax](#), swift son

of Oileus, who was smaller than Telamonian Ajax, wore a tight tunic of linen, and was the greatest spearman among all Panhellenes and Achaeans. He led the men from [Cynus](#), [Opoeis](#), [Calliarus](#), [Bessa](#), [Scarphe](#), the lovely [Augeiae](#), [Tarphe](#), and [Thronium](#) on either side of the [Boagrius](#) river. Little Ajax led forty black ships full of Locrians, who lived across the straits from holy Euboa.

The fire breathing [Abantes](#) occupied [Euboa](#), [Calchis](#), [Eretria](#), vine-rich [Histiaea](#), [Cerinthus](#) by the sea, and the steep-walled city of [Dion](#); they also lived in [Carystus](#) and held [Styra](#). [Elephenor](#) was their leader, companion of Ares, son of Chalcodon, and lord of the great-hearted Abantes. Following him were the swift Abantes, wearing their hair long in the back and wielding ashen spears able to shatter enemy breastplates. In all, Elephenor commanded forty black ships.

Those who dwelt in [Athens](#)—the well-built citadel and home of great-hearted [Erechtheus](#), who was born of the grain-giving earth but nurtured by Athena, daughter of Zeus, in her own rich temple in Athens, where each year young men sought to win his favor through the sacrifice of a bull or ram—were led by [Menestheus](#), son of Peteos, who had no equal in commanding chariots and shield-bearing warriors. Only Nestor challenged him in this, being his elder. The Athenians followed their leader in fifty ships.

Ajax led twelve ships from [Salamis](#), who were stationed with the Athenian battalions in battle.

And those who held Argos, high-walled [Tiryns](#), [Hermione](#), [Asine](#) that occupies a deep bay,

[Troezen](#), [Eionae](#), vine-rich [Epidarus](#), and the sons of the Achaeans who held [Aegina](#) and [Mases](#) were led by the skilled battle-crier [Diomedes](#) and [Sthenelus](#), prized son of famed [Capaneus](#). A third came with them: [Euryalus](#), godlike son of King [Mecisteus](#), who was the son of [Talaus](#). But the leader was the skilled battle-crier [Diomedes](#), who led a fleet of eighty black ships.

Those who held the well-built citadel at [Mycenae](#), wealthy [Corinth](#), and the well-built [Cleonae](#); and those who lived in [Orneae](#), pleasant [Araethyrea](#) and [Sicyon](#), where Adrastus was first made king; and those with homes in [Hyperesia](#), [Gonoessa](#) on a steep cliff, and [Pellene](#); and those around [Aegium](#), [Aegialus](#), and wide [Helice](#) were led by the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, who commanded one hundred ships and the largest army with the bravest soldiers and proudly wore gleaming gold, for he distinguished himself above all other warriors both in nobility and in leadership.

Those who held hollow, rifted [Lacedaemon](#), [Pharis](#), [Sparta](#), and [Messe](#), the haunt of doves; and those from [Bryseae](#) and lovely [Augeiae](#); and those from [Amyclae](#) and [Helos](#), citadel by the sea, [Laas](#), and [Oetylus](#) were led by great war-crier Menelaus, who commanded sixty ships, arming them apart from the others. He went among them with great confidence, urging them to battle, for he was most anxious to avenge all of Helen's fighting and groaning

Then came those who inhabited Pylos, fair Arene, [Thryum](#), the ford of [Alpheius](#), well-built [Aepy](#), Cyparisseis, Amphigeneia, [Pteleos](#), [Helos](#),



and [Dorium](#), where the Muses met the Thracian [Thamyris](#) and stopped his singing as he traveled from the house of [Eurytus](#) in Oechalia for he boasted of winning the daughter of Zeus even if the Muses themselves sang against him. In their anger, they maimed him, silencing his sweet voice and preventing him from playing the lyre. They were led by horseman Nestor of Gerenia, and with him were ninety ships lined up in rows.

Those holding [Arcadia](#) under steep [Mount Cyllene](#), by the barrow of [Aerytus](#), where warriors fight hand-to-hand; and those from [Pheneos](#), sheep-rich [Orchomenus](#), [Rhipe](#), [Stratia](#), and windy [Enispe](#); and those in [Tegea](#), charming [Mantineia](#), [Stymphalus](#), and [Parrhasia](#) were led by the son of [Ancaeus](#), King [Agapenor](#), with sixty ships, each one filled with many Arcadian warriors, all highly skilled in combat. As they had no interest in seafaring, Agamemnon, son of Atreus and king of men, provided them well-benched ships so they could cross the wine-dark sea.

And those who dwelt in [Buprasium](#) and famed [Elis](#), from the lands of [Hyrmine](#) and [Myrsinus](#) by the sea to the rock of Olen and [Alesium](#), had four leaders. Each leader was followed by ten ships, and each ship was filled with Epeian fighters. Two were led by [Amphimachus](#) and Thalpius: one the son of [Cteatus](#), the other of [Eurytus](#); another was led by Diore, son of [Amarynceus](#); and the fourth was led by [Polyxeinus](#), son of King [Agasthenes](#) and grandson of [Augeias](#).

Then those from [Dulichium](#) and the holy islands of the [Echinae](#), who dwell across the sea from Elis,

were led into battle by [Meges](#), equal to Ares and son of the horseman [Phyleus](#), dear to Zeus, who long before, enraged at his father, went to live in Dulichium. With Meges followed forty black ships.

And Odysseus led the great-hearted [Cephalenians](#) who dwelt in [Ithaca](#) and windy-wooded [Neritum](#), along with those who lived in [Crocyleia](#) and rugged [Aegilips](#), those holding [Zacynthus](#) and the area near [Samos](#), and those on the mainland opposite the isles. They were led by Odysseus, equal to Zeus in counsel, on twelve ships with red prows.

And the [Aetolians](#) who lived in Pleuron, [Olenus](#), [Pylene](#), [Chalcis](#) by the sea, and rocky [Calydon](#) were led by [Thoas](#), son of Andraemon, for the sons of great-hearted [Oeneus](#) were gone, as was the king himself, and yellow-haired [Meleager](#) was also dead. Thus, the burden of rule over all Aetolians passed to him. He led a contingent of forty black ships.

Idomeneus, the great spearman, led the [Cretans](#), who dwelt in [Cnossos](#), [Gortyn](#) with its high walls, [Lyctus](#), [Miletus](#), the white cliffs of [Lycastus](#), the cheerful cities of [Phaistos](#) and [Rhytium](#), and all others who lived among the thousand cities of Crete. Their leaders were Idomeneus, expert spearman, and [Meriones](#), equal of [Enyalios](#), slayer of men. Together, they led eighty black ships to Troy.

[Tlepolemus](#), son of [Heracles](#), a large and lanky man, led nine ships out of [Rhodes](#), all filled with lordly Rhodians who divided into three groups: [Lindos](#), [Ialysus](#), and [Cameirus](#) with its white cliffs. Spear-famed Tlepolemus was born to mighty Heracles by Astyocheia. Heracles took her out of [Ephyra](#) by the Selleïs river

after sacking the city and slaying many warriors. When Tlepolemus came of age in his father's palace, he killed [Licymnius](#), his father's beloved uncle a child of Ares who had already grown old; he quickly built ships, gathered a large band, and escaped across the sea, for mighty Heracles' sons and grandsons had threatened him. After much weary wandering, he arrived at Rhodes where his people settled into three distinct tribes. Zeus, master of men, favored them, and he rained a river of riches down upon them.

[Nireus](#) led three balanced ships out of [Syme](#). The son of Aglaïa and King Charopus, Nireus was the second most handsome man among the Danaans after the noble son of Peleus. But he was powerless, and few men followed him.

Those who dwelt in [Nisyros](#), [Carpathus](#), [Cassos](#), [Cos](#), [Eurypylus](#), and the [Calydnian islands](#) were led by [Pheidippus](#) and [Antiphus](#), sons of King Thessalus, son of Heracles. With them there sailed thirty hollowed ships.

And all those who dwelt in [Pelasgian Argos](#), [Alus](#), [Alope](#), [Trachis](#), Phthia, and [Hellas](#), land of fair women, and who were called Myrmidons and Hellenes and Achaeans, were commanded by Achilles, who led fifty ships. But they were not concerned with waging war, since there was no one to lead them into the ranks. Swift-footed Achilles was idling by his ships, enraged because of the fair-haired girl Briseïs, whom he won after the sacking of [Lyrnessus](#) and the Theban walls, and after striking down the spear-fighters Mynes and Epistrophus, sons

of King Evenus, who was the son of Selepus. He was idle in grief for her, but soon he would rise up.

And those who dwelt in [Phylace](#), flowery [Pyraus](#), the sacred fields of [Demeter](#), mother of sheep [Iton](#), [Antron](#) by the sea, and the grassy banks of [Pteleos](#) were once led by warlike [Protesilaus](#), but the black earth had long since covered him. He left a grieving wife in Phylace and a house half-finished when he was killed by a Dardanian after being the first Achaean to leap from the ships. Though the men missed their leader, they were not leaderless. [Podarces](#), scion of Ares, took charge, the son of [Iphiclus](#) Phylacus, and the younger, full-blood brother of great-hearted Protesilaus. Still, warlike Protesilaus was older than his brother and a better warrior. Thus, while the men had a leader, they mourned the great man they lost. And with Podarces there sailed forty black ships.

The eleven ships of those who lived in [Pherae](#) beside [Boebeïs](#) lake and in [Boebe](#), [Glaphyrae](#), and well-built [Iolcus](#) were led by the beloved son of [Admetus](#), [Eumelus](#), born to Admetus by Alcestis, Pelias' most beautiful daughter.

And those who lived in [Methone](#), [Thaumacia](#), [Meliboea](#), and rocky [Olizon](#) were led by the famed archer [Philoctetes](#). On each of their seven ships were fifty rowers, and each rower was an expert archer in battle. However, Philoctetes lay in overwhelming pain on the holy island of Lemnos, where the Achaean sons left him in great grief after a bad bite from a deadly water snake. But the Argives would soon remember King Philoctetes. Though the men

missed their king, they were not without a leader, for [Medon](#) marshaled them, the bastard son of [Oileus](#), whom [Rhene](#) bore to the pillager.

And those who held [Tricca](#), craggy [Ithome](#), and [Oechalia](#), the city of Oechalian Eurytus, were led by the two sons of [Asclepius](#), the skilled healers [Podaleirius](#) and [Machaon](#). Along with them sailed thirty hollowed ships.

And those who held [Ormenium](#), the springs of Hypereia, [Asterium](#), and the white peaks of [Titanus](#) were led by [Eurypylus](#), dear son of [Euaemon](#). With him sailed forty black ships.

And those who held [Argissa](#) and [Gyrtone](#), [Orthe](#), [Elone](#), and [Oloösson](#), the city of white, were led by [Polypoetes](#), staunch in the fight, the son of [Peirithous](#), son of Zeus. Glorious [Hippodameia](#) conceived him to Peirithous on the day he exacted revenge from the hairy [centaurs](#), forcing them out of [Pelion](#) and driving them to [Aethices](#). He led with Leonteus, scion of Ares, son of great-hearted [Coronus](#) who was Caeneus' son. With them sailed forty black ships.

And [Gouneus](#) led twenty two ships from [Cyphus](#), filled with the [Enienes](#) and the [Peraebi](#), staunch fighters who built their homes in wintry [Dodona](#) and in the fields around charming [Titaressus](#), the sweet stream that pours into the [Peneius](#) but never merges with those crystal-clear waters; instead, it floats over them like olive oil, for it is a branch of the [Styx](#), the terrible river of oaths.

And speedy [Prothous](#), son of Tenthredon, was the leader of the [Magnetes](#), who dwelt

around Peneius and leaf-covered Pelion.  
With Prothous there followed forty black ships.

These were the leaders and kings of the Danaans.  
But tell me, Muse, who were the best warriors  
and the best horses among the sons of Atreus?

The best horses were those driven by Eumelus,  
grandson of [Pheres](#): swift as birds, matching  
in color, and equal in age and in height. Apollo  
of the silver bow reared them in Pereia, a pair  
of mares fueled by the fierce panic of war.  
The bravest warrior was Telamonian Ajax—  
so long as Achilles raged, for Peleus' noble son  
and the horses that drove him were by far the best.  
But he sat among his crooked, sea-cleaving  
ships, enraged at Agamemnon, son of Atreus.  
His men by the sea shore amused themselves  
with the discus, the javelin, and the bow;  
their horses stood idle, eating cloves and celery  
from the marshy ground; and the chariots  
were covered in the tents of their masters.  
The men, longing for their Ares-blessed leader,  
wandered around the camp but did not fight.

So they advanced as if the earth was consumed  
in fire, and the land groaned as when Zeus, hurler  
of thunder, lashes out in anger at the land around  
[Typhoeus](#) in [Arimoi](#), where the creature sleeps.  
And the earth roared beneath their feet as they  
marched along, moving quickly over the plain.

Wind-swift [Iris](#), messenger for aegis-bearing Zeus,  
came to the Trojans with a grievous message.  
A general assembly of Trojans, both young  
and old, had gathered at Priam's gate. Swift Iris  
stood nearby and addressed them, disguising

her voice to sound like [Polites](#), the son of Priam who was Troy's trusted lookout, posted atop the barrow of old [Aesyetes](#) where he watched for the Achaeans to move from their ships. In his guise, swift-footed Iris said to them: "Old man, you always enjoy endless debate, but now endless war has sprung up. I have engaged in countless battles between warriors, but I have never before seen an army this size: as many feet charging over the plains to the city as there are leaves or grains of sand on a shore. Hector, there are many allies all over Priam's city, but they speak different tongues and come from different lands, so let each chief order the men from his tribe to assemble and then lead them out of the city and into battle."

Hector heeded the goddess' words and quickly dismissed the assembly to take up arms. Then the gates were opened, and with a rumbling roar the army marched out, on foot and on horse.

In front of the city, there is a steep hill far off in the distance with a clear space all around it. The men call this hill [Batieia](#), but the gods call it the grave-mound of Myrine, the leaper; this is where the Trojans and their allies marshaled forces.

The Trojan leader was gleaming-helmed Hector, son of Priam; his army was by far the largest and the best, each man eager to wield the sword.

The [Dardanians](#) were led by brave [Aeneas](#), son of [Anchises](#), whom Aphrodite conceived when she lay with the mortal at the spur of [mount Ida](#). He was aided by [Antenor's](#) two sons, [Archelochus](#) and [Acamas](#), both skilled in all manner of fighting.

The Troes, who dwelt in [Zeleeia](#) at the lowest foot of Ida, were wealthy men who drank the dark water of [Aesepus](#) and were led by the son of Lycaon, [Pandarus](#), who was given a bow by Apollo himself.

Those holding [Adrasteia](#) and the land of [Apaesus](#), and those in [Pityeia](#) and steep Mount Tereia were led by [Adrastus](#) and [Amphius](#) who wore a tight tunic made of linen, sons of the soothsayer [Merops](#) of [Percote](#) who would not allow his sons to join in war's destruction, but they did not obey him, for the black god of death drove their minds.

And those living around Percote and Practius and those who held [Sestus](#), [Abydus](#), and rich [Arisbe](#) were led by [Hyrtacus](#)' son [Asius](#), ruler of men, who came from Arisbe and the river Selleïs, borne by his massive, chestnut horses.

And the eager spearmen of the [Pelasgi](#) tribes, who dwelt in fertile [Larisa](#), were led by [Hippothous](#) and his brother [Pylaeus](#), child of Ares, sons of Pelasgian Lethus, the son of [Teutamus](#).

[Acamas](#) and the hero [Peirous](#) led the [Thracians](#) who lived near the strong waters of the [Hellespont](#).

And Euphemus, son Troezenus, cherished by Zeus, led the [Ciconian](#) spearmen.

[Pyraechmes](#) led the [Paeonians](#) of the curved bows, from far off [Amydon](#) by the wide-flowing [Axius](#) whose waters were the most beautiful on earth.

The [Paphlagonians](#) were led by brave-hearted [Pylaemenes](#) from [Eneti](#), land of wild mules. They held [Cyturus](#), the area around [Sesamus](#),



and the grand homes by the [Parthenius](#) river  
in [Cromna](#), [Aegialus](#), and lofty [Erythini](#).

Odius and [Epistrophus](#) led the [Halizones](#)  
from far off Alybe, the birthplace of silver.

And the leaders of the [Mysians](#) were [Chromis](#)  
and [Ennomus](#), the soothsayer, who could not  
prevent his black fate: to be killed in the river  
by swift-footed Achilles, along with other Trojans.

And the [Phrygians](#) from far off Ascania were led  
by the battle-ready [Phorcys](#) and godlike Ascanius.

The [Maeonians](#) from the foot of mount [Tmolus](#)  
were led by Mesthles and Antiphus, sons  
of Talaemenes and the nymph of the [Gygaean lake](#).

And Nastes led the barbarous tongued [Carians](#),  
who held [Miletus](#), the densely forested mountains  
of [Phthires](#), the rivers of [Maeander](#), and the high  
peaks of [Mycale](#). Their leaders were [Amphimachus](#)  
and Nastes, the glorious sons of Nomion. Foolish  
Nastes came to the battle dressed all in gold like  
a little girl, but it could not protect him from death,  
for he was killed in the river at the hands of swift-  
footed Achilles, and Achilles claimed the gold.

And [Sarpedon](#) and noble [Glaucus](#) led the [Lycians](#)  
from far off Lycia, by the whirling river Xanthos.

## BOOK 3

When the leaders had assembled their troops,  
the Trojans advanced with a loud clamor,  
like the cries of cranes that fill the skies as  
they set out over the streams of Oceanus,  
fleeing winter storms and terrifying rains,  
carrying death and destruction to the [Pygmies](#),  
and waging wicked war in the early morning  
hours. But the fire-breathing Achaeans moved  
silently, eager and ready to protect one another.

Just as the South Wind pours fog over a mountain—  
a foe to shepherds but a better friend for thieves  
than night—and a man can see only as far as  
he can throw a stone, so a dense dust cloud rose  
from the feet that advanced quickly over the plain.

As the armies closed on one another, godlike  
[Alexander](#) emerged out of the Trojan ranks.  
With a panther skin on his shoulders, a bent bow  
on his back, a sword at his side, and two bronze  
spears in his hands, he challenged any Argive  
to fight him man-to-man in grim combat.

Menelaus, dear to Ares, recognized the man  
who came strutting out of the throng. Just as  
a hungry lion rejoices when he finds a horned  
deer or wild goat carcass and eagerly devours

it though swift dogs and mighty hunters draw ever closer, so Menelaus rejoiced when he saw Alexander, for he knew his time for vengeance had arrived. He sprang, fully armed, from his chariot and hit the ground.

Seeing him standing before the battle line, Alexander's heart shook with deathly horror, and he withdrew into the ranks. Just as a man recoils at the sight of a serpent in a forest glen, his limbs trembling uncontrollably and a paleness filling his cheeks as he runs away, so godlike Alexander, fearing Menelaus, retreated back into the Trojan throng.

Seeing this, a disgusted Hector said to him: "Wretched Paris, beautiful deceiver of women, if only you had never been born or had died unwed—either would be better than these shameful acts that make you a joke to others. The long-haired Achaeans howl with laughter, saying our champion was chosen for his looks, not his strength or spirit. Was this how you gathered your comrades, sailed over the seas in your sturdy ship, mingled with foreigners, and brought back a beautiful woman, sister of skilled spearmen, and a great misery to your father, city, and people? You bring joy to your enemies and disgrace to yourself. Will you not face Menelaus and learn the kind of man he is whose wife you stole? Aphrodite's gifts, your lyre, your locks, and your looks will be no help when you hit the dust. The Trojans are the timid ones; otherwise they would have stoned you to death for your wicked deeds."

In reply, godlike Alexander said to him:  
“Hector, your reproach is proper and fair.  
Your heart is forever like a sharp axe driven  
into a tree by a skilled shipbuilder, the blade  
making each cut that much stronger; so also  
does your sharp spirit intensify your mind’s  
resolve. But do not scorn golden Aphrodite  
or dismiss the gods’ glorious gifts, for it is  
their will, not ours, that grants them. But if  
you wish me to fight, then I will. Have all  
Trojans and Achaeans sit, but set Menelaus  
and I in the middle, and we will fight for Helen  
and her riches. Whoever proves himself  
the strongest and wins will take the woman  
and all the wealth and go home, while the rest  
swear oaths of friendship and trust, and you will  
live in fertile Troy while they return to Argos’  
pastures and the fair women of Achaea.”

His words pleased Hector, who went straight  
to the Trojan front line, held the battalions back  
with his spear, and ordered them to sit. Seeing  
Hector, the long-haired Achaeans prepared  
to shoot him with arrows and strike him with stones,  
but Agamemnon, leader of men, loudly shouted:  
“Hold, Argives, and cease your fire, Achaean youth.  
Flashing-helmed Hector is preparing to speak.”

Hearing this, they ceased fighting and quickly  
quieted. Then Hector addressed both armies:  
“Listen to me, Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans,  
for Alexander, the source of our strife, has an offer.  
He urges the other Trojans and all Achaeans  
to put their fine armor down on the fertile earth  
and let Paris and the warrior Menelaus fight  
one-on-one for Helen and her riches. Whoever

proves himself the strongest and wins will take the woman and all the wealth and go home, while the rest swear oaths of friendship and trust.”

So he spoke, and the soldiers all fell silent; then the great war-crier Menelaus said to them: “Listen to me, for the pain in my heart is by far the greatest. I want the Argives and Trojans to part ways because my quarrel with Alexander, the aggressor, has caused far too much suffering. Whoever is fated to die today, let him die so the rest can quickly part ways. Now bring two different lambs, one white and one black, for earth and sun, and bring another for Zeus;<sup>1</sup> then send for mighty Priam, so he himself can swear an oath, for his sons are untrustworthy, and any wrongdoing would violate Zeus’ oath. Young men’s hearts are always blown by passions, but an older man sees both the past and the future and can find a solution that is best for both sides.”

At once, the Achaeans and Trojans rejoiced, hoping this would bring the bitter war to an end. They lined up their chariots, dismounted, stripped off their armor, and set it on the ground in tight rows that left little free space. Then Hector sent two heralds hurrying to the city to summon King Priam and to retrieve two lambs while Agamemnon told Talthybius to head back to the hollow ships and retrieve another lamb, and he did not disobey godlike Agamemnon.

But messenger Iris came to white-armed Helen disguised as her sister-in-law, [Laodice](#), wife

1. The white lamb is a sacrifice for Helios (Ἥλιος), the black for Gaia (Γαῖα). Since the Achaeans are strangers in this land, they add another sacrifice for Zeus, the [patron of hospitality and guests](#) (Xenia, ξενία).

of Antenor's son [Helicaon](#), sister to Paris and Hector, and most beautiful of Priam's daughters. She found her in the palace weaving a purple folded cloak adorned with battle scenes between the horse-tamer Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans—all for her sake. Standing beside Helen, swift-footed Iris said to her: "Come, dear maiden, and witness the horse-tamer Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans. Where once their battles brought countless tears to the deadly plains, now the fighting has ceased and they sit in silence, leaning on their shields, their long spears fixed to the earth. For Alexander and Menelaus will fight in single combat—all for you! He who wins will call you his beloved wife."

The goddess' words brought to Helen's soul sweet longing for her former husband, her city, and her parents. With round tears in her eyes, she covered herself with a white cloth and raced from her chambers, followed by two handmaids: [Aethra](#), daughter of [Pittheus](#), and ox-eyed [Clymene](#).<sup>2</sup> Soon they arrived at the Scaean gates.

Priam sat by the Scaean gates with his council of elders: [Panthous](#), [Thymoetes](#), Lampus, Clytius, Hicetaon, son of Ares, and the shrewd strategists [Ucalegon](#) and Antenor. Old age prevented them from fighting, but they were fine orators, like cicadas that sit in a forest tree and let loose their lily-like voices—these were the Trojan elders who sat on the tower. When they noticed the approaching Helen, they quietly spoke to one another, saying:

2. Troy's western gate and the one closest to the fighting.

“The Trojans and Achaeans cannot be faulted for suffering so much for so long for such a woman: to look at her is to see a goddess in the flesh. All the same, she should go home in the long ships and spare us and our children further misery.”

So they spoke, but Priam said to Helen:  
“Come, dear child, and sit beside me so you can see your former husband, your kinsmen, and your people, for it was not you but the gods who started this woeful war with the Achaeans. Now tell me, who is this powerful Achaean warrior, so brave and tall? There are certainly others who are taller in stature, but I have not set eyes on one so well-favored and so majestic. Clearly this man is a king.”

And Helen, noblest of women, replied to him:  
“Beloved father-in-law, whom I both revere and fear, if only foul death had taken me when I followed your son here and left my marriage bed, my kin, my lovely daughter, and my childhood companions. But that was not to be, so I pine away in tears. But you asked about this man, so let me answer: he is Agamemnon, son of Atreus, lord of many lands, a worthy king, a mighty warrior, and brother-in-law to my dog-eyed soul, unless that was but a dream.”

So she said, and the old man, in wonder, told her:  
“The son of Atreus is a child of fortune whom the gods bless and many Achaean youths obey. Long ago I journeyed to Phrygia, rich in vines, where I saw countless warriors and their nimble steeds, the men of Otreus and godlike [Mygdon](#), encamped beside the [Sangarius](#) river. I was among their allies on the day the [Amazons](#),

a match for men, came. But not even they could match the quick-glancing Achaeans.”

Next, upon seeing Odysseus, the old man asked: “Now tell me, dear child, who is this other man? He is a head shorter than Agamemnon but looks broader in the shoulders and chest. His battle armor lies upon the fertile earth, but he seems to go around inspecting the lines of soldiers like a thick-fleeced bellwether ram as it passes through a large flock of white ewes.”

Then Helen, born of Zeus, answered him: “That is the son of Laertes, cunning Odysseus, who was raised in the rugged land of Ithaca and knows all kinds of tricks and shrewd schemes.”

In reply, wise and sensible Antenor said to her: “Yes, all the things you say, young lady, are true, for King Odysseus and Menelaus, dear to Ares, came to us once as part of an embassy. I hosted the guests and entertained them in my halls, and I got to know both men’s stature and cunning. When they stood before the Trojan assembly, Menelaus towered over him with his wide shoulders, but when they sat Odysseus was more dignified. When they began to weave their web of words, Menelaus spoke clearly, without stumbling, but said little, since he was a man of few words and not one to ramble, though he was younger. But when Odysseus sprang up, he stood stock still, his eyes fixed to the ground, his scepter held stiff to the floor, moving neither forwards or backwards like a man of ignorance; you would have thought him a surly, senseless fool. But when his great voice burst from his chest,



his words falling like snowflakes in a winter storm, then no mortal man could challenge Odysseus. After that, Odysseus' appearance was forgotten."

Seeing a third man, Ajax, the old king asked: "Who is that third Achaean, strong and wide, standing head and shoulders above the Argives?"

And fair Helen, in her flowing robes, replied: "That is mighty Ajax, defender of the Achaeans, and godlike Idomeneus stands on the other side among the other Cretan leaders. Menelaus would often entertain him when he journeyed to our home from Crete. Now I see the other quick-glancing Achaeans, and I remember them well and can tell you their names, but there are two leaders missing: horse-tamer [Castor](#) and great fighter [Polydeuces](#), my brothers, born from the same mother. Either they did not follow from lovely Lacedaemon, or they sailed here in their sea-faring ships but did not wish to join with the soldiers in battle for fear of the insults and abuse heaped upon me."

So she said, but they were in Lacedaemon, their father's land, buried in the life-giving earth.

Now heralds carried across the city offerings to the gods: two lambs and a goatskin bag filled with earth-grown, heart-warming wine. Idaeus, carrying a shining bowl and a golden goblet, stood by the old king and called upon him: "Come, son of Laomedon, for the horse-taming Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans summon you to the plain to swear solemn oaths of trust, for Alexander and Menelaus are to fight each other with long spears for the sake of Helen.

The victor will win the woman and her wealth  
while the rest swear oaths of friendship and trust.  
We will return to the fertile soil of Troy, and they  
to horse-rich Argos and Achaea's fair women."

Hearing this, the king shuddered but ordered  
men to yoke his horses, and they quickly obeyed.  
Priam mounted his chariot and drew back  
the reins, and with him was Antenor. Then they  
drove the swift horses out of the Scaean gates.

When they reached the Trojans and Achaean  
armies, they stepped down from their chariots  
and walked between the armies. Agamemnon  
and wily Odysseus then rose, and the noble  
heralds brought the offerings for the gods,  
mixed the wines into the bowl, and poured  
water over the hands of the kings. Atreus' son  
took into his hand a dagger he always held  
in the sheath beside his sword and cut wool  
from the heads of the lambs, which the heralds  
offered to the Trojan and Achaean leaders.  
Then Agamemnon lifted his hands and prayed:  
"Great and glorious Father Zeus who rules  
from Ida, and [Helios](#) who sees and hears all,  
and the rivers and earth and those who dwell  
below and punish men who swear falsely—be  
witnesses and guard the sanctity of sacred oaths.  
If Alexander kills Menelaus, then let him have  
Helen and all of her possessions while we return  
to our ships and sail across the sea to our homes.  
But if fair-haired Menelaus kills Alexander,  
then let Troy give up Helen and all her wealth  
and pay the Argives a fitting recompense, one  
that will be remembered by future generations.  
But if Alexander falls and Priam and Priam's

sons are unwilling to pay the price, then I will remain and fight for my blood-ransom, and I will not stop fighting until the war is over.”

Then he cut the lambs’ throats with his ruthless blade and placed them on the ground gasping for breath, for the knife had seized their souls. Then the two kings drew wine out of the bowl with goblets and poured it out, and Achaeans and Trojans alike prayed to the eternal gods: “Great and glorious Zeus and all other immortals, should any defy these solemn oaths, let their brains and their children’s brains be poured onto the ground like this wine and let their wives be taken by others.”

So they prayed, but Cronos’ son did not answer. Then Priam, son of Dardanus, said to them: “Listen, Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans, I am returning home to wind-blown Ilios, for I could not endure seeing with my own eyes my dear son battling Menelaus, dear to Ares. Only Zeus and the other immortal gods know which of the two is destined by fate to die today.”

So saying, the godlike man had the lambs placed in his well-wrought chariot, which he then mounted. Once Antenor was beside him, Priam drew back the reins and returned to Ilios. Then Priam’s son Hector and godlike Odysseus measured out a space and together cast lots in a helmet tipped with bronze to decide who would be the first to throw his bronze spear. And all Achaeans and Trojans raised their hands to the gods and offered their prayers, saying: “Father Zeus, ruler of Ida, glorious and great, whoever caused these troubles for both sides,

may he die and head to the house of Hades,  
and may the rest of us swear oaths of friendship.”

As they prayed, gleaming-helmed Hector shook  
the lots, looking away, and the lot for Paris  
leapt out. Then the soldiers sat down in rows,  
each beside his horse and well-wrought armor.  
Godlike Alexander, fair Helen’s husband, put  
his splendid armor on his shoulders, wrapped  
the greaves around his legs, and fastened them  
to his ankles with a silver buckle. Next he  
covered his chest with his brother Lycaon’s  
breastplate, which fit him well, and slung over  
his shoulder his silver-studded bronze sword  
and great and sturdy shield. On his head he  
put a sturdy horse-hair crest helmet topped  
with a fierce, nodding plume, and he took up  
a stout spear that fit his hand perfectly.  
And Menelaus geared for battle in the same way.

Once armed, the men stood between the two  
armies, glaring harshly at one another,  
and wonder seized the onlookers, the horse-  
taming Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans.  
The two stood near the marked-off space,  
each brandishing a spear and boiling with rage.  
Alexander shot first, and his long-shadowed spear  
struck the well-balanced shield of Atreus’ son  
but did not pierce it; instead, the sturdy shield  
bent the spearhead. Then, as Menelaus readied  
to launch his lance, he prayed to father Zeus:  
“Lord Zeus, grant me revenge on Alexander,  
who wronged me, and let my hands slay him  
so generations to come may recoil at the thought  
of harming a host who offers friendship.”

So saying, he hurled the long-shadowed spear and struck Paris' well-balanced shield, piercing the shield and the richly-adorned breastplate, tearing into his tunic, and reaching his flank—but Paris turned to one side and escaped death's darkness. Then Menelaus drew his silver-studded sword and struck the ridge of Paris' helmet, but the sword broke into three or four pieces and fell from his hand. Groaning, the son of Atreus looked to the heavens and cried: "Father Zeus, no other god is as dangerous as you. I thought I had revenge for Alexander's wrongs, but I lost my sword when it shattered and my spear when it flew from my hand and missed its target."

Menelaus then lunged at his helmet's horse-hair crest and, with a spin, dragged him to the Achaean line. The well-stitched strap holding the helmet in place stretched Paris' chin, choking his tender throat, and Menelaus would have dragged him away and gained eternal glory had Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, not broken the helmet's ox-hide strap, leaving Menelaus holding an empty helmet. He turned and threw the helmet at the Achaeans, and his comrades picked it up. Then he turned back, intent on attacking Paris with his bronze spear, but Aphrodite, with the ease of a goddess, grabbed Paris, covered him in a mist, and sent him back to his sweet-scented bedroom. Then she went to summon Helen, who was on the high wall ringed by a throng of Trojan women. The goddess put her hand on Helen's fragrant robe, shook it, and then spoke to her in the guise of an old woman, a wool dresser from Lacedaemon who was known to Helen and was especially loved. In this guise, heavenly Aphrodite addressed her:

“Go now, for Alexander calls you home. He is in the bed chamber, on the bed with inlaid rings, his body and clothes shining, and looking not like a man who just faced a foe but a man heading to a dance or just come from a dance.”

So she said, stirring the heart in Helen’s breast. Seeing the beautiful neck, lovely chest, and sparkling eyes of the goddess, she was filled with awe, and she addressed her, saying: “Strange goddess, why this deception? Do you plan to lead me further into shame, to send me to cities like Phrygia or pleasant Maeonia where another mortal man you favor awaits, since Menelaus has defeated godlike Alexander and wants to lead woeful me back to his home? Is this why you have come to me with trickery? Sit by his side yourself, quit the way of the gods, never turn around and return to Olympus but be forever anxious for him and protect him until he makes you his wife—or perhaps his slave. But I will not go there, for it would be a disgrace to share his bed. All Trojan women would blame me hereafter, and my heart has enough grief.”

With violent rage, Aphrodite replied to her: “Do not anger me, stubborn woman, or I will hate you more deeply than I now love you and brew bitter hatred for you by both the Trojans and the Danaans, ensuring you a dreadful death.”

Her words terrified Helen, daughter of Zeus, who covered herself in a white robe and snuck silently past the Trojan women, led by the goddess.

When they arrived at Alexander’s majestic house, Helen’s handmaids went quickly about their work

while she went to the high-roofed bedchamber. The goddess, ever-smiling Aphrodite, took a chair and set it down across from Alexander. Helen, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, sat down, looked away from her husband, and scolded him: “You came back from war, but I wish you had died there, slain by a mighty man, my former husband. You once claimed to be greater than Menelaus, dear to Ares, with your hands and spear. Well then, go back and challenge him to another fight, man-to-man. But no, I urge you not to fight fair-haired Menelaus in single combat or in any other reckless way, for you could very well die under his spear.”

Paris quickly responded to her words, saying: “Do not taunt me with abusive words, woman. Yes, Menelaus beat me today, with Athena’s help, but I will win next time, for we have gods as well. But let us go to bed and make love, for I have never felt such desire for you, not even when I first took you from fair Lacedaemon and sailed with you on my seafaring ships and made love to you on the island of [Cranae](#). Now more than ever does sweet love control me.”

Then he led the way to bed, and his wife followed.

While they retired to their inlaid bed, the son of Atreus roamed up and down the battlefield like a wild beast in search of godlike Alexander. But the Trojans and their famed allies could not point out Alexander to Menelaus, dear to Ares. Had they seen him, they would not have tried to hide him, for they hated him like black death. So Agamemnon, ruler of men, addressed them:

“Hear me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies:  
victory clearly belongs to Menelaus, dear to Ares,  
so surrender the Argive Helen and her possessions,  
and pay to us a fair and just recompense, one that  
will be remembered by future generations.”

So said the son of Atreus, and all Achaeans agreed.



## BOOK 4

So the gods sat beside Zeus and held assembly on the golden floor, and as divine [Hebe](#) went among them pouring nectar into their golden goblets, they looked down on Troy and toasted one another. Then the son of Cronos, wishing to provoke Hera, spoke to her maliciously:

“There are two goddesses helping Menelaus, [Argive Hera](#) and [Alalcomenean Athena](#).

But while they seem satisfied to sit and watch the scene from afar, ever-smiling Aphrodite stands beside Paris and wards off the fates.

In fact, she just now saved him from certain death. Still, Menelaus is the clear victor, so let us consider these matters. Should we again ignite the bitter battles of war, or should we inspire friendship on both sides? If this sweet outcome is somehow welcomed by all, then lord Priam’s city would remain inhabited and Menelaus would take back Argive Helen.”

So he said, and Athena and Hera whispered to each other, plotting more pain for the Trojans. Still, Athena stayed silent, though her father’s words filled her with fury. But Hera could not contain her anger, and she said to him: “Dreaded son of Cronos, what are you saying?

Do you wish to render my work worthless?  
I toiled in sweat—my horses, too—gathering  
armies to bring pain to Priam and his sons.  
So do it, but do not expect all gods to agree.”

Greatly troubled, cloud-gathering Zeus replied:  
“Crazy woman, what did Priam and his sons do  
to incite the endless rage that fuels your deep  
desire to destroy the well-built citadel of Ilios?  
If you went through the city gates and high walls  
and ate Priam, his sons, and all other Trojans  
raw, then perhaps your rage would be sated.  
Do what you wish, but do not allow this quarrel  
to be the cause of any future strife between us.  
But I will say one more thing, and take it to heart:  
in the future, should I be bent on destroying a city  
whose inhabitants have become dear to you,  
do not seek to thwart my anger, but let me be,  
for I give you this freely, though it breaks my heart.  
Of all the cities under the sun and starry skies  
where men have built their homes upon the earth,  
the one that my heart holds most dear is the Ilios  
of Priam and Priam’s men of the ashen spear,  
for never has my altar lacked offerings of wine  
and burnt flesh, those gifts that are rightly ours.”

Then ox-eyed queen Hera answered him, saying:  
“Indeed, three cities are very dear to me: Argos,  
Sparta, and the wide streets of Mycenae. If ever  
these cities grow hateful to your heart, sack them,  
and I will not stand in your way or resent you for it.  
Besides, even if I sought to stop your slaughter,  
it would accomplish little for you are far stronger.  
Still it is not right to render my work worthless,  
for I too am a god, from the same stock as you.  
I am the eldest-born daughter of wily Cronos

and am doubly-blessed to be both the first-born  
and the wife of he who rules all immortals.  
But clearly we must yield to each other on this,  
you to me and I to you; then the other gods  
will follow our lead. Now quickly order Athena  
to go at once to the field of battle and arrange  
for the Trojans to be first to break the sacred  
oath and attack the illustrious Achaeans.”

She spoke, and the father of gods and men agreed  
and quickly addressed Athena with winged words:  
“Go at once to the field of battle and arrange  
for the Trojans to be first to break the sacred  
oath and attack the illustrious Achaeans.”

His words roused an already eager Athena.  
Just as the son of crooked counselor Cronos  
sends a star as a sign for sailors or soldiers,  
a bright light shooting sparks in all directions,  
so Pallas Athena dashed down the peaks  
of Olympus and landed between the armies,  
amazing all who saw her, horse-taming  
Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans alike;  
and men looked at one another and declared:  
“Either wicked war and dreaded battle-cries  
have returned or Zeus, who controls men’s wars,  
has brought both armies together for peace.”

So spoke both the Achaeans and the Trojans.  
Athena entered the Trojan troops disguised as  
the skilled spearman Laodocus, son of Antenor,  
and she went in search of godlike Pandarus.  
She found the strong and noble son of Lycaon  
standing among the shield-bearing soldiers  
who followed him from the river Aesepus.  
She went to him and spoke with winged words:

“Listen to me, skilled son of Lycaon. If you dare to take a speedy shot at Menelaus, then you will gain the gratitude and glory of all Trojans—noble Alexander most of all. For if he saw warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus, felled by your arrow and laid on a pyre, then he would grant you many brilliant gifts. So shoot your arrow at glorious Menelaus, and swear to wolf-born Apollo, the great archer, that you will offer a sacrifice of first-born lambs when you return home to the city of Zeleia.”

Athena’s words persuaded the foolish man to take his polished bow made from the horn of a wild ibex he himself had killed, waiting in ambush for it to emerge, shooting it in the chest, and driving it onto a cleft rock. The ibex’s horns were sixteen hands in length, and an artisan bound the horns together, polished the bow, and topped it with a gold tip. He set down the bow, bent it, and strung it, and his comrades hid him behind their shields so Achaea’s sons could not spring up before warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus, was struck. He opened the lid of his quiver, removed a fresh, feathered arrow loaded with black pain, fitted the piercing arrow into the bowstring, and swore to wolf-born Apollo, the great archer, that he would offer a sacrifice of first-born lambs when he returned home to Zeleia. He then drew the notched arrow to his chest until the bow string met the iron arrowhead, and when he stretched the great bow into a curve, the bow sang, the bowstring cried, and the sharp-pointed arrow flew eagerly through the throng.

But the blessed gods did not forget you,  
Menelaus. First, Athena, driver of spoils,  
stood before you and blocked the sharp arrow,  
sweeping it away from your flesh like a mother  
swatting a fly from her sweetly sleeping child.  
She directed it down to where the golden  
belt buckle and double breastplate overlapped.  
The sharp arrow struck the finely-made buckle,  
passed through the warrior's elaborate belt,  
forced its way into the well-wrought breastplate,  
and tore into his greatest defense, the metal  
band that protected the skin against spears.  
So the tip of the arrow cut into the man's skin,  
and black blood began oozing from his wound.

Just as Maeonian and [Carian](#) women stain ivory  
with dark red dye when making a cheekpiece  
for horses—which many desire but cannot use  
for it is stored away for the king's delight alone,  
to ornament his horse and glorify its driver—  
so too was Menelaus stained in black blood  
from thighs to shapely legs to ankles below.

Then Agamemnon, ruler of men, shuddered  
in fear at the sight of black blood flowing  
from the wound. Menelaus also shuddered,  
but when he saw that the arrow's barbs were  
outside the flesh, his heart returned to his chest.  
As the men moaned, lord Agamemnon gave  
a heavy sigh, held Menelaus' hand, and said:  
"Brother, my oath has brought your death,  
for I sent you alone to fight the Trojans for us,  
and their strike has violated our sacred pact.  
But no oath is worthless. We sacrificed sheep,  
poured unmixed wine, and clasped right hands.  
And even if the Olympian does not act at once,

he will eventually, and they will pay heavily with their heads and the heads of their wives and children. For I know this well in my mind and heart: one day holy Ilios will be destroyed, as well as Priam and those under his ashen spear. Zeus, son of Cronos, on his throne in heaven, will shake his dark aegis over them in anger at their deceit; these things will come to be. But my grief for you will be great, Menelaus, if you die and use up your measure of life. I would return to dry Argos in utter disgrace, for the Achaeans would immediately look to home, and Priam and the Trojans would boast of Argive Helen. Your bones would rot in a Trojan field with a task left unfinished, and some arrogant Trojan will leap upon the barrow of glorious Menelaus and say: 'This is the result of Agamemnon's rage: he led his Achaean army here for nothing and returned in empty ships to his dear fatherland, leaving noble Menelaus behind.' On that day, may the earth consume me."

Cheering him, fair-haired Menelaus said: "Take heart and do not frighten the Achaean army, for my shining belt and the band under it, made carefully for me by smiths, stopped the sharp arrow before it hit a fatal spot."

Lord Agamemnon answered him, saying: "I hope that this is so, my dear Menelaus. But the healer should examine the wound and apply a drug to stop your dark pain."

Then he told the herald, godlike Talthybius: "Talthybius, quickly call Machaon, son

of Asclepius, the noble healer, to come here  
and see warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
for some Trojan or Lycian bowman seeking  
glory shot him with an arrow, to our dismay.”

So he said, and the herald heard and obeyed.  
He roamed the bronze-clad Achaean army  
for the hero Machaon and found him standing  
with the mighty shield-bearing warriors who  
followed him from the horselands of Tricca.  
Talthybius stood beside him and said:  
“Rise, son of Asclepius. Lord Agamemnon  
calls you to warlike Menelaus, Achaean leader.  
Some Trojan or Lycian bowman seeking  
glory shot him with an arrow, to our dismay.”

So he said, stirring the heart of Machaon.  
They raced through the wide Achaean army  
to the spot where fair-haired Menelaus was  
hit to find him surrounded by many leaders.  
The healer, a godlike man, stood among them  
and quickly pulled the arrow from his belt;  
as he did this, the sharp barbs were broken  
backwards. He then loosened the shining belt  
and the band beneath it, made carefully for him  
by smiths. When he saw the sharp arrow wound,  
he sucked the blood out and sprinkled on it  
a soothing drug [Chiron](#) once gave to his father.

As the great war-crier Menelaus was treated,  
lines of shield-bearing Trojans approached,  
and the Achaeans readied themselves for war.

You would not see noble Agamemnon sleeping  
or cowering in fear or running from the fight,  
for he was eager for battle and glory. He left  
his snarling horses and well-wrought chariot

and ordered his attendant [Eurymedon](#), son of Ptolemaeus, who was the son of Piraeus, to keep hold of them in case fatigue seized his limbs while he commanded the army. Then he went on foot through the regiments, and when he saw Danaans on fleet horses eager for battle, he would encourage them, saying: “Fight on, fearless Argives—no holding back, for father Zeus gives no aid to oath-breakers. And those who first defy their oath and fight shall surely get their soft flesh eaten by vultures, and we will carry off on our ships their beloved wives and children once we capture the city.”

But when he saw men holding back from war, he showered them with harsh abuse, saying: “Argive bowmen, have you no shame or honor? Why are you standing there, neither moving nor fighting? You look like helpless fawns who, exhausted after racing across a wide plain, stay still, their hearts stripped of all spirit. Are you waiting for the Trojans to come near the sterns of the ships beached by the grey sea, hoping the hands of Zeus will protect you?”

While barking orders and reviewing the ranks of soldiers, he came upon the Cretan warriors as they readied for battle beside Idomeneus, who led the front lines like a spirited wild boar while Meriones urged on the lines in the rear. Seeing them, king of men Agamemnon rejoiced, and spoke to Idomeneus with calming words: “Idomeneus, above all the Danaans with swift horses do I honor you in war, in other work, or at the feast where the Argive leaders mix in a bowl the sparkling wine of the elders.



For although other long-haired Achaeans drink their share, your cup remains full, like my own, for you drink only when it suits you. So go and prove your claims of great fighting true.”

Then Idomeneus, the Cretan chief, replied:  
“Son of Atreus, I will be your most worthy comrade, just as I promised you so long ago. But stir up the other long-haired Achaeans so we can finally begin the battle against the oath-breaking Trojans, who shall suffer death and grief for violating their sacred word.”

He spoke, and a pleased son of Atreus moved on, passing many men before seeing both Ajaxes gearing for war, a cloud of infantry behind them. Think of a goatherd who sees a cloud passing over the sea, pushed by the roaring [West Wind](#). From far off, the cloud appears pitch black; knowing this heralds a great storm, the goatherd shudders and drives his flock into a cave. So it was that a thick phalanx of Zeus-blessed youths moved behind the two Ajaxes, bound for deadly war and brandishing spears and shields. Seeing this sight, lord Agamemnon rejoiced, and spoke to them with winged words, saying:  
“Ajaxes, leaders of the bronze-clad Argives, you need no urging, so I give you no orders; for you push your men to fight with great force. Father Zeus and Athena and Apollo, if all my people’s souls possessed such courage, then lord Priam’s city would quickly be bent beneath our hands, utterly sacked and seized.”

So saying, he left them there and moved on and soon found Nestor, the clear-toned Pylion

orator, who was urging his men to prepare for battle, flanked by great Pelagon, Alastor, Chromius, lord Haemon, and Bias, shepherd of men. He put the charioteers and their horses in front, set his best foot soldiers at the rear as a bulwark, and drove the cowards to the middle, forcing them to fight out of necessity. Nestor spoke first to the charioteers, ordering them to keep their horses away from the battle throng: “Do not trust your horsemanship or valor and try to fight the Trojans alone before help arrives, and do not fall back or you will weaken the line. If a charioteer reaches the chariot of a foe, then it is better to lunge at him with your lance. This is how men of old, men with strong minds and valiant hearts, sacked walls and cities.”

So the old man inspired them with his battle wisdom. Seeing him, lord Agamemnon rejoiced and addressed him with winged words, saying: “Old man, I wish that your knees and your vigor were a match for the passion within your heart. But old age has worn you down; if only others had your many years, and you had their youth.”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, answered him: “Son of Atreus, I too greatly wish I could again be the man who once slew godlike Ereuthalion. But the gods never grant men their every wish. I was just a youth then but am now an old man, but I will be with the charioteers, urging them on with words of advice, for that is the gift of age. Shooting spears is not for me but for younger men who have confidence in their youthful strength.”

His words cheered the son of Atreus, who moved

on and soon came to the horseman Menestheus,  
son of Peteos, standing with the war-crying  
Athenians. Nearby, wily Odysseus stood,  
and with him stood the relentless Cephallenians.  
These men had not yet heard the battle cry,  
for the lines of the horse-taming Trojans  
and the Achaeans had just begun to move;  
so they stood there, waiting for Achaean lines  
to move upon the Trojans and start the battle.  
Seeing them, the lord of men Agamemnon  
became angry, telling them with winged words:  
“Son of Peteos, Zeus-nourished king, and you,  
Odysseus of the cunning tricks for greedy  
gain, why do you two cower in fear, waiting  
for others? You should be standing on the front  
lines and charging into the blazing battle,  
for you are always the first to hear my call  
when the Achaeans ready a feast for the elders,  
and you always love eating roasted meat  
and drinking goblets of honey-sweet wine.  
But now you happily watch as ten Achaean  
troops fight the pitiless enemy in front of you.”

With a scowling look, wise Odysseus replied:  
“Son of Atreus, what sort of words are these?  
How can you say we hide from battle whenever  
the Achaeans fight the horse-taming Trojans?  
Should you bother to look, you will soon see  
dear Telemachus’ father fighting the Trojans.  
Thus your words are empty like the wind.”

When he saw his anger, lord Agamemnon  
smiled and took back his words, telling him:  
“Zeus-born son of Laertes, wily Odysseus,  
I neither unduly reproach you nor order you,  
for I know you think as I do, and the heart

in your chest beats in sync with my own.  
So go, and if any wicked words were spoken  
between us, then let the gods render them void.”

He finished and left them to go and see others.  
Soon he found the son of Tydeus, Diomedes,  
standing with his horse and well-built chariot,  
and nearby was Sthenelus, son of Capaneus.  
Seeing him, lord Agamemnon chastised him  
and addressed him with winged words, saying:  
“Alas, son of skilled horse-tamer Tydeus, why  
do you cower while gazing at the battle lines?  
Tydeus was never one to cower in this way  
but would fight foes far ahead of his comrades—  
according to those who saw him toil in battle,  
for I myself never saw this greatest of men.  
He once came to Mycenae, not as enemy  
but as friend, to raise an army with godlike  
[Polynices](#) for their fight against sacred Thebes,  
begging that we may offer our service as allies.  
We greatly desired to heed their call, but Zeus  
sent ill omens to change our minds. So they  
departed, headed up the road, and when  
they came to the grassy banks of the [Asopus](#),  
the Achaeans sent Tydeus on a mission  
to the sons of Cadmus. He left and soon found  
them feasting in the house of mighty [Eteocles](#).  
And horseman Tydeus, though a stranger  
alone among many [Cadmeians](#), felt no  
fear but challenged them to trials of strength,  
and defeated them easily with Athena’s help.  
This angered the skilled horsemen of Cadmus,  
so as he headed back, they shrewdly set  
an ambush of fifty men, including two leaders,  
[Maeon](#), son of [Haemon](#), equal to the gods,  
and stout Polyphontes, son of Autophonus.

But Tydeus sent them all to a dreadful end,  
killing them and allowing only Maeon to return  
home, obeying the will of the gods. This was  
Tydeus of Aetolia, but his son is not his equal  
in battle, though he is a better speaker.”

So he spoke, but Diomedes said nothing,  
fearing the rebuke of the respected king.  
So the noble son of Capaneus answered:  
“Son of Atreus, do not lie, for you know  
the truth. We are better than our fathers.  
We took the seven-gated citadel of Thebes  
with a smaller army beneath a stronger wall,  
obeying the gods’ signs and aided by Zeus.  
But our fathers were destroyed by their own folly  
and do not deserve our well-earned honor.”<sup>1</sup>

With a scowl, mighty Diomedes said to him:  
“Silence, my friend, and do as I say. I am  
not angry at Agamemnon, shepherd of men,  
for rousing the well-greaved Achaeans to battle.  
Great glory shall follow if the Achaeans  
slaughter the Trojans and seize Ilios, but great  
grief will come if the Achaeans are slain.  
For now, let us focus on war’s fierce fury.”

So saying, he leapt fully-armed from his chariot,  
and the king’s bronze chest rattled with each  
step, frightening even the stoutest of hearts.

Just as roaring waves, driven by the West Wind,  
crash against the sea shore, the sea first rising  
into a crest, then breaking with a great roar  
onto dry land, crashing against arched peaks,

1. Sthenelus here is referring to the second Theban war, also called the Epigoni (for “offspring”), where the sons of the Seven Against Thebes (including Diomedes and Sthenelus) avenged the deaths of their fathers and retook Thebes.

and spitting salt foam into the sky, so also did the relentless Danaan battalions move as one into the fight. Each leader ordered his men, and each man followed behind in silence as if he possessed no voice of his own, and all were adorned with shining, well-wrought armor. But the Trojans were like countless ewes in the pens of wealthy men, waiting to be milked and bleating incessantly when they hear the voices of lambs. So stirred the war-cries of the wide Trojan army, for they shared no common language, came from many lands, and spoke many tongues. The Trojans were urged on by Ares, the Danaans by gleaming-eyed Athena, and both were moved by [Terror](#), [Fear](#), and [Strife](#), sister of Ares, slayer of men: small when first roused, but soon her head is high in heaven and her feet are fixed on the earth. She moved over the battle-throng hurling hatred in all directions, intensifying the agony of men.

When both armies converged on one another, the shields and spears of bronze-chested warriors collided, their bossed shields pressed together, and the many noises of battle filled the air. Then came wailing and shouting by slayers and slain, and rivers of blood covered the earth. Just as winter storms bring torrents pouring down mountains onto valley glens below, the waters meeting and plunging into a hollow gorge, and far off a mountain shepherd hears the roar, so the cries and furies of war mingled as one.

[Antilochus](#) was the first to kill a Trojan warrior, the skilled fighter Echepolus, son of Thalysius. He struck him first on his helmet's horsehair crest,

driving the spear into his forehead, and the copper point bore into bone. His eyes then drew dark and he toppled like a tower in the ferocious fight. As he dropped, lord Elphenor, son of Chalcodon and leader of the Abantes, caught him by the feet and tried to drag him away from the missiles so he could quickly strip the armor. But he did not get far before great-hearted Agenor spotted him. Seeing the man's ribs exposed when he stooped, he thrust his spear into his side, and his limbs went limp, and his soul left him. Over his body, the battle raged, Trojans and Achaeans leaping at each other like wolves, man against man.

Then Telamonian Ajax struck Anthemion's son, the young, vigorous Simoeisus, whose mother bore him by the river [Simois](#) while descending down Mount Ida after visiting her family's flocks. Thus, he was called Simoeisus, but he would never repay his parents for raising him, for his life was cut short by the spear of great-hearted Ajax. First the bronze spear struck on the right side of his chest by the nipple, going straight into his shoulder. He hit the ground like a poplar tree growing at the bottom of a great marsh, its trimmed trunk topped by many branches; a chariot-maker cuts it down with a blazing axe and uses it to fashion beautiful chariot wheels, and now it lies drying on the banks of the river. Thus did Zeus-born Ajax kill Anthemion's son, Simoeisus. Then the son of Priam, Antiphus, threw a sharp spear at Ajax through the throng. It missed him but hit Odysseus' friend Leucus in the groin as he was dragging the body away; the corpse slipped from his hands and he fell. Enraged by his death, Odysseus approached

the front lines, gleaming in his bronze armor. He drew near them, glanced round, and threw his shining spear. The Trojans drew back from the warrior's throw, but the shot did not miss, striking Priam's bastard son Democoon, who came from Abydos, land of swift horses. Odysseus, furious for his friend, shot the bronze spear into his forehead, and it bore straight through to the other side; his eyes drew dark, and he fell with a thud, his armor rattling his chest. Then the front ranks and great Hector withdrew, and the Argives cried, took the bodies away, and pressed on. Apollo, atop [Pergamus](#), watched with disgust, and shouted at the Trojans: "Up, horse-taming Trojans. Do not give ground to the Achaeans. Their skin is neither stone nor iron, impervious to bronze. And Achilles, son of the fair-haired Thetis, does not fight, for he is on his ship nursing his hateful heart."

So spoke the dreaded god, but the Achaeans were urged on by noble Tritogeneia,<sup>2</sup> daughter of Zeus, whenever she saw them giving ground.

Then Diores, son of Amarynceus, met his fate, for a jagged boulder struck his right ankle, thrown by the leader of the Thracians, Peirous, son of Imbrasmus, who had come from [Ainos](#). The reckless stone completely crushed both tendons and bones, and he fell into the dust backwards, his hand reaching for his comrades, his breath fading. Then Peirous ran up to him

2. This is one of Athena's titles, but its origin and meaning is still unclear. It could suggest "Triton-born," but that would make Athena the daughter of Triton, messenger of the sea. More probably, it refers to the area around the river Triton in Boeotia, which was home to an Athenian cult.



and speared him in the gut, and his bowels  
gushed onto the ground, and his eyes drew dark.

As Peirous moved away, Thoas of Aetolia  
speared him in the chest above the nipple,  
and the bronze pierced his lungs. Then Thoas  
took the mighty spear out of his chest, pulled  
out his sharp sword, and stabbed him in the gut,  
taking his life. But he could not strip the armor,  
for he was surrounded by the Thracian's long-  
speared comrades, and though Thoas was brave,  
mighty, and noble, they forced him back, and he  
staggered away. So these two were left in the dust  
beside one another, the Thracian and the bronze-  
clad Aetolian, surrounded by the other dead.

No man could make light of the battle any longer,  
even those unstruck and uninjured by the whirl  
of sharp bronze or protected from the onrush  
of missiles by the guiding hand of Pallas Athena,  
for on this day many Trojans and Achaeans  
lay beside each other, their faces in the dust.

## BOOK 5

Then Pallas Athena gave Tydeus' son Diomedes  
the courage and confidence to distinguish  
himself among all Achaeans and to win glory.<sup>1</sup>  
She lit his helmet and shield ablaze with endless  
fire, like a harvest-time star that shines brightest  
of all when bathing in the ocean stream.  
She set this blaze upon his head and shoulders  
and sent him where the fighting was fiercest.

Now [Dares](#), a rich and honorable Trojan  
and a priest of Hephaestus, had two sons,  
Phegeus and Idaeus, both skilled in fighting.  
These two split from the army and attacked  
Diomedes, they in chariots and he on foot.  
When they drew closer to one another,  
Phegeus hurled his far-shadowing spear,  
but it sailed over Diomedes' left shoulder,  
missing him. Then Tydeus' son sent his spear  
flying from his hand, hit Phegeus in the chest,  
and knocked him from his chariot. Idaeus  
leaped off his chariot but lacked the courage  
to defend his brother's body. And he would  
have met that same black fate had Hephaestus

1. Aristeia (ἀριστεία) is a scene in epic poetry where the hero in battle has his finest moment. Other instances of aristeia in the *Iliad* include Hector in book 8, Agamemnon in book 11, Patroclus in book 16 (while wearing Achilles' armor), and Achilles himself in book 21.

not concealed him in darkness, saving him  
and sparing his aged father from further grief.  
But great-hearted Diomedes claimed the horses,  
and his men drove them to the hollow ships.  
When the great-hearted Trojans saw the two  
sons of Dares, one in flight and the other slain,  
their hearts broke; but gleaming-eyed Athena  
seized Ares by the hands and said to him:  
“Ares, Ares, blood-stained destroyer of men,  
let us leave the Trojans and Achaeans to fight,  
so father Zeus may grant glory as he sees fit,  
while we retire and avoid his wrath.”

She then made furious Ares leave the battle,  
sit by the river Scamander's banks, and watch  
as the Trojans retreated and the Danaan  
leaders slew their men. First Agamemnon threw  
from his chariot a fleeing Odius, the Halizones  
leader, fixing his spear into his back between  
the shoulders and thrusting it through his chest.  
And Odius fell with a thud, his armor clanging.

Then spear-famed Idomeneus slew Phaistos,  
son of Borus the Maeonian, who came  
from fertile Tarne; he was struck on his right  
shoulder while mounting his horses and fell  
from his chariot as dread death took him.

As Idomeneus' men stripped Phaestus' armor,  
Menelaus, son of Atreus, used his sharp spear  
to slay Strophius' son, Scamandrius, a skilled  
hunter whom Artemis herself taught to shoot all  
kinds of wild beasts that grow in the mountain  
forest. But Artemis, shedder of arrows, could not  
help him, nor could his superior archery skill;  
for, as he ran away, famed spearman Menelaus,

son of Atreus, thrust his spear into his back  
between the shoulders and drove it into his chest;  
and he fell face-first, his armor clanging.

And Meriones slew [Phereclus](#), son of Harmon  
the smith; beloved by Pallas Athena, his hands  
made many fine items—including Alexander's  
stellar ships, the seeds of mischief that brought  
misery to all Troy and to Phereclus himself,  
who did not know the decree of the gods.  
Meriones chased him, caught him, and speared  
him in the right buttocks, the spear-point going  
straight past the bone and into his bladder.  
He fell to his knees and cried as death covered him.

And Meges slew Pedaeus, Antenor's bastard son,  
reared with care by [Theano](#) like her own dear  
children so as to please her husband. Phyleus'  
spear-famed son came near, pierced the base  
of his neck with his sharp spear, and then drove  
the spear straight into the teeth, slicing his tongue.  
He fell to the dust, his teeth biting cold bronze.

And Eurypylus, Euaemon's son, slew noble  
Hypsenor, son of great-hearted Dolopion,  
the Scamander priest who was honored like  
a god by the people. Famed Eurypylus pursued  
Hypsenor as he fled from him, striking his sword  
in his shoulder and severing his heavy arm.  
The blood-red stump dropped to the ground as  
dark death and unrelenting fate fell over his eyes.

As they toiled away in fierce combat,  
you could not tell whether Diomedes  
fought for the Trojan army or the Achaean,  
for he ran across the plain like a winter storm  
from Zeus that swells a river until its waters

suddenly burst beyond the embankment  
and scatter unchecked over the fortified walls  
of a flourishing vineyard, thus destroying  
the many beautiful works made by men.  
In this way the dense Trojan ranks were driven  
to disorder and despair by the son of Tydeus.

But when Lycaon's<sup>2</sup> noble son saw him run  
about, sending the battle lines into chaos,  
he quickly bent his bow and struck a charging  
Diomedes on the right shoulder. The sharpened  
arrow pierced the corselet's front plate and flew  
clean through, spattering the armor with blood.  
And Pandarus, noble Lycaon's son, cried out:  
"Rise up, great-hearted Trojan horsemen!  
The best of the Achaeans has been hit, and he  
will not endure that arrow for long, if Apollo,  
son of Zeus, truly sent me here from Lycia."

So he said in triumph, but the missile did not  
kill Diomedes, who drew back and stood before  
his chariot and said to Sthenelus, son of Capaneus:  
"Come, dear Sthenelus, leap from your chariot  
and pull this sharp arrow from my shoulder."

At once Sthenelus leapt from his chariot, stood  
beside him, and pushed the arrow clean through  
his shoulder as blood burst through the loose tunic.  
Then great war-crier Diomedes offered a prayer:  
"Hear me, Atrytone,<sup>3</sup> child of aegis-bearing Zeus.  
If you ever kindly came to the aid of my father  
in deadly battle, then honor me now, Athena.  
Grant this man to come within range of my spear  
so I may slay him, this man who blindsided me  
and brags that I am not long to see the sun's light."

2. Pandarus

3. Athena

So he prayed, and Pallas Athena heard him  
and lightened his limbs, feet, and hands above.  
Then she came and stood beside him and said:  
“Have courage, Diomedes, as you fight  
the Trojans. I have put in your chest the might  
of your father, fearless Tydeus, horseman  
of the great shield, and I have lifted the mist  
from your eyes so you can clearly distinguish god  
from man. Do not fight face-to-face against any  
immortal god who might try to test you, but if  
the daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite, enters the fray,  
then you may stab her with your sharp bronze.”

So gleaming-eyed Athena said and departed,  
and the son of Tydeus returned to the front  
ranks. He had fought the Trojans eagerly before,  
but now three times more fury took hold, as when  
a shepherd protecting his flock injures a fence-  
jumping lion; rather than killing him, the wound  
increases his strength, forcing the shepherd  
to retreat into the farmhouse while the sheep are  
routed, their bloodied bodies heaped into piles,  
after which the lion leaps back over the fence.  
Thus did Diomedes bring fury to the Trojans.

Then he slew Astynous and Hyperion, herder  
of men: one with his bronze spear above the nipple,  
the other with his great sword on the collarbone,  
severing his shoulder from the neck to the back.  
He left them to pursue Abas and Polyidus,  
sons of the elderly dream diviner Eurydamas;  
the old man could no longer read their dreams,  
for mighty Diomedes had slain them. Then he  
went after Xanthus and Thoön, beloved sons  
of Phaenops, who was worn with woe in his old age,  
for he sired no other sons to inherit his property.

Diomedes killed them, stripping them of their souls,  
and Phaenops wailed in grief over his wretched loss,  
since he could not welcome them home from war  
and distant kin would inherit his possessions.

Then he killed Dardanian Priam's two sons,  
Echemmon and Chromius, both in the same chariot.  
Like a lion leaping onto a herd and breaking  
the neck of a calf or cow as it grazes in a pasture,  
so the son of Tydeus harshly forced them  
from their chariot, stripped their armor, and gave  
their horses to his men to drive to the ships.

Aeneas saw Diomedes decimating the ranks  
and set out into the chaos of soldiers and spears  
in hopes of finding godlike Pandarus.  
Finding the brave and bold son of Lycaon,  
he came and stood before him and said to him:  
"Pandarus, where are your bow, your winged  
arrows, and your unmatched skill that cannot  
be equaled in this land or in Lycia? Come,  
lift your hands in prayer and shoot an arrow  
at this mighty man who has harmed the Trojans  
by breaking many great men at the knees—  
unless he is a wrathful god angry at the Trojans  
over some sacrifice, for a god's wrath is deadly."

Then the shining son of Lycaon replied:  
"Aeneas, bronze-clad counselor of the Trojans,  
the man resembles the skilled son of Tydeus  
for he has his shield, his helmet's hollowed eyes,  
and his horses; still, I cannot say if he is man  
or god. But if he is the skilled warrior Diomedes,  
then some immortal god with shoulders wrapped  
in clouds must be beside him, deflecting  
my speedy arrow just as it was to strike him.

Just now I shot my missile into his right shoulder,  
and it drove straight through his hollow armor;  
I said that I would send him to Aïdoneus,<sup>4</sup>  
but it did not end him; and now a god is furious.  
Neither horses nor chariot are available to me,  
but there are eleven beautiful chariots in Lycaon's  
great halls, all newly-made and covered in cloth;  
and beside each one stands a pair of yoked  
horses feeding on light barley and oats.  
In fact, as I was leaving our stately home,  
the old warrior Lycaon gave me stern orders:  
that I should mount the horses and chariot  
and lead the Trojans into the fury of battle,  
but I did not obey, as would have been best.  
I feared the horses would suffer in the crunch  
of men, for they were used to eating their fill.  
I left them behind and came to Ilios on foot,  
trusting in my bow—but it was no help. I have  
already shot at two great leaders, the sons  
of Tydeus and Atreus, hitting both and drawing  
blood, but this only angered them. Thus it  
was a dreadful day when I took my curved  
bow from its peg and led my Trojans to lovely  
Ilios as a favor to noble Hector. If I ever return  
home and set my eyes upon my father's land,  
my wife, and my high-roofed home, then let  
some stranger sever my head from my neck  
if I do not break my bow in half with my hands  
and toss it in a blazing fire, for it is useless to me.”

The Trojan leader Aeneas then replied to him:  
“Do not speak in this way; things will not improve  
until we secure horses and chariots and fight  
this man face-to-face, weapon against weapon.  
Instead, mount my chariot, so you may see

4. Hades



what the Trojan horses are like as they dash back and forth across the plain, either charging or fleeing. They will bring us safely to the city, should Zeus again grant favor to Diomedes, son of Tydeus. So take the whip and glistening reins and I will dismount from the horses to fight; or you fight this man, and I will take the horses.”

Then the noble son of Lycaon answered him: “Aeneas, you hold the reins and drive the horses for they are used to your driving of the curved chariot, and if we need to flee from Diomedes and the horses do not hear your voice, they may run wild with fear and forget to carry us from battle; then the great-hearted son of Tydeus will rush us, kill us, and drive off the single-footed horses. But if you drive your chariot and your horses, then I will meet his attack with my sharp spear.”

So they mounted the well-made chariot and drove the swift horses against the son of Tydeus. Seeing them, Sthenelus, noble son of Capaneus, quickly said to Diomedes: “Son of Tydeus, Diomedes, dear to my heart, I see two mighty men with unmeasured strength eager to fight you. One is the skilled bowman Pandarus who boasts of being Lycaon’s son; the other is Aeneas who boasts that his father is noble Anchises and his mother Aphrodite. Come, let us draw back in our chariot and not rush to the front—or you may lose your life.”

With a scowling glance, Diomedes replied: “You will never persuade me to flee, for it is not in my nature to shirk from a fight or cower in fear, and my might is unimpaired. I will

not mount the chariot but will face them  
as I am, for Pallas Athena will not let me flee.  
But the swift horses of these men will not carry  
them away from us, even if one escapes. And I  
will tell you another thing, and take it to heart:  
if Athena of many counsels grants me the honor  
of killing them both, you must hold our swift  
horses here, tether the reins to the chariot's rail,  
make a rush for Aeneas' horses, and drive them  
from the Trojans to the well-greaved Achaeans,  
for they are from the stock given to Troy  
by Zeus in payment for his son [Ganymede](#):  
the finest of all horses under the sun. King  
of men Anchises stole them and bred them  
with his mares without [Laomedon's](#) knowledge.  
Six of this fine breed were born to his house;  
he kept four, rearing them in his manger,  
and gave these two devisers of doom to Aeneas.  
If we take them, we will win great glory."

While they were speaking to one another,  
the Trojans drove their swift horses ever closer,  
and the shining son of Lycaon said to Diomedes:  
"Son of noble Tydeus, stout-hearted and fierce,  
my bitter arrow did not defeat you before,  
so now I will see if my spear can hit its mark."

He hurled his long-shadowed spear and struck  
the shield of Tydeus' son, and the bronze point  
cut through the shield and hit the breastplate.  
And the glorious son of Lycaon cried out:  
"You are hit clean through the flank and will not  
last long, I think; but you have given me glory."

Mighty Diomedes was unafraid, saying to him:  
"You missed me, but you two will not escape

until one of you has fallen and steady-shielded warrior Ares has taken his fill of your blood.”

He then threw, and Athena directed the spear at Pandarus’ nose and eye, and the sturdy bronze shattered his white teeth and cut off his tongue. The point came out at the base of his chin, and he fell from the chariot, his flashing armor rattling. The frightened horses quickly jolted aside as his soul and strength abandoned him.

Aeneas darted down with his shield and long spear, fearing the Achaeans would drag the body away. Like a proud, powerful lion, he stood over him, holding out his spear and well-balanced shield, waiting to kill any who came near, and uttering a terrible cry. But Tydeus’ son grabbed a large boulder no two mortal men of today could lift, though he easily lifted it by himself. He hurled this and hit Aeneas on the hip where the thigh meets the hip joint, a place men call the cup. The jagged stone smashed the cup, severing both tendons and cutting away the skin, and the hero fell to his knees and stayed there, leaning on the dirt with his strong hands as darkness covered his eyes.

And Aeneas, lord of men, would have died but for the keen eyes of his mother, Aphrodite, Zeus’ daughter, who bore him to Anchises, the ox-herder; she threw her white arms around her dear son and put a fold of her shining robe in front of him as a shield should any mounted Danaan try to spear him in the chest and take his soul.

She removed her beloved son from the battle, but Capaneus’ son did not forget his promise to great-shouter Diomedes. He took his single-

hoofed horses from the chaos and tethered their reins to the chariot rail; then he went after Aeneas' flowing-maned horses, drove them from the Trojans to the well-greaved Achaeans, and gave them to his dear friend Deïpylos, whose heart he prized above all others, and he drove them to the hollow ships. Then Sthenelus mounted his chariot, took the reins, and drove his strong-hoofed horse in pursuit of Tydeus' son, who was chasing the lady of Kypros<sup>5</sup> with his ruthless bronze, for he knew her to be a weak goddess, not one to dominate in battle like Athena or [Enyo](#), sacker of cities. When he caught up to her in the battle throng, great-hearted Diomedes thrust his sharp spear at her, and the bronze tip tore into the ambrosial cloth made for her by the [Graces](#) themselves, cutting her skin on the palm of her gentle hand; out flowed ichor, the blood of the gods, for they do not eat food or drink sparkling wine and so are bloodless and are called immortals. She cried out in pain and dropped her son, but Phoebus Apollo saved him in his arms, hiding him in a dark mist so the swift-horse Danaans could not spear his chest and end his life. But war-crier Diomedes shouted at her: "Give up this war and chaos, daughter of Zeus. Is deceiving weak women not enough for you? If you join the battle regularly, you will dread the word war even when spoken from afar."

He spoke, and she left in agony; wind-swift Iris led her from the battle, consumed by pain, her beautiful skin blackened. Soon she found

5. Another name for Aphrodite, since Cyprus was seen as her birthplace

furious Ares sitting to the left of the battle,  
his spear leaning on a cloud near two swift  
horses; she fell to one knee and begged her dear  
brother for his horses with golden frontlets:  
“Save me, dear brother. Give me your horses,  
so I can go to Olympus, the home of the gods.  
I am in pain, wounded by a mortal, the son  
of Tydeus, who now could challenge even Zeus.”

So Ares gave her the horses with golden frontlets,  
and she took her grieving heart and boarded  
the chariot. Iris followed her, took the reins,  
whipped the horses into a gallop, and soon  
arrived at their home on steep Olympus.  
Quick-footed Iris tethered and unyoked  
the horses and fed them ambrosial fodder,  
and Aphrodite fell to the knees of [Dione](#),  
her mother, who held her daughter in her arms  
and caressed her with her hands, asking:  
“Dear child, which of the gods has harmed you,  
as if you were doing wicked deeds before all?”

And ever-smiling Aphrodite answered her:  
“Tydeus’ son, arrogant Diomedes, wounded me,  
for I was carrying away from battle my dear son  
Aeneas, whom I love more than any other mortal.  
This is no longer a bitter battle between Trojans  
and Achaeans, for the Danaans fight like gods.”

Then glorious goddess Dione said to her:  
“My child, be strong and endure your suffering,  
for many who dwell on Olympus have suffered  
at men’s hands when we inflict pain on one  
another. Ares suffered when [Aloeus’](#) sons, [Otos](#)  
and mighty [Ephialtes](#), chained him in powerful  
bonds and encased him in a bronze jar for thirteen

months; and Ares, unbeatable in war, might have died had his stepmother, the fair Eëriboia, not brought word to Hermes, who rescued Ares, now greatly weakened by the powerful bonds. Hera also suffered when Amphytryon's mighty son shot her in the right breast with a three-barbed arrow, bringing her unbearable pain. Hades, too, suffered a swift arrow when this same man, son of aegis-bearing Zeus, shot him among the dead of Pylos, bringing him agony. Still, he went to Zeus' house on high Olympus, his heart pierced with untold pain and his soul distressed, for the arrow was driven into his stout shoulder. But [Paeon](#) applied an herb that eased his pain and healed him, for he was not of mortal stock. Hard-hearted and unafraid of unseemly violence, Herakles hurt the Olympian gods with his arrows. Bright-eyed Athena set Tydeus' son upon you, but his foolish mind does not know that no man lives long fighting with the gods, nor do his children come and sit at his knees after he returns from fighting a dreaded war. The son of Tydeus may be very strong, but he must watch out lest he fight one stronger than you, or [Aegialeia](#), wise daughter of Adrastus and fair wife of horse-taming Diomedes, will awaken her dear servants with cries for her husband, the best of the Achaeans."

With both hands, she wiped Aphrodite's arms of ichor, healing her and stemming the pain. But Athena and Hera looked on and mocked Zeus, son of Cronos, hoping to provoke him, and gleaming-eyed Athena was first to speak: "Father Zeus, would you be angry if I spoke? It seems that the lady of Kypros is urging some

Achaean women to follow her much-beloved Trojans, and as she caressed these women's fair robes, she tore her hand on a golden brooch."

Hearing this, the father of gods and men smiled and called to golden Aphrodite, saying to her: "You, my child, are not meant to wage war but to attend to the delights of marriage, so leave warcraft to swift Ares and Athena."

As these gods were talking to one another, war-crier Diomedes attacked Aeneas. Though he knew Apollo's hands protected him, he was too eager to kill Aeneas and strip off his fine armor to stand in awe of the great god. Three times he attempted to attack and kill him, and three times Apollo fended off his shining shield. But as he made his fourth godlike attack, Apollo called out to him with a terrible cry: "Take thought and give up, son of Tydeus. You are not a god, and men who walk the earth can never equal the race of immortals."

So he said, and Diomedes stepped back slightly to avoid far-shooter Apollo's wrath. Then Apollo took Aeneas out of the throng and sent him to his temple in sacred Pergamus. Here, Leto and Artemis, shedder of arrows, healed his wounds in the grand sanctuary. But silver-bowed Apollo fashioned a phantom in the likeness of Aeneas, armor and all. Around this, Trojans and noble Achaeans hacked at one another and at their round, ox-hide shields and at their light, fluttering bucklers. Then Phoebus Apollo called to furious Ares: "Ares, Ares, destroyer of men and blood-stained

stormer of walls, can you not hold back Tydeus' son, who would now fight father Zeus himself? He first wounded Kypros on the hand, near the wrist, and then went after me like a god."

He spoke and seated himself atop Pergamus while cruel Ares joined the Trojan ranks disguised as swift Acamas, the Thracian leader, and stirred the noble sons of Priam, saying: "Sons of noble King Priam, for how long will you allow the Achaeans to kill your men? Will it be until they reach our well-built gates? Lying dead is one we honored like noble Hector: Aeneas, son of great-hearted Anchises. Come, let us retrieve our comrade from the battlefield."

His words stirred each man's strength and spirit. Then Sarpedon strongly scolded noble Hector: "Hector, where has your once mighty rage gone? You once said you could hold the city without allies, just your brothers and sister's husbands. But I see none of them here now, for they are off cowering in fear like dogs around lions while we mere allies do all of the fighting. For I am an ally who comes from afar, from distant Lycia by the eddying Xanthos. There I left my beloved wife, my infant son, and my riches—things all men desire. Still, I urge on the Lycians and am anxious myself to fight my foe, though I have nothing for the Achaeans to carry away as spoils. But you stand there and do not even urge your men to remain and defend their wives. Watch out or you will all be caught in the mesh of a net and become spoils for our enemy who will then quickly sack your strong city.



Concern yourself with all this day and night  
and beg the leaders of your famed allies  
to hold their ground and silence this rebuke.”

Sarpedon’s words hit Hector in the heart;  
at once, he leapt to the ground from his chariot  
wielding two spears and ran through the army  
urging all to fight and waking the din of war.  
His men whirled about to face the Achaeans,  
but the Argives fearlessly stood their ground.  
Just as wind carries chaff over holy threshing  
floors where men winnow, and fair Demeter  
sends bursts of wind to separate grain from chaff  
until the chaff becomes white, so the Achaean  
faces became white under clouds of dust stirred  
to the brazen heavens by their horses’ hooves  
as charioteers spun around to rejoin the fighting.  
Strong hands drove them forward, and furious  
Ares was everywhere, shrouding the battle  
in night to aid the Trojans, fulfilling the charge  
of Phoebus Apollo of the golden sword, who  
ordered him to rouse the Trojans when he saw  
Pallas Athena depart, for she aided the Danaans.  
Then Apollo sent Aeneas away from the rich  
sanctuary and filled his breast with vigor.  
Aeneas joined his comrades, and they rejoiced  
to see him alive, safe and sound and full  
of vigor; but they did not question him, too  
occupied by the toil brought by the silver bow,  
by murderous Ares, and by ceaseless Strife.

Then both Ajaxes, Odysseus, and Diomedes  
all pressed the Danaans to fight, since they  
themselves feared neither the Trojan might  
nor their attacks. Like unmoving clouds placed  
atop lofty mountains by Cronos’ son when

the North Wind and other furious winds sleep,  
winds that blow whistling cries over shadowy  
clouds and scatter them, so the Danaans stood  
firm and unflinching against the Trojans.  
And Atreus' son went among them, calling out:  
"Be men, my friends. Take your fill of courage  
and respect each other in the fierce fighting.  
When men show respect, more are saved than slain,  
and no glory comes from fleeing, nor any defense."

So he said and quickly hurled a spear, striking  
great-hearted Aeneas' comrade, Deïcoön, son  
of Pergasus, honored by the Trojans like a son  
of Priam for his readiness to fight on the front  
lines. Lord Agamemnon threw his spear at him,  
and the bronze spear tip hit his shield and drove  
straight through his belt and into his lower belly,  
and he crashed to the ground, his armor clanging.

Then Aeneas slew two great Danaan warriors,  
the sons of Diocles, Crethon and Orsilochus.  
Diocles lived a wealthy life in well-built Pheres,  
and was descended from the river Alpheius,  
whose streams flow wide through Pylia lands.  
Alpheius was the father of Orsilochus, ruler  
of men, and Orsilochus fathered great-hearted  
Diocles, to whom were born twin sons, Crethon  
and Orsilochus, skilled warriors both. When  
they came of age, they joined the Argive black  
ships headed to Ilios, land of horses, seeking  
recompense for Agamemnon and Menelaus,  
the sons of Atreus; but death intervened.  
In the same way that two mountain lions,  
raised by their mother in a deep, dark woods,  
will prey upon cattle and well-grown sheep  
and will lay waste to the homes of herders

until they are killed by men with sharp swords,  
so too were these two bested by the hands  
of Aeneas, and so they fell like tall fir trees.

But warlike Menelaus pitied the slain and strode  
past the front lines armed in gleaming bronze,  
carrying a spear, and stirred on by Ares, who  
hoped he might be killed by Aeneas' hands.  
But Antilochus, great-hearted Nestor's son,  
saw him and followed, fearing the shepherd  
of men might be harmed, thereby frustrating  
all of their efforts. As the men faced each other,  
their sharp spears extended and ready for battle,  
Antilochus came and stood beside Menelaus.  
Aeneas, though a swift fighter, did not remain  
when he saw two men standing firm before him.  
So these two pulled the dead to the Achaean  
army, left the unlucky men in their comrades'  
hands, and then returned to the front lines.

These two then slew Ares-blessed Pylaemenes,  
the great-hearted Paphlagonian warrior chief.  
He stood his ground, but Menelaus, Atreus' son,  
shot his famed spear straight into his collar-bone.  
Then Antilochus hurled a stone at his charioteer,  
Mydon, noble son of Atymnius, who was turning  
his horses. It hit his elbow, and the ivory reins  
fell from his hands and dropped to the dust.  
Antilochus then charged and drove his sword  
into his temple; Mydon gasped and tumbled  
from the chariot, landed headfirst in deep sand,  
and stayed there until his horses' hooves trampled  
him into the dust. Then Antilochus whipped  
the horses and drove them to the Achaean army.

Hector saw them across the ranks and rushed

after them, crying out, and the mighty Trojan battalions followed. Ares and queen Enyo led them: she carried the shameless chaos of war while he held a monstrous spear in his hands, moving first ahead of Hector, then behind.

Seeing him, war-crier Diomedes shuddered. Just as a man crossing a plain stops helplessly before a swift-running river flowing to the sea, watches it roar and foam, and steps back, so Tydeus' son drew back, telling his men: "My friends, we all marvel at godlike Hector's skill with the spear and his boldness in battle, but a god is always nearby, protecting him. Now it is Ares disguised as a mortal man, so keep facing the Trojans as you give ground, and do not seek battle with the gods."

So he said as the Trojans closed in on them. Then Hector killed Menesthes and Anchialus, two skilled fighters riding in the same chariot. As they fell, great Telamonian Ajax felt pity; standing close by, he hurled his shining spear, hitting Amphius, son of Selagus, a rich man from Paesus who owned many cornfields, but fate led him to ally with Priam and his sons. Ajax hit the man below his belt, the long-shadowed spear stuck into his lower belly, and he fell with a thud. As shining Ajax rushed to strip his armor, the Trojans showered him with sharp spears, but his shield caught many. He put his foot on the corpse and pulled out the bronze spear, but the rain of missiles prevented him from stripping the fine armor. He feared the powerful defense of the brave, spear-wielding Trojan lords who faced him,

and though he was strong, noble, and brave,  
they forced him back, and he retreated, stumbling.

As the two armies continued their struggle,  
Tlepolemus, son of Heracles, mighty and tall,  
was roused by resistless fate against godlike  
Sarpedon. When the two drew closer—one  
a son, the other a grandson of cloud-gatherer  
Zeus—Tlepolemus spoke first, saying to him:  
“Sarpedon, advisor to the Lycians, why are  
you here, cowering in fear? You cannot fight.  
Those calling you the progeny of aegis-bearing  
Zeus must be lying, for you are nothing like  
those men sprung from the gods in days of old.  
Such a man, they say, was mighty Herakles,  
my father, bold of spirit and lion-hearted,  
who once came here for Laomedon’s horses  
with just six ships and a few men, but still he  
sacked Ilios and desolated the city’s streets.  
But you are a coward, and your men perish;  
your coming here from Lycia could never aid  
Troy, no matter your strength, for I will defeat  
you and send you through the gates of Hades.”

In reply, Sarpedon, the Lycian leader, said:  
“Tlepolemus, Herakles did destroy sacred Ilios  
thanks to the recklessness of lordly Laomedon  
who rewarded his noble deeds with insults  
and withheld the horses he came so far to get.  
But your only reward from me today will be  
black death by my hands, and you will honor  
me as my spear sends your soul to Hades.”

So said Sarpedon as the other raised his ashen  
spear, and at the same time, both men hurled  
their long spears. Sarpedon hit Tlepolemus

square in the neck; the pont sliced clean through,  
and black night enveloped his eyes like a shroud.  
And Tlepolemus' long spear hit Sarpedon's  
left thigh; the point passed through and grazed  
the bone, but his father kept death at bay.

Then godlike Sarpedon's noble comrades carried  
him out of the battle, the heavy spear dragging  
behind him. In their haste, they did not think  
to draw the ashen spear from his thigh so he could  
stand—such was the difficulty of handling him.

On the other side, well-greaved Achaeans carried  
Tlepolemus from battle as noble, stout-hearted  
Odysseus watched, his soul burning with rage.  
He pondered in his mind and heart whether  
to chase after the son of loud-thundering  
Zeus or to take more Lycians lives. But fate did  
not decree for great-hearted Odysseus to slay  
the noble son of Zeus with his sharp spear,  
so Athena turned his mind to the Lycian forces,  
and he killed Coeranus, Alastor, Chromius,  
Alcandrus, Halius, Noëmon, and Prytanis.  
And Odysseus would have killed more Lycians  
had gleaming-helmed Hector not spotted him.  
He tore through the front lines, terrifying  
the Danaans, but Sarpedon, son of Zeus,  
rejoiced at his approach, and said to him:  
“Son of Priam, do not let the Danaans prey  
upon me—protect me! Should I die, let it be  
in your city, for I am not fated to return  
to my home in my beloved fatherland  
to comfort my dear wife and infant son.”

So he said, but Hector of the gleaming helm  
hurried past without reply, for he was intent

on driving the Argives back and taking many lives. But godlike Sarpedon's comrades sat him under a sacred oak of aegis-bearing Zeus, and mighty Pelagon, his dear friend, pushed the ashen spear through and out of his thigh. A mist fell over his eyes and he breathed his last, but then a North Wind gust blew over him, returning the spirit he had so painfully lost.

But the Argives, pressed by Ares and bronze-clad Hector, did not turn and flee to the black ships or stand and fight but drew ever backwards, for they knew Ares was with the Trojans.

Who was the first and who was last to be slain by Priam's son Hector and brazen Ares? Godlike Teuthras was first, followed by horse-driver Orestes, the Aetolian warrior Trechus, Oenomaus, Oenops' son Helenus, and Oresbius of the glancing guard, who lived in Hyle by lake Cephisian, worried for his wealth; and near him other Boeotians lived in rich, fertile lands.

When golden-haired goddess Hera noticed them killing the Argives in fierce battle, she quickly spoke winged-words to Athena: "Well, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, Atrytone, our pledge to Menelaus—that he return home after sacking well-walled Ilios—will be in vain if we allow deadly Ares to rage in this way. Come, let us focus on our own fighting fury."

She spoke, and gleaming-eyed Athena obeyed. Goddess Hera, eldest daughter of Cronos, harnessed the gold-filleted horses, and Hebe quickly put the bronze chariot's curved, eight-spoked wheels onto the iron axle. The fellows

were made of imperishable gold and fitted with bronze tires, a wonder to look upon, and silver naves spun round on both sides. The cart was plated with silver and gold straps with two rails circling it. The chariot's pole was silver, and on its end Hebe bound the fine gold yoke and fastened the golden harness; and beneath the yoke, Hera led the swift-footed horses, eager for battle.

But Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, let fall on her father's floor her ornamented robe, which she herself had made, donned the tunic of cloud-gathering Zeus, and armed herself for the miseries of war. She threw about her shoulder the tasseled, terrible aegis, crowned by Panic, Strife, Strength, and cold Pursuit, and in the center was the head of the [Gorgon](#), terrible and dire, a portent of aegis-bearing Zeus. On her head she set a helmet with two horns and four gold plates embossed with soldiers from a hundred cities. Then she stepped onto the fiery chariot and seized the heavy, strong spear used to rout the ranks of men who anger a mighty sire's daughter. Hera lashed the horses with her whip, and heaven's gates groaned open by order of the [Hours](#), who control whether the thick clouds of Olympus are opened or closed. They held their horses steady through the gates and found the son of Cronos sitting alone on the topmost peak of rocky Olympus. White-armed goddess Hera held her horses and spoke to Zeus, Cronos' son, asking him: "Father Zeus, are you not angered by Ares senselessly slaughtering so many Achaeans



just to spite me, while Kypros and Apollo  
of the silver bow sit back and delight in inciting  
this foolish maniac with no sense of justice?  
Father Zeus, would it anger you if I strike  
Ares painfully and drive him from battle?”

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus answered, saying:  
“Go and send Athena, driver of spoils, against  
him, for she is best able to bring him pain.”

So he said, and white-armed Hera did not  
disobey but whipped her horses, who eagerly  
flew between the earth and the starry skies.  
As far as a man on a mountain can see while  
gazing into the haze over the wine-dark sea,  
so far do the roaring horses of the gods leap  
in a single bound. When they came to Troy,  
where the Simoïs and Scamander rivers join,  
white-armed goddess Hera stayed her horses,  
unyoked them, and covered them in a thick mist;  
and Simoïs made ambrosia for them to graze on.

Though eager to protect the Achaean warriors,  
the goddesses stepped forward like timid doves  
until they came to the place where the bravest  
and best men were gathered around mighty  
horse-tamer Diomedes like ravenous lions  
or wild boars whose strength never waivers.  
White-armed goddess Hera stood there, disguised  
as great-hearted, brazen [Stentor](#) whose voice  
was as great as fifty men, and she cried out:  
“Argives, fair to behold but disgraceful in deed!  
When noble Achilles fought in battle, the Trojans  
could not get past the Dardanian gates, so afraid  
were they of the man’s mighty spear; but now  
they fight at the hollow ships, far from the city.”

Her words stirred each man's strength and spirit.  
But gleaming-eyed Athena rushed to Diomedes  
and found the king beside his horses and chariot  
cooling the arrow wound given him by Pandarus.  
The sweat under the broad strap of his rounded  
shield troubled him and his arm was weary, so he  
lifted the strap and wiped away the black blood.  
The goddess seized the horses' yoke and said:  
"Diomedes, you are not much like your father.  
Tydeus was small in size but a true fighter.  
Once he left the Achaeans and went alone  
to Thebes as an envoy among the Cadmeians.  
I ordered him to feast at ease in their halls  
and not to fight or distinguish himself,  
but his stout heart challenged the Cadmeian  
youth and easily defeated them all—thanks  
to the help I provided him. Now I also stand  
beside you, protect you, and urge you to fight  
earnestly against the Trojans, for either fighting  
has made your limbs fall weak or terror has  
drained your spirit. Truly, you are no child  
of Tydeus, the son of wise Oeneus."

In reply to her, mighty Diomedes said:  
"I know you, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
and so will speak honestly and hide nothing.  
Neither lifeless terror nor hesitance hold me;  
rather, I obey your order not to fight face-  
to-face with the blessed gods unless Aphrodite,  
daughter of Zeus, joins the battle, in which  
case I can pierce her with my sharp bronze.  
This is why I have drawn back and have  
ordered the Argives to gather beside me here;  
for I know that it is Ares who leads the fight."

Then gleaming-eyed goddess Athena replied:

“Diomedes, son of Tydeus, dear to my heart,  
you do not need to fear Ares or any other  
immortal, for I am here to defend you.  
So drive your single-hoofed horse at furious  
Ares, strike him in close combat, and do  
not fear that baneful, two-faced liar who  
recently promised Hera and me that he  
would fight the Trojans and aid the Argives.  
Now he cares nothing for us and aids Troy.”

So saying, she pulled Sthenelus off the chariot,  
and he fell to the ground and ran off; then  
the battle-ready goddess boarded the chariot  
with noble Diomedes, the axle creaking under  
the weight of the terrible goddess and the great  
man. Pallas Athena took the reins and drove  
the single-hoofed horses quickly against Ares.  
Blood-stained Ares was stripping the armor  
from monstrous Periphas, best of the Aetolians  
and noble son of Ochesius, but Athena donned  
the wolf's cap of Hades<sup>6</sup> so Ares would not see her.

But when destroyer of men Ares saw noble  
Diomedes, he left great Periphas where  
he had first struck him and taken his life  
and made straight for horse-tamer Diomedes.  
As they drew near to one another, Ares  
thrust his bronze spear over his horses' yoke  
and reins, intent on taking the other's life;  
but grey-eyed Athena used her hands to deflect  
the spear away from the chariot and its target.  
Then great war-crier Diomedes rushed him  
with his bronze spear, and Pallas Athena thrust  
it into Ares' flank where his belt girded him,

6. A helmet that, when worn, renders the wearer invisible to both mortals and immortals.

drove it deep into his fair flesh, and pulled it out again. Brazen Ares uttered a cry as great as the cries of nine or ten thousand soldiers when they fight with the fury of the war god. Achaeans and Trojans alike trembled in terror at the powerful cry of battle-mad Ares.

Just as a dark mist appears from clouds stirred by a violent whirlwind on a hot day, so to Diomedes did bold Ares appear as he retreated to the clouds in wide heaven. When he came to Olympus, home of the gods, he sat in grief beside Zeus, son of Cronos, pointed to the immortal blood flowing from his wound, and cried to him in despair: "Father Zeus, are you not enraged by these violent acts? We gods always bring suffering to one another when we give favor to men. You started this war by bearing this foolish, accursed maid who cares only for evil deeds. All other gods on Olympus are obedient and submissive to you, yet you say and do nothing to restrain her; instead, you urge her on, for she is your own child. Now she has urged reckless Diomedes, Tydeus' son, to direct his fury at the immortals. First, he wounded Kypros on the wrist near her hand; then he rushed at me like a god. My quick feet bore me from danger or else I would long be lying in misery among the dead or living powerless because of the spear strikes."

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus scowled and said, "Do not sit by me and whine, two-faced liar. To me, you are the most hateful of all Olympian gods for you relish strife, war, and fighting.

You have the rebellious spirit of your mother,  
Hera; even I cannot control her with words,  
and I suspect she is behind your suffering.  
But I will not allow you to suffer any longer,  
for you are my child, born to me by your mother.  
Had you hurt other gods in this way, then long  
ago you would have fallen below the Titans.”

So he said, and ordered Paeon to heal him,  
and Paeon sprinkled herbs to soothe the pain  
and mend him, for he was not of mortal stock.  
Just as fig juice added to white milk quickly  
thickens and curdles the liquid as it is stirred,<sup>7</sup>  
so too did he quickly heal furious Ares.  
Hebe bathed him, clad him in fine clothes,  
and sat him beside Zeus to rejoice in his glory.

Then Argive Hera and Alalcomenean Athena  
returned to the halls of Zeus after stopping  
the slaughter brought by Ares, plague of men.

7. According Paul MacSweeney, “this...may be a reference to the rennet coagulation of milk by ficin, a thiol proteinase present in fig latex.”

## BOOK 6

So the dread battle between Trojans and Achaeans was left to itself, and combat swayed this way and that over the plain as men with bronze spears clashed between the Simois and Xanthos rivers.

Ajax, son of Telamon, Achaean defender, was first to break the Trojan ranks, clearing a path for his men by slaying Acamas, son of [Eussorus](#), powerful and tall and best of the Thracians. He struck the horsehair plume on his helmet and drove the bronze point through his forehead and into bone as darkness covered his eyes.

Then war-crier Diomedes struck down Axylus, son of Teuthras, who lived in well-built Arisbe, a wealthy man beloved of all, for he treated visitors to his house by the road with kindness. But on this day there were none to stand before him and ward off wretched ruin, for Diomedes took the lives of both he and his charioteer Calesius, and they both went into the earth.

Euryalus next killed Dresus and Opheltas and went after [Aesepeus](#) and [Pedasus](#), sons of the nymph [Abarbarea](#) and blameless [Bucolion](#). Bucolion was noble Laomedon's eldest-born, but his mother bore him out of wedlock.

He bedded the nymph while tending his sheep,  
and she conceived and bore him twin sons.  
But Euryalus broke their strong, glorious limbs  
and stripped the armor from their dead shoulders.

Stout Polypoetes also struck down Astyalus,  
Odysseus and his bronze spear slew Pidytes  
of Percote, and [Teucer](#) slew noble Aretaon.  
Nestor's son Antilochus used his shining spear  
to kill [Ablerus](#), and lord Agamemnon slew Elatus  
who dwelt in high Pedasus beside the fair river  
Satnioeis. And the warrior Leitus killed a fleeing  
Phylacus while Eurypylus took out Melanthius.

Then war-crier Menelaus took Adrestus alive  
after his two panic-stricken horses got tangled  
in a tamarisk and took flight over the plain,  
breaking the curved chariot at the pole  
and running back to the city, terrifying many.  
He fell and landed face-first by the chariot  
wheel, his mouth filled with dust, and Menelaus  
came near holding his long-shadowed spear.  
Adrestus grabbed his knees and begged him:  
"Spare me, son of Atreus, and receive a suitable  
prize. In my father's house there are great  
treasures: gold, bronze, and well-worked iron.  
My father would grant you countless ransoms  
if he learns I am alive by the Achaean ships."

His words persuaded Menelaus in his heart,  
who started to give the man to his aide to be  
taken to the Achaean ships; but Agamemnon  
ran over to him and spoke words of rebuke:  
"Dear Menelaus, why do you care so much  
for these men? How did the Trojans treat you  
in your home? Let none escape their dreaded

fates by our hands; even the unborn boy  
in his mother's womb should not escape. Let  
all of Ilios perish, unmourned and forgotten."

This call for justice changed Menelaus' mind.  
He pushed Adrastus away and Agamemnon,  
lord of men, speared his flank, and he fell  
backwards. Then the son of Atreus set his foot  
on his chest and pulled out his ashen spear.

Nestor shouted and called out to the Achaeans:  
"My friends, heroes of Danaan, servants of Ares,  
do not hold back now in search of spoils, hoping  
to carry the largest hoard back to the ships.  
First, kill the men; then return later to strip away  
the armor from the corpses across the plain."

His words stirred each man's strength and spirit.  
And the overpowered Trojans would have been  
forced by the warlike Achaeans to go back to Ilios  
had not the great augur Helenus, son of Priam,  
gone up to Aeneas and Hector and said:  
"Aeneas and Hector, since the burden of battle  
is heaviest on you among Trojans and Lycians,  
for you are best both in fighting and advising,  
stand your ground and go around to the men  
and make them stay outside the gates and not flee  
into their wives' arms—to your enemy's delight.  
When all ranks have been roused into action,  
the rest of us will hold here and fight the Danaans  
no matter our weariness, for it is necessary.  
But you, Hector, must return to the city and tell  
our mother to assemble the older women  
at grey-eyed Athena's shrine high in the citadel,  
bringing with her a robe that seems the largest,  
most beautiful, and most precious in the palace;



she should then go into the sacred temple, lay the robe upon fair-haired Athena's knees and vow to sacrifice in her shrine twelve young heifers, ungoaded, so the goddess may take pity on Troy and its women and children and keep away from Ilios the son of Tydeus, the savage spearman and master of terror who I say is the mightiest of the Achaeans. Not even Achilles, leader of men and son of a goddess, was feared as much as this man who is unrivaled in rage and might."

So he said, and Hector obeyed his brother. He leapt fully-armed from the chariot wielding two sharp spears and roamed through the army urging all to fight and rousing the din of war. So they turned to face the Achaeans, who recoiled and ceased their slaughter, thinking an immortal had flown down from heaven to protect the rallying Trojans. Then Hector lifted his voice and cried out to the Trojans: "Great-hearted Trojans and famed allies, be men, friends, and remember your raging spirit while I go back to Ilios and tell the elder counselors and our wives to pray to the gods and offer them hecatombs."

So bright-helmed Hector said and departed, and the black-hide edges of his embossed shield struck against both his ankles and neck.

Then Glaucus, son of Hippolochus, and the son of Tydeus went to the space between the armies, eager for a fight. When they closed on one another, war-crier Diomedes spoke first: "My friend, who among mortal men are you?

I have never before seen you on the battlefield of glory, but now you have boldly pushed past all others to face my long spear, though those whose sons face my might despair. But if you are an immortal who has come down from heaven, then I will not fight you. Not even [Lycurgus](#), stout son of Dryas, lived long when he fought the gods of heaven. He once drove the nurses of furious [Dionysus](#) from sacred [Nysa](#), dropping their wands on the ground as murderous Lycurgus struck them with an ox-whip and Dionysus, terrified by the man's shouts, fled beneath the waves where Thetis received him into her bosom. The easy-living gods were furious at Lycurgus, and the son of Cronos blinded him, and soon after he died, hated by the immortal gods. This is why I would not fight the blessed gods. But if you are mortal and eat the fruits of the soil, then come closer so you may soon find death."

The shining son of [Hippolochus](#) replied to him: "Son of noble Tydeus, why ask of my lineage? The generations of men are like those of leaves. Just as the wind blows leaves to the ground but the rich forest flourishes anew every spring, so one generation of men rises as another dies. But if you wish to learn my lineage, then I will tell you, for many know it already. The city of Corinth lies in a corner of horse-grazing Argos, where lived the son of Aeolus, crafty [Sisyphus](#), who had a son called [Glaucus](#), who in turn sired blameless [Bellerophon](#), who was granted beauty and fair manliness by the gods. But powerful [Proetus](#), whom Zeus made subject to his scepter, hated him

in his heart and drove him out of Argos.  
The wife of Proetus, beautiful [Anteia](#), madly  
desired to lie with Bellerophon, but she could  
not persuade him, for his mind was virtuous.  
So she lied to King Proetus, telling him:  
'Kill yourself, Proetus, or kill Bellerophon,  
for he desired to lie with me but I refused.'  
Hearing her words, he became furious,  
but his heart shrank from killing the man,  
so he sent him to Lycia with many deadly  
guest-tokens scratched onto a folded tablet,  
which he was told to present to his wife's father.  
So he went to Lycia under escort of the gods.  
When he came to Lycia and the river Xanthos,  
the king of Lycia eagerly honored him, hosting  
him for nine days and sacrificing nine oxen.  
But on the tenth day, when rosy-fingered dawn  
appeared, the king asked to see the tokens  
that were sent from his son-in-law Proetus.  
After receiving the tokens, he sent Bellerophon  
away with orders to kill the great [Chimera](#).  
She was of divine origin, not mortal; her front  
was lion, her back was serpent, her middle  
was goat, and she breathed terrible fire.  
He killed her, obeying the omens of the gods.  
Then he fought the famous [Solymoi](#), which he  
said were the toughest warriors he ever fought.  
Finally, he killed the Amazons, a match for men.  
As he returned, the king devised a cunning trick:  
he selected the best men in all Lycia and set  
a trap. But they never returned to their homes,  
for blameless Bellerophon killed them all.  
When the king realized this man was a powerful  
son of a god, he detained him and offered him  
his daughter and half of his princely honor,

and the Lycians designated for him a beautiful estate with fine orchards and plow lands. His bride bore to skilled Bellerophon three children: Isander, Hippolochus, and Laodamia. Laodamia lay with counselor Zeus, and she bore godlike Sarpedon, marshaller of spears. After Bellerophon became hated by the gods, he walked alone over the [Aleion plain](#), eating his heart out and avoiding the haunts of men. His son Isander was slain by furious Ares while fighting the famous Solymoi, and Artemis of the golden reins killed his daughter in anger. And Hippolochus beget me, and so I say he is my father, and he sent me to Troy, charging me to always be brave and noble and not to bring shame on my forefathers, who were the best in Corinth and in wide Lycia. This, I declare, is my heritage and my blood.”

So he said, and war-crier Diomedes rejoiced, fixing his spear in the grain-giving earth and kindly addressing this shepherd of men: “Then you are a friend of my father’s house! Noble Oeneus once hosted blameless Bellerophon in his great hall for twenty days, and the men exchanged fine gifts of friendship. Oeneus gave a bright red warrior’s belt, and Bellerophon gave a two-handled cup of gold which I left at home when I came here. But I do not recall my father Tydeus, for I was a child when he and the Achaean army died in Thebes. So now I am your host when you are in Argos, and you to me in Lycia when I visit the land. Let us leave our spears, even in this throng; there are other Trojans and their allies to slay, either sent by the gods or overcome by foot,

and many Achaeans for you to slay, if you can.  
And let us exchange armor, so others may know  
we are guest-friends from our fathers' days."

Once finished, they dropped from their chariots,  
took each other's hands, and pledged friendship.  
Then Zeus robbed Glaucus of his wits when he  
exchanged his golden armor, worth a hecatomb,  
for the bronze of Diomedes, worth nine oxen.

But as Hector reached the Scaean gates and oak  
tree, Trojan wives and daughters ran to him  
asking about their sons, brothers, fathers,  
and friends; but he commanded them all to pray  
to the gods, and sorrow hung over the crowd.

Then he arrived at Priam's beautiful palace,  
built with well-wrought colonnades and fifty  
interconnected sleeping chambers made  
of polished stone, and within these chambers  
Priam's sons slept with their wedded wives.  
On the other side of the courtyard, there stood  
twelve interconnected roofed chambers made  
of polished stone, and within these chambers  
Priam's sons-in-law slept with their revered wives.  
Hector was met by his generous mother  
and by Laodice, the fairest of her daughters.  
Clasping her hands to his, [Hecuba](#) said to him:  
"Son, why did you leave the bitter battle and come  
here? The hated Achaeans must be exhausting  
you as they fight near the city, and you are here  
to lift your hands to Zeus from atop the citadel.  
But wait while I bring you honey-sweet wine  
for a libation to Zeus and the other immortals,  
and then you can also have a drink, if you wish.

Wine strengthens men grown weary from work,  
and you are weary from defending your people.”

In reply, great Hector of the glancing helm said:  
“Bring me no honey-hearted wine, lady mother,  
lest you hobble me and take my strength and vigor.  
Hands this dirty dare not offer bright wine to Zeus,  
nor can a man so befouled with blood and gore  
make prayer to the black-clouded son of Cronos.  
Instead, gather the elder women and bring a burnt  
offering to the temple of Athena, driver of spoils,  
bringing with you a robe that seems the largest,  
most beautiful, and most precious in the palace;  
then lay the robe upon fair-haired Athena’s  
knees and vow to sacrifice twelve young heifers,  
ungoaded, so the goddess may take pity  
on Troy and its women and children and keep  
away from Ilios the son of Tydeus, the savage  
spearman and master of terror. Now go  
to Athena’s shrine, and I will seek out  
Paris to summon him, if he will listen to me.  
I wish the earth would swallow him whole,  
for Zeus bred him to be a curse on the Trojans,  
on great-hearted Priam, and on his sons.  
If I could see him sink down to Hades,  
then my heart would be free of painful misery.”

So Hecuba went into the house and called  
her servants to assemble the city’s elder women,  
and she went down to the fragrant storeroom  
where her many-colored robes were kept, the work  
of Sidonian women taken from Sidon  
by godlike Alexander when he sailed the wide  
sea and brought noble-born Helen to Troy.  
Hecuba took as offering for Athena a robe  
hidden under the others; it was the largest

and finest in design, and it shone like a star.  
Then she left, and the elder women followed.

When they came to Athena's shrine atop  
the citadel, the door was opened for them  
by fair-cheeked Theano, daughter of Cisses,  
wife of Antenor, and Trojan priestess of Athena.  
With a loud cry, they all raised up their hands  
to Athena while fair-cheeked Theano took  
the robe, laid it on the knees of fair-haired  
Athena, and prayed to great Zeus' daughter:  
"Lady Athena, brightest of goddesses, protector  
of the city, take pity on the city and on Trojan  
wives and children. Shatter Diomedes' spear  
and grant him to fall face-first before the Scaean  
gates, so we may immediately sacrifice twelve  
yearling heifers, ungoaded, in your shrine."

So she prayed, but Pallas Athena refused her.

As they prayed to the daughter of great Zeus,  
Hector went to Alexander's house—a fine  
palace that had been built with the finest  
craftsmen in fertile [Troad](#); they made for him  
a chamber, hall, and courtyard near Priam's  
and Hector's houses in the citadel. So Hector,  
dear to Zeus, entered, his hands holding  
a spear of eleven cubits with a shaft tipped  
with blazing bronze and a ferrule of gold.  
Inside, he found Paris working on his beautiful  
shield and breastplate and handling his bow  
while Argive Helen sat with her servants  
and supervised their elegant craftwork.  
Hector, seeing Paris, reproached him, saying:  
"You fool, it is no good hiding away with anger  
in your heart, for men are perishing beyond

the city's walls, and it is your fault the cries of battle burn around us; you yourself would upbraid anyone else who hung back from hated war, so get up or soon the city will be on fire."

In reply, godlike Alexander answered:

"Hector, you reproach me rightly and justly, so I will tell you and hope you understand. I did not sit in my room to spite or reproach the Trojans but to wallow in my grief. Just now my wife used soft words to urge me back to battle, and this seems to me the best choice, as well, for victory is always in flux. So wait for me as I don my war gear, or go now and I will follow and catch up to you."

So he said, but bright-helmed Hector did not reply; then Helen spoke gentle words to him: "Brother-in-law of a hated, hurtful bitch, I wish on the day my mother bore me that a violent storm had hurled me into a mountain or into the waves of a roaring sea, to be swept away before all this came to pass. But since the gods have ordained these woes, then I wish I had been wife to a better man, one who could feel the indignation of others. His judgment is unbalanced, and it always will be; this, I think, will be his undoing. But come inside, brother, and take a seat, for great toil fills your mind because of my shamelessness and Alexander's foolish folly. Zeus has placed a wicked curse upon us, to become songs for men not yet born."

Then great Hector of the bright helm replied:

"Do not ask me to sit, dear Helen, for you



will not persuade me; my heart aches to aid  
the Trojans, who are lost when I am away.  
But rouse this man and hurry him along  
so he can catch up to me before I leave the city.  
First I will go home to see my servants, my dear  
wife, and my infant son, for I do not know  
if I will return to them again, or if the gods  
will slay me with the hands of the Achaeans.”

So saying, bright-helmed Hector went away  
and soon arrived at his own pleasant home,  
but white-armed Andromache was not there  
for she, her child, and a well-robed handmaid  
were standing on the wall, weeping and wailing.  
When Hector could not find his blameless wife,  
he went to the door and asked the serving women:  
“Tell me, handmaidens, where did white-armed  
Andromache go when she left the hall? Did she  
go to my sisters, to my brother’s well-robed wives,  
or to Athena’s shrine with all the other Trojan  
women praying to appease the dread goddess?”

Then a handmaid readily replied to him:  
“Hector, since you order us to speak the truth,  
she did not go to your sisters or your brother’s  
wives or Athena’s shrine, where the well-dressed  
Trojan women seek to appease the dread goddess;  
rather, she went to the great wall of Ilios, having  
heard of Trojan setbacks against the mighty  
Achaeans. Thus she hurried to the wall in great  
distress along with the nurse carrying her child.”

So spoke the housekeeper, and Hector went  
away, hurrying back along the well-made streets  
of the great city until he came to the Scaean  
gates. As he was about to head onto the plain,

his bountiful bride came running to meet him,  
Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eëtion,  
who lived under well-wooded mount Placus  
in Hypoplakia and ruled the [Cilicians](#);  
his daughter was wife to bronze-clad Hector.  
She came to him, accompanied by her nurse  
who held to her breast a tender child,  
Hector's beloved son, as beautiful as a star.  
Hector called him Scamandrius, but others  
[Astyanax](#), for Hector alone guarded Ilios.<sup>1</sup>  
He smiled in silence as he glanced at the boy,  
but Andromache wept as she approached  
him, and taking her hand in his, she said:  
"My dearest, your bravery will destroy you,  
and you have no pity for your son or for me,  
a soon-to-be widow, for soon all the Achaeans  
will rise up and slay you. If I should lose you,  
I would sink into the earth, for there will be  
no comfort for me, only pain, once you have  
met your fate. I have no father or mother,  
for my father was slain by noble Achilles,  
who ravaged the fair city of Cilicians Thebes  
of the lofty gates. He slew Eëtion, but did not  
strip his armor, a sign of respect, and instead  
burnt the body in his armor and covered him  
in a barrow circled by elm trees planted  
by nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus.  
And my seven brothers in our great halls  
all went down to Hades on the same day,  
slain by swift-footed, noble Achilles beside  
their shambling oxen and white-fleeced sheep.  
My mother, queen under well-wooded Placus,  
was brought here with the other prizes; Achilles  
freed her after accepting ransoms, but she was

1. Astyanax means "high king" or overlord. This nickname connects Hector's child to Hector's own role as defender of the city and heir to the throne.

killed in her father's halls by Artemis, shedder of arrows.<sup>2</sup> Hector, you are now my father, my mother, my brother, and my vigorous husband, so pity me, stay on the wall, and do not make your child an orphan and your wife a widow. Station your men by the wild fig tree, where the wall can be scaled and the city overrun. Three times the best men came to attempt an assault: both Ajaxes, glorious Idomeneus, the sons of Atreus, and the stout son of Tydeus. Either some skilled soothsayer told them or their spirits stirred them to make the assault.”

Then bright-helmed Hector replied to her:  
“Lady, I fear these things too, but I would feel shame before the Trojans and Trojan wives with trailing robes should I cowardly shirk battle; nor will my heart allow it for I have learned to excel in fighting on the Trojan front ranks, winning great glory for my father and myself. For I know in my mind and in my heart that sacred Ilios will one day be laid waste, as will Priam and all those under Priam's ashen spear. But I am troubled less by the woes to come for the Trojans, for Hecuba, for King Priam, and for my many noble brothers sure to fall in the dust at the hands of hostile men, and more by your tearful suffering on the day some bronze-clad Achaean takes your freedom. Then in Argos you will work another's loom, carry water from Messeis or Hyperia against your will, and heavy burdens will be laid on you. And one day a man will see you crying and say: ‘This is Hector's wife. When men fought

2. Artemis and her twin brother Apollo were “death-bringing” deities; Apollo sent death to men, and Artemis sent death to women.

in Ilios, he was the best of all horse-taming Trojans.' But his words will renew your pain at losing the man who kept you from slavery. May I be dead and covered in earth before I hear your cries as you are dragged away."

So saying, Hector reached for his son, who went crying into his nurse's well-girdled bosom, for he feared the sight of his dear father's bronze armor and the horse-hair crest that nodded menacingly from atop his helmet. His dear father and honored mother laughed, and glorious Hector removed his gleaming helmet and set it down upon the ground. Then he kissed his son, held him in his arms, and prayed to Zeus and the other immortals: "Zeus and all other gods, grant this child to be, like me, noble and strong among the Trojans and a powerful leader of Ilios. And on return from war, let men say, 'He is better than his father,' for he kills his foe, bears his bloody spoils, and gladdens his mother's heart."

So he said, and placed the child in his wife's arms; and she took him into her fragrant bosom, smiling through her tears. Seeing this, Hector took pity on her and stroked her, saying to her: "Do not let your grief for me destroy you. No man will send me to Hades unless it is fated, and no man can escape his fate once he is born, neither cowardly men nor nobles. But go into the house and focus on your loom and your distaff and order your handmaids to their work as well; let war be the concern for all men who live in Ilios, but especially me."

So shining Hector picked up his horsehair helmet while his loving wife returned home, occasionally turning back and shedding tears. Soon she was back at man-slaying Hector's fine palace where she found many handmaids stirred by her arrival into lamentation. Thus Hector's house mourned him though he himself lived, for none believed he would return from war or escape Achaean fury.

And Paris did not loiter long in his lofty home, for after donning his brilliant bronze armor he ran through the city, trusting his swift feet. Just as a well-fed horse confined to a manger exults as he breaks his bonds and gallops over the plain to a bathing spot on the fair-flowing river, then holds his head high and tosses his mane as he marvels at his beauty, and his legs hurriedly take him to a pasture full of mares, so went Paris, Priam's son, shining in his armor like the sun and laughing as his swift feet carried him down from atop Pergamus. Soon he came upon his brother, noble Hector, just as he was about to turn after conversing with his wife. And godlike Alexander was first to speak: "Brother, I fear my long delay held you back and kept you from making a quick departure."

Then Hector of the bright helm answered him: "Odd man, no right thinker would dishonor your work in battle, since you have courage; but you are lazy and unprepared, and it grieves my heart to hear insults about you from the lips of Trojans who suffer in battle because of you. But let us go; we will atone later, should Zeus and the immortal gods in heaven grant us to set

an offering for freedom in the large hall after  
we drive the well-greaved Achaeans out of Troy.”

## BOOK 7

So saying, shining Hector and his brother  
Alexander ran through the gates, both  
eager in their hearts to fight and to battle.  
Just as a god grants fair winds to suppliant  
sailors whose limbs have become exhausted  
from driving the sea with well-polished oars,  
so the two appeared to the needy Trojans.

Then Paris slew the son of King Areithous,  
Menesthius of Arne, born to club-bearer  
Areithous and ox-eyed Phylomedusa;  
and Hector struck his spear in the neck  
of Eioneus, under his helmet, and his limbs  
collapsed. And Glaucus, son of Hippolochus  
and Lycian leader, shot his spear at Iphinous,  
son of Dexius, as he mounted his swift mares;  
he fell from his chariot and his limbs went limp.

When bright-eyed goddess Athena saw  
the Argives dying in the fierce fighting,  
she shot down from the peaks of Olympus  
to sacred Ilios, and Apollo, desiring victory  
for Troy, raced from Pergamus to meet her.  
They came together beside the oak tree,  
and lord Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke first:  
“Daughter of mighty Zeus, why has your strong

spirit brought you down here from Olympus?  
Do you seek victory in battle for the Danaans?  
Clearly, you care nothing for the Trojan dead.  
But it would be better if you took my advice:  
let us put an end to today's war and strife.  
Later they will fight until victory over Ilios  
is achieved, since the hearts of you immortal  
goddesses seem set on the city's destruction."

Bright-eyed goddess Athena replied to him:  
"So be it, free worker. This is why I came down  
from Olympus to the Trojans and Achaeans.  
But how do you plan to stop these men fighting?"

Then lord Apollo, son of Zeus, answered her:  
"Let us stir the anger of horse-tamer Hector  
so he will challenge some Danaan to fight  
him face-to-face in dreaded combat; then  
the bronze-greaved Achaeans will grudgingly  
send out one man to battle noble Hector."

So he said, and gleaming-eyed Athena obeyed.  
Helenus, Priam's dear son, heard in his heart  
the discussion of the gods and their agreement,  
and he came up to Hector and said to him:  
"Hector, son of Priam, equal to Zeus in counsel,  
listen to my words now, for I am your brother:  
make all the Trojans and Achaeans sit together  
and challenge the best of the Achaeans  
to fight you in single combat to the death;  
for I heard the voice of the immortal gods say  
that it is not your fate to meet your doom today."

Hector was greatly pleased to hear these words,  
and he went among the Trojans, using his spear  
to restrain the front lines until all were seated.  
Agamemnon made all the Achaeans sit as well,



and Athena and Apollo of the silver bow took the form of vultures, sat atop the oak tree sacred to their father, aegis-bearing Zeus, and happily watched the huddled soldiers, bristling with their shields, helmets, and spears. Like a fresh West Wind spreading ripples over the water and darkening the depths below, so sat the lines of Achaeans and Trojans on the plain as Hector spoke to both armies: "Listen, Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans, as I speak what is in my heart and in my soul: Zeus, seated on high, failed to fulfill our oaths. He has devised wicked plans for both sides until you either come to sack well-walled Troy or you are routed beside your seafaring ships. You are all best among Achaeans, so let the one whose heart urges him to fight me now come here and challenge noble Hector. So I declare, and let Zeus be our witness: if he slays me with a sharp bronze spear, then strip my armor and take it to the hollow ships, but let my body be taken home so Trojan men and wives may offer death rites by funeral pyre. But if I slay him and Apollo grants me glory, then I will strip his armor, take it to sacred Ilios, and hang it on the shrine of far-shooter Apollo, but his corpse may return to the well-benched ships so the long-haired Achaeans may bury him and build a barrow by the wide Hellespont. And some future men, as he sails his ships over the wine-dark sea, will say: 'There lies the barrow of a man who was killed long ago by brave and glorious Hector.' So he will say and so my glory will never die."

So he said, and all fell silent, ashamed

to refuse him but afraid to take the challenge. Eventually, Menelaus stood. A deep groan filled his heart as he reproached them, saying: "You boastful women, not men, of Achaea. Surely it will be a sore and sorry disgrace if no Danaan goes against Hector today. Let all of you become water and earth as you sit there, spiritless and inglorious. I will arm myself against this man, though victory is in the hands of the immortal gods above."

So saying, he began to don his fine armor, and you, Menelaus, would have seen your life come to an end under the superior hands of Hector had the Achaean king, lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, not seized you by the right hand, called you by name, and said: "Menelaus, dear to Zeus, stop being a fool. There is no reason to put yourself in danger and fight a foe as powerful as Hector, son of Priam, who others also fear. Even Achilles shrinks from fighting him for honor, and he is far better than you. So go and sit among your comrades, and let the Achaeans pick another champion, one who is fearless and insatiable in battle and who will, I think, gladly bend his knee if he can escape this bitter battle and dreadful combat."

So the hero said, his wise words winning over his brother, who obeyed; and his attendants gladly removed his armor from his shoulders. Then Nestor rose to speak to the Argives: "Great grief has come to the land of Achaea, and old horse-tamer Peleus, wise Myrmidon counselor and speaker, would groan in dismay.

Once, in his house, he rejoiced as I recalled the lineage and legacy of the Argives. If he could hear these men cowering before Hector, then he would pray that the gods rip his breath from his body and send him to Hades. O father Zeus, Athena and Apollo, if only I were as young as I was when the Pylians and Arcadians met by the rushing [Celadon](#) and fought under [Pheia's](#) walls, beside the streams of the [Iardanus](#). Godlike Ereuthalion was their champion. He wore on his shoulders the armor of King Areithous, whom men and fair-girdled women called club-bearer because he used not a bow or long spear but an iron club when battling and breaking battalions. Lycurgos killed him not by might but by trickery, springing on him in a narrow pass where his iron club could not protect him, spearing him in the chest, dropping him to the earth, and stripping away his armor, a gift from brazen Ares. Thereafter Lycurgos wore this armor in battle, but when he was an old man in his great hall, he gave the armor to his dear attendant Eruthalion. Wearing this armor, he challenged the bravest men, but they were too afraid to fight him. But my unflinching heart boldly urged me to fight him, though I was youngest of all. So I fought him, and Athena gave me glory. He was the tallest and strongest man I ever killed; his huge sprawling body spread everywhere. If I were younger and stronger, then glancing-helmed Hector would find me fighting him. But though you are all the finest of Achaeans, none of you have the guts to fight Hector.”

After the old man's reproach, nine men stood.

First to rise was Agamemnon, lord of men,  
followed by Tydeus' son, mighty Diomedes,  
the two Ajaxes clothed in rushing courage,  
and Idomeneus and his comrade Meriones,  
equal to man-slaying Enyalios. Then came  
Eurypylus, noble son of Euaemon, and Thoas,  
Andraemon's son, and finally noble Odysseus.  
All were willing to battle noble Hector.  
Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, spoke again:  
"Now cast lots in turn to determine who wins,  
for he will benefit both the well-greaved  
Achaeans and his own heart, if he can escape  
this bitter battle and dreadful combat."

So saying, each man marked his lot and threw  
it into Agamemnon's helmet, and the army  
lifted their hands to the gods and prayed,  
each man looking to the heavens and saying:  
"Father Zeus, let the lot fall on Ajax or the son  
of Tydeus or the king of golden Mycenae."

As they prayed, Nestor, horseman of Genenia,  
shook the helmet, and Ajax's lot popped out,  
the one most desired. The herald carried it  
through the throng, showing it to all Achaean  
leaders, but none of them recognized the mark.  
Then he carried it to the man whose mark it  
was, glorious Ajax. As soon as the herald put  
the lot in Ajax's hand, Ajax's heart rejoiced  
for he saw that it was his. He threw the lot  
on the ground beside his feet and cried out:  
"My friends, the lot is mine, and my heart  
rejoices, for I think I will defeat noble Hector.  
But do this for me: while I don my battle  
armor, pray to lord Zeus, son of Cronos,  
either in silence to yourself so no Trojan can

hear you, or out loud since we fear no man  
and no one can by force or by skill drive me  
away against my will, for no man born  
and raised in Salamis can be called a novice.”

So he said, and all gazed up to the heavens  
and prayed to lord Zeus, son of Cronos, saying:  
“Father Zeus, who rules from Ida, greatest  
and noblest, grant victory and honor to Ajax;  
or if you also love Hector and care for him,  
then grant both equal power and glory.”

As they prayed, Ajax donned his bright armor,  
and when his body was covered in bronze,  
he ran off like monstrous Ares when he heads  
to battle with men brought together by the son  
of Cronos to fight in heart-devouring strife.  
So also did monstrous Ajax, the Achaean wall,  
dash off, his shaggy face smiling and his long-  
shadowed spear shaking with each giant step.  
The Argives looked upon him and rejoiced,  
but each Trojan’s knees quivered with dread,  
and even Hector’s heart started beating faster.  
But he could not retire or retreat back behind  
the ranks, for it was he who made the challenge.  
Ajax drew near carrying a towering bronze shield  
with seven layers of ox-hide, made by Tydeus  
of Hyle, the finest of leather-workers, who made  
him a gleaming shield using seven stout oxen  
hides and an eighth layer of bronze, and this is  
what Telamonian Ajax held against his chest as  
he stood near Hector and threatened him, saying:  
“Hector, now you will know clearly what kind  
of great men there are among the Danaans  
besides lion-hearted Achilles, breaker of ranks.  
He may be lying by his curved seafaring

ships, enraged at Agamemnon, herder of men, but we are here, we are many, and we are ready for you. Now let us fight.”

And Hector of the flashing helm answered: “Godlike Ajax, son of [Telamon](#), lord of men, do not try to frighten me like some feeble child or woman who knows nothing of war. I know all about war and the slaughter of men, and I know how to move left and right with my ox-hide shield, my bulwark in battle, and how to charge into battle with my swift chariot, and how to stand and dance the war dance to Ares.<sup>1</sup> But I do not wish to deceive you and take you unawares but to openly try to hit my mark.”

So saying, he aimed his long-shadowed spear, threw it, and hit Ajax’s terrible shield with seven layers of ox-hide and one of bronze. The spear tore through six leather layers, but the seventh held it back. Then Ajax, sprung from Zeus, threw his long-shadowed spear and hit the well-balanced shield of Priam’s son. The mighty spear pierced his shining shield, forced its way into his well-wrought breastplate, and cut into his tunic beside his flank, but he turned away in time and avoided black death. The two men pulled the long spears out of their shields and rushed each other like ravenous lions or wild boars, whose powers are not feeble. Hector struck his spear square in Ajax’s shield, but the bronze held and the point bent back. Then Ajax’s spear-point punctured Hector’s shield and cut into his neck, forcing him back

1. This is a reference to the war dances performed prior to battles or during festivals (including festivals to Ares, god of war). The Greek war dance was later called “Pyrrhichios” (πυρρίχιον).

as black blood oozed out. But shining-helmed Hector did not quit; instead, he drew back and, with his strong hands, seized a jagged black stone lying on the plain. This he hurled square onto the boss of Ajax's terrible ox-hide shield, making the bronze layer ring. Ajax then lifted an even bigger stone, whirled around, threw it with all his strength, and tore Hector's shield apart like a millstone. Hector's knees gave out and he fell on his back, close to the shield, but Apollo lifted him up. Now a close quarters sword battle would have begun had the heralds, messengers of Zeus and men, not arrived, a Trojan and an Achaean, Talthybius and Idaeus, wise men both. They separated the men with their staffs, and Idaeus addressed them with wise words: "No more fighting or battling, dear children. Both of you are loved by cloud-gatherer Zeus, and both are skilled fighters; we all know this. Now Night is here, and we should obey her."

Telamonian Ajax then answered them: "Hector should speak these words, Idaeus, for it was he who called our best to battle. Let him begin, and I will obey what he says."

Then Hector of the flashing helm replied: "Ajax, since a god gave you strength, stature, and wisdom, and since you are the best Achaean spearman, we should stop fighting and battling for today; later we will battle until the gods decide to grant victory to one side or the other. Now Night is here, and we should obey her, so you can cheer all Achaeans by their ships, especially your kinsmen and comrades; and I

shall gladden King Priam's great city of Troy,  
both the men and the women with flowing robes  
who will offer the gods prayers of thanks for me.  
But come, let us exchange gifts with each other,  
so that Achaeans and Trojans alike will say:  
'though the two battled with relentless strife,  
they formed an alliance and departed as friends.'"

So he spoke and gave to him his silver sword  
along with its scabbard and well-made baldric;<sup>2</sup>  
and Ajax gave to him his bright red warrior's belt.  
And so they separated, one to the Achaean army  
and the other to the Trojan throng. The Trojans  
cheered to see that Hector had escaped mighty  
Ajax and his invincible hands, and they who  
thought him doomed led him back to the city.  
And Ajax rejoiced in victory as the well-greaved  
Achaeans led him to noble Agamemnon.

When they came to the tents of Atreus' son,  
Agamemnon, lord of men, slew a five-year-old  
bull as sacrifice to the mighty son of Cronos.  
They flayed, dressed, and divided the victim,  
and then skillfully sliced and spitted the meat,  
roasted it carefully, and drew out each piece.  
When the work was done and the meal ready,  
they feasted, and all ate to their heart's content.  
And Ajax was honored with the prime cut  
by the heroic son of Atreus, lord Agamemnon.  
When they had taken their fill of food and drink,  
aged Nestor, the best of all counselors,  
began to weave his wise words of counsel;  
with good intent, he addressed the assembly:  
"Son of Atreus and the other Achaean leaders,

2. A baldric is a type of belt worn over the shoulder that is used to carry a sword or other weapon.



many long-haired Achaeans lie dead, their blood shed around the far-flowing Scamander by eager Ares, their souls descending to Hades. Thus we must halt Achaean fighting at dawn, gather the corpses, wheel them off with oxen and mules, and burn them away from the ships so each man may carry their bones back to their children when we return home to our father's land. And near the pyre we will make a barrow out on the plain, and around it we will quickly build a high wall to defend the ships and ourselves. In the wall we will add a well-fitted gate, one large enough for a chariot to drive through; and just outside we will dig a deep trench able to hold back chariots and soldiers should the Trojans bear down and attack us."

So he spoke, and all the kings approved. Meanwhile, the Trojans held a fierce and chaotic assembly in Ilios' citadel, beside Priam's doors. Thoughtful Antenor was the first to speak: "Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies, for I say what the heart in my chest commands. Come, let us give Argive Helen and her treasures to the sons of Atreus to carry off, for now we are fighting after breaking solemn oaths. I expect nothing positive to come if we do not do this."

When finished speaking, he sat, and noble Alexander, husband of fair-haired Helen, rose and replied to him with winged words: "Antenor, your words are not pleasing to me; and you know better than to utter them. But if you are truly speaking in earnest, then the gods themselves have ruined your mind. But I will declare this to all horse-taming

Trojans: though I will not give back my wife,  
I will return all the treasure I took from Argos,  
and I will add to it gifts from my own house.”

He finished speaking and sat, and up rose Priam,  
son of [Dardanus](#), equal to the gods in counsel,  
who addressed them with well-meaning words:  
“Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies,  
for I say what the heart in my chest commands.  
Take your evening meal across the city, as before,  
and remember your guard duty, so all are watchful;  
then, at dawn, Idaeus will go to the hollow ships  
and tell Atreus’ sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus,  
the words of Alexander, who started this strife.  
And give them this shrewd suggestion in hopes  
that they will pause this woeful war until our dead  
are burned; later we will again fight until the gods  
decide to grant victory to one side or the other.”

So he said, and all eagerly listened and obeyed;  
Soldiers took their evening meals in their quarters,  
and in the morning Idaeus went to the hollow ships.  
He found the Ares-aided Danaans assembled beside  
the stern of Agamemnon’s ship, and the herald  
stood among them and spoke with a loud cry:  
“Son of Atreus and other noble Achaean leaders,  
Priam and the other noble Trojans have ordered  
me to convey, in hopes that they meet your approval,  
the words of Alexander, who started this strife.  
All the treasure brought to Troy in hollow ships  
by Alexander—would that he perished first—  
will be returned along with gifts from his house.  
But he will not give back the lawful wife of glorious  
Menelaus, though all Troy asks him to do this.  
They asked me also to add a request, in hopes that  
you agree, to pause this woeful war until our dead

are burned; later we will again fight until the gods decide to grant victory to one side or the other.”

So he spoke, and all assembled fell silent; eventually, the great war-crier Diomedes spoke: “Let no man take from Alexander either treasure or Helen; even the most foolish man knows that death’s cord has touched the Trojans.”

So he said, and all sons of Achaea shouted cheers for the words of horse-taming Diomedes. Then lord Agamemnon said to Idaeus: “Idaeus, clearly you heard for yourself the answer given by the Achaeans; and I agree with them. As for burning corpses, I do not begrudge you, for there is no time to waste in quickly setting fire to the dead once the bodies have perished. Let Zeus, Hera’s thundering lord, hear our oaths.”

Saying this, he lifted his staff to all the gods, and Idaeus went back to sacred Ilios. The Trojans, Dardanians, and other allies sat in assembly, waiting for Idaeus to return; and he came, stood among them, and delivered his message. Then they made quick plans for some to gather bodies and others to gather wood. And the Argives ran from the well-built ships, some to gather bodies, others to gather wood.

Helios was fresh on the fields, having risen out of the deep, gentle waters of Oceanus to climb the sky, when the two armies met. It was hard to distinguish one man from another, but with water they washed away the blood and lifted them into wagons, shedding tears. But great Priam forbade wailing, so they grieved in silence as they heaped the corpses on the pyre,

burnt them to ash, and returned to sacred Ilios. Similarly, the Achaeans grieved quietly as they heaped corpses on the pyre, and when all were burnt, they returned to the hollow ships.

When it was not yet dawn but night neared its end, a chosen group of Achaeans came to the pyre and formed atop it an endless barrow stretching over the plain. Beside it they built a wall with high ramparts to defend their ships and themselves; in the walls they added well-formed gates to provide a way for chariots to pass through; and outside the wall they dug a deep trench, great and wide, and then planted stakes in it.

As the long-haired Achaeans toiled, the gods sat beside Zeus, lord of lightning, and looked down on the bronze-clad Achaeans' great work; and earth-shaker Poseidon was first to speak: "Father Zeus, is any man on this wide earth willing to declare to the immortals his mind and plans? Do you not see that the long-haired Achaeans have built a wall and laid a trench to defend their ships without offering the gods glorious hecatombs? Surely its fame will spread as far as dawn itself, and men will forget the wall Phoebus Apollo and I struggled to build for the hero Laomedon."

A vexed cloud-gatherer Zeus answered him: "What a thing to say, mighty earth-shaker. Other gods might fear such thoughts, ones feebler than you in hand and might, but your fame will surely spread as far as dawn itself. However, once the long-haired Achaeans have returned in their ships to their dear fatherlands, you can smash the walls, sweep them out to sea,

and cover the wide beach with sand again,  
thus destroying the great wall of the Achaeans.”

So the gods spoke to one another as the sun set.  
When the Achaeans finished their work, they  
slaughtered oxen and took their evening meal  
by their tents. The ships from Lemnos brought  
much wine, sent by Jason’s son, [Euneus](#), whom  
[Hypsipyle](#) bore to [Jason](#), shepherd of men.  
Euenos gifted a thousand measures of wine  
to Atreus’ sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus,  
but the rest of the long-haired Achaeans bought  
wine: some for bronze or shining iron, others  
for skins or live oxen, and still others for slaves;  
and all prepared a splendid feast. All night  
long the long-haired Achaeans feasted, as did  
the Trojans and their allies in the city. But all  
night long counselor Zeus terrified them  
with wicked thunder. Seized with a pale green  
fear, no one drank wine from their cups without  
first pouring an offering to the mighty son  
of Cronos. Then they lay down and fell asleep.

## BOOK 8

As Dawn's saffron robes spread over the earth,  
thunder-making Zeus assembled the gods  
on the highest peak of rocky Olympus  
and addressed them, and all the gods listened:  
"Hear me, all of you gods and goddesses,  
as I say what the heart in my chest commands.  
Let no immortal, man or woman, go against  
my plans, but let all agree so I may bring  
these matters to a speedy end. If any of you  
attempt to aid the Trojans or Danaans,  
you will be hit with lightning on return  
to Olympus, or I shall take and hurl you  
down to murky [Tartarus](#), in the deepest  
pit under the earth, with gates of iron  
and a threshold of bronze, as far from Hades  
as heaven is from earth. Then you will know  
my power over all other gods. Come, gods,  
and try it so you may know. If you hung  
a golden chain from the heavens, and if all  
you gods and goddesses took hold and pulled  
with all of your might, you could never drag  
the great counselor Zeus down to the ground.  
But whenever I take it in my mind to pull,  
I would drag you all up—and the earth and sea  
as well—then bind the rope to a jutting peak

on Olympus, so you all hang in mid-air.  
Such is my power over all gods and mortals.”

So he said, and all fell silent, struck with awe  
at the power of his address. Eventually,  
gleaming-eyed goddess Athena replied:  
“Our father, son of Cronos, lord above all,  
we well understand your unstoppable might;  
but we have pity for the Danaan spearmen  
who must fulfill a terrible destiny and die.  
Still, we will obey you and refrain from battle;  
but we will help the Argives with wise advice,  
so your rage does not wholly consume them.”

Smiling, cloud-gatherer Zeus replied to her:  
“Courage, Tritogeneia, dear child; I do not  
speak in earnest, for I wish to be kind to you.”

So saying, he yoked his chariot to his bronze-  
hoofed, swift-flying horses with manes of gold;  
he then clothed himself in gold, took his finely-  
made golden whip, boarded the chariot, lashed  
the steeds, and set off; and they flew eagerly  
between the land and starry skies. Soon he came  
to Ida of many springs and to [Gargaron](#), mother  
of wild beasts, his holy home and smoky altar.  
The father of gods and men then stopped,  
unyoked, and spread a mist around his horses.  
And he sat on the peak, rejoicing in his splendor  
and watching the Trojan city and Achaean ships.

Now the long-haired Achaeans took their meals  
speedily in their tents and armed themselves.  
In the city, Trojans also donned their armor;  
though fewer, they readied to fight a necessary  
battle to protect their wives and children.

As the gates opened, a great noise rose up  
as the army filed out on foot and in chariots.

When the armies came together in one  
place, the bossed shields and spears clashed  
against each other, the bronze-clad warriors  
filled the field with the roars of triumph  
and the cries of misery from the slayers  
and slain alike, and the earth flowed with blood.

So long as it was morning on that sacred day,  
missiles from both sides hit their targets and men  
fell. But as Helios stood at heaven's peak,  
Zeus lifted his golden scales and placed in them  
two deadly fates: one for the horse-taming  
Trojans and one for the well-greaved Achaeans.  
And the scales of doom sank on the Achaeans,  
thus setting their fates upon the bountiful  
earth and lifting Troy's to the wide heavens.  
From Ida, Zeus thundered loudly, sending  
a fire onto the Achaean army, and the sight  
terrified them and filled them with pale panic.

Idomeneus took flight, as did Agamemnon  
and the two Ajaxes, but Nestor of Gerenia,  
guardian of the Achaeans, could not flee,  
for Alexander, Helen's husband, had struck  
Nestor's horse with an arrow to the crown,  
a deadly spot where hair first grows on a horse's  
skull. As the arrow sank into his brain,  
the horse leapt in agony, throwing the team  
into panic as he writhed against the bronze  
point. As the old man quickly darted down  
and cut the trace harness with his sword,  
the swift horses of Hector charged, carrying  
their bold charioteer, Hector. And Nestor



would have lost his life had war-crier Diomedes not noticed him and called to Odysseus:

“Godlike son of Laertes, wily Odysseus, why do you run, turning your back like a coward? Do not let them spear you but stay and help me protect Nestor from this wild warrior.”

So he said, but stout Odysseus did not hear as he darted past on his way to the hollow Achaean ships. But the son of Tydeus, battling the front ranks alone, stood before the horses of the old man, the son of Neleus, and addressed him: “Old man, the young fighters are too much for you; you are too old, your strength is spent, your attendant weak, and your horses slow. But come, board my chariot, and see the Trojan horses I seized from Aeneas, deviser of doom, and marvel at how they speed over the plain either in pursuit or in retreat. Our attendants will tend to your horses as we drive against the horse-taming Trojans so Hector may know if my spear rages in the palm of my hands.”

So he said, and Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, obeyed. The attendants, strong Sthenelus and kind Eurymedon, tended to Nestor’s mares while Nestor boarded Diomedes’ chariot, took the glittering reins in his hands, whipped the horses, and closed quickly on Hector. As they charged, Tydeus’ son shot his spear at him but missed and hit his driver, Eniopeus, son of great-hearted Thebaeus, as he was driving, striking him in the chest by the nipple. He fell from the chariot, the swift-footed horses recoiled, and his strength and spirit left him. Hector’s mind was awash in sorrow

for his driver, but though grieving, he left him there and sought a new charioteer; he soon found one, the son of Iphitus, bold Archeptolemus, who quickly mounted behind the horses and took the reins in his hands.

Then death and out of control fighting would have penned them against Ilios like lambs, but the father of gods and men was watching; he thundered terribly and sent a bright bolt that landed in front of Diomedes' horses; a foul fire arose, burning of sulphur and terrifying the horses who jumped against the chariot. Nestor's hands slipped from the shining reins, his heart full of fear as he called to Diomedes: "Come, son of Tydeus, turn your single-hoofed horses. Do you not know that you cannot defeat Zeus? The son of Cronos gives glory to that man today; tomorrow he will grant it to us, should he wish it. No man can fight the mind of Zeus, not even one so strong, for he is far stronger."

Then great war-crier Diomedes answered him: "Yes, old man, all you have said is proper, but this is a great grief to my heart and soul, for one day Hector will tell the Trojans: 'The son of Tydeus fled from me to his ships.' When he so boasts, may the earth consume me."

And Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, replied: "Alas, son of skilled Tydeus, what a thing to say. Even if Hector calls you foul and feeble, neither the Trojans nor the Dardanians will believe you, nor will the wives of the great-hearted Trojan warriors whose husbands you have turned to dust."

So saying, he turned his horses and fled through

the throng while the Trojans and Hector made a divine noise and showered them with missiles laden with woe, and great-helmed Hector cried: "Son of Tydeus, the swift-horsed Danaans gave you the honored seat, rich flesh, and full cups; now they dishonor you for acting like a woman. Go away, weak puppet, for before I give way and let you take our towers and drag our women to your ships, I will send you to your doom."

So he said, and the son of Tydeus considered turning the horse around and fighting the enemy. Three times his heart and mind considered this, and three times counselor Zeus on Mount Ida thundered, a sign that the battle turned for Troy, and Hector cried out to the Trojans, saying: "Trojans, Lycians and Dardanians fighting hand to hand, be men and have courage. The son of Cronos has granted victory and great glory for me but misery for the Danaans. The fools have also built a weak and worthless wall that will not stop my might and have dug a trench that my horses will easily hurdle. But whenever I reach their hollowed ships, then let some remember to bring blazing fire so I may burn their ships and slay any Argives who are panicking from the smoke."

He finished and then shouted to his horses: "Xanthus, Podargus, Aethon, and divine Lampus, now repay Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eëtion, for giving you constant care, honey-hearted wheat, and mixed wine to drink to your heart's content even before she served me, her vigorous husband. But hurry along so we can take Nestor's

shield, whose fame reaches heaven and is solid gold, cross-rods and shield alike; and also take from horse-tamer Diomedes his breastplate, finely-fashioned by Hephaestus. If we take these, then perhaps the Achaeans will sail away this very night on their swift ships.”

So he boasted, but noble Hera was furious  
She started from her seat, making tall Olympus quake, and she addressed mighty Poseidon:  
“Alas, mighty earth-shaker, the heart in your breast now has no pity for the dying Danaans. But they bring to Helice and [Aegae](#) many fine offerings, and you wished them victory. So if we who favor the Danaans wished it, we could drive back the Trojans and restrain far-seeing Zeus, and he would sit alone grieving on Mount Ida.”

Greatly vexed, the mighty earth-shaker replied:  
“Hera, reckless in speech, what are you saying?  
I certainly do not want us all fighting Zeus,  
son of Cronos, for he is by far the strongest.”

As they spoke to one another, the space between the ships and the trench and wall that protected them was filled with chariots and shield-bearing soldiers, all penned in by Hector, Priam’s son, equal to swift Ares and granted glory by Zeus. And he would have destroyed their ships by fire if honored Hera had not put into Agamemnon’s mind to quickly go and rouse the Achaeans. So he went past the tents and Achaean ships, held his great purple cloak in his strong hands, and stood near the huge black ships of Odysseus in the camp’s center, so his voice could be heard from Telamonian Ajax’s tents to those of Achilles,

for they had drawn their ships at either end,  
trusting in their mettle and their powerful hands.  
With a great shout, he addressed the Danaans:  
“Shame on you Argives, you worthless soldiers!  
What happened to our bragging, our idle boasts  
of bravery that we made in Lemnos as we ate  
plentiful meat from straight-horned oxen, drank  
mixing bowls filled with wine, and said that each  
man would stand in battle against one or two  
hundred Trojans? Now we cannot fight one man,  
Hector, who will soon engulf our ships in fire.  
Father Zeus, what other mighty king have you  
recklessly blinded and then deprived of honor?  
As I journeyed here in my well-benched ships,  
I never passed one of your fine altars without  
offering sacrifices of burnt fat and thigh-bones  
of oxen in my desire to sack well-walled Troy.  
But Zeus, fulfill this wish for me today: grant  
that we may run away and escape, and do not  
let the Achaeans be conquered by the Trojans.”

So he said, and as his tears fell, Zeus felt pity  
and nodded his head, thus sparing his men.  
At once, he sent a sure sign: an eagle holding  
in his talons a fawn, youngest of deers. It fell  
beside the fine altar where Achaeans offered  
sacrifices to Zeus, source of all omens. Seeing  
that the bird was from Zeus, the men eagerly  
leapt on the Trojans, their battle lust restored.

Though numerous, no other Danaan could  
drive his swift horses ahead of Tydeus’ son  
as he drove across the ditch and joined the battle;  
he was the first to kill a Trojan warrior, Agelaus,  
Phradmon’s son. As he turned to flee, Diomedes  
stuck a spear in his back, between his shoulder

blades, and drove it through his chest; and he fell from his chariot, his armor clanging around him.

Then came the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, followed by both Ajaxes, clothed in swift fury. Next were Idomeneus and Meriones, his comrade, equal to Enyalios, slayer of men, along with Eurypylus, noble son of Euaemon. And Teucer, his bow bent back, was the ninth and stood behind Telamonian Ajax's shield. When Ajax moved his shield for him, the hero peered out, spotted his target, and shot. Once the victim fell, Teucer returned to hide behind the shield like a child hiding behind his mother; so Ajax covered him with his shining shield.

Which Trojan was first slain by noble Teucer? First was Orsilochus, then Ormenus, Ophelestes, Daetor, Chromius, godlike Lycophontes, Polyaeon's son Amopaon, and Melanippus—one after the other they fell to the rich earth. Seeing so many Trojan ranks felled by Teucer's mighty bow, lord of men Agamemnon rejoiced and came to stand beside him, and said to him: "Teucer, dear man, son of Telamon, lord of men, your archery brings light to the Danaans and glory to your father, who reared you and cared for you in his home even though you were a bastard, and now you honor him, though he is far away. I say this to you now, and it will come to pass: if aegis-bearing Zeus and Athena grant me to sack well-walled Ilios, the first prize of honor after mine will be yours: a tripod, two horses and a chariot, or a woman who will go into your bed."

Then noble Teucer answered him, saying:  
“Great son of Atreus, why hurry me when I am  
already eager? Since we started driving them  
back to Ilios, I have waited with my bow,  
slaying men, never stopping or exhausting  
myself. I shot eight arrows with long barbs,  
and all have struck the flesh of swift-fighting  
young men, but I still cannot hit this mad dog.”

He spoke, drew his bowstring, and sent another  
arrow straight at Hector, determined to hit him;  
but the arrow missed him and instead struck  
the chest of blameless [Gorgythion](#), Priam’s fair  
son, born to a married mother from [Aesyme](#),  
beautiful Castianeira, as shapely as a goddess.  
Just as a garden poppy hangs heavy with fruit  
and the showers of spring, so too did his head  
hang to one side, weighed down by his helmet.

Again Teucer drew his bowstring and shot  
an arrow straight at Hector, determined to hit him;  
but the arrow missed, pushed aside by Apollo,  
and instead hit Archeptolemus, Hector’s bold  
charioteer, in the chest near the nipple as he raced  
into battle. He fell from the chariot as the swift-  
footed horses recoiled, and his spirit and strength  
left him. Hector’s mind clouded over with grief  
for his driver, but he left him there and told  
his brother [Cebriones](#), who was nearby, to take  
the reins, and his brother heard and obeyed.  
With a terrible cry, Hector leapt from his shining  
chariot, picked up a stone, and went straight  
for Teucer, determined to strike him. Teucer  
took a sharp arrow from his quiver and put it  
on the bowstring, but as he drew the shaft back  
to his collar-bone, between his neck and chest,

shining-helmed Hector threw a jagged stone and hit him with deadly fury. The strike snapped the bowstring and made his arm grow numb; he fell to one knee and dropped the bow. But Ajax did not fail to aid his fallen brother, running and protecting him with his shield. Then two dear friends, Mecisteus, Echius' son, and noble Alastor, lifted a groaning Teucer and carried him to the hollow ships.

Once again the Olympian fired the Trojans' fury, and they forced the Achaeans back against the deep trench, led by Hector, who exulted in his might. Just as a swift-footed dog in pursuit of a wild swine or lion seizes him from behind at the hip joint or rump but watches carefully as he tries to twist free, so Hector chased the long-haired Achaeans, slaying the stragglers as they took flight. After they had fled past the stakes and trench, and after many had been slain by Trojan hands, they stopped beside their ships and called to each other and to all the gods, lifting their hands and praying, while Hector whirled around on his fair-maned horses, his eyes like the Gorgon or destroyer Ares.

Seeing them, white-armed goddess Hera took pity and quickly spoke winged words to Athena: "Alas, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, are we not to care one last time for the suffering Danaans? Now they will fulfill a dreaded destiny and fall due to the rage of one man, Hector, son of Priam, who has done great damage."

Gleaming-eyed goddess Athena answered her: "Truly I wish the man would lose his soul,



killed in his father's land by Argive hands;  
but my father's wicked and unyielding mind  
is bent on rage and thwarts my desires.  
He forgets that I often saved his son Heracles  
when the tasks of [Eurystheus](#) weakened him.  
Indeed, he would cry out to heaven, and Zeus  
would send me down to aid him. If my wise  
heart had known this when Heracles was sent  
to Hades of the gate to lead the hated god's  
dog out of [Erebus](#), then he would not have  
escaped Styx's high waters. Now Zeus slights  
me by fulfilling the plans of Thetis, who kissed  
his knees, cupped his chin, and begged him  
to honor Achilles, sacker of cities. One day,  
he will again call me his grey-eyed girl.  
But now, make ready the single-hoofed horses  
while I go to aegis-bearing Zeus' home  
and don my armor so I may see if Priam's  
son, shining-helmed Hector, will rejoice  
to see us on the battlefield, or if the Trojans  
will satisfy the dogs and birds when their fat  
and flesh fall beside the Achaean ships."

So she said, and white-armed Hera, Cronos'  
daughter, did not disobey but harnessed  
the horses with frontlets of gold. But Athena,  
daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, let fall  
on her father's floor her ornamented robe,  
which she herself had made, donned the tunic  
of cloud-gathering Zeus, and armed herself  
for the miseries of war. She then boarded  
the shining chariot and grabbed the large,  
heavy, and sturdy spear she used to destroy  
the ranks of soldiers who angered the mighty  
sire's daughter. Hera quickly whipped her horses,  
and heaven's gates groaned open by order

of the Hours, who control whether the thick clouds of Olympus are opened or closed.  
And through the gates sped the goaded horses.

When Zeus saw them from Ida, he grew angry and sent golden-winged Iris to deliver a message: “Go, swift Iris, turn them back, and do not let them come here, since it would be unwise for us to fight. For I say this and know it will come to pass: I will cripple their swift horses, hurl the goddesses from their seats, and smash their chariot. And the wounds my thunderbolts inflict on them will not be healed for ten years, so Athena may know what it is to fight her father. But I feel no great anger or indignation for Hera, for she always tries to undermine my commands.”

So he said, and storm-footed Iris took his message and left the mountains of Ida for high Olympus. At the first gates of many-peaked Olympus, she met them and relayed the words of Zeus: “Where are you going? Why do your hearts rage? Zeus forbids you from giving aid to the Achaeans. Whatever Cronos’ child threatens shall come to pass: he will cripple your swift horses, hurl you from your seats, and smash your chariot. And the wounds his thunderbolts inflict on you will not be healed for ten years, so you, bright-eyes, may know what it is to fight your father. He feels no great anger or indignation for Hera, for she always tries to undermine his commands. But you, bold bitch, are truly unbearable if you dare to raise your mighty spear against Zeus.”

So she said, and swift-footed goddess Iris departed. Then Hera said to Athena:

“Well, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, I cannot let us battle Zeus for the sake of mortal men. Let one live and another die, as fate dictates; and let him decide in his heart who shall win, the Trojans or Danaans, as is his right.”

Saying this, she turned her single-hoofed horses back, and the Hours unyoked their harnesses, secured the fair horses in their fragrant mangers, and set the chariot against the radiant inner walls. The goddesses then sat on the golden couches with the other gods, their spirits dashed.

Then Zeus drove his fine chariot and horses from Ida to Olympus and reached the assembled gods. The great earth-shaker freed his horses, put his chariot on its stand and covered it in cloth. Then far-seeing Zeus sat on his golden throne, and beneath his feet great Olympus shook. Athena and Hera sat apart from Zeus, neither speaking to him nor questioning him, but his mind knew all, and so he asked them: “Why so troubled, Athena and Hera? Surely you are not worn out from destroying in glorious war the Trojans you despise. My power and reach are now so invincible that no Olympian gods could turn me back, and trembling took hold of your limbs long before you saw war and war’s gristly deeds. For I say this and know it will come to pass: once struck by my lightning, you would never return to Olympus, home of the immortals.”

So he said as Athena and Hera murmured to each other, devising death for the Trojans. Still, though she was furious at her father

Zeus, Athena stayed silent and said nothing;  
but Hera did not contain her rage, telling him:  
“Dreadful son of Cronos, what are you saying?  
We know that your strength is not feeble,  
but we feel pity for all the Danaan warriors  
whose deadly destinies will now be fulfilled.  
We shall refrain from battle if you order it,  
but we will aid the Argives with counsel  
so they do not all perish due to your wrath.”

Cloud-gatherer Zeus replied to her, saying:  
“At dawn, ox-eyed goddess Hera, you will see,  
if you wish, Cronos’ mighty son lay waste  
to a multitude of Achaean warriors, for mighty  
Hector will keep fighting until the day Peleus’  
swift-footed son is roused to join the dire battle  
over Patroclus’ corpse in the narrow pass  
by the ships’ sterns; so it shall be. But I do  
not care for your anger, not even if you reach  
the lowest levels of sea and land where [Iapetus](#)  
and Cronos sit in deep Tartarus with neither  
the rays of Helios [Hyperion](#) or the wind  
to delight them. Even if you reach that  
place, I will care nothing for your fury,  
for there are none more reckless than you.”

So he said, but white-armed Hera did not reply.  
Then the sun’s bright light sank into Oceanus,  
bringing black night over the grain-giving earth.  
Darkness came against the will of the Trojans,  
but it was a sweet answer to Achaean prayers.

Then shining Hector assembled the Trojans  
away from the ships, beside a whirling river,  
in a clear space freed of any corpses. They  
stepped from their chariots to the ground

to hear the words of Hector, dear to Zeus,  
whose hands held a spear eleven cubits long,  
with a tip of blazing bronze and a ring of gold.  
Leaning on the spear, he addressed the Trojans:  
“Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanian allies:  
I wanted to destroy the Achaeans and all  
their ships and return home to windy Ilios,  
but darkness has come and has saved the Argives  
and their ships along the shore of the sea. So let  
us resign ourselves to black night and prepare  
our meal. First, unyoke your fair-maned horses  
from the chariots and feed them fodder. Then  
from the city quickly fetch oxen and fat sheep  
and from our homes procure honey-sweet wine  
and bread. Finally, gather ample wood, so that  
all through night until the early-born dawn we  
can burn many fires, their light reaching heaven;  
otherwise, the long-haired Achaeans may flee  
during the night across the sea’s wide waves.  
Do not let them board their ships with ease,  
but fire arrows or sharp spears as they spring  
to their ships, making them nurse their wounds  
once home, so others may shrink from bringing  
wrathful war upon the horse-taming Trojans.  
Let the Zeus-loved heralds announce to the city  
that young boys and grey-headed old men  
should take their stations along the god-built  
city walls, let each woman build a great fire  
in her great hall, and let a vigilant watch  
be kept so none may ambush the city while  
the army is away. So let it be as I proclaim,  
great-hearted Trojans; and let these orders  
stand for now, but at dawn I will have more  
to say. I pray in hope that Zeus and the other  
gods will chase away these dogs born by doom,

which death carried here in their black ships.  
Now, tonight we will maintain our positions,  
but before dawn breaks, we will arm ourselves  
and attack the hollow ships with fierce fury,  
and I will know if mighty Diomedes forces  
me back from the ships to the wall, or if I will  
slay him with bronze and carry off his gory  
spoils. Tomorrow, if he can face my spear,  
he will know his valor, but I think he will be  
among the first to be cut down, surrounded  
by many allies, when the sun rises tomorrow.  
If only I were immortal, ageless, and held  
in honor like Athena or Apollo, then surely  
the coming day brings death for the Argives.”

So Hector spoke, and the Trojans shouted  
approval. They unyoked the sweating horses  
and tethered them with reins to their chariots.  
Then they quickly brought oxen and fat sheep  
from the city, honey-sweet wine and bread  
from their homes, and ample wood for fires.  
Finally, they offered hecatombs to the immortals.  
The wind carried the pleasant smell of burnt  
flesh over the plain, but the gods did not  
feast, for they truly hated sacred Ilios, Priam,  
and the people of Priam of the ashen spear.<sup>1</sup>

All night long, these noble-hearted men sat  
beside the battlefield, fires blazing all around.  
Just as the stars and moon in heaven shine  
clearly when the air is windless, revealing every  
mountain peak and high bluff and deep dell,

1. These three lines were not in the original poem but added later in a pseudo-Platonic work called the [Second Alcibiades](#) from the 3rd or 2nd centuries BC and makes little sense considering that the Trojans have as many gods on their side as the Achaeans.

and the aether<sup>2</sup> clears the sky so all the stars  
are seen, delighting the shepherd's heart,  
so shone the Trojan fires blazing between  
the ships and the river Xanthos, beside Ilios.  
A thousand fires blazed across the plain,  
each one warming the faces of fifty men.  
And by the chariots, horses ate white barley  
and oats, waiting for Dawn to take her seat.

2. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Aether was the son of Erebus (darkness) and Nyx (night) and brother of Hemera (Day). Aether embodies the "pure" air in the upper atmosphere (the stratosphere) that the gods breathe as opposed to the normal air (ἀήρ) that humans breathe.

## BOOK 9

While the Trojans held watch, it was fear's chilling cousin, panic, that held the Achaeans, for their leaders were overwhelmed by grief. Just as the twin winds Boreas and Zephyrus emerge suddenly out of Thrace to stir the fish-filled seas and raise a mass of black waves that scatter seaweed along the shore, so despair filled the hearts of all Achaeans.

But the son of Atreus, consumed with great grief, ordered the clear-voiced heralds to join him in quietly calling each man by name to assemble. When the dispirited men had all gathered, a grieving Agamemnon stood before them, tears pouring from his face like a river of black water falling from a steep cliff. With a heavy groan, he said to the Argives: "Friends, leaders, and advisors of the Argives, great Zeus, son of Cronos, has ensnared me in folly, for he promised me with a nod of assent that I would sack great Ilios before going home, but that was a foul trick, and now I must return to Argos in shame, having lost many men. Such are the pleasures of all-powerful Zeus, who has razed many cities and will destroy many more, for his strength is greatest of all.



So this is my commandment for all to obey:  
let us sail back home to our beloved fatherlands,  
for we shall never capture Troy's wide streets."

So he spoke, and all Achaean sons fell silent,  
deeply troubled, and they stayed silent  
until war-crier Diomedes addressed them:  
"Son of Atreus, I will be first to protest this  
foolishness, as is my right in assembly, so do  
not be angry. I was the first Danaan you reviled  
for lack of courage, calling me unwarlike  
and cowardly; all Argives know this, old  
and young. But Cronos' wily son gave you only  
half a gift: with the scepter, he granted you honor  
above all, but he did not grant you the greater  
gift, courage. Do you truly think the Achaean  
sons are as unwarlike and cowardly as you claim?  
If your heart is so keen to leave, then leave.  
There is the road to the sea and to the many  
ships you used to sail here from Mycenae.  
But the other long-haired Achaean leaders  
will stay until we sack Troy; and even if they  
do sail back to their beloved fatherlands,  
then Sthenelus and I will keep fighting  
until Ilios is ours, for Zeus himself sent us here."

So he said, and the Achaean sons cheered  
in wonder at horse-tamer Diomedes' words.  
Then horseman Nestor stood and spoke:  
"Son of Tydeus, you are mightiest in battle  
and best of those your own age in council.  
No Achaean will disparage or question  
your words, but your speech is incomplete.  
You are young enough to be my son,  
and you provide wise counsel to the Argive  
kings since you speak by right, but now, since

I am your elder, I will speak and declare all,  
for no one will challenge my words, not even  
lord Agamemnon. He who lusts for the terrors  
of war among his own people is unworthy  
of clan, laws, or home. But now let us accept  
the blackness of night and prepare our meals,  
and let guards stand watch in the trench  
we dug beyond the wall. I give these orders  
to the young men, but you, son of Atreus,  
should lead, for you are the most royal.  
Prepare a feast for the elders, as is right  
and proper; your tents are filled with wine  
brought from Thrace each day by Achaean  
ships, so you should offer hospitality.  
When all are gathered together, you will  
take the wisest counsel. The Achaeans need  
good and wise counsel, since foes burn watch  
fires near our ships, and who rejoices at that?  
This night will destroy our army or save it.”

So he spoke, and they eagerly heard and obeyed.  
Guards in full armor gathered quickly around  
Nestor’s son, [Thrasymedes](#), shepherd of men,  
and Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, sons of Ares,  
and Meriones and Aphareus and Deïpyrus,  
and the noble [Lycomedes](#), son of [Creon](#).  
Each of these seven sentry leaders led one-  
hundred young men, all wielding long spears.  
Once in position between the trench and wall,  
they kindled a fire and prepared their meals.

The son of Atreus led all the Achaean elders  
to his tent and offered them an abundant feast.  
They set their hands on the fine meal before  
them, but after drinking and eating their fill,  
the old man, Nestor, was first to weave his wise

counsel, for he always offered the best advice. With good intent, he addressed the assembly: “Son of Atreus, Agamemnon, great ruler of men, I will begin and end with you, for you rule over many men, and Zeus granted you the scepter and the right to rule your people justly. Therefore you must speak, listen, and act on another’s advice when he speaks for the good of all; but you have the final word. Thus I will give to you my best advice. No other man will devise a better plan than the one I have had in mind for a long time now, ever since that day, noble king, when you angrily seized the girl Briseïs from the tent of Achilles against our advice. I anxiously sought to dissuade you, but you surrendered to your great heart and dishonored this mighty man whom the gods cherish by taking and keeping his prize; so now we must arrange to make amends and persuade him with soothing words and pleasing gifts.”

Agamemnon, lord of men, answered him: “Old man, your recount of my folly is no lie; I was reckless, and I do not deny it. Worth many warriors is this man beloved by Zeus, who honors him by hurting the Achaean army. Since my actions were those of a blind fool, I must make amends and offer countless gifts. So before you all I shall name these gifts: seven tripods untouched by fire, ten talents<sup>1</sup> of gold, twenty gleaming kettles, and twelve fit horses who are all race champions. A man would not be without riches, nor would he be without precious gold, if given the prizes won

1. A talent is approximately 34 kilograms or 72 pounds, so ten talents is approximately 340 kg or 720 lb.

for me by my single-hoofed horses. I will also give him seven women of [Lesbos](#), each skilled in craftwork and unmatched in beauty, which I chose on the day Achilles captured well-built Lesbos. These I will give him, and among them will be the girl Briseïs; and I will swear an oath that I never went to her in bed or slept with her, as is customary for men and women. All these things shall be his at once; and should the gods grant us to sack Priam's great city, let him come and fill his ship with an abundance of gold and silver when we divide the spoils, and let him select twenty Trojan women who are the most beautiful after Argive Helen. If we return to the rich lands of Achaeian Argos, then he will be my son, equal in honor to [Orestes](#), my beloved son who is being raised in luxury. I have three daughters in my well-built palace, [Chrysothemis](#), [Laodice](#), and [Iphianassa](#); let him take one of these without bride price<sup>2</sup> to the house of Peleus; and I will add a dowry bigger than any man ever gave with his daughter. And seven prosperous cities will I give him: [Cardamyle](#), [Enope](#), grass-clad [Hire](#), holy Pherae, [Antheia](#) with its deep meadows, beautiful [Aepeia](#), and vine-rich Pedasus. Each is near the sea, at the edge of sandy Pylos, and is home to men rich in cattle and flocks who will honor him with gifts like a god and will fulfill his commands under his scepter. All this shall be his if he ceases his wrath. Make him yield, for Hades is unyielding and inflexible and hence the god most hated

2. The custom at this time was for the suitor to give gifts to the bride's father.

by mortal men. And make him submit to me,  
for I am a greater king and am his elder.”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, replied:

“Son of Atreus, Agamemnon, great ruler  
of men, the gifts for lord Achilles are without  
fault; but come, let us quickly send chosen men  
to the tents of lord Achilles, son of Peleus.

Rather, whoever I select, let them obey.

First, [Phoenix](#), dear to Zeus, shall take the lead,  
and great Ajax and noble Odysseus will follow  
along with the heralds Odios and Eurybates.

Bring water for our hands, and keep silent as we  
pray to Zeus, son of Cronos, so he will pity us.”

So he said, and his words pleased all. At once,  
heralds brought water and poured it over  
their hands, and young men filled the mixing  
bowls with drink and served all, pouring libations  
first into goblets. After offerings had been made  
and all had drunk their fill, they left Agamemnon’s  
tents, and Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, gave them  
detailed instruction, eyeing each man, especially  
Odysseus, urging them to win over Peleus’ son.

As they went along the shore of the long-roaring  
sea, they prayed often to earth-shaking Poseidon  
in hopes of easily swaying [Aeacus](#)’ great-minded  
grandson. They reached the Myrmidon tents  
and ships and found him enjoying the clear notes  
of the lyre, finely made with a cross-bar of silver,  
taken from the spoils of the sacked city of Eëtion;  
with it, he cheered his heart by singing songs  
of great warriors. Patroclus sat silently across  
from him, waiting for Achilles to finish singing.  
Noble Odysseus led the way as they came

to stand before him; Achilles leapt up in surprise, still clutching his lyre in his hands, and Patroclus also sprang up when he noticed the men.

Then swift-footed Achilles greeted them, saying: “You are welcome, my dearest Achaeans, but your needs must be great to have come here.”

So saying, godlike Achilles invited them inside, asked them to sit on couches with purple coverings, and quickly said to Patroclus, who was nearby: “Son of Menoetius, bring out a large mixing-bowl, mix strong wine, and prepare a goblet for each, for under my roof have come my dearest friends.”

So he said, and Patroclus obeyed his dear friend. He set the chopping block on the bright fire and laid down a ram’s back, a fat goat’s back, and a wild boar’s chine<sup>3</sup> loaded with grease. [Automedon](#) held them while noble Achilles carved the meat and placed the pieces on spits and godlike Patroclus stoked the blazing fire. Once the fire burnt down and the flames were quenched, he spread the embers, set the spits on the andirons, and sprinkled salt on the meat. After roasting the meat and placing it on platters, Patroclus took out bread and set it in baskets on the table while Achilles served the meat. He sat opposite godlike Odysseus by the furthest wall and ordered Patroclus to make a sacrifice. His friend then threw burnt offerings into the fire, and they began to enjoy the good meal before them. After they took their fill of food and drink, Ajax nodded to Phoenix; noticing this, Odysseus filled his cup with wine and said to Achilles: “Cheers, Achilles. We are not wanting in feasts,

3. A cut of meat that includes the backbone of the animal.

either in the tent of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
or in yours now, where we have an abundance  
to feast on. But our minds care not for delightful  
feasts but for far greater concerns, for it is  
doubtful that the well-built ships will be saved  
from destruction if you do not add your strength.  
The high-hearted Trojans and their famed allies  
have set their tents near the ships and the wall,  
have lit many fires through the army, and say they  
will not fall back but will fall upon our black ships.  
Zeus, son of Cronos, has signaled with lightning  
on their right sides, and great Hector fights  
like a madman, exulting in his might, trusting  
in Zeus but respecting neither god nor man.  
He prays for heavenly Dawn to come quickly,  
for he promises to cut off the tops of each stern,  
to fill the ships with flaming fire, and to slay  
the Achaeans as they panic from the smoke.  
My mind gravely fears that the gods will fulfill  
his boasts and that we are destined to perish  
in Troy, far from the pastures of Argos.  
So come, then, if you are inclined to save  
the Achaean sons from the Trojan assault.  
This woe, once done, will bring to you a sorrow  
that cannot be healed, so consider how you  
will defend the Danaans from this evil day.  
Friend, surely your father, on the day he sent  
you to Agamemnon from Phthia, said to you:  
'My son, Athena and Hera will give you might  
if they so choose, but curb your proud heart,  
for friendliness is better; and keep away  
from strife, bringer of evil, and the Argives  
will honor you all the more, young and old.'  
So he said, but you forgot. So cease this now,  
and forget this bitter brawl, for Agamemnon

offers suitable gifts if you curb your wrath.  
Now listen to me as I list off all the gifts  
Agamemnon, in his tent, promised you:  
seven tripods untouched by fire, ten talents  
of gold, twenty gleaming kettles, and twelve  
fit horses who are all champions. A man given  
the prizes won by Agamemnon's single-hoofed  
horses would not be without riches or precious  
gold. He would also give you seven women  
of Lesbos, each skilled in work and unmatched  
in beauty, which he chose on the day you  
yourself took well-built Lesbos. These he will  
give to you, and among them will be the girl  
Briseïs; and he swears an oath that he never  
went to her in bed or slept with her, as is  
customary for men and women. All these  
shall be yours at once; and should the gods  
grant us to sack Priam's great city, you may  
go and fill your ship up with gold and silver  
when we divide the spoils, and you may  
select twenty Trojan women who are the most  
beautiful after Argive Helen. If we return  
to the rich lands of Achaean Argos, then you  
will be his son, equal in honor to Orestes,  
his beloved son who is being raised in luxury.  
He has three daughters in his well-built palace,  
Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa;  
you may take one of these without bride price  
to the house of Peleus; and he will add a dowry  
bigger than any man ever gave with his daughter.  
And seven prosperous cities will he give you:  
Cardamyle, Enope, grass-clad Hire,  
holy Pherae, Antheia with its deep meadows,  
beautiful Aepeia, and vine-rich Pegasus.  
Each is near the sea, at the edge of sandy Pylos,



and is home to men rich in cattle and flocks  
who will honor you with gifts like a god  
and fulfill all commands under your scepter.  
All these will be yours if you cease your wrath.  
But if you hold too much hate for Atreus' son,  
then pity the rest of the suffering Achaean  
army, for they would honor you like a god,  
and you would win great glory in their eyes,  
for you might slay Hector, since he would come  
close to you in his deadly rage and says no one  
who came here in Danaan ships is his equal."

In reply, swift-footed Achilles answered him:  
"Zeus-born son of Laertes, cunning Odysseus,  
clearly I must speak to you with blunt words  
and explain to you how we will proceed  
so you do not sit here and prattle on and on.  
I hate this man like the gates of Hades,  
for he thinks one thing and says another.  
So I will say what I think is right and true:  
I will not be swayed by Agamemnon, son  
of Atreus, or any other Danaan, for I received  
no thanks for my ceaseless fighting of enemies.  
An equal fate awaits both the coward holding  
back and the hero fighting hardest, and death  
comes both to the idle man and the busy.  
It has not brought me profit for my heart  
to suffer by always risking my life in battle.  
Just as a bird brings back for her young chicks  
any morsel she finds, leaving none for herself,  
so also have I passed many sleepless nights  
and blood-stained days waging war and fighting  
warriors for the sake of their wives. I have  
sacked twelve cities with my ships and claimed  
eleven across the rich Troad; I took many fine  
treasures, brought them back, and gave them

to Agamemnon, son of Atreus; but he, staying behind in the swift ships, gave out only a small portion and kept the rest. Other prizes given to heroes and kings stayed securely theirs, but alone among the Achaeans was my prize taken, the wife of my heart; may she cheer his bed. But why are the Argives fighting the Trojans? Why has Atreus' son gathered an army and led them here? Was it not for fair Helen? Are the sons of Atreus the only men who love their wives? All good, sensible men love and care for their wives, just as I love this girl, though she was captured by my spear. Since he took her from me with trickery, he cannot tempt me; I know him too well and will not be persuaded. You, Odysseus, and the other kings must help him devise a plan to protect the ships from enemy fire. He has done a great many things in my absence, like building the wall, digging a large, wide trench, and planting sharp stakes within it—but he cannot contain the might of man-slaying Hector. As long as I fought with the Achaeans, Hector was unwilling to fight far from the wall, going only as far as the Scaean gates and oak tree; once he fought me there alone and barely survived. But I no longer want to battle noble Hector, so tomorrow I will sacrifice to Zeus and the other gods, fill my ships, and launch them on the sea. Then you will see, should you so desire, my ships sailing in the early dawn across the fish-strewn Hellespont, my men eagerly rowing the oars. If the glorious earth-shaker grants us fair voyage, in three days I will arrive at rich-soiled Phthia. I left much behind when I came to this place, but I will return from here with gold, red bronze,

well-girdled women, and grey iron—all won by lot, save for my prize which was first given and then insultingly taken by Agamemnon, son of Atreus. Return and tell him openly what I say to you, so other Achaeans will be offended should he hope to deceive them with his dog-like shamelessness, for he does not have the courage to look me in the face. I will not join him in counsel or in battle, for he deceived me and failed me, and I refuse to let him do so again. Let him make his own ruin, since counselor Zeus has taken his wits. His gifts are hateful and worthless to me. Even if he gave me ten or twenty times more than he has, and even if he added all gifts brought to Orchomenus or hundred-gated Thebes of Egypt—where treasures fill men's houses and where two hundred warriors go forth from each gate in horses and chariots—and even if his gifts were as many as sand or dust, Agamemnon would still not persuade my heart until he fully repaid his outrage. I will not marry Agamemnon's daughter, even if she equaled golden Aphrodite in beauty and gleaming-eyed Athena in handiwork; let him select another of the Achaeans, one who is more suitable and more kingly than I. If the gods preserve me and I make it home, then surely Peleus will find a wife for me. There are many Achaean maidens across Hellas and Phthia, daughters of great men, and I can choose my wife from among them. For many years my manly heart was bent on marrying a beautiful bride and enjoying the possessions won by old man Peleus.

My life is not equal to the riches possessed  
by the well-peopled citadel of Ilios in times  
of peace, before the Achaean sons arrived,  
or to what is held within the marble threshold  
of the archer, Phoebus Apollo, in rocky Pytho.  
For oxen, fattened sheep, tripods, and yellow-  
maned horses can be carried off by force,  
but a man's life cannot be captured or taken  
away once it escapes from his clenched teeth.  
My mother, silver-footed goddess Thetis,  
tells me I am fated to die in one of two ways.  
If I remain to fight around the city of Troy,  
I will not return home but will gain eternal glory;  
but if I return home to my dear father's land,  
I will lose eternal fame but will win a long life,  
and death's end will not come quickly for me.  
I would also advise the rest of you to sail away  
for home; it is not your lot to reach high Ilios  
since far-seeing Zeus holds his mighty hands  
over it, and its people are filled with courage.  
But you must return and relay my message  
to the Achaean leaders, for that is the privilege  
of advisors: to come up with another plan  
to save the ships and save the Achaean army  
beside the hollow ships, since your plan will not  
work due to my bitter wrath. But let Phoenix  
stay and sleep here, so tomorrow he may come  
with me on my ship to our dear fatherland—  
if he wishes, that is, for I will not force him."

So he said, and all fell softly silent, awed  
by his stern refusal. After some time, the old  
horseman Phoenix burst into tears and spoke,  
greatly fearing for the Achaean ships:  
"Glorious Achilles, if your rage-filled heart  
is considering a return home, and you care not

to defend the swift ships from fiery destruction,  
 then how could I remain here all alone, dear  
 child? On the day old horseman Peleus sent  
 you from Phthia to Agamemnon, he sent me  
 as well, for you were a child who knew nothing  
 of war or of debate where men gain greatness.  
 He sent me to teach you all of these things,  
 to be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.  
 Thus, dear child, I would not want to be left  
 behind, not even if Zeus himself scraped off  
 my age and made me young again, as when  
 I first left Hellas, home of beautiful women,  
 fleeing from my father, [Amyntor](#), Ormenus'  
 son. He was angry at me over a fair-haired  
 concubine whom he himself loved, dishonoring  
 his wife, my mother; she begged me to sleep  
 with this concubine, and so to make her hate  
 the old man. I did as she asked, but my father  
 found out and cursed me, invoking the dreaded  
[Erinyes](#), that no child of mine would ever sit  
 upon my knees; and Zeus of the underworld  
 and glorious [Persephone](#) fulfilled that curse.  
 I devised a plan to kill him with my sharp sword,  
 but one of the gods stopped my anger, putting  
 in my mind the voices of rumor and reproach,  
 that the Achaeans would call me father-killer.<sup>4</sup>  
 So my soul refused to remain any longer  
 in my father's house for fear of his anger.  
 My cousins and clansmen stood around me,  
 and detained me in the halls, offering prayers,  
 sacrificing fat sheep, shambling and sleek  
 oxen, and rich swine that were singed  
 and stretched over the fire of Hephaestus  
 as they drank wine from the old man's jars.

4. These four lines are not considered part of the original poem but were added later. They are quoted in Plutarch's *Moralia* (Ηθικά).

They passed nine long nights with me, taking turns keeping watch and leaving the fires unquenched, one on the well-walled courtyard portico and another in front of my chamber porch. But on the tenth murky night, I broke down the closely-constructed chamber doors and fled, leaping easily over the courtyard fence and eluding the guardsmen and servant women. Then I went far away across spacious Hellas until I came to fertile Phthia, mother of sheep, and to King Peleus. He greeted me heartily and loved me in the same way a father loves his only son, who is heir to great possessions. He granted me wealth and many subjects, and I ruled [Dolopia](#), on the borders of Phthia. I raised you to be as you are, godlike Achilles, and loved you with all my heart. You would not go with another to the feast or eat meat in the large hall until I set you on my knees and gave you your fill of cut-up meat and held your drink. Often you soaked my tunic with the wine you would spit out in childish misery. So I have suffered and toiled much for you, and since the gods would not grant me a child of my own, I wished for you to be my son, godlike Achilles, so you could ward off my bitter end. Now curb your great spirit and restrain your reckless heart; even the gods change their minds, though their honor and might are greater. With burnt sacrifices, calm offerings, and libations do men beg the gods to turn back their wrath against those who transgress and do wrong. There are [Prayers](#), too, daughters of great Zeus, who are lame, wrinkled, and eyed with sidelong glances, as they anxiously follow after [Mischief](#).

But Mischief is strong and swift and outruns  
Prayers, rushing ahead and smiting men in all  
lands while Prayers run behind, trying to heal.  
Those who respect Zeus' daughters when near  
will have their prayers heard and answered,  
but if they reject and inflexibly refuse them,  
then Prayers go to Zeus and beg for Mischief  
to follow them and punish them with harm.  
Thus, Achilles, give honor to the daughters  
of Zeus, who bends the minds of many others.  
For if the son of Atreus did not bring gifts  
or offer even more but remained enraged,  
I would not ask you to give up your anger  
and aid the Argives, though their need is great.  
But he promises you gifts now and in the future,  
and has sent the Achaean army's best to convince  
you, those you hold dearest among the Argives.  
Do not dishonor their words or visit, though  
before this none would blame you for your anger.  
We have heard the stories of great heroes of old  
who, when terrible fury came over them, were  
appeased by gifts and won over with words.  
I myself remember a story from older days,  
and as we are all friends, I will share it now.  
The [Curetes](#) and stout Aetolians were battling  
and slaying one another near Calydon,  
the Aetolians defending beautiful Calydon  
and the Curetes eagerly sacking the city.  
Golden-throned Artemis had stirred this evil,  
angered that Oeneus had failed to offer her  
the finest harvest fruits. As other gods feasted  
on hecatombs, great Zeus' daughter was given  
nothing, Oeneus having forgotten or not noticed.  
This angered the Shedder of Arrows, daughter  
of Zeus, and she sent a wild, white-tusked boar,

to wreak great woes on the orchards of Oeneus,  
 uprooting trees and dashing them to the ground,  
 root and apple blossom and all. But Meleager,  
 son of Oeneus, slew the beast by gathering  
 hunters and hounds from many cities, all  
 needed for the kill since the boar was huge  
 and had put many men on burning pyres.  
 But the goddess sent chaos and quarrels  
 between the Curetes and noble Aetolians  
 over the swine's head and shaggy hide.  
 So long as Meleager fought, the battle went  
 badly for the Curetes, who kept losing ground  
 outside the wall in spite of their numbers.  
 But Meleager fell into a rage,<sup>5</sup> one that swells  
 in the hearts of many, even the wise, a rage  
 directed at his dear mother [Althaea](#). He was  
 laying with his wife [Cleopatra](#), daughter  
 of fair-ankled Marpessa, who was the daughter  
 of Evenus and of [Idas](#), the mightiest of men,  
 who took up his bow against Phoebus Apollo  
 for his fair-ankled bride. In their halls,  
 Cleopatra's father and revered mother called  
 her Halcyone, for her mother cried like  
 a sorrowful halcyon bird when far-shooter  
 Phoebus Apollo snatched her away. As he  
 lay beside Cleopatra, he burned with rage  
 over his mother's curses, for she called down  
 the gods upon him for killing her brother.  
 With breasts wet with tears, she knelt, beat  
 her hands on the earth that feeds many,

5. The traditional story that Phoenix recounts here concerns a conflict between Meleager and his uncles (brothers of Meleager's mother, Althaea) who objected to a woman, Atalanta (not mentioned in Homer) getting a piece of the boar's spoils. In the conflict, Meleager killed his uncles. Upon hearing this, Althaea prayed to the gods to kill her son. The other elements of the story recounted here—Meleager's refusal to fight—is not recounted in other versions of this story and is likely Homer's own invention, particularly because it parallels so closely with Achilles's own story.



and called on Hades and dread Persephone to send death to her son; and harsh-hearted Erinyes, walking in darkness, heard her call. Soon battle noises arose around the gates and fortified walls; and the elder Aetolians sent their best priests to Meleager to beg him to come and aid them, promising many gifts and telling him that he could select for himself fifty fine acres from among the richest fields of Calydon, with half of the area vineyards and the other half bare, arable lands. Then the old horseman Oeneus begged his son, going to the threshold of his lofty bedchamber and shaking the closely-joined doors; then his sister and revered mother begged him, but he refused; then his comrades, those nearest and dearest to him, begged him, yet even they could not persuade the heart in his chest. Finally, when the Curetes were scaling the walls, burning the great city, and threatening his chambers, Meleager's well-girdled wife begged him by recounting all the horrors men and women suffer when a city is sacked: men killed, the city burnt to ash, and the children and women taken by strangers. Hearing this evil tale stirred Meleager's heart, and he rose, clothed his body in shining armor, and warded off the Aetolians on this evil day, yielding to his heart, though he was not repaid with fine gifts. So, dear boy, strip your mind of such thoughts and steer your spirit away from this path, for it is far harder to save a burning ship. Go while gifts can still be won, and you will be honored by the Achaeans like a god. If you

enter the battle without gifts, then your honor will be less though you may ward off war.”

Then swift-footed Achilles replied to him:

“Phoenix, noble old father, I do not need this honor; I have already been honored by Zeus and will hold this among the curved ships as long as I can draw breath and bend my knees. And I will say another thing, and take it to heart: do not trouble me with weeping and wailing for Atreus’ noble son, and do not love that man or you will be hated by one who loves you. It is better for you to hurt the one who hurts me, so stay, be king with me, and take half my honor. These men will relay my message while you stay and sleep on my soft beds; then, at dawn, we will discuss whether to remain or go home.”

So saying, he nodded his brow to silently tell Patroclus to lay out a warm bed for Phoenix, so the others might quickly decide to leave. But Ajax, godlike son of Telamon, spoke up: “Zeus-born son of Laertes, wily Odysseus, let us go, for it seems we will not fulfill the mission’s goal; we must quickly bring back the bad news to the Danaans, who no doubt are sitting and waiting for us, since Achilles holds his hate deep within his great heart. He is hardened and untroubled by the love of his comrades who honor him above all. A man accepts ransom even from the slayer of his brother or son; the guilty man remains in his own land once he pays, and the kinsmen’s heart and honor are restrained by accepting the ransom. But the gods have placed in your breast an implacable heart—all for one girl;

and now we offer you seven, the best by far,  
and more besides. So be gracious and respect  
your house, for we have come from the Danaans  
to be under your roof, and we eagerly desire  
your honor and love above all other Achaeans.”

Swift-footed Achilles then answered him:  
“Zeus-born Ajax, son of Telamon, ruler  
of men, you say all that is in my mind,  
but my heart swells with hate when I think  
of how the son of Atreus insulted me before  
the Argives like some dishonored vagabond.  
So go and relay my message: that I will not  
think of blood-red war until Priam’s warrior  
son, noble Hector, comes to the Myrmidon  
tents and ships, kills the Argives, and sets  
fire to our ships. But I think Hector will  
keep far away from my tents and black  
ships, though he will be eager for battle.”

So saying, each man made a drink offering  
from a double-cup and returned to their ships,  
Odysseus leading. Then Patroclus ordered  
his comrades and attendants to quickly make  
a bed for Phoenix, so they spread out a fleece,  
blanket, and fine linen, and the old man laid  
down and waited for heavenly Dawn. Achilles  
slept deep within the well-made tent, and beside  
him slept a woman, taken from Lesbos, daughter  
of Phorbas, fair-cheeked Diomedes. Patroclus  
lay on the other side, and beside him slept  
well-girdled Iphis, given to him by Achilles  
after he sacked steep [Scyros](#), city of [Enyeus](#).

When they reached the son of Atreus’ tent,  
the Achaean sons stood up, raised golden cups

in welcome, and questioned them; the first to ask a question was Agamemnon, lord of men: "Tell me, famed Odysseus, glorious Achaean, will he defend the ships from blazing fire, or has he refused and let his anger consume his heart?"

Then stout and noble Odysseus answered him: "Famed son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, the man will not turn from his wrath, for he is filled with hate and refuses you and your gifts. He says to consult the Argives and devise a plan to save the Achaean army and ships; and he himself threatens at the break of dawn to launch his well-benched ships into the sea. He also urges others to sail for home, since you will not bring about the end of high Ilios since far-seeing Zeus holds his mighty hand over it, filling its people with courage. So he said, and these men here can attest to this: Ajax and the two heralds, both sensible men. But Phoenix stayed back, at Achilles' urging, so he may join him on his ships to his father's land if he wishes, for he will not be forced."

So he said, and the assembly fell softly silent, stunned by his strong words. The Achaean sons grieved in silence for some time until great war-crier Diomedes spoke to them: "Noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, I wish you had not begged the great son of Peleus or offered countless gifts; he is arrogant, and you have driven him further into arrogance. But now we must forget about him. He may stay or he may go, and he will fight when his heart demands it and when the gods rouse him. So come, listen to me and do as I say:

go and sleep, once you have sated your heart  
with food and wine, for courage and strength.  
But when rosy-fingered Dawn appears, swiftly  
gather your men and chariots by the ships  
and inspire them by fighting on the front lines.”

So he said, and the kings all agreed, awed  
by the words of the horse-tamer Diomedes.  
After pouring a libation, each man went  
to his tent, laid down, and took the gift of sleep.

## BOOK 10

All the other Achaean leaders spent the night softly slumbering beside their ships, but sweet sleep evaded Agamemnon, son of Atreus, leader of men, for his mind was troubled. Just as fair-haired Hera's husband shoots lightning when bringing terrifying rain or hail or a blizzard that covers the fields with snow, or like the sharp jaws of piercing warfare, so groaned Agamemnon from the deep recesses of his chest, his body trembling in fear. Gazing out at the Trojan plain, he marveled at the fires burning before Ilios, the sounds of flutes and pipes, and the noises of men. But when he looked at the Achaean ships and army, he tore his hair out by the roots, looked up to Zeus on high, and groaned in his heart. Thus the plan that seemed to him to be best was to first visit Nestor, son of Neleus, in hopes that he would devise a shrewd scheme that would avert disaster for all Danaans. So he stood up, donned his tunic, bound his beautiful sandals to his shining feet, draped about him a yellow leopard hide that reached to his feet, and seized his spear.

Sleep also evaded a trembling Menelaus, for he

feared the fate of all the Argives who came across the sea's great waters to Troy with war in their hearts—all for him. He wrapped a multi-colored panther skin around his chest, lifted a bronze helmet, set it upon his head, and seized a spear in his thick hand. Then he went to see his brother, great lord of all Argives, honored by his people like a god. He found him putting fine armor over his shoulders by his ship's stern and was welcomed warmly. And great-shouter Menelaus spoke first: "Brother, why are you arming? Are you stirring a soldier to spy on the Trojans? I have a grave fear that no man will perform this task for you, for only a stout-hearted man would go out to spy on a hostile enemy in the ambrosial night."

Then lord Agamemnon answered him, saying: "You and I need clever counsel, Menelaus, dear to Zeus, that will protect and save the Argives and their ships, for the mind of Zeus has turned against us, and his heart leans towards Hector. I have not seen or heard tell of any man devising such dreaded deeds as those Hector, dear to Zeus, has done today against the Achaeon sons, though he is not a son of a goddess or god. The Argives will not long forget the distress and despair that he has brought upon them. But now go along the line of ships and call Ajax and Idomeneus to hurry here, and I will awaken noble Nestor and ask him to head to the sacred sentinels and give them an order. They will eagerly obey him, since his son is their leader, along with Meriones, aide of Idomeneus; for these were the great men given this charge."

Then great-shouter Menelaus answered him:

“How do you command me with your words?  
Shall I remain there with them and wait for you  
to come or run back after giving them your order?”

To him did Agamemnon, leader of men, reply:

“Remain there, in case we miss each other as we  
go, for there are many paths through the camp.  
But wherever you go, order each man to wake up  
by using his father’s name and lineage, thus giving  
him respect; and do not be too proud of heart,  
but let you and I together do the work, for Zeus  
placed upon us a heavy burden at our birth.”

So saying, he sent his brother off with his orders,  
while he himself went to find Nestor, herder  
of men. He came upon him on a soft bed beside  
his hut and black ship; by him were his dappled  
armor, his shield, two spears, and a shining helmet.  
By him also lay the gleaming warrior’s belt  
he wore when leading his troops into battle,  
for mournful old age could not slow him down.  
He raised himself with his arms, lifted his head  
and addressed the son of Atreus, asking him:  
“Who are you wandering alone by the army  
and ships in darkness, when mortal men sleep?  
Do you seek one of your mules or comrades?  
Quit your silence and speak; what do you want?”

In reply, Agamemnon, lord of men, said to him:

“O Nestor, son of Neleus, honored Achaeans,  
you will know Atreus’ son Agamemnon,  
whom Zeus has set more trials than any other,  
so long as I breathe and my knees are moving.  
I wander because sweet sleep evades my eyes,  
for I worry about the war and the troubled



Achaeans. I fear terribly for the Danaans, my pulse is unsteady, I am distraught, my heart leaps out of my chest, and my lower limbs tremble. But if you are ready to do something, since you also cannot sleep, then let us go to the sentries and see whether they have grown exhausted, fallen asleep, and forgotten to keep watch. For the enemy camp is near, and we know not whether they plan to attack us this night.”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, replied:  
“Son of Atreus, noble Agamemnon, lord of men, surely counselor Zeus will not carry out all of Hector’s hopes and plans; but I suspect he will suffer far greater troubles if Achilles abandons the vile anger in his heart. Still, I will gladly follow you, but let us awaken others: famed spearman Diomedes, Odysseus, swift Ajax, and Meges, Phyleus’ famed son. And someone should go and call for godlike Telamonian Ajax and lord Idomeneus for their ships are far away, nowhere near us. And though he is loved and respected, I must blame Menelaus, even if it angers you, for he now sleeps, forcing you to work alone. Now he ought to go to all the leaders and beg them, for our needs have become unbearable.”

Then Agamemnon, lord of men, answered him:  
“Old man, you can blame him some other time, even by my command, for he is often lazy and idle, not because he is slothful and thoughtless but because he looks to me and follows my lead. But it was he who woke up first and came to me, and I sent him out to call those you mentioned.

But we will go and find them by the sentinels  
at the gates, where I ordered them to assemble.”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, replied:  
“Thus no Argive will ever disobey or criticize  
him when he urges them and orders them.”

So saying, he put his tunic on over his chest,  
bound his glittering feet with well-made sandals,  
and fastened around himself a large, double-  
folded purple cloak with a thick, wooly fleece.  
Seizing his stout, bronze-tipped spear, he went  
down to the ships of the bronze-clad Achaeans.  
Odysseus, Zeus’ equal in counsel, was the first  
man found by Nestor, horseman of Gerenia,  
awakened by a cry that quickly filled his mind  
until he woke, left his tent and addressed him:  
“Who wanders by the ships and the camp all  
alone in the dark of night? What do you want?”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, replied:  
“Divine son of Laertes, wily Odysseus, be not  
vexed, for dangers have come to the Achaeans.  
Come and we shall awaken others who may  
give wise counsel on whether to fight or flee.”

Hearing this, wise Odysseus went into his hut,  
took his dappled shield, strung it on his shoulders,  
and followed them. They soon came to Diomedes,  
son of Tydeus, outside his tent with his weapons;  
his men slept on their shields around him,  
their spear butts driven in the ground nearby,  
the bronze tips shining like father Zeus’ lightning.  
Diomedes was sleeping under an oxen hide,  
and a bright blanket was under his head.  
Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, kicked him awake  
with his foot and scolded him to his face:

“Wake up, son of Tydeus. Why do you sleep all night? Are the Trojans not poised on the plain’s edge by the ships, a narrow space between us?”

So he said, and Diomedes sprang up from deep sleep and addressed him with winged words:

“You are cruel, old man, and you never stop working. Are there not younger sons of Achaea who can go all across the camp to each king and wake him up? You, old sir, are impossible.”

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, answered:

“Yes, friend, all that you say is right and true.

I have sons who are blameless, and I have many men who could be sent to call others.

But the Achaeans face a very grave threat, for it all stands upon a razor’s edge, whether the Achaeans live or die a woeful death.

But go now and wake swift Ajax and the son of Phyleus, for you are young and must pity me.”

So he said, and Diomedes put on a long, tawny lion’s skin that fell to his feet and lifted his sword. He set to go, waking the other men to follow.

Upon reaching the assembled sentinels, they found the leaders of the guards not asleep but wide awake, their weapons poised. Just as dogs watching over sheep in a field will have their sleep broken when they hear a stout-hearted beast coming through the woods and the cries of men and dogs around him, so sweet sleep evaded the eyes of those keeping watch through the dark night as they turned to the plain, listening for Trojan movement. Seeing them, the old man rejoiced and stirred them with words from his heart, saying to them:

“Keep up your watch, young men; do not let sleep seize you, or else we shall delight our foes.”

So saying, he sped past the trench, followed by the other Argive leaders who were called to the council. Meriones and Nestor’s noble son came also, both being asked to join the counsel. So they went across the well-dug trench and sat down on a spot untouched by fallen corpses, the space where mighty Hector had turned back from slaughtering Argives once night drew its veil. So the men settled to speak to one another, and Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, spoke first: “Friends, is there no man, ruled by his bold spirit, willing to go against the great-hearted Trojans and seize some enemy straggler during battle or hear some report discussed during a Trojan war council, whether they plan to remain by the ships, far from the city, or whether to return home, having beaten the Achaeans? He may learn all this, return without a scratch, gain glory among men that would spread across the heavens, and gain splendid gifts. For each lord who holds sway among the ships shall offer him a black ewe with a lamb suckling at her teat, a prize like no other, and he will always join us at feasts and banquets.”

So he said, but all the men fell softly silent. Then great war-crier Diomedes said to them: “Nestor, my heart and sturdy spirit urge me to enter the camp of the nearby foes, the Trojans; but my confidence and spirit would grow if another were to follow me. When two go together, one sees advantage

before the other; one man's mind alone  
sees more slowly and with a smaller reach."

So saying, many were eager to follow Diomedes.  
The two Ajaxes, servants of Ares, were eager,  
as were Meriones and Nestor's son and the son  
of Atreus, spear-famed Menelaus, and patient  
Odysseus: all were willing to enter the Trojan  
throng, for bold were the hearts in their breasts.  
Then Agamemnon, lord of men, said to them:  
"Diomedes, son of Tydeus, dear to my heart,  
choose whichever comrade that you wish,  
whichever is the best, since many are eager.  
Do not leave the best man behind simply  
out of respect, taking instead a man who  
is worse, even if he is a greater king."

So he said, fearing for fair-haired Menelaus.  
Then war-crier Diomedes again spoke:  
"If you command me to choose a comrade  
myself, then I must choose godlike Odysseus,  
beloved of Pallas Athena, whose stout heart  
and brave spirit are above all in times of toil.  
If he is with me, then we would even escape  
a blazing fire, for his mind is the sharpest of all."

Then unflinching, noble Odysseus said to him:  
"Son of Tydeus, do not praise or blame me  
so much, for you say these things to Argives who  
know me. But let us go, for the night is short,  
the dawn is near, the stars have moved, two  
watches have passed, and only a third remains."

So he said, and they donned their fearsome  
armor. Stout-fighter Thrasymedes gave the son  
of Tydeus a two-edged sword, having left his own  
on his ship, and a shield, and on his head he set

a bull's hide helmet with no horn or crest, often called a skullcap for it protects the heads of strong young men. Meriones gave Odysseus a bow, quiver, and sword, and on his head he placed a fine leather helmet<sup>1</sup> made with many tightly-stretched straps stiffening the inside, rows of white teeth from a shimmering swine skillfully arranged on the outside, and a layer of felt set in the middle. [Autolycus](#) stole this when he broke into the sturdy home of Amyntor, son of Ormenus, in Eleon, and he gave it to Amphidamas of [Cytheria](#) at [Scandeia](#), and Amphidamas gave it as a gift of friendship to [Molus](#), who gave it to Meriones, his son; and now it covered the head of Odysseus.

When they had donned their fearsome armor, they set to go, leaving behind all the noble leaders. Pallas Athena sent a heron to their right side, near the path, and though their eyes saw nothing in the murky dark, they heard its cry. Rejoicing at this omen, Odysseus prayed to Athena: "Hear me, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, who aids me in all toils and keeps watch over me: now again grant your great love, so we may return to the famed ships after performing a deed that will bring sorrow to the Trojans."

Then war-crier Diomedes also spoke a prayer: "Hear me, too, child of Zeus, Atrytone. Follow me as you once followed my father, Tydeus, when he went into Thebes as messenger for the Achaeans. He left the bronze-clad Achaeans in Asopus and carried winning words to the Cademians, but on the way back he forged evil plans with you,

1. This is referred to as a "boar's tusk helmet." A 14th century BC helmet matching this description was found in Mycenae and is now on display at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, Greece.

fair goddess, for you stood zealously by his side.<sup>2</sup>  
So now stand by my side and protect me, and I  
will sacrifice a broad-fronted, unbroken heifer  
that no man has taken by the yoke; I will coat  
her horns with gold and offer her to you.”

So they prayed, and Pallas Athena heard them.  
And having prayed to the daughter of great Zeus,  
they crept like two lions through the black night,  
dodging corpses, armor, and black blood.

Nor did Hector allow the mighty Trojans  
to sleep but summoned together all the greatest  
leaders and rulers of Troy; and when they  
had gathered, he told them of his shrewd plan:  
“Who will undertake a task and carry it out  
for a great prize? The reward will be ample.  
I will give a chariot and two strong-necked  
horses, the finest among the Achaean swift  
ships, to he who undertakes this task, winning  
glory for himself: to go near the swift ships  
and find out if those ships are guarded as before,  
or whether, having been routed by our hands,  
they plan to flee and are unwilling to guard  
them all night, as they are worn and weary.”

So he said, but all the men fell softly silent.  
Then a Trojan named [Dolon](#), son of Eumedes,  
the sacred herald who was rich in gold  
and bronze, who looked ugly but was swift  
of foot, and who was an only son with five  
sisters, said to the Trojans and to Hector:  
“Hector, my heart and brave spirit urge me  
to go near the swift ships and learn what I can.  
But come, raise your staff and swear that you

2. See 4.382-398.

will give me the horses and the bronze-adorned chariot that carries the noble son of Peleus, and I will prove no inept scout or deceiver; for I will go through the camp until I come to Agamemnon's ship, where the leaders will be holding council on whether to fight or flee."

He spoke, and Hector lifted the staff and swore: "Let thundering Zeus, lord of Hera, be my witness that no other Trojan shall mount those horses but you, and they shall bring glory to you alone."

So he swore an impossible oath, stirring the man's heart; at once, Dolon threw a curved bow over his shoulder, clothed himself in grey wolf-skin, covered his head with a marten-skin helmet, grabbed a sharp spear, and headed for the ships and camp, but he was not fated to return and bring word back to Hector. He left the throng of horses and men and went eagerly on his way, but godlike Odysseus saw him coming, and said to Diomedes: "Diomedes, someone is coming from the camp, and I am unsure whether he comes to spy on our ships or pillage the bodies of our dead. But let him first pass us a little on the plain, and then we can rush him and swiftly seize him; if he outruns us on foot, then keep drawing him to the ships and away from camp, pressing him with your spear so he does not flee to the city."

They left the road and hid among the dead, and he ran quickly and foolishly past them. When he was as far from them as mules range in plowing—for they are better than oxen at drawing a plow over a deep, fallow field—they chased him, and he stopped when he heard



their footsteps, hoping in his heart they were fellow Trojans calling him back at Hector's urging. When they were a spear's throw away, he recognized them as hostile and fled as fast as his limbs could carry him, and they quickly pursued. Like two jagged-jawed dogs eagerly hunting a young deer or a hare in a wooded place, the prey crying as it flees, so the son of Tydeus and Odysseus, sacker of cities, pursued Dolon, cutting him off from his camp. And just as he was coming near the sentinels by the ships, Athena granted Diomedes might so no other bronze-clad Achaean would gain glory by cutting the man down before he arrived. Lifting his spear, stout Diomedes said to him: "Stop or I will hit you with my spear, and you will not long evade utter death by my hands."

With that, he shot his spear and missed Dolon on purpose, the point passing over his right shoulder and sticking in the earth. The Trojan froze in terror, his clattering teeth filling his mouth with green fear. They came to him out of breath, seized his hands, and he cried out: "Spare me and I will pay the ransom, for at home I have bronze and gold and well-wrought iron. My father will bestow on you countless ransoms if he hears that I am alive by the Achaean ships."

Then wily Odysseus replied to him, saying: "Have courage and take no thought of death. But come, tell me something and make it true: what are you doing wandering alone in the murky night by the ships and camp while others sleep? Are you stripping armor from one of the dead?"

Has Hector sent you to the hollowed ships  
to spy on us? Or did your own soul send you?"

His limbs trembling beneath him, Dolon replied:  
"Hector led my mind astray with great deception,  
for he swore to give me the single-hoofed horses  
of Achilles and his chariot adorned with bronze,  
and he ordered me to move quickly through  
the dark night and to go near the foe to find out  
whether those ships are guarded as before,  
or whether, having been routed by our hands,  
they plan to flee and are unwilling to guard  
them all night, as they are worn and weary."

Then wily Odysseus smiled and said to him:  
"Clearly your soul sought only to gain the great  
horses of Aeacus' battle-minded grandson,  
but they are hard for any man to control or drive  
save Achilles, whose mother is immortal. But come,  
tell me something and make it true: where was  
Hector, shepherd of men, when you left him?  
Where are his battle armor and horses? Where  
are the other Trojans, the watchers and sleepers?  
What do they talk about amongst themselves?  
Do they plan to remain by the ships or return  
to the city, since they have beaten the Achaeans?"

And Dolon, son of Eumedes, replied to him:  
"I will truthfully tell you all of these things.  
Hector is holding council with his greatest  
leaders beside the tomb of divine [Ilus](#)  
away from the throng; as for sentries,  
no soldiers are assigned to guard the army.  
By the blazing hearths of the Trojans, men  
lay awake and keep watch until they order  
others to relieve them; but the foreign allies

sleep, relying instead on Troy to protect them, for neither their wives nor children are near.”

Then wily Odysseus answered him, saying:  
“How are they sleeping? Are they mixed with the horse-taming Trojans? Tell me.”

And Dolon, son of Eumedes, replied to him:  
“I will truthfully tell you all of these things. The Carians, bent-bowed Paeonians, [Leleges](#), [Caucones](#) and Pelasgi are towards the sea, and the Lycians, famed Mysians, charioteer Phrygians, and chariot lord Maeonians are near [Thymbra](#). But why do you ask such things? If you plan to raid the Trojan camp, then go to the newly-arrived Thracians at the extreme end, where you will find their king, [Rhesus](#), son of Eioneus. He has the most beautiful horses I have ever seen, lighter than snow and swifter than the wind; he also has a chariot, well-wrought with gold and silver, and mighty golden armor that is a wonder to see and is better suited to be worn by an immortal god, not a mortal man. Now, take me to the swift-sailing ships or tie me with ruthless bonds and leave me, so you may go and put my words to the test and find out if what I say is true or not.”

With a scowl, mighty Diomedes said to him:  
“Do not think of escape, Dolon, despite having delivered good news into our hands. For if we let you loose now or set you free, then later you will go to the swift Achaean ships, either as a spy or as an enemy in battle; but if my hands cut you down and end your life, then you will never again bring the Argives misery.”

Hearing this, Dolon tried to grasp the other's chin and beg for his life, but Diomedes stuck his sword through his neck, tearing both tendons, and his still-speaking head fell to the dust. They removed his marten-skin helmet, his wolf's skin covering, his curved bow, and his long sword. Then noble Odysseus lifted them high to Athena who spreads spoils and spoke a prayer to her: "Rejoice in these, goddess, who we call on first among all the Olympian immortals; but send us to the horses and beds of the Thracian warriors."

So saying, he put the prizes on a tamarisk shrub and placed bundled reeds and tamarisk branches next to it as a landmark that would be visible when they returned through the swift black night. They then proceeded past the armor and black blood and soon came to the Thracian warriors who were weary from war and fast asleep, their fine armor laying on the ground in three rows and a yoked horse standing beside each man. Rhesus slept in the middle, his swift horses tied with a leather strap to the outer rail of the chariot. Odysseus saw him first and said to Diomedes: "Diomedes, here are the man and the horses that Dolon, the man we killed, told us about. So come and lend your might and do not stand idly by with your weapons; untie the horses or slay the men and I will handle the horses."

So he said, and, bright-eyed Athena filled Diomedes with might, and he annihilated the Thracians, one after another; they groaned horribly as his sword flew and the earth turned blood red. Like a lion finding shepherd-less sheep or goats and leaping on them wickedly,

so Tydeus' son leapt on the Thracians, killing twelve; and as each one fell, wise-counselor Odysseus would catch the body by its feet and drag it away, so the fair-maned horses would pass through without panicking over dead bodies, as they were not yet used to them. But the king was the thirteenth man, and when Tydeus' son took his honey-sweet life, the man gasped, for a bad dream hung over his head that night: the son of Oeneus, by Athena's will.<sup>3</sup> Then stout Odysseus let the single-hoofed horses loose, harnessed them with reins and drove them from camp, striking them with his bow, forgetting to take in his hands the chariot's elaborate whip; and he signaled noble Diomedes with a whistle.

But Diomedes held back and considered whether he should seize the chariot and its fine armor by drawing it away with a pole or by lifting it high and carrying it off, or if he should take the life of still more Thracians. As he pondered all this, Athena approached noble Diomedes and said: "Go back to the hollow ships, son of great-hearted Tydeus, or else you may be pursued on your return should another god rouse the Trojans."

Obedying the goddess, he mounted the horses while Odysseus whipped them with his bow, and they hurried back to the Achaean swift ships.

But silver-bowed Apollo was no blind watchman, for he saw Athena meeting with the son of Tydeus; enraged, he went among the Trojan throng

3. Oeneus was the grandfather of Diomedes. Interestingly, Oeneus was given the gift of vines by Dionysus, the god of wine, and "wine" is said to be named after Oeneus (whose name is sometimes spelled "Oineus"). The link between wine and sleep and dreams comes to play here in the odd imagery of Oeneus' grandson looming over Rhesus and killing him in his sleep.

and roused Hippocoön, the Thracian counselor  
and Rhesus' cousin. When he woke and saw  
an empty space where the swift horses had  
stood and men panting their last breaths,  
he wailed aloud and shouted to his comrades.  
A din arose as the Trojans gathered to look  
upon the woeful deeds done by the warriors  
before they returned to the hollow ships.

When they came to the place where they slew  
Hector's spy, Odysseus reined in the swift horses,  
and Diomedes fell to the ground, gave the gory  
spoils to Odysseus, and remounted the horses;  
Odysseus whipped the horses, and they drove  
to the hollow ships, where his soul wished to be.  
Nestor was first to hear the sound, and he said:  
"Friends, leaders, and protectors of the Argives,  
should I lie or tell the truth? My heart orders me.  
The crash of swift horses strikes both my ears,  
for Odysseus and mighty Diomedes have driven  
here the single-hoofed horses of the Trojans;  
but my heart fears that these greatest of Argives  
have been harmed in their clash with the Trojans."

Before he even finished speaking, they arrived  
and leapt down onto the earth, and all rejoiced  
with welcome applause and with pleasing words.  
First to speak was Nestor, horseman of Gerenia:  
"Come and tell me, illustrious Odysseus, great  
glory of the Achaeans, did you take these horses  
from a Trojan throng, or did a god come and give  
them to you? They burn like the blinding sun.  
Always am I mixing with the Trojans in battle,  
and I do not wait by the ships, though I am old;  
but I have never seen or known of such horses.  
I suspect some god has given them to you,

for you both are loved by cloud-gatherer Zeus  
and the bright-eyed daughter of Zeus, Athena.”

Then wily Odysseus answered him, saying:  
“Nestor, son of Neleus, Achaea’s greatest glory,  
a god could easily grant us better horses than  
these if he wished, for the gods are greater by far.  
But, old man, these horses you mention are  
from Thrace: brave Diomedes slew their lord  
and twelve of his comrades, all of his best.  
The thirteenth slain was a scout near our ships  
who had been sent out to spy on our camp  
by Hector and the other noble Trojans.”

So saying, he smiled and drove the single-  
hoofed horses through the trench as Achaeans  
cheered. When they came to Diomedes’ well-  
built tent, they used a shapely strap to halter  
the horses and placed them alongside his other  
swift horses and fed them honey-sweet grain.  
On his ship’s stern, Odysseus set Dolon’s gory  
spoils until he could prepare an offering to Athena.  
Then they entered the sea and washed away  
the sweat from their necks, thighs, and calves.  
When the waves of the sea had washed them  
clean and their hearts were refreshed, they  
entered a polished bath and bathed. After  
bathing and anointing themselves in olive oil,  
they dined, and from a full mixing bowl they  
made an offering of honey-sweet wine to Athena.

## BOOK 11

Dawn rose from her bed beside noble [Tithonus](#), bringing light to mortals and immortals alike, and Zeus swiftly sent deadly Strife to the Achaean ships, an omen of war in her hands. She stood by Odysseus' hollow, black ship in the middle of the fleet so she could shout to both sides, from Telamonian Ajax's tents to those of Achilles, for they drew their ships at the extreme ends, trusting the bravery and courage of their hands. The goddess stood there and uttered a great and terrible shriek, filling each Achaean heart with the strength to battle without pause. Battle, for these men, was sweeter than a trip home in their swift ships to their dear father's lands.

The son of Atreus shouted for the Argives to gird for battle, and he donned his bronze armor. First, he fixed to his legs beautiful greaves with fine silver fastenings; then he put on his chest a breastplate once given to him as a guest-gift by [Cinyras](#), for in far-away [Cyprus](#) he heard the rumor that the Achaeans were about to sail to Troy, so he gave the breastplate to the king as a gift. Upon this plate were ten stripes of dark cobalt, twelve of gold, and twenty of tin,



and near the neck were cobalt serpents, three on each side, like the rainbows fixed to clouds by the son of Cronos, omens for mortal men. Over his shoulder he slung a sword with studs of glittering gold that was sheathed in a silver scabbard and joined with a golden baldric. He then seized an elaborate, all-enclosing shield, a beautiful thing with ten bronze circles, twenty tin bosses all gleaming white, a cobalt boss set in the center, and a grim-looking Gorgon on its crown, a horror to behold; and around it were Fear and Panic. The shield was held by a silver baldric, and on it was a cobalt serpent with three heads twisting around and growing from a single neck. On his head he set a helmet with two ridges, four bosses, and a horsehair plume bobbing proudly above it. He seized two stout spears with bronze tips so sharp that they shone far up into heaven, and Athena and Hera thundered in honor of the king of gold-rich Mycenae.

Then each man ordered his driver to again rein in the horses by the trench, while they themselves, in full armor, rushed to the fray with a cry that rang out across the early dawn. They were lined up along the trench ahead of the charioteers who followed closely behind. And Cronos' son let stir an evil roar and rained down bloody dewdrops from above, for he was set to send many strong men down to Hades.

On the other side, at the plain's edge, the Trojans gathered around great Hector, noble Polydamas, and Aeneas, honored as a god by the Trojans, as well as Antenor's three sons: [Polybus](#), noble

Agenor, and young Acamas, peer of the gods.  
In the forefront Hector carried his perfect  
shield. Just as a deadly star<sup>1</sup> shines bright  
among the clouds and then sinks into darkness,  
so Hector's bronze flashed like lightning  
bolts from aegis-wielding Zeus as he stood  
among the forefront and urged on the hindmost.

Just as reapers advancing from opposite sides  
drive their lines across a wealthy man's field  
of wheat or barley, thick armfuls falling fast,  
so the Trojans and Achaeans sprang and slew  
each other, neither side mindful of deadly fear.  
Their lines stayed equal in battle, they raged  
like wolves, and Strife looked on and rejoiced.  
She was the only immortal present for the battle,  
for the other gods were seated comfortably  
in their halls among the clefts of Olympus  
where grand homes had been built for each.  
All blamed Cronos' son, lord of the black clouds,  
for it was his wish to give glory to the Trojans.  
But Zeus paid no heed, sitting apart from others,  
rejoicing in his glory, looking down on the city  
of Troy and on the Achaean ships, on the clash  
of bronze, and on the killers and the killed.

As long as the sacred light of day grew stronger,  
the spears struck and killed men on both sides.  
But at the time of day when a woodcutter prepares  
his meal in a mountain glen, his hands sore  
from felling tall trees, his heart grown weary,  
and his mind seized with a desire for sweet bread,  
then the valiant Danaans broke ranks, calling  
to their comrades through the lines. Agamemnon  
was first to attack, slaying Bienor, herder of men,

1. This is a reference to Sirius, the "Dog Star"

and his comrade Oïleus, smiter of horses. Oïleus sprang down from his chariot to meet the enemy, but as he charged, Agamemnon's sharp spear struck his forehead, passed through the heavy, bronze helmet and into the bone, and splattered his brains, and in fury he was slain. And lord of men Agamemnon stripped their tunics, left them there with gleaming chests, and went to slay [Isus](#) and Antiphus, two sons of Priam, one a bastard, the other born in wedlock, and both in the same chariot; the bastard was the charioteer, but famed Antiphus was beside him. Achilles once caught them as they tended sheep on the spurs of Ida, bound them with willows, and freed them for ransom. But now wide-ruling Agamemnon speared Isus in the chest near the nipple and hit Antiphus near the ear with his sword, driving him off his chariot. He quickly stripped their fine armor for he remembered seeing them near the swift ships when swift-footed Achilles brought them from Ida. Just as a lion easily seizes a swift deer's fawn and devours it with his mighty fangs after invading its lair, taking its tender life away, while nearby the mother is unable to help for she is trembling with terror, moving quickly through the dense thickets and woods, and sweating as she hurries away from the mighty beast's attack, so too were the Trojans unable to ward off their deaths, for they themselves had fled from the Argives.

Then he took Peisander and stout Hippolochus, sons of skilled Antimachus, who accepted golden gifts from Alexander in exchange for opposing the return of Helen to tawny-haired Menelaus. Lord Agamemnon slew his two sons, who were in one chariot trying to control their swift horses,

for the shining reins had slipped from their hands and the horses had gone wild. Atreus' son rushed them like a lion, and they pleaded with him: "Capture us, son of Atreus, and gain a rich ransom, for treasures of bronze, gold, and well-worked iron lie in the house of Antimachus. Our father will grant you countless ransoms if he learns we are alive by the Achaean ships."

So they spoke these pleasing words to the king, but Agamemnon's reply was not so pleasant: "If you are the sons of skilled Antimachus, who once urged the Trojan assembly to kill Menelaus and godlike Odysseus, who were there as envoys, and not allow them to return to the Achaeans, then you will now pay for your father's outrage."

So saying, he speared Peisander in his chest, driving him from his chariot and onto the earth. Hippolochus leapt down but Agamemnon's sword sliced off both his arms and his head, and he fell to the ground and rolled like a log into the throng. The king left them there and went where the line was weakest, and the other Achaeans followed. Then footmen killed fleeing footmen, horsemen killed horsemen, and the hooves of thundering horses stirred dust on the plain. They killed with bronze and mighty Agamemnon led the way, urging the Argives forward. Just as a furious fire falls on a thick timbered land, the rolling wind carrying it everywhere as the shrubs are uprooted in the fire's assault, so the heads of fleeing Trojans fell before Agamemnon as many high-necked horses rattled empty chariots over the battlefield,

yearning for their noble masters who were lying on the earth, a delight for vultures, not for wives.

Zeus led Hector away from the spears, dust, slaughter, blood, and noise, but Atreus' son followed, urging the Danaans onward. Past the grave of ancient Ilus, son of Dardanus, past the plain and wild fig tree, and to the city they ran, pursued by a shouting Agamemnon, his invincible hands wet with gore. But when they reached the Scaean gates and oak tree, the two armies stopped and waited. Others on the plain scattered like cattle in the dead of night when lions attack a terrified herd, though utter death comes for only one; the lion first snaps her neck with its mighty fangs and then gulps down the blood and entrails. So lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, chased the throng and slayed the fleeing stragglers. Many were hurled face-first from their chariots by the hands of spear-raging Agamemnon. But as he reached the city's fortified walls, the father of gods and men, Zeus, came down from heaven and sat on the peak of Ida, rich in springs, a thunderbolt in his hands, and he sent golden-winged Iris to deliver a message: "Go quickly, Iris, and tell Hector these words: so long as he sees Agamemnon, herder of men, rushing to the front-lines and slaying soldiers, he should hold back and order other men to fight the enemy in combat. But once Agamemnon is struck with a spear or an arrow and leaps to his chariot, then I will grant Hector mastery over death until he reaches the well-benched ships and the sun sets and darkness descends."

So he said, and swift-footed Iris obeyed,  
racing down from Ida to sacred Ilios  
to find noble Hector, son of wise Priam,  
standing by the joined chariots and horses;  
and swift-footed Iris came to him and said:  
“Hector, son of Priam, equal to Zeus in counsel,  
father Zeus has sent me to tell you these words:  
As long as you see Agamemnon, herder of men,  
rushing to the front-lines and slaying soldiers,  
you should hold back and order other men to fight  
the enemy in combat. But once Agamemnon  
is struck with a spear or an arrow and leaps  
to his chariot, then I will grant you mastery  
over death until you reach the well-benched  
ships and the sun sets and darkness descends.”

So swift Iris said and went away. Then Hector,  
wielding two sharp spears, leapt from the chariot  
to the ground and went through the army urging  
his men to fight and waking the cruel cries of war.  
So they wheeled round and faced the Achaeans,  
and the Argives strengthened their battle-lines.  
The two sides were set, and Agamemnon was  
first to charge, eager to fight ahead of the rest.

Tell me, Muses whose homes are on Olympus,  
who was the first to fight against Agamemnon,  
either from the Trojans or their famed allies.

First was brave and tall Iphidamas, Antenor’s  
son, born in fertile Thrace, mother of flocks.  
Cisseus, his grandfather and father of fair-cheeked  
Theano, raised him in his house, but when  
he came of age, Cisseus tried to hold him  
by offering his daughter, but once wed he left  
his bride to seek glory against the Achaeans,

and twelve curved-beak ships followed him. He left his well-balanced ships at Percote and came on foot to Ilios, and now it was he who faced Agamemnon. When they closed on one another, Atreus' son threw his spear, but it was turned aside, and Iphidamas stabbed his belt below the breastplate, trusting his heavy hands to lance the skin; but he could not pierce the dappled belt, for the spear's tip hit the silver and bent back like lead. Wide-ruling Agamemnon then seized the spear like a lion, pulled it out of Iphidamas' hands, and sliced his neck with a sword. Iphidamas went limp and fell into the bronze sleep of death—all in aid of his people and far from his wife, who had given him no joy but had cost him much: a hundred cattle and a promise of a thousand goats and sheep from among his countless herd. Then Agamemnon stripped him of his armor and carried it back through the Achaean throng.

But when [Coön](#), renowned fighter and Antenor's eldest son, saw him, a mighty sorrow shrouded his eyes for his fallen brother. He stood to one side, unnoticed by Agamemnon, and speared the king in the arm, just below the elbow, and the shining spear point passed clean through. Agamemnon, lord of men, shuddered with pain but did not stop fighting with his wind-swept spear. He leapt on Coön, who was eagerly dragging his brother Iphidamas, born of the same father, away by the foot and calling to all the best men. The son of Atreus hit him with a spear held under his embossed shield, and Coön's limbs fell limp. Stepping over Iphidamas' corpse, Agamemnon

severed Coön's head, fulfilling the fate of Antenor's sons, and they went to the house of Hades.

Agamemnon ranged over the ranks of fighting men with his spear, sword, and stones while hot blood gushed from his wound. But once the wound dried and the blood no longer flowed, sharp pain began to sap his strength. Just as sharp missiles pierce a woman in labor, missiles sent by [Eileithyiae](#), Hera's daughter who bring sharp pains, so sharp pains sank into mighty Atreus' son. So he jumped back onto his chariot and ordered the charioteer to drive to the hollow ships, for his heart was weak. And he cried out to the Danaans: "My friends, chiefs and rulers of the Argives, you must keep the dreaded din of battle away from the seafaring ships, for counselor Zeus does not allow me to fight all day against the Trojans."

So saying, the driver whipped the fair-maned horses back to the hollow ships, and they did not disobey; with foam-covered chests and dust-stained bellies, they carried their injured king away from battle.

Seeing Agamemnon departing, Hector called to the Trojans and Lycians with a great shout: "Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanian fighters, be men, my friends, and remember your eager spirits. Their leader has gone, and Zeus has granted me great glory; so drive your single-hoofed horses against the valiant Danaans and win high honor."

So he said, stirring each man's strength and spirit. As when a hunter sets his white-toothed dogs on a wild boar or a lion, so great-hearted Hector, Priam's son and equal to Ares, destroyer of men,



set the great-hearted Trojans on the Achaeans.  
With high hopes, Hector went to the front lines  
and dove into battle like a whirling wind  
that rushes down and stirs the violet sea.

Who was first and who last to be slain by Hector,  
Priam's son, once Zeus granted him glory?  
First was Asaeus, and then Autinous, Opites,  
and Dolops, son of Clytius, Orpheltius, Agelaus,  
Aesymnus, Orus, and staunch fighter Hipponous.  
He slew these Danaan chiefs and then a throng  
of men. Just as the West Wind strikes the clouds  
of the white [South Wind](#) and brings a rising  
storm that drives huge, rolling waves and shoots  
foam high into the rush of the wandering wind,  
so too did Hector fell the heads of many men.

Then deadly deeds beyond repair might have  
been done and the Achaeans might have fled back  
to their ships had Odysseus not said to Diomedes:  
“Son of Tydeus, where did our rushing rage go?  
Come and stand with me, for dishonor will be  
ours if flashing-helmed Hector takes our ships.”

Then mighty Diomedes answered him, saying:  
“Of course I will stay and fight, but our edge  
will not last long since cloud-gatherer Zeus  
wants to give victory to the Trojans, not to us.”

So saying, he stuck his spear in the left breast  
of Thymbraeus and pushed him off his horses  
as Odysseus slew Molion, the king's attendant.  
They left them lying there and joined the battle-  
throng to cause further chaos. Like two ravenous  
boars rushing on hunting dogs, they turned  
back to the Trojans and killed them, briefly  
halting the Achaean retreat from noble Hector.

Then they seized a chariot and two great men, sons of Merops of Percote, the finest soothsayer among men, who forbade his boys from going to war, the destroyer of men; but they did not obey, for the agents of black death led them on. So spear-famed Diomedes robbed them of life and spirit and took away their glorious armor, and Odysseus slew Hippodamus and Hypeirochus.

Looking down from Ida, Cronos' son tightened the battle lines, and the warriors kept on killing. Next the son of Tydeus speared Agastrophus, heroic son of Paeon, on the hip-joint; but he was unable to flee, for he foolishly left behind his horses and attendant and rushed on foot among the foremost until he lost his dear life. Hector saw this clearly from across the ranks and charged at them with a cry, and the Trojan battalions followed. Seeing him, war-crier Diomedes shuddered and said to Odysseus: "Mighty Hector is barreling down upon us; but come, let us stand here and ward him off."

Saying this, he aimed and shot a long-shadowed spear and did not miss, striking Hector's helmet; but the bronze of the three-layered, hollow-eyed helmet, given to him by Phoebus Apollo, deflected the bronze spear and protected his fair flesh. Then Hector ran back, mixed with the throng, fell to his knees, and stayed there, his stout hands leaning on the earth and darkness covering his eyes. While Diomedes went through the front fighters to reclaim his spear that was lodged in the earth, Hector revived, rushed to his chariot and returned to the fray, shunning a black fate. And mighty Diomedes rushed at him with his spear and cried:

“Once more you cheated death, dog; you came close to ruin only to be saved again by Phoebus Apollo, whose prayers you must seek before facing the din of spears. When I meet you next, I will end you, should one of the gods defend me as well. For now I will go after others, whoever I reach.”

So saying, he stripped Paeon’s spear-famed son. But Alexander, husband of fair-haired Helen, aimed his bow at Tydeus’ son, herder of men, leaning on a pillar on the mound made by men’s hands for Ilus, Dardanus’ son, an ancient elder. Diomedes was taking Agastrophus’ breastplate from his chest, the shield from his shoulder, and the strong helmet from his head when Paris drew his bow and fired his arrow; and the shot was not in vain, for it hit the flat of his right foot and drove through and into the ground. Paris then leapt from his hiding spot, laughed, and said: “My shot was not in vain for you are struck, but I wish I had hit your flank and taken your life and given a break to the Trojans who shudder before you like bleating goats before a lion.”

Unafraid, mighty Diomedes answered him: “Filthy bowman, curly-haired seducer of women, if you tried to fight me one-on-one in full armor, then your bow and fast arrows would be no help; yet you now boast of grazing the flat of my foot. It feels like I was struck by a woman or dumb child, for a dart is the blunt tool of a weak, useless man. But a spear from my hands, even if struck lightly, would quickly take a man’s life, fill his wife’s cheeks with tears, and leave his children fatherless while he rots away, his blood staining the earth, and more birds swarming him than women.”

So saying, he went and stood beside spear-famed Odysseus, who knelt and plucked the swift arrow from his foot, and a great pain filled his flesh. Then he leapt on his chariot and told his driver to return to the hollow ships, his heart in pain.

Odysseus, famed for his spear, was left alone, for no Argives were near, fear having taken them all. Sorely troubled, he spoke to his great heart: "What is to become of me? It would be a great evil to flee from the throng, but it would be worse to be taken alone, for Cronos' son has scattered the other Danaans. But why am I debating these things? I know cowards flee from battle, but a hero must boldly stand his ground, whether he is hit or is the one hitting."

While he considered these things in his mind and heart, many shield-bearing Trojans closed in around him, thus sealing their deadly fates. Just as dogs and strong young men rush a boar as it emerges from a thick woods, grinding the white tusks in his bent jaw, and as they attack, they hear the terrifying noise of these tusks, but they face him all the same, so too did the Trojans quickly circle Odysseus, dear to Zeus. First he hurled his spear and struck noble Deïopites above the shoulder; then he slew Thoön and Ennomus. Next he speared Chersidamas in the navel, below the bossed shield, as he leapt from his chariot; he then hit the dust and clutched the earth with his hands. He left them all behind and speared Charops, son of Hippasus and brother of wealthy Socus. And to his aid came godlike Socus, who came and stood near Odysseus and said to him:

“Glorious Odysseus, insatiable mischief-maker,  
today you will either revel in killing both sons  
of Hippiasus and stripping their armor  
or be struck with my spear and lose your life.”

So saying, he stuck Odysseus’ perfect shield.  
The mighty spear drove through the bright  
shield, forced its way into his dappled breastplate,  
and severed the skin along his ribs, but Pallas  
Athena did not allow it to pierce his entrails.  
Odysseus knew he had not met a fatal end,  
so he drew back and spoke to Socus, saying:  
“Luckless one, utter ruin surely has caught you.  
You stopped me from fighting Trojans, but I say  
that death and black fate will come for you today,  
for when I kill you with my spear, I will gain glory  
and you will fall to Hades of the splendid steeds.”

Socus quickly turned to flee, but as he turned  
Odysseus stuck his spear in his back between  
the shoulders and drove it through his chest;  
he fell with a thud, and Odysseus taunted him:  
“Socus, son of skilled horse-tamer Hippiasus,  
death has caught you before you could escape.  
Poor fool, your father and revered mother will  
not close your eyes in death, for birds will beat  
their wings as they tear your flesh, but if I die,  
the noble Achaeans will bury me with honor.”

Then he pulled the mighty spear of skilled  
Socus out of his flesh and his bossed shield  
as blood gushed forth, troubling his heart.  
The great-hearted Trojans saw Odysseus  
bleeding, called to each other, and attacked  
en masse. But he backed away and called  
his comrades. Three times Odysseus shouted

at full volume, and three times Menelaus heard his call, and he said to nearby Ajax: “Ajax, sprung from Zeus, son of Telamon, lord of men, steadfast Odysseus’ cries ring round me, as if he is all alone, surrounded and overwhelmed by fierce-fighting Trojans. So let us enter the fray and defend him. I fear for him alone against the Trojans, for he is brave and would be a great loss to the Danaans.”

So saying, he took the lead, and godlike Ajax followed. Soon they found Odysseus surrounded by Trojans. Think of tawny jackals around a wounded mountain stag that has been hit with an arrow; the stag can quickly escape so long as his blood is warm and his knees limber, but when the quick arrow eventually kills him, the jackals eat his raw flesh in the shady mountain glen until some god brings a ravenous lion, and the jackals flee and the lion feasts. In this way did many brave Trojans surround wise, crafty Odysseus, but he darted about with his spear and warded off his fated day. When Ajax and his tower-like shield came and stood beside him, the Trojans scattered. Then Menelaus led Odysseus from battle and held his hand until the chariot arrived.

Then Ajax sprang on the Trojans and slew Doryclus, Priam’s bastard son, followed by Pandocus, Lysander, Pyrasus, and Pylartes. As when a flooding river flows into a plain from the mountains after a winter storm, bringing the rains of Zeus, carrying dried oak and pine trees, and drawing mud into the sea, so famed Ajax drove wildly over the plain,

cleaving horses and men alike. But Hector knew none of this, for he fought on the far left by the river Scamander, where the heads of the best men fell fastest and great cries arose around Nestor and warlike Idomeneus. Hector was engaged there, using his spear and chariot to wipe out battalions of men. But these noble Achaeans would not have given ground had Alexander, fair-haired Helen's husband, not halted Machaon, herder of men, hitting his right shoulder with a three-barbed arrow. The fury-breathing Achaeans feared for him lest the tide turn against him in battle. So Idomeneus quickly said to noble Nestor: "Nestor, son of Neleus, honored Achaean, mount your chariot and let Machaon board beside you, and then drive quickly to the ships, for a healer is worth many men for his ability to cut out arrows and sprinkle soothing drugs."

So he said, and Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, obeyed. He quickly mounted his chariot, and Machaon, great healer Asclepius' son, mounted beside him. Whipping the horses, they flew eagerly to the hollow ships.

But Cebriones, seeing the Trojans panicking as he stood by Hector on the chariot, said to him: "Hector, while we fight the Danaans here on the edge of the bitter battle, other Trojans are panicking in confusion, both horses and men. Ajax, son of Telamon, drives them; I can see the wide shield on his shoulders. So let us take our horses and chariot and go where foul combat is fiercest between horsemen and foot soldiers and where ceaseless cries ring out."

Saying this, he lunged the fair-maned horses with the whistling whip; feeling the strike, they drove the swift chariot between the Trojans and Achaeans, trampling corpses and shields and splattering the chariot's axles and rails with blood thrown up by the tires and horses' hooves. Hector longed to rush and shatter the throng, and he gave his spear little rest as he hurled menace upon the Danaans. He ranged along the battle lines of men with his spear, sword, and great stones but avoided fighting Ajax, son of Telamon.

Then Zeus on high drove fear into Ajax's heart; he stood in a daze, threw his seven layer ox-hide shield on his back, and fled like a beast, turning and glancing back at the throng as he sped away. Imagine a tawny lion driven from a cattle pen by the shouts of dogs and country men, who watch all night long and do not allow the beast to take the fattest ox; but in his lust for flesh he charges forward all the same only to meet javelins shot from brave hands and burning torches that force him to flee despite his desire so that, at dawn, he leaves with a sullen heart. So Ajax, his spirits dashed, was forced to flee from the Trojans, fearing for the Achaean ships. Just as an ass overpowers boys to enter a field, going in even though they break their cudgels on his ribs and keep beating him as he ravages the deep corn crops, and though their strength is weak, they drive him out once he eats his fill, so too did the daring Trojans and their allies stab their shining spears into the shield of great Ajax, son of Telamon, as they follow after him. For a time, Ajax would remember his rushing



courage and turn to check the horse-taming  
Trojans only then to whirl back round and flee.  
But he alone barred them from reaching the swift  
ships, running between the Trojans and Achaeans  
as he battled. And some spears from their hands  
were fixed to his great shield while many others  
were impaled in the earth before reaching  
his white skin, though they longed for his flesh.

When Eurypylus, Euaemon's splendid son,  
saw the darts pressing thick and fast upon Ajax,  
he stood beside him, aimed his shining spear,  
and hit Apisaon, Phausius' son, herder of men,  
in the liver below the midriff, and his knees  
buckled. Eurypylus leapt on him and started  
to strip the armor from his shoulders, but godlike  
Alexander saw him, quickly drew his bow, and shot  
Eurypylus with an arrow in the right thigh.  
The shaft broke and filled his thigh with pain,  
so he retreated behind his comrades to avoid death.  
He then gave a great cry and said to the Danaans:  
"Friends, leaders, and rulers of the Argives,  
turn and stand and beat back this day of death  
from Ajax who is besieged by darts and who may  
not survive this woeful battle. So stand and face  
the foes with the great Ajax, son of Telamon."

So said the stricken Eurypylus, and they all stood  
with him, their shields leaning on their shoulders  
and their spears outstretched. And Ajax joined  
his comrades and turned and stood with them.

As they fought like a blazing fire, the sweat-strewn  
horses of Neleus carried Nestor and Machaon,  
herder of men, away from the battle. And swift-  
footed, noble Achilles eyed him as he stood

at the stern of his large hollow ship and watched the toil of war and the tearful retreat. At once, he called from the ship to his friend Patroclus, and Patroclus emerged out of the tent like Ares, and this was the beginning of his end. The stout son of Menoetius was first to speak: "Why do you call, Achilles? What do you need?"

In reply, swift-footed Achilles said to him: "Noble son of Menoetius, dear to my heart, now, I think, the Achaeans will come and beg me on their knees for they are in desperate straits. But go, Patroclus, and ask Nestor the name of the wounded man he brings back from battle; from behind, he looks a lot like Machaon, son of Asclepius, but I did not see his eyes, for his horses darted past and hurried on."

So he said, and Patroclus obeyed his dear friend and raced along the Achaean tents and ships.

When the others reached Nestor's tent, they stepped onto the rich earth, and Eurymedon, his attendant, loosed the horses from the chariot while the others stood, dried their sweat-stained clothes in the ocean breeze, went into the tent, and took their seats. Then a potion was prepared by fair [Hecamede](#), daughter of great-hearted Arsinous whom Nestor took when Achilles sacked Tendeos; the Achaeans awarded her to Nestor for being the best of all in counsel. First she pushed between them a well-polished, elegant table with cobalt feet; on it she set a bronze basket with an onion relish for their drink, golden honey, and blessed barley bread; and beside these she put a beautiful goblet

brought from home by the old man, with golden nails studded around it, four handles, two feeding doves drawn on either side, and a double base for support. Others struggled to lift the goblet off the table, but old Nestor lifted it easily. Into this the goddess-like woman mixed a potion with the Pramnian wine,<sup>2</sup> grating goat cheese over it and adding sprinkles of white barley. Once ready, she urged them to drink. When they had sated their thirst, they spoke cheerfully to one another until godlike Patroclus appeared at the door. Seeing him, the old man leapt from his shining chair, took his hand, and offered him a seat. But Patroclus refused and said to him: "I cannot sit nor will you persuade me, old man. A respected and feared man sent me to find out who it was you brought back wounded, but I see that it is Machaon, herder of men. Now I will bring word back to Achilles. You know the kind of man he is, old man beloved by Zeus: quick to blame even the blameless."

Then Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, replied: "Why does Achilles worry about Achaea's wounded sons? He knows not the grief stirred across the camp, for the best of them are lying by the ships, injured by spear-thrusts and arrows. Diomedes was struck by an arrow, Odysseus and Agamemnon were wounded by spears, Eurypylus was hit with an arrow in his thigh, and I have led this arrow-stricken young man, Machaon, back from battle. But Achilles, though noble, does not care for or pity the Danaans.

2. Wine created on the island of Lesbos (which is still a well-known producer of wine today).

Does he wait until the swift ships near the sea  
are aflame and the Argives slain one by one  
despite their best efforts? For my limbs are not  
as limber as they once were. If only I was still  
the young, strong man I was when we fought  
the Eleans over the theft of cattle, and I slew  
Itymoneus, Hypeirochus' mighty son, who  
lived in Elis, as I drove off the cattle in reprisal;  
while fighting over the oxen, he was struck  
by a spear from my hands, and as he fell,  
the country folk around him fled in terror.  
Together we drove great spoils out of the plain:  
fifty oxen herds, just as many flocks of sheep,  
herds of swine, herds of wandering goats,  
and one hundred and fifty chestnut horses,  
all mares, many with suckling foals. We drove  
all these by night into Neleus' keep in Pylos,  
and Neleus cheered at the spoils that had come  
my way though I was but a youth. At dawn,  
the heralds called out that any man owed  
a debt in noble Elis should come. And all  
the leaders in Pylos came to divide the spoils,  
for the Epeians owed many men a debt since  
we in Pylos were few and poorly-treated,  
for mighty Heracles had come many years  
earlier and oppressed us, killing all our bravest.  
There had been twelve sons of Neleus,  
but I alone remained, the others perishing,  
and because of this, the arrogant, bronze-clad  
Epeians devised deplorable deeds against us.  
From the spoils, the old man took a herd of oxen  
and a flock of sheep, three hundred of each,  
and their herdsmen. For a great debt was owed  
him in noble Elis: four prize horses and a chariot  
that had gone to the games to race for the tripod,

but Augeias, lord of men, kept the horses there and returned their driver who mourned his lost horses. These words and deeds angered the old man, so he took a large share, and gave the rest to his people so none might lack an equal share.

“So we settled each debt, and the city was filled with sacrifices to the gods; but on the third day the Epeians rushed in with many men and single-hoofed horses, and among them were the two Moliones,<sup>3</sup> both young and unskilled in fighting. Now Thryum is a city on a steep hill far from Alpheius on the farthest border of sandy Pylos; there they set camp, eager to lay waste to the town. But when they made for the plain, divine Athena came to us at night from Olympus bearing a message to arm for battle for the army gathered in Pylos was eager for war. But Neleus did not allow me to arm and hid my horses for he thought I knew nothing of warcraft. Still, though I was on foot, I was pre-eminent among horsemen, for Athena directed the battle. Now the river Minyeïus empties into the sea near Arene; and here it was that we Pylian horsemen and foot soldiers waited for divine Dawn. We quickly dressed in full armor and arrived at midday to the holy waters of Alpheius where we offered fine sacrifices to mighty Zeus, a bull to Alpheius, a bull to Poseidon, and a cow from the herd for gleaming-eyed Athena. Then we took our meal, each with his company, and went to sleep in full armor beside the river. Now the great-hearted Epeians surrounded the city, eager to destroy it, but before that

3. Cteatus and Eurytus are the sons of either Actor of Poseidon. Together, they are called Moliones after their mother, Molione.

happened, there came a great work of Ares,  
for when the bright sun rose over the land,  
we met in battle, praying to Zeus and Athena.

“When the Pylians and Epeians began to fight,  
I was the first to slay a man and seize his horse:  
spearman Mulius, son-in-law to Augeias, whose  
eldest daughter was Mulius’ wife, fair Agamede,  
who knew all the herbs grown across the earth.  
As he charged, I struck him with my bronze-tipped  
spear; he fell to the dust, and I took his chariot  
and joined the foremost fighters. But the other  
great-hearted Epeians fled when they saw him fall,  
for he led their horsemen and was a fierce fighter.  
But I sprang on them like a black tempest  
and took fifty chariots, and on each one two men  
bit the dust, overpowered by my spear. And I  
would have slain the two Moliones, sons of Actor,  
if their father, wide-ruling Poseidon, had not saved  
them from war by hiding them in a heavy mist.  
Then Zeus granted the Pylians great might,  
for we pursued them over the vast plain, slaying  
men and picking up their fine armor until we led  
our horses to wheat-rich Buprasium and the rock  
of Olen, where there is a hill called Alesium; here  
Athena turned back the army. I slew the last man  
and left; but the Achaeans drove the swift horses  
from Buprasium back to Pylos, and all praised  
Zeus among gods and Nestor among men.

“So it was for me with men, unless it was a dream.  
But Achilles will celebrate his valor alone, though  
I think he will weep bitterly when his men perish.  
Surely, friend, Menoetius said all this to you  
when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon.  
Noble Odysseus and I were in the house

and heard all the advice he gave to you when  
we came to the pleasant halls of Peleus,  
gathering the army throughout rich Achaea.  
We found heroic Menoetius in the house with you  
and Achilles, and old horseman Peleus was  
burning a fat bull's thigh for loud-thunderer Zeus  
in the open courtyard, holding a golden cup  
and pouring bright wine over the blazing altar.  
You two were tending the fire while we stood  
in the doorway; and Achilles jumped in surprise,  
took our hands, led us in, sat us down, and offered  
us fine hospitality, as is a stranger's right. Once  
we filled ourselves with food and drink, I spoke  
first, urging you both to follow us, and as you  
were eager to go, your fathers spoke to you.  
Old man Peleus charged his son Achilles  
to be the bravest and mightiest warrior of all,  
but Menoetius, son of Actor, charged you thus:  
'My child, by birth Achilles is higher than you  
and his strength is greater, but you are the elder.  
So speak wise words to him, give him counsel,  
and guide him; if he obeys you, he will prosper.'  
So he said, but you forgot. Yet even now you  
could speak to skilled Achilles and he would listen.  
Who knows? With a god's help, your words may  
stir his soul; a friend can be very persuasive.  
But if he is trying to evade some prophecy,  
his mother having shared some secret from Zeus,  
then let him send you out and let the Myrmidons  
follow you and so be a light for the Danaans.  
And let him give you his fine armor to wear into war,  
so the Trojans think that you are he, hold back  
from battle, and give the worn-out Achaeans  
some rest, for there is little time for rest in war,

and rested men might easily push weary men  
back towards the city from the ships and tents.”

So he said, stirring the heart of Patroclus, who  
ran back along the ships to Aeacus’ grandson  
Achilles. But when he came to the ships of godlike  
Odysseus, where the Achaeans held assembly  
and cast votes and where an altar to the gods was  
set, Eurypylus, Zeus-born son of Eumaeon, met  
him as he limped away from battle, having been  
hit with an arrow in the thigh. Sweat dripped  
from his head and shoulders and black blood  
trickled from his painful wound, but his mind  
was clear. The brave son of Menoetius looked  
at him and felt pity, and said with winged words:  
“Wretched leaders and lords of the Danaans,  
were you fated, so far from friends and native  
lands, to sate Troy’s wild dogs with your shining  
flesh? Tell me, Eurypylus, Zeus-blessed warrior,  
will the Achaeans be able to hold back mighty  
Hector, or will they die, mastered by his spear?”

Then the wounded Eurypylus replied to him:  
“Nothing will safeguard the Achaeans, godlike  
Patroclus, but they will flee back into their black  
ships. All the best warriors lie on the ships  
with arrow or spear wounds from the hands  
of Trojans whose strength is ever increasing.  
But now help me to my black ship, cut the arrow  
from my thigh, wash away the black blood  
with warm water, and sprinkle healing herbs  
upon it, which they say you learned from Achilles,  
who was taught by the wisest centaur, Chiron.  
As for the healers, Machaon lies wounded  
in the huts and is himself in need of healing,



while his brother Podaleirius is on the plain,  
awaiting the sharp wrath of the Trojans.”

Then the brave son of Menoetius said to him:  
“How can this be? What shall we do, Eurypylus?  
I am going to wise Achilles to relay the words  
of Nestor of Gerenia, guardian of the Achaeans,  
but I cannot leave you in your suffering.”

So saying, he threw his arms around Eurypylus  
and led him to his tent where his servant set  
down oxen hides. Using a sharp knife Patroclus  
cut the arrow out of his thigh, washed off  
the black blood with warm water, and applied  
a sharp root that stills pain. Then the wound  
started drying and the blood stopped flowing.

## BOOK 12

As Menoetius' noble son treated the stricken Eurypylus in his tents, the Argives and Trojans fought in close combat. The Danaan's trench and wide wall protected them, but not for long. When they build the trench and wall, they had offered the gods no great hecatombs so they might defend and keep safe the swift ships and ample spoils; but since it was built against the gods' will, it would not last long. So long as Hector lived, Achilles raged, and King Priam's city remained unsacked, the great wall of the Achaeans stood firm. But after the greatest Trojans and Argives had fallen, and after the sacking of Priam's city in the tenth year of the war, and after the Argives had returned in their ships to their fatherlands, then Poseidon and Apollo destroyed the wall by letting loose all the rivers that flow from mount Ida to the sea: Rhesus, Heptaporus, [Caresus](#), [Rhodius](#), [Granicus](#), Aesepus, divine Scamander, and Simoïs, where many ox-hide shields and helmets fell to the dust as well as many demigods. Phoebus Apollo redirected all their mouths and for nine days flooded the wall, and Zeus sent constant rain to break the wall and wash it into the sea.

The earth shaker led them; holding a trident in his hand, he sent into the waves the beams and stones set there by toiling Achaeans, smoothed the strong-flowing Hellespont, covered the beach again with sand once the wall was leveled, and returned the sweet-running river waters to their former currents.

So Poseidon and Apollo were destined to do, but now the noise of battle blazed around the well-built wall, the beams rang when struck, and the Argives, tamed by Zeus' whip, were hemmed in by their hollow ships, held by fear of the terrifying Hector who fought, as before, like a whirling storm. When hunters and hounds face a wild boar or a lion who turns all around, exulting in his might, the men line up in a wall, stand against him, and hurl javelins at him; and though the beast's courage kills him, his glorious heart neither flinches nor frights as he turns around and challenges the line of men, so that wherever he goes the line gives way. So, in this way, did Hector stride through the ranks, urging his men to cross the trench. But the swift-footed horses balked at the edge of the lip, neighing and refusing to move, for they feared that the trench was too wide to leap over and too tough to traverse, as the overhanging banks stood all around on both sides, and the top was covered with huge, sharp stakes which the Achaean sons had placed tightly together to defend against the enemy. A horse could not easily pull a wheeled chariot inside, but the foot soldiers were eager to try. So [Polydamas](#) stood beside bold Hector and said: "Hector and other Trojan and ally leaders, it is

senseless to drive the swift horses over the trench.  
It is hard to cross, for sharp stakes are placed  
inside and close to these is the Achaean wall,  
and chariot horses cannot descend and fight,  
for it is too narrow and it will bring danger.  
If loud-thundering Zeus wants to destroy  
our enemy and aid the Trojans, then I eagerly  
hope that this will come to pass and the Achaeans  
are killed and forgotten far from Argos.  
But if they should recover, forcing us away  
from the ships and back to the trench, then I  
fear no one will be left to bring a message  
to the city once the Achaeans have rallied.  
But come now and do all that I command:  
let the attendants keep the horses by the trench  
while we dismount, arm for battle, and follow  
Hector as one, and the Achaeans will not stop  
us if death's ropes are fastened upon them."

So Polydamas said, and the words pleased  
Hector, who immediately leapt from the chariot  
to the ground; and the other Trojans did not  
remain on their chariots but sprang down when  
they saw noble Hector on foot. Then each man  
told his charioteer to hold the horses at the trench,  
and the men divided into five well-ordered  
companies and followed after the leaders.

Those with Hector and noble Polydamas were  
the best, the most numerous, and the most eager  
to break the wall and fight by the hollow ships.  
Cebriones joined them as the third, for Hector  
left a less skillful man back beside the chariots.  
Paris, Alcathous, and Agenor led the second;  
Helenus and noble [Deïphobus](#), two sons  
of Priam, led the third, and with them was

Asius, son of Hyrtacus, who brought his great tawny horse from Arisbe by the Selleïs river. Aeneas, noble son of Anchises, led the fourth, and with him were Antenor's two sons, Acamas and Archelochus, both skilled in all fighting. Sarpedon led the famous allies, and he chose as his comrades Glaucus and the warrior [Asteropaeus](#) for they seemed clearly to be the finest after himself, but he was best of all. They all linked their ox-hide shields and charged eagerly at the Danaans, certain they would not be held back but would reach the black ships.

The other famous Trojans and allies obeyed the orders of noble Polydamas, but Hyrtacus' son Asius, leader of men, did not want to leave his horse and charioteer behind and so drove straight to the swift ships, the fool, for he was not destined to escape his black fate and return home to windy Ilios from the ships in triumph with his horses and chariot. Before this, his foul destiny would envelop him through the spear of Idomeneus, [Deucalion's](#) noble son. He made for the left side of the ships, where Achaean chariots were returning from the plain, and drove his horses and chariot to the gates and found them neither shut nor bolted, for men held them wide open, hoping their comrades could flee the battle for the safe ships. He drove his horses straight through, and his men followed, screaming sharply and thinking the Achaeans would not hold them back from reaching the black ships. But they were fools, for at the gate they found two brave and noble [Lapithi](#) warriors: mighty Polypoetes, son of Peirithous, and Leonteus, equal to Ares, destroyer of men. They stood

before the tall gates like two oak trees on a lofty mountain that stand up to the wind and rain every day because their deep, strong roots are fixed firmly in the earth; in this way, these two, trusting their arm strength, stood without flinching as mighty Asius charged, along with Iamenus, Orestes, Adamas, son of Asius, Thoön, and Oenomaus, all of them raising their dry, ox-hide shields, screaming loudly, and going straight for the well-built wall. For some time, the Lapiths were inside the wall urging the well-greaved Achaeans to defend the ships, but when they saw the Trojans charge and the Danaans flee, they darted out of the gates and fought. Just as wild swine in the mountain, as they wait for an approaching band of men and dogs, tear through trees and cut them at the roots, the sound of clashing tusks ringing out until someone spears them and kill them, so too did the men's bright bronze chests clang with the sounds of spear tips as they bravely faced the enemy, trusting in their own might and the might of the men on the wall who were hurling boulders from the well-built walls and protecting the tents, the swift ships, and themselves. Like snowflakes falling down to the ground during a blustery gale that drives thick, shadowy clouds over the bountiful earth, so too did the darts rain down from Achaean and Trojan hands alike, helmets and embossed shields ringing harshly with each stone strike. Then Asius, son of Hyrtacus, wailed, struck his thigh, and spoke woeful words, saying: "Father Zeus, clearly you are now a great lover of lies, for I did not think the Achaean warriors

would withstand our strong, unflinching hands.  
Just as a swarm of wasps or bees make a nest  
on the side of a rough road, refuse to leave  
their hollow home, and remain and ward off  
hunters to protect their young, so these men,  
though only two, refuse to surrender the gate  
until they either kill or are killed themselves.”

So he said, but his words failed to move Zeus  
who wished to grant great glory to Hector.

Others were fighting around the other gates,  
and I would have to be a god to tell all tales:  
an all-consuming fire blazing along the wall  
of stone, desperate Argives defending  
their ships, gods weeping in their hearts  
for the Danaans they once aided in battle,  
and the Lapiths fighting together in combat.

Then the son of Peirithous, mighty Polypoetes,  
struck a spear in the bronze cheekpiece helmet  
of Damasus, and the bronze point pierced  
the helmet, shattered his bone, and spattered  
his brains, destroying him in his fury; then he  
killed Pylon and Ormenus. And Leonteus,  
follower of Ares, killed Hippomachus, son  
of Antimachus, with a spear strike to the belt.  
And again he drew his sharp sword from its  
sheath, rushed through the throng, and struck  
first Antiphates, hurling him to the ground,  
and then Menon, Iamenus, and Orestes—all  
thrown to the bountiful earth, one after another.

As they were stripping their gleaming armor,  
the young followers of Polydamas and Hector,  
the best, most numerous, and most eager  
to break the wall and set fire to the ships,

stood at the edge of the trench and paused.  
An omen appeared when they desired to cross,  
a soaring bird passing to the left of the men,  
carrying in his massive talons a red snake  
that was gasping for life but continuing  
to fight, for it bent backwards and sank its  
fangs into the eagle's neck, hurting the bird  
and forcing it to drop the snake into a throng  
of men. Then it shrieked loudly and flew away.  
The Trojans felt dread at seeing the slinking  
snake lying in front of them, a sign from Zeus.  
Then Polydamas came to Hector and said:  
“Hector, you always chide me in assembly,  
though I give good advice, since it is not right  
for a commoner to question you, in council  
or in war, but to always uphold your authority,  
but now I shall speak as I think best. Let us  
not go and fight the Danaans by their ships.  
For an omen came to the Trojans when  
they desired to cross over, a soaring bird  
passing to the left of the men and carrying  
in his massive talons a red snake, still alive,  
that he dropped before reaching his nest,  
thus failing to bring it back for his children.  
So it will be for us, for if we smash the gates  
and walls and force the Achaeans to retreat,  
we will return back the same road in disarray,  
leaving many Trojans behind, slaughtered  
by the Achaeans defending their ships.  
So a soothsayer would say, one whose mind  
is open to omens and whom the people obey.”

With a scowl, glancing-helmed Hector replied:  
“Polydamas, your words do not please me,  
and you know better than to speak like this.  
But if you are serious about what you say,



then clearly the gods have destroyed your wits,  
since you order me to ignore Zeus' counsel  
which he promised me with a nod of assent.  
You would urge obedience to a long-winged  
bird, for I refuse to care or to think about  
whether it goes to the right and the dawn's  
light or to the left and the murky darkness.  
We should obey the counsel of mighty Zeus  
who rules over all mortals and immortals.  
One omen is best to fight for your country.  
Why do you fear war and warfare? For if  
we were all slaughtered around the Argive  
ships, you would have no fear of dying  
for your heart is not steadfast in the fight.  
But if you take no part in war or if you  
persuade others to turn away from war,  
then a strike from my spear will end your life."

So saying, he took the lead and they followed  
with a deafening roar, and loud-thundering Zeus  
roused a rushing wind from mount Ida, sending  
dust against the ships, confusing Achaean  
minds and glorifying Hector and the Trojans.  
Trusting in his omens and their own might,  
they sought to shatter the great Achaean wall.  
They tore outworks, pulled down battlements,  
and displaced jutting buttresses the Achaeans  
had set in the earth to reinforce the wall.  
They pulled these up hoping to break the wall,  
but even now the Danaans gave no ground  
but secured the battlements with oxen hide  
and threw at the enemy who came to the wall.

The two Ajaxes roamed the walls, urging men  
on and stirring Achaean might. Some were  
given kind words, but others who had grown

slack in the fight were given harsh words:

“Friends, not only the finest but also the middling and the lesser among the Achaeans, for men are not equal in war, but now there is work for all, which you well know. Let no man who has heard the enemy’s shouts turn back to the ships but press forward and urge one another on, so Olympian Zeus may grant us to turn the tide of battle and drive them back to the city.”

So they shouted, rousing the Achaeans to fight. Just as snowflakes fall thick and fast on a winter day when counselor Zeus is moved to make snow, displaying his missiles for men, stilling the wind and pouring flakes without pause until the mountain peaks, rocky bluffs, grassy valleys, and rich lands of men are all covered, as are the harbors and headlands of the grey sea, and though the waves beat it back, all other things are enfolded within the driving storm of Zeus; so also stones from both sides rain down, some on the Trojans, some on the Achaeans, as they cast at one another, and a din arose over the wall.

But the Trojans and bright Hector would not have broken the walls, gates, and bars had counselor Zeus not roused his son, Sarpedon, against the Argives like a lion against sleek oxen. Straightaway he held his well-balanced shield, finely formed by the bronzesmith’s hammer, with many ox-hides stitched together using close-set golden wire that ran round the ring. He held it before him, carried two spears, and set off like a mountain lion who has gone meatless for too long, his proud heart urging him to go into the farm and try for the sheep,

and though he finds the shepherd guarding the flock with dogs and spears, he refuses to be driven away before making an attempt, and either leaps in and carries one away, or is himself struck by a quick, sharp spear. So godlike Sarpedon's spirit urged him to rush the wall and break the battlements. Quickly, he spoke to Glaucus, son of Hippolochus: "Glaucus, why are we granted great honors like prime seats, rich meat, and filled goblets in Lycia and are looked upon as gods and are given property by the banks of the Xanthos with fair orchards and wheat-bearing lands? It is so we will take a stand with Lycia's best and fight in this burning battle so that many of the strong-armored Lycians would say: 'Truly, they are not inglorious, those kings who hold sway in Lycia; they eat fat sheep and drink honey-sweet wine, but their honor is strong for they fight among Lycia's best.' Friend, if we fled this fight and were able to live forever, being ageless and immortal, then I would not fight among the finest, nor would I send you to win glory in battle; but now the goddess of death is all around us, and since no mortal can escape or avoid it, let us go and gain glory or give it to another."

So saying, Glaucus obeyed, and the two led the great Lycian army forward. Seeing them, Menestheus, Peteos' son, shuddered, for they brought trouble to his part of the wall. Peering around for a leader who might prevent harm coming to his comrades, he saw both Ajaxes, insatiable fighters, standing with Teucer, who had just come from the tents; but Menestheus'

cries could not be heard over the great noise that rose up to the heavens: horsehair helmets and shields clashing, gates shutting, and the enemy standing before them, ready to break down the gates and enter. Quickly, he sent the herald Thoötes to the Ajaxes: “Run, noble Thoötes, and call Ajax, or both of them, for that would be best of all since we are headed for utter destruction. The Lycian leaders are bearing hard on us, and they have long been formidable fighters in fierce combat. But if in their place great strife has been stirred, then at least let brave Telamonian Ajax come, and let the skilled bowman Teucer follow him.”

So he said, and the herald heard and obeyed, running along the bronze-clad Achaeans’ wall until he stood beside the Ajaxes and said: “Ajaxes, leaders of the bronze-clad Achaeans, the son of Peteos, cherished by Zeus, urges you to go to him for a time and face the danger there, or both of you, for that would be best of all since we are headed for utter destruction. The Lycian leaders are bearing hard on us, and they have long been formidable fighters in fierce combat. But if in your place great strife has been stirred, then at least let brave Telamonian Ajax come, and let the skilled bowman Teucer follow him.”

So he said, and great Telamonian Ajax obeyed, quickly telling the son of Oileus: “Ajax, you and mighty Lycomedes stay here and press the Danaans to hold fast and fight while I go to face the danger there, and I will return quickly once I have come to their aid.”

So saying, Telamonian Ajax went away, joined by Teucer, his brother of the same father, and Pandion, who carried Teucer's bent bow. They went along the wall until they reached noble Menestheus and his men who were under siege, for Lycia's strong leaders and rulers were scaling the battlements like a black storm. With a great cry, they charged into the fight.

Telamonian Ajax was first to kill a man, Sarpedon's friend, great-hearted Epicles, striking him with a sharp quartz rock that was atop the wall's battlements. Most men, even strong ones, would struggle to lift the rock with two hands, but Ajax lifted it easily and threw it, crushing his four-sheeted helmet and smashing the bones in his head. Then he fell from the high wall like a diver, and his soul left his bones. Then Teucer shot Glaucus, Hippolochus' mighty son, with an arrow from the high wall when his arm was bare, forcing him to stop fighting. He leapt from the wall secretly so no Achaean would notice his injury and taunt him. Seeing Glaucus depart quickly filled Sarpedon with sorrow, but he did not let up on the fight, aiming well and spearing Alcmaon, Thestor's son; and when he pulled out the spear, Alcmaon fell on his face, his bronze armor clanging. Then Sarpedon took the battlements in his stout hands and pulled, and a whole section gave way, creating an open space for many to pass through.

Ajax and Teucer attacked Sarpedon together. Teucer shot an arrow into the shining strap that held his shield to his chest, but Zeus protected his son from dying beside the ships' sterns.

Then Ajax leapt and speared him, but the point failed to pierce the shield and forced him away from the battlements. Still, Sarpedon did not give way, for his heart was set on gaining glory, so he turned and called to the godlike Lycians: "Lycians, why do you relax your rushing rage? Strong though I am, it is difficult for me alone to break this wall and lay a path to the ships. So join me: the more men, the better."

So he said, and fearing his reproach, the men brought more weight to bear around their lord. On the other side, the Argives' defense of the wall stiffened, and the battle intensified on both sides. The stout Lycians were not strong enough to break the Danaan wall and lay a path to the ships, nor were the Danaan spearmen strong enough to drive the Lycians from the wall when they drew near. Just as two men holding measuring cords struggle over a boundary stone in a common field, grappling in a small space over equal shares, so the battlements separated them, and they stretched out to tear at each other's well-rounded, ox-hide shields and light, fluttering bucklers. Many were struck in the flesh by relentless bronze, some by turning and leaving their backs open to attack, others by strikes through the shield itself. Blood from both sides, Trojans and Achaeans, was spattered all along the walls and battlements. The Trojans could not force the Achaeans to flee, and both sides held. Just as a woman carefully balances wool on either side of a scale, making them equal so as to win a pitiful wage for her children, so the two sides stood equal in battle until Zeus granted glory to Hector, son of Priam, who was first to break past the Achaean wall.

With a piercing shout, he called to the Trojans:  
“Rise up, horse-taming Trojans, break the wall  
of the Argives, and rain fire upon their ships.”

So he said, inspiring them, and they all listened  
and raced for the wall en mass, wielding sharp  
spears as they scaled the wall. Hector lifted  
up a stone that stood at the base of the gate,  
which was thick at the base but sharp on top;  
two strong men of today would struggle to lift  
the stone off the ground and into a wagon,  
but he easily lifted it himself, for the son of wily  
Cronos lightened it for him. Just as a shepherd  
easily carries in one hand a ram’s fleece,  
its weight making it no burden, so Hector lifted  
and carried the stone to the door that guarded  
the tall, tight, and sturdy double-gates that  
were fitted with cross-bars to hold them shut  
and fastened by a single bolt. Standing nearby  
and setting his feet wide apart, he threw  
at the middle with all his strength and shattered  
the door hinges. The stone fell inside, the gates  
groaned, the bars did not hold, and the doors  
were thrown apart by the falling stone. Then  
bright Hector, holding two spears in his hands,  
leapt inside, his black face like the nimble  
night, his bronze armor like a shining terror,  
and his eyes like a blazing fire. Once he leapt  
past the gates, not even the gods could stop him.  
He turned around and ordered the Trojans  
to scale the wall, and they obeyed his summons.  
At once, some scaled the wall while others drove  
through the gates, and the Danaans fled back  
to the hollow ships, and a great noise arose.

## BOOK 13

Once Zeus had driven the Trojans and Hector to the ships, he left them to ply the endless, woeful work of war and turned his shining eyes to the Thracian horsemen, the close-fighting Mysians, the noble [Hippemolgi](#) who live on mare's milk, and the most pious men of the [Abii](#). He no longer turned his bright eyes to the Trojans for he did not think in his heart that any immortal would go and aid the Trojans or the Danaans.

But the lord of earthquakes<sup>1</sup> kept no blind watch, for he sat spellbound by the war and the strife atop the highest peak of wooded [Samothrace](#), where all of mount Ida was visible as well as Priam's city and the ships of the Achaeans. He left the sea to sit there, feeling pity for the Achaeans fleeing the Trojans, and blaming mighty Zeus.

At once, he quickly descended down the rocky mountain, the high hills and valleys trembling with immortal Poseidon's every footstep. He took three steps, and on the fourth he reached his goal, [Aegae](#), his famous home deep under the sea, glittering in gold and impervious to decay. Then he harnessed his chariot to his swift-footed

1. Poseidon



horses with hooves of bronze and golden manes, dressed his body in gold, took up his well-wrought whip of gold, boarded his chariot, and drove over the waves. The sea creatures rose and frolicked around him, for they knew him well, and the sea happily parted for him; they flew on swiftly, the bronze axle never getting wet, and the swift horses brought him to the Achaean ships.

There is a wide cavern deep under the sea midway between Tendeos and rocky [Imbros](#); there earth-shaker Poseidon stopped his horses, unyoked them, gave them ambrosia to eat, bound their hooves with unbreakable golden shackles so they would remain until their master returned, and headed for the swift Achaean army.

The Trojans pressed together like flames or storm clouds, eagerly following Hector, son of Priam, roaring loudly and hoping to seize the Achaean ships and to slay all of their finest men. But earth-embracing, earth-shaking Poseidon came out of the deep sea to stir the Argives; taking on the form and voice of Calchas, he spoke first to the two eager Ajaxes: “Ajaxes, remember your courage, forget your fear, and you will save the Achaean army. I do not fear the invincible Trojan hands that have climbed over the great wall en masse, for the well-greaved Achaeans will stop them. But I have a dreadful fear of the raging fire that is hurling towards us: Hector, who claims to be the son of mighty Zeus. Let one of the gods stir your souls to stand strong and to inspire the others as well;

then you might force him back from the swift ships though the Olympian urges him on.”

So saying, the earth-embracer and shaker hit them with his staff, filling them with great might, and lightening their limbs, feet, and hands. Just as a swift-winged hawk lifts itself high over a steep rock face and flies out across the plain as he chases some other bird, so earth-shaking Poseidon darted past them. And Ajax, swift son of Oileus, was first to recognize him, and he quickly said to Ajax, son of Telamon: “Ajax, one of the Olympian gods has come in the likeness of the augur Calchas to urge us to battle beside the ships, for easily could I see that the outlines of his feet and lower legs were those of a god. Thus the heart in my breast, the feet below me, and the hands above me have never been more ready to wage war and to do battle.”

In reply, Telamonian Ajax said to him: “Like you, my invincible hands are eager to grasp my spear, my rage is stirred, my feet below are driving me on, and I cannot wait to fight savage Hector, Priam’s son, one-on-one.”

As they spoke to one another, rejoicing in the battle-lust granted them by a god, the earth-mover stirred the Achaeans who sat resting beside the swift ships. Their limbs were worn from painful toil, and great grief filled their hearts upon seeing the Trojans who were coming en mass over the great wall. Seeing this brought tears to their eyes, for they saw no hope of escape; but the earth-shaker

went among them and inspired the battalions. He went first to stir on Teucer and Leïtus followed by heroic Peneleos, Thoas, Deïpyrus, Meriones, and great war-crier Antilochus. To these he spoke with winged words, saying: "Shame on you, young Argives, for I trusted your fighting skills to protect our ships; but if your furious fighting has grown slack, then we will be routed by the Trojans today. Indeed, I see with my eyes a great marvel, a sight I never thought would come to pass: our ships assaulted by Trojans, who before were like timid deer in the forest preyed upon by jackals, leopards, and wolves, flitting about helplessly and lacking a fighting spirit; the Trojans, too, were timid, unable to stand against the might and arms of the Achaeans. Now they fight far from the city by the hollow ships due to our weak leader and the stubborn men who quarrel with him and who prefer to die beside the swift ships than defend them. Even though it is true that the warrior son of Atreus, broad-ruling Agamemnon, is guilty of dishonoring the swift-footed son of Peleus, we must not refrain from fighting. Let us heal the breach, for great men's hearts can atone, but never again should great men's fighting fury be allowed to grow slack. Now, I would not quarrel with a man who was worthless in battle, but with you my heart burns with rage. You weaklings, soon your laziness will bring a greater evil, so steel yourselves against shame and cowardice, for a great battle is upon us. Great war-crier Hector has smashed the gates and long bar and is fighting beside our ships."

So the earth-shaker stirred the swift Achaeans. Courageous battalions formed around both Ajaxes, and neither Ares nor Athena, rouser of armies, could scorn them, and these brave men awaited the Trojans and godlike Hector. They stood man to man, spear to spear, helmet to helmet, and shield against shield. The horse-hair plumes on their shining helmets touched as their heads moved as one, their stout hands shook their spears in a jagged line, their minds were steady, and they were ready for a fight.

The Trojans advanced as one with Hector leading the way like a rolling rock on a cliff that a powerful river swollen with winter rain dislodges from its foundation; the rock leaps and flies recklessly through the echoing woods and rolls relentlessly ahead until it reaches level ground and goes no further. So Hector boasted that he would easily break past the tents and Achaean ships and reach the sea, slaying as he went. But when he neared the thick battle-lines, he paused, for the Achaeans were ready for him, thrusting out their swords and two-edged spears and forcing Hector to give ground. He then cried out to the Trojans, saying: “Trojans, Lycians, and Dardanians who fight as one: the Achaeans will not hold me back for long, though they are arrayed like a wall. But they will be beaten back by my spear if I am truly being led by the thundering lord of Hera.”

So he said, stirring each man’s might and spirit. With them came Deïphobus, Priam’s proud son, who advanced lightly on his feet, protecting himself with the well-balanced shield held before

him. Meriones aimed at him and shot his shining spear and did not miss, hitting his well-balanced ox-hide shield; but the long spear's shaft broke off before the point could pass through. Deïphobus held his ox-hide shield away from him, his heart terrified by Meriones' spear, but Meriones fell back into the throng, dreadfully angry both for missing his target and for shattering his spear. And he went back to the Achaean camp and ships to retrieve a spear he had left in his tent.

The others fought on with unquenchable cries. Teucer, son of Telamon, was first to kill a man: [Imbrius](#), rich Mentor's son, who lived in Pedaeum before the Achaean sons arrived and married Medesicaste, illegitimate daughter of Priam. But when the Danaans came, he went to Ilios, was loved by the Trojans and lived the house of Priam, who treated him like a son. Teucer stabbed Imbrius under the ear with his long spear and drew the spear out, and he fell like an ash tree cut down by bronze on a hill visible in all directions, and as it falls its tender leaves scatter over the earth. So Imbrius fell, his bronze armor ringing round him. As Teucer raced to strip the armor, Hector threw his shining spear at him. Teucer saw him and only just dodged the dart, but it hit Amphinomachus, son of Cteatus who was the son of Actor, in the chest as he was joining the battle, and he fell with a heavy sound, his armor clanging. As Hector lunged to strip away the helmet fitted to the head of great-hearted Amphinomachus, Ajax hurled his shining spear at him but failed to pierce his bronze-shielded skin and struck his bossed shield. This forced Hector back, allowing the Achaeans

to pull the two corpses away. Then Stichius and Menestheus, the Athenian leaders, carried Amphimachus to the Achaean camp while the two mighty Ajaxes lifted Imbrius. Like two lions tearing a goat away from sharp-toothed dogs and into the thick brush, holding the goat in their jaws high above the ground, so the two Ajaxes held Imbrius high and stripped his armor. Then the son of Oileus, angered by Amphimachus' death, severed his head from his tender neck, and it rolled away like a ball, stopping in the dust by Hector's feet.

But Poseidon's heart was enraged by the death of his grandson in fierce battle,<sup>2</sup> so he went to the Achaean ships and tents to rouse the Danaans and bring trouble to the Trojans. He met spear-famed Idomeneus just as he had finished aiding a comrade who had been struck in the hamstring by a sharp spear. After giving orders to the healer, he went back to his tent and was eager to return to battle when the earth-shaker spoke to him with the voice of Andraemon's son, Thoas, lord of the Aetolians in all Pleuron and lofty Calydon and honored like a god by his people: "Idomeneus, Cretan advisor, what became of the Achaean sons' threats against the Trojans?"

And Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, replied: "O Thoas, no man is responsible, as far as I am aware; for we all know the ways of warfare. No man is held by feckless fear, nor do they shrink from bitter battle. Instead, it must be the will of mighty Cronos' son that the Argives

2. Amphimachus' father, Cteatus, was one of the two Molioni.

are fated to die nameless and far from Argos.  
But Thoas, you are always steadfast in battle  
and able to urge on those who lose the will to fight,  
so do not give up now but call out to each man.”

Then earth-shaker Poseidon answered him:  
“Idomeneus, the man who willingly recoils  
from fighting on this day may never return home  
from Troy but become sport for dogs. But come,  
take your weapon and follow me; we two must  
work together quickly if we are to be any help.  
Even poor soldiers can bring success when united,  
but we know how to battle even with the best.”

So he said and moved on, a god among men’s  
toil, and when Idomeneus came to his well-made  
tent, he donned his fine armor, took two spears,  
and ran like the lightning that Zeus seizes  
in his hands and brandishes on radiant Olympus  
to send signs to mortals and to light the sky.  
Thus did Idomeneus’ bronze chest shine as he  
ran. Near the tents he met Meriones, his brave  
attendant, who was on his way to get a bronze  
spear, and mighty Idomeneus said to him:  
“Swift-footed Meriones, son of Molus, dearest  
friend, why have you left the battle to come here?  
Were you struck and injured by a missile’s point,  
or are you delivering me a message? I myself  
do not want to stay in the tents but to fight.”

Then shrewd Meriones answered him, saying:  
“Idomeneus, advisor of the bronze-clad Cretans,  
I am going to get a spear, if you have a spare  
one in the tent. My spear was shattered when I  
hurled it at the shield of arrogant Deïphobus.”

Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, replied to him:

“If you want one or twenty spears, you will find them by the bright inner wall of the tent, Trojan spears taken from the slain. I do not like to fight the enemy by standing far away, so I use swords and bossed shields and helmets and breastplates that are glittering and bright.”

Then shrewd Meriones answered him, saying:  
“My tent and black ship also hold many Trojan spoils, but they are not nearby for me to take. And I tell you, I have not forgotten my might, for once war’s fury has been stirred, I stand and fight among the finest in pursuit of glory. Other bronze-clad Achaeans might not know of my prowess, but I think you know it.”

Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, replied to him:  
“I know your worth; why must I tell you of it? When the best of us gather for an ambush beside the ships, then a man’s true nature is revealed, whether he is brave or cowardly. The skin of a coward changes colors, his spirit is stirred so that he cannot sit, his feet fidget from one side to another, the heart in his chest beats louder as he imagines his death, and his teeth chatter. But a brave man’s skin is unchanged for he does not shrink from joining the ambush and prays to quickly mix in mournful war. Then truly, none would question your courage or strength, for if you were struck or stabbed in battle, the arrow would not fall behind your neck or on your back but on the chest or in the belly as you charged ahead to grapple a foe. But come, let us stop standing and talking



like children or else someone will censure us.  
Go to the hut and choose a mighty spear.”

So he said, and Meriones ran into the tent like swift Ares, took a bronze spear, and followed Idomeneus, his mind set on war. Just as Ares, destroyer of men, goes to battle with Phobos, his mighty and fearless son, who forces even the stoutest soldier to flee, leaving Thrace fully armed and ready to encounter Ephyri or great-hearted Phlegyes, not hearing all prayers but giving glory to one side only, so Meriones and Idomeneus, leaders of men, ventured into the fight armed in fiery bronze. And Meriones spoke first to Idomeneus: “Son of Deucalion, should we join the battle on the right of the army, in the middle, or on the left? Nowhere else are long-haired Achaeans so overmatched in battle.”

Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, replied to him: “The middle ships are protected by the two Ajaxes and Teucer, the best of all Achaeans in archery and a good fighter in close combat; they will give Hector, son of Priam, his fill of war, even though he is strong and battle-ready. And though he is eager to fight, it will be hard for him to beat their strength and invincible hands and burn the ships unless Cronos’ son throws a fire-brand into our swift vessels. But great Telamonian Ajax yields to no mortal man who eats the corn of Demeter or is able to be cut with bronze or rent by rocks. Not even Achilles, breaker of men, would give way in a close fight, but no man rivals Achilles in fleetness of foot.

No, we will head to the army's left and find out if we are to gain glory or give it to another."

He spoke, and Meriones, equal to swift Ares, led the way until they reached the army's left side.

When the Trojans saw Idomeneus, like a mighty flame, and his attendant dressed in well-wrought armor, they called to each other and went after him, converging to fight by the sterns of the ships. Just as on days when whistling gales unleash whirling storms, piling dust thick upon the roads only for winds to lift the dust into great clouds, so the fighters swirled together, each man eager in his heart to slay his foes with sharp swords. And the battle that destroys men bristled with long, flesh-tearing spears and eyes blinded by the light from their bronze helmets or newly polished breastplates or shining spears massing together; and stout-hearted men would not weep but would rejoice to see such fighting.

Their minds divided, Cronos' two mighty sons devised great woes for mortal men. Zeus desired victory for the Trojans and Hector and to give glory to swift-footed Achilles—not to destroy the Achaean army before Ilios but to bring honor to Thetis and her strong-hearted son. But Poseidon snuck out of the salt sea to rouse the Achaeans, for their defeat to the Trojans angered him and he blamed Zeus. Though the two were of one generation and shared one father, Zeus was first born and wiser, so Poseidon avoided openly defending the Achaeans but took the form of a man and roused the army in secret. Thus they knit together the rope of war and strife,

stretching it tightly around both armies, making it unbreakable, and cutting many at the knees.

Then grizzled Idomeneus roused the Danaans, leaping among the Trojans and forcing them to flee. He slew [Othryoneus](#) of Cabetes, recently arrived after hearing reports of war; he had asked Priam for the hand of [Cassandra](#), his most beautiful daughter, but brought no bride-price, promising instead deeds that would force Achaean sons off Trojan lands. Old Priam nodded and promised to give her; Othryoneus trusted him and fought. Idomeneus aimed and threw his shining spear, hitting the man mid-stride; his bronze breastplate failed him, and the spear stuck in his stomach. As he fell with a thud, Idomeneus taunted him: “Othryoneus, I honor you above all other men if you truly bring to pass all that you promised Dardanian Priam in return for his daughter. We will also make you a promise: to give you the fairest daughter of Atreus’ sons, bringing her here from Argos to be your wife, if you join us in sacking prosperous Ilios. So come with me to our seafaring ships so we can make wedding plans, for we are not bad matchmakers.”

So saying, heroic Idomeneus dragged him across the battlefield by the foot. But Asius dismounted to rescue him, his charioteer behind him, holding the horses who were breathing on his shoulders. Before he could strike, Idomeneus quickly speared him in the throat and drove the bronze straight through, and he fell like a oak, white poplar, or tall pine tree on a mountain that woodcutters had cut down with sharp axes to make timber for a ship. So Asius lay stretched before his horses

and chariot, roaring in pain and clutching the bloody dust. The charioteer was too afraid to turn his horses and flee from enemy hands, so Antilochus pierced him in the middle. The bronze breastplate failed to stop the spear from sticking in his stomach, and he fell from his chariot, gasping. Then Antilochus, son of great-hearted Nestor, led the horses away from the Trojans to the well-greaved Achaeans.

Then Deïphobus, grieving for Asius, came close to Idomeneus and hurled a shining spear at him. But Idomeneus saw the bronze spear coming and avoided it by hiding behind his balanced shield fitted with ox hides, rings of gleaming bronze, and two cross-rods. He crouched down, and the bronze spear made a scraping sound as it grazed the shield and flew past. But the throw from his heavy hands was not in vain for it struck Hypsenor, son of Hippasus, herder of men, in the liver below the belly, dropping him to his knees, and Deïphobus rejoiced, saying: "Asius has been avenged, and though he goes to the mighty gates of Hades, his heart will be pleased for I have sent him a companion."

His words brought the Achaeans sorrow and stirred the spirit of skilled Antilochus. Though grieving, he ran over and covered his comrade with a shield until Mecisteus, son of Echius, and noble Alastor, two worthy men, could pick him up and carry the groaning man to the hollow ships.

Idomeneus' fury had not ceased, for he was eager either to shroud some Trojans in gloomy

night or to die while defending the Achaeans. Then came the warrior Alcathous, dear to Zeus, son of Aesyetes and son-in-law of Anchises, having married his daughter Hippodameia, who was beloved by her father and honored mother for she surpassed all other girls her age in beauty, crafts, and wisdom; thus the best man in all Troy had taken her as wife. Idomeneus slew Alcathous with help from Poseidon, who bewitched his bright eyes and shackled his limbs so he stood still like a stone pillar or lofty tree, unable to turn back or escape as Idomeneus' spear struck the center of his chest. A harsh, grating sound rang out as the spear tore open the bronze armor that once protected his body from harm, and he fell with a thud, the spear stuck in his still-beating heart, the spear's butt-end still shaking. Then mighty Ares took his life from him, and Idomeneus rejoiced in triumph, crying: "Deïphobus, are we even now, three men slain to one? You were the one who boasted. You are a fool, but stand and face me and see the man, Zeus' son, who has come before you. First, Zeus fathered Minos to guard Crete, and Minos bore blameless Deucalion, who then bore me to rule many men in wide Crete. Now my ships have brought me here to bring misery to you, your father, and the rest of Troy."

So he said, and Deïphobus was of two minds: whether to retreat and find some great-hearted Trojan companions or to fight on his own. He pondered this and decided it was best to go to Aeneas, who was at the battle's edge, for he was always angry at noble Priam who never honored

him among the people, brave though he was.  
He came near and spoke winged words to him:  
“Aeneas, Trojan counselor, if you care about  
your kin, then defend your brother-in-law.  
Come now and rescue Alcathous, who helped  
to raise you in your halls when a child. Now  
spear-famed Idomeneus has killed him in battle.”

These words roused the heart in Aeneas’ chest,  
and he attacked Idomeneus, his mind set on war.  
But Idomeneus was no child taken with terror,  
for he waited like a mountain boar, sure of strength,  
who awaits a herd of hunters to come against  
him in an isolated place; with his back bristling,  
his eyes burning with fire, and his tusks whetting,  
he is eager to fight back against dogs and men.  
So spear-famed Idomeneus did not give ground  
on great-shouter Aeneas but called his comrades:  
Ascalaphus, Aphareus, Deïpyrus, Meriones,  
and Antilochus, battle-criers all. He called out  
to them, urging them on with winged words:  
“Come, friends, and aid me, for I am alone,  
and I fear swift-footed Aeneas who is charging  
on me, is a fierce slayer of men in battle, and has  
the vigor of youth, when men are strongest.  
If we were the same age and our spirits equal,  
then either of us would soon earn great victory.”

So he said, and they stood together, all of one  
spirit, their shields leaning on their shoulders.  
Opposite them, Aeneas called his comrades,  
looking to Deïphobus, Paris, and noble Agenor,  
who led the Trojans with him, and after them  
came the army. And just as sheep follow a ram  
from pasture to water, the shepherd glad

at heart, so Aeneas was glad in his heart  
to see the army following after him.

Then they attacked at close quarters around  
Alcathous using long spears, their bronze chests  
ringing loudly as they aimed and fired at one  
another, and Aeneas and Idomeneus, both  
equal to Ares, stood apart from others, eager  
to cut the other's flesh with ruthless bronze.  
First, Aeneas shot at Idomeneus, but Idomeneus  
saw the bronze spear coming and so avoided it,  
and the shaking spear from the hand of Aeneas  
fell fruitlessly to the ground. Then Idomeneus  
hit Oenomaus square in the stomach. The bronze  
shattered his breastplate, bursting his bowels,  
and he fell to the earth, his hands clawing at dust.  
Idomeneus drew the long-shadowed spear out  
of his corpse but was forced back by missiles  
and could not strip the armor off the shoulders,  
for his joints lacked the vigor they once held  
when rushing for his spear or fleeing another's.  
In close fighting he fended off his dreaded day,  
for his feet could not quickly carry him from war.  
As he retreated, Deiphobus hurled his shining  
spear at him, for he had always resented him.  
Again the shot missed, but the spear struck  
the shoulder of Ascalaphus, son of Enyalius,  
who fell to the earth, his hands clawing at dust.  
Great-shouter Ares knew nothing of his son's  
fall in mighty combat, for he sat on the highest  
peak of Olympus, under the golden clouds;  
along with the other immortal gods, he was  
held back from battle by the will of Zeus.

All around Ascalaphus, they fought hand-to-  
hand. Deiphobus snatched away his shining

helmet, but Meriones, equal to swift Ares, sprang up and hit his arm, and the hollow-eyed helmet fell to the dust with a clank. Meriones again leapt like a vulture, drew the spear from his shoulder, and shrank into the crowd of his comrades. Then Polites, Deïphobus' brother, pulled him by the waist and led him from woeful war to his swift horses, which stood behind the battle with the charioteer and fine chariot, and they carried him back to the city, groaning with pain as blood flowed from his injured arm.

The rest fought on as ceaseless cries arose. Then Aeneas sprang at Aphareus, Caletor's son, and struck his exposed throat with a sharp spear. His head turned to one side, his shield and helmet fell, and life-destroying death enveloped him. Then Antilochus waited for Thoön to turn around before striking him and severing the vein that ran from his back to his neck, tearing it away entirely. As he fell to the dust, he stretched both hands out to his comrades. Antilochus sprang and tried to strip the armor from his shoulders while the circling Trojans attacked him, but their hard bronze was not able to pierce the shining shield and graze his rounded flesh, for earth-shaker Poseidon protected Nestor's son from the swarming spears. Enemies surrounded him, but he moved among them with his spear constantly in motion and his mind ever ready to hurl his missile at a foe or charge in and fight.

But he could not escape Adamas, son of Asius, who rushed and pierced the center of his shield



with his sharp spear; but dark-haired Poseidon weakened the strike and saved Antilochus' life. Half the spear was stuck in his shield like a burnt stake while the other half was on the ground, and he retreated behind his comrades to avoid death. But Meriones pursued, cast his spear, and hit him between the groin and navel, where Ares inflicts grievous pain to mortal men. The spear stayed in place as Antilochus thrashed about like a bull bound by ropes and dragged away against his will by mountain herdsman. So also did he thrash about until heroic Meriones pulled the spear from his flesh, and darkness covered the eyes of Antilochus.

Then Helenus hit Deïpyrus' head with his huge Thracian sword and smashed the helmet, knocking it from his head to the ground. It rolled along the fighters' feet until an Achaean picked it up. Then darkness covered Deïpyrus' eyes.

Grief filled war-crier Menelaus, son of Atreus, as he shook his sharp spear and drove with fury at heroic lord Helenus, who drew back his bow. Both shot at the same time, one with a sharp spear and the other with an arrow from a bowstring. Priam's son struck Menelaus with an arrow in the hollow of his breastplate, but the arrow bounced off. Just as the swing of a winnower's wide shovel tosses high black beans and chickpeas on a large threshing floor under a whistling wind, so the pointed arrow bounced off glorious Menelaus' breastplate and flew far away. Then war-crier Menelaus, son of Atreus, struck him in his bowstring hand, the bronze spear driving straight through both bow and hand. Helenus

retreated into the throng to avoid a deadly fate,  
his hand limp and an ashen spear trailing behind  
him. Great-hearted Agenor drew out the spear  
and bandaged him with a sling made of wool,  
brought by his attendant, a shepherd of men.

Peisander then went straight at famed Menelaus,  
but an evil fate would bring him to death's end,  
to be killed by Menelaus in dread battle.

When the two came close to one another,  
the spear of Atreus' son was turned aside,  
and Peisander struck glorious Menelaus'  
shield but could not drive the bronze through  
for the broad shield held and broke the spear  
shaft. Still his heart rejoiced in hopes of victory.  
But Atreus' son drew his silver-studded sword  
and leapt on Peisander, who took from under  
his shield a fine bronze axe with a long, polished  
olive wood handle, and they sprang at each other.  
Peisander hit the crest of his horse-hair helmet,  
just beneath the plume, but Menelaus struck  
him above the nose, breaking the bone and making  
his bloody eyes fall to the dust by his feet.

He fell and Menelaus put his foot on his chest,  
stripped him of weapons, and said in triumph:  
"This is how you will leave the swift Danaan ships,  
reckless Trojans obsessed with battle-shouts.  
You lack no outrageous insults to levy on me,  
foul dog, nor do your hearts fear the grievous  
wrath of loud-thundering Zeus, lord of guests,  
who will someday decimate your high city.  
You unjustly took away my wife and my many  
possessions when she offered you hospitality,  
and now you eagerly wish to to hurl deadly fire  
on our seafaring ships and kill Achaean heroes.  
But your eagerness for battle will yet be stayed.

Father Zeus, both men and gods say that you are wiser than all others, yet all this was your doing, for you favor these indecent men, these Trojans, who are filled with reckless rage and incapable of satisfying their lust for furious fighting. Others would rather have their fill of sleep or sex or sweet song or glorious dance—all these would a man rather be filled with than war, but the Trojans are insatiable for battle.”

So saying, noble Menelaus stripped the bloody armor from his body, gave it to his comrade, and returned again to fight on the front lines.

Then Harpalion sprang upon him, son of King Pylaemenes, who followed his dear father to Troy and to war but did not return to his native land. His struck his spear square on Menelaus’ shield, but the bronze could not pierce it. He then tried to hide behind his comrades, avoiding fate, while keeping watch, fearing someone would come and cut his flesh with bronze. But as he fell back, Meriones shot a bronze-tipped arrow that hit his right buttock and passed through the bladder under the bone. Falling into the arms of his dear comrades, he took his last breath and lay stretched out like a worm on the ground, his black blood soaking the earth. Noble Paphlagonians attended him, placing him in his chariot and taking him mournfully back to sacred Ilios, his weeping father following him;<sup>3</sup> but no blood-price would be paid for his fallen son.

Harpalion’s death filled Paris’ heart with anger, for he had been his host among the Paphlagonians; in his rage, he let fly a bronze-tipped arrow.

3. Harpalion’s father, Pylaemenes, is actually killed by Menelaus in book 5 (5.576-79).

Now [Euchenor](#), son of the seer Polyidus, was a rich and noble man from Corinth; when he sailed off on his ship, he knew his foul fate, for his noble father had often told him he would either die of a painful disease at home or be slain by Trojans among the Achaean ships. Thus he avoided both the heavy Achaean fine<sup>4</sup> and the foul disease so his heart would suffer no woes. Paris struck his lower jaw under the ear, his spirit quickly left his limbs, and dread darkness took him.

So they fought on like blazing fires, but Hector, beloved of Zeus, neither heard nor knew that on the left of the ships his finest men were being slain by the Argives, and the Achaeans would soon gain glory, for the earth-shaker Poseidon urged them on and aided them with his might. But Hector held on where he first broke the gates and beat the ranks of shield-bearing Danaans, where the ships of Ajax and Protesilaus were beached along the grey sea, where the wall was at its lowest, and where the men and their horses were particularly merciless in battle.

The Boeotians, the flowing-robed [Ionians](#), the Locrians, Phthians, and bright Epeians all tried to halt divine Hector's charge at the ships but failed to force back his fiery fury. There were also hand-picked Athenians, led by Menestheus, Peteos' son, followed by Pheidias, Stichius, and noble Bias; and the Epeians were led by Meges, Phyleus' son, followed by Amphion and Dracius; and leading the Phthians were Medon and staunch Podarces. Medon was the bastard son of divine

4. This "fine" would presumably be paid by wealthy men like Harpalion should they refuse to sail to war.

Oïleus and brother of Ajax, but he lived in Phylace, far from his father's land, having killed a kinsman of his stepmother Eriopis, wife of Oïleus; and Podarces was the son of Iphiclus, Phylacus' son. These armed men led the great-hearted Phthians, and fought beside the Boeotians to defend the ships. But Ajax, the swift son of Oïleus, would not stand apart from Telamonian Ajax, even a little; just as two wine-dark oxen joined to a plow struggle to till a fallow field, ample sweat gushing from the roots of their horns and the well-crafted yoke alone keeping them apart as they strain over the furrow before reaching the field's edge, so the Ajaxes stood as one in battle. Many fine men, comrades all, followed after Telamon's son, taking his shield when his limbs grew weary and sweaty. But the Locrians did not follow great-hearted Oïleus' son, for they were not equipped for close-fought battles, lacking horse-hair helmets, rounded shields, and ashen spears and relying on the bows and twisted slings of wool they brought when they followed him to Ilios. With these they shot thick and fast, seeking to break the Trojan ranks. Thus those in front wore well-wrought armor and fought the Trojans and bronze-helmed Hector, those behind shot from cover, and the Trojans forgot about war for the arrows had thrown them into confusion.

Then the Trojans would have fled pitifully from the ships and tents back to windy Ilios had Polydamas not stood near bold Hector and said: "Hector, you are a difficult man to persuade. Since the gods have granted you prowess in war, you believe your counsel surpasses all others, but you will never be able to possess all things.

The gods will give one man prowess in war,  
one skill in dance, another in lyre and song,  
and in the heart of another far-seeing Zeus will  
grant wisdom that brings profit to many men  
and saves many, and this man knows his value  
best. But I will say what it is that in my heart:  
a blazing battle surrounds you, but since going  
over the wall, some great-hearted Trojans stand  
idly by with their weapons while others fight,  
some against many, scattered along the ships.  
So draw back and call all the best men to this  
place so we may devise the wisest counsel  
for our assault on the many-benched ships,  
if the gods give us victory, or allow us to return  
unhurt from the ships. I fear the Achaeans  
will avenge the debts of yesterday, since there  
remains by the ships a man insatiable for war  
who will, I fear, no longer refrain from battle.”

So Polydamas said, and his words pleased Hector,  
who quickly leapt in full armor from his chariot  
to the ground and spoke winged words to him:  
“Polydamas, keep all the best men here while  
I go over there to engage in battle and return  
quickly once I have given my orders to them.”

So saying, he set off like a mountain blizzard,  
shouting as he flew through the Trojans and allies.  
The rest hurried towards kind Polydamas, son  
of Panthous, when they heard Hector’s order.  
But Hector raced through the finest fighters,  
hoping to find Deïphobus, great lord Helenus,  
Adamas, son of Asius, and Asius, Hyrtacus’ son.  
He found them neither unhurt nor unscathed;  
some lay by the sterns of the Achaean ships,  
their lives lost by Argive hands, while others

were by the wall, struck by arrows and spears.  
But to the left of the tearful battle he found  
noble Alexander, husband of fair-haired Helen,  
inspiring his comrades and urging them to fight,  
so he came up to him and rebuked him, saying:  
“Wretched Paris, most fair deceiver of women,  
where are Deïphobus, great lord Helenus,  
Adamas, son of Asius, and Asius’ son Hyrtacus?  
Where is Othryoneus? Now high Ilios is  
doomed and your own destruction assured.”

Then godlike Alexander answered him:  
“Hector, you wish to blame me, though I am  
blameless. I may have fled from fighting before,  
but not now; my mother did not raise a coward.  
We have been fighting the Danaans here without  
pause ever since you roused us beside the ships;  
but those comrades you asked about are dead.  
Only Deïphobus and mighty lord Helenus have  
survived; both were struck in the arms by long  
spears, but Cronos’ son prevented their deaths.  
Now lead on as your heart and spirit command  
and we will follow eagerly and we will not let  
you down, so long as our strength holds. No  
man, however eager, can fight without strength.”

The warrior’s words changed his brother’s mind,  
and they went to the place where the fighting was  
fiercest, around Cebriones, noble Polydamas,  
Phalces, Orthaeus, godlike Polyphetes, Palmys,  
Ascanius, and Morys, Hippotion’s son. This  
relief force had come the day before from fertile  
Ascania, and now Zeus stirred them to fight.  
They moved like a burst of painful wind that  
runs over the earth beneath Zeus thunder until it  
mixes with the noisy sea, forging many roaring

waves, one after another, that bend and curl with white-flecked foam. So the Trojans moved as one, flashing their bronze and following their leaders. Hector, son of Priam and equal to Ares, led them. He held before him a well-balanced shield made with thick hides and beaten with bronze, and atop his head shook his shining helmet. He tested the battalions at each point to see if they would give way as he moved behind his shield, but he could not confound the Achaean hearts. Ajax strode forward, first to challenge him: "Come closer, fool. Why do you try to frighten the Argives? We are not ignorant of war; we were only broken by the foul whip of Zeus. Surely your hearts hope to storm our ships, but we also have hands to defend them. Before you take our ships, your well-peopled city will be taken and sacked by our hands. As for you, the day is near when you flee while praying to father Zeus and the other immortals that your fair-maned horses will be faster than falcons as they carry you through the dust to your city."

As he spoke, a bird of omen flew by on the right, a soaring eagle, and the Achaean army cheered at this sign, but illustrious Hector answered: "Ajax, you babbling windbag, what words you speak! If only I could be the son of aegis-bearing Zeus and honored Hera for all of my days, and be honored like Athena and Apollo, then surely on this day would I bring evil to all the Argives, and you would die if you dare face my long spear that will rend your lily-like skin, and your fat flesh will sate the Trojan dogs and birds when you fall by the Achaean ships."



So saying, he set off, and the army followed him  
with a deafening clamor of shouts and cries.  
The Argives roared in reply, remembering  
their valor and awaiting the finest Trojans,  
and the noise rose up to the aether and to Zeus.

## BOOK 14

The noise did not escape the notice of Nestor,  
who was drinking, and he said to Asclepius' son:  
"Noble Machaon, what do you make of all this?  
The young men's cries grow stronger by the ships.  
Now, you just sit here, drinking sparkling wine,  
as fair-haired Hecamede heats a warm bath  
for you and cleans your bloody wound, and I  
will go to a lookout spot to see what is going on."

So saying, he took the shining bronze shield  
of his son, horse-taming Thrasymedes, which was  
lying in the tent, for the son had his father's shield.  
Then he laid hold of his sharp-edged bronze spear,  
left his tent, and quickly saw a shameful sight:  
the Achaeans in panicked flight, the great-hearted  
Trojans in pursuit, and the wall toppled.  
Just as a deep sea swell heaves but does not break,  
the waves rolling neither forward nor to the side  
but waiting for a decisive surge of piercing  
winds to be sent down by Zeus, so the old man  
pondered in his divided heart whether to join  
the throng of swift-mounted Danaans or to find  
Agamemnon, son of Atreus, herder of men.  
He soon decided it was best to find Atreus' son.  
But the rest battled on, fighting and slaying,

and hard bronze rang round as warriors thrust  
their swords and two-edged spears at one another.

Nestor met the Zeus-blessed, bronze-struck kings  
as they returned along the ships: the son of Tydeus,  
Odysseus, and Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

The ships had been drawn up out of the grey  
sea, far from the fighting and closest to the shore  
and to the defenses built at their sterns. Since  
the beach was not wide enough to hold all  
the ships and the army was confined, the ships  
were drawn in rows and filled the wide mouth  
of the shore that is enclosed by the headlands.

So the kings went as one, leaning on their spears,  
to look upon the battle, the hearts in their chests  
filled with woe. Old Nestor approached them,  
and the heart in his breast shared their despair.

Lord Agamemnon addressed him, saying:

“Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans,  
why have you left the war, destroyer of men,  
to come here? I fear mighty Hector will carry out  
the threat he made to the Trojan throng: that he  
would not return to Ilios from the ships until  
he has burned our vessels and killed our men.  
So he said, and now this is coming to pass.  
I fear the other well-greaved Achaeans are full  
of hatred for me, just like Achilles, and have  
no wish to fight by the sterns of the ships.”

In reply, Nestor, horseman of Gerenia, said:

“Yes, these things are upon us, and not even  
high-thundering Zeus could change them,  
for the unbreakable wall that we trusted  
to protect our ships and ourselves has fallen,  
the men beside the swift ships fight without  
pause, and you cannot tell from which direction

the Achaeans are driven to rout, so random is their slaughter, their cries reaching heaven. We must consider our next plan, if such plans can help us now; but we should not join the battle, for injured men make poor fighters.”

Then Agamemnon, lord of men, answered him: “Nestor, since they are fighting by the ships’ sterns and the wall and trench did not protect us, though we labored long on them in hope that they would be unbreakable and protect our ships and ourselves, then it must please mighty Zeus that the Achaeans should die here, nameless and far from Argos. Where once he zealously defended the Danaans, now he exalts the Trojans like they were blessed gods and binds our hands and saps our strength. So this is what we shall do, and let all obey: take the ships nearest to the sea, draw them out into the shining waters, and moor them in the harbor until ambrosial night comes. If the Trojans ever cease fighting, then we can draw out the other ships, for there is no shame in fleeing misfortune, even by night. Better to run from ruin than be captured by it.”

Then wily Odysseus scowled at him and replied: “Son of Atreus, accursed man, what are you saying? I wish you commanded some other army of cowards and not us: men chosen by Zeus to carry out the burdens of battle from youth to old age, until each of us is dead. Do you truly intend to abandon Troy’s wide streets, for which we have endured so much? Keep quiet or some other Achaeans will hear your words, which should never leave the lips of anyone who knows in his head what should

and should not be said, must less a sceptered king of an army of Argives who obey you. You have lost your mind to say such things, ordering us, while the battle rages, to launch our well-benched ships onto the sea, adding more glory to the Trojan victory and driving us further into despair. Once the Achaeans see ships drawing down to the sea, they will not hold firm in battle but will look for a way to escape. Then, leader of men, your plan will ruin us.”

Then Agamemnon, lord of men, replied to him: “Odysseus, your harsh rebuke has pierced my heart. I will not order the Achaean sons to launch the well-benched ships into the sea, but if someone else could offer a better plan, be he young or old, then I would welcome it.”

Then great-shouter Diomedes addressed them: “That man is near, and we will soon find him if you are willing to listen without jealousy or contempt because I am the youngest of us. But I am of noble stock, my father being Tydeus who lies buried beneath the Theban soil. [Portheus](#) fathered three noble sons, and they lived in Pleuron and rocky Calydon: [Agrius](#), Melas, and the horseman Oeneus, who was my father’s father and the bravest of them. Oeneus remained there, but my father was forced to flee to Argos, which was the will of Zeus and the other gods. He married one of the daughters of Adrastus and lived in a wealthy home with ample wheat fields, long lines of fruit trees, and many sheep, and he surpassed all Achaeans with the spear. No doubt you have heard this and know it true, so do not say I am a liar or coward by blood

and so ignore my words if I speak well.  
I say, injured or not, we must return to battle.  
Once there, we should hold back, stay out  
of missile range to avoid any further wounds,  
and press others into battle, those who bear  
resentment, standing apart and not fighting.”

So he said, and they heard and obeyed, setting  
off, with Agamemnon, lord of men, in the lead.

The famed earth-shaker was not blind to any  
of this but joined them disguised as an old man.  
He took the right hand of Agamemnon, son  
of Atreus, and spoke to him with winged words:  
“Son of Atreus, the deadly heart of Achilles  
must rejoice to see so many Achaeans dead  
or in flight, for he understands nothing at all;  
may he too die, driven down by a god.  
But the serene gods are not wholly angry  
at you, and soon the leaders and lords of Troy  
will fill the wide plain with dust as you watch  
them retreat to the city from the ships and tents.”

So saying, he sped over the plain with a cry as  
great as the battle shouts of nine or ten thousand  
warriors coming together under Ares’ fury;  
and the force of the earth-shaker’s cry lifted  
the strength of each Achaean’s heart so they  
were able to battle and to fight without pause.

Standing atop Olympus, golden-throned  
Hera looked down and soon spotted her brother  
and brother-in-law hurrying over the battlefield  
of glory and rejoiced in her heart. But she also  
saw Zeus atop the highest peak of Ida of many  
waters, and he filled her heart with hatred.  
Ox-eyed Hera then considered how best

to deceive the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
and she decided that the best plan was to make  
herself beautiful, go to many-watered Ida,  
and seduce him to sleep beside her flesh  
in loving embrace and so pour warm, gentle  
sleep over his eyelids and his astute mind.  
She went to her chamber, which Hephaestus built  
for her with sturdy doors fixed to the doorposts  
and a secret bolt that no other god could open;  
then, once she was inside, she shut the doors.  
She first washed the impurities from her lovely  
body with sweet ambrosia and then anointed  
herself with olive oil so rich and fragrant that  
if it were shaken in the bronze-floored palace  
of Zeus, its scent would reach both earth  
and heaven. After anointing her fair skin with oil,  
she combed her hair, used her hands to plait  
the lovely, ambrosial locks on her immortal  
head, donned a well-wrought, ambrosial robe  
which Athena had made and smoothed for her,  
fastened a gold brooch to her chest, girded  
around her waist a belt with a hundred tassels,  
and put earrings with three clustered berries  
in her well-pierced ears. Then the goddess,  
filled with grace, covered herself with a fair,  
newly-made veil, as white as the sun, and under  
her shining feet she bound beautiful sandals.  
And when she had dressed herself in all finery,  
she left her chamber and called Aphrodite  
away from the other gods and said to her:  
“Dear child, will you listen and obey me,  
or will you deny me out of anger because  
I aid the Danaans and you the Trojans?”

Then Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, replied:  
“Hera, revered goddess, daughter of great

Cronos, speak your mind; I will obey your command if it is in my power to do so.”

With guile in her heart, revered Hera replied:  
“Give me love and desire, which you use  
to seduce gods and mortal men alike. I am  
going to the ends of the earth to visit Oceanus,  
who birthed the gods, and mother [Tethys](#),  
who raised me lovingly in their home when I  
was taken from [Rhea](#) after wide-eyed Zeus sent  
Cronos to live below the earth and barren sea.  
I will go and free them from endless strife,  
for rage has consumed their love and kept  
them apart for far too long. If my words  
could prevail upon these two hearts to again  
unite in the marriage bed, then I would  
forever be honored and loved by them.”

Then ever-smiling Aphrodite answered her:  
“I can hardly refuse your request, for you pass  
the night in the bent arms of mighty Zeus.”

So saying, she took from her breast a pierced,  
leather strap, finely-made with all manner  
of spells for love, yearning, and seduction:  
desires that steal even the wisest man’s senses.  
She put this in Hera’s hands and said to her:  
“Take and put across your breast this well-made  
strap with all manner of spells. With this, you  
will accomplish anything your heart desires.”

So she said, and ox-eyed queen Hera smiled  
and drew the leather strap across her breast.

As Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, returned home,  
Hera darted quickly down from rocky Olympus,  
passing [Pieria](#) and beautiful [Emathia](#), moving



over the highest snow-capped peaks of Thracian horsemen, her feet never touching the earth. Passing [Athos](#), she stepped upon the surging sea and arrived in Lemnos, city of divine Thoas. There she met [Sleep](#), brother of [Death](#). Claspings his hand and speaking his name, she said to him: “Sleep, ruler of all gods and men, if you ever listened to my words, then obey me now and I will be grateful for all my days: lull to sleep the shining eyes of Zeus below his brows as soon as I lie down beside him in love. In turn, my son Hephaestus, the bow-legged god, will make for you with his skill a fine, imperishable golden throne along with a footstool upon which you can rest your smooth feet when you relax.”

Then refreshing Sleep answered her, saying: “Queen Hera, divine daughter of great Cronos, I could easily lull any other immortal god to sleep, even the flowing waters of the river Oceanus, from whom all immortals are born, but I cannot draw near nor lull to sleep Zeus, son of Cronos, unless he himself ordered it. It was one of your own commands that taught me this lesson, on the day the noble son of Zeus<sup>1</sup> sailed from Ilios after sacking the city of Troy. I sent sweet sleep to the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus while you planned foul deeds in your heart against Heracles, stirring up a blast of wind that carried him to busy Cos, far from all he loved. When Zeus woke, he was enraged, tossing the gods about his halls in search of me, and he would have thrown me into the sea had I not been saved by Night, who calms both men and gods. I fled to her, and Zeus eased his rage; though angry,

1. Heracles (see 5.638-651)

he feared upsetting speedy Night. And now you order me to fulfill yet another impossible task?"

Then ox-eyed Hera spoke to him once more:  
"Sleep, why trouble your heart with such things?  
How can far-seeing Zeus' aid to the Trojans  
compare to his anger over his son Heracles?  
But come, I will give you one of the young  
Graces to marry and to be called your wife:  
[Pasithea](#), the one you longed for all your days."

So she said, and Sleep rejoiced and replied to her:  
"Come, then, and swear to me by the sacred  
waters of the Styx, seizing the bountiful earth  
with one hand and the sacred sea with the other  
so all gods below with Cronos may bear witness,  
that you will give me one of the Graces,  
Pasithea, who I have longed for all my days."

So he said, and the white-armed goddess Hera  
obeyed, and swore as he asked, calling upon all  
the gods who are below Tartarus, called Titans.  
After swearing the oath, they left the cities  
of Lemnos and Imbros and sped off, clothed  
in clouds, until they came to well-watered  
Ida, mother of beasts, past Lectum, where  
first they left the sea, and onto dry land,  
and below their feet the treetops quivered.  
There Sleep halted before Zeus' eyes could spy  
him and climbed a tall fir tree—the tallest tree  
in Ida, which reached into the mists of heaven.  
Here he waited, covered in pine branches  
and disguised as a shrill-crying mountain bird  
that gods call chalcis and men call cymindis.

But Hera went swiftly to Gargaron, the topmost  
peak of Ida, and when cloud-gatherer Zeus saw

her, his shrewd mind was overwhelmed by desire,  
as when they first came together in love, sneaking  
to bed behind the backs of their dear parents.  
Standing before her, he addressed her, saying:  
“Hera, what brings you here from Olympus?  
Your horses and chariot are nowhere to be seen.”

With guile in her heart, revered Hera said to him:  
“I am going the ends of the earth that feeds  
many to see Oceanus, from whom all gods are  
sprung, and Tethys, who nursed and loved me.  
I wish to mend their endless struggle, their hate-  
filled hearts having kept them from each other  
and from their marriage bed for too long.  
At the base of well-watered Ida stand my horses,  
ready to carry me over dry land and ocean waters.  
But now I have come down from Olympus  
so you will not be angry at me for going  
to Oceanus’ watery house without telling you.”

In reply, cloud-gatherer Zeus said to her:  
“Hera, you can head there at a later time,  
but now let us go to bed and make love,  
for my desire for goddess or mortal woman  
has never overwhelmed my heart as it does  
now, not even when I fell for [Ixion](#)’s wife,  
who bore Peirithous, a god’s peer in counsel;  
or for fair-ankled [Danaë](#), daughter of [Acrisius](#),  
who bore [Perseus](#), greatest of all warriors;  
or for the [daughter](#) of the famed [Phoenix](#),  
who bore [Minos](#) and godlike [Rhadamanthys](#);  
or for [Semele](#) or [Alcmene](#) in Thebes, who  
bore stout-hearted Heracles, and Semele who  
bore Dionysus, a source of comfort for men;  
or for Demeter, the bright-tressed queen,

or radiant Leto or you yourself, for I now  
love you and sweet desire has taken hold of me.”

With trickery in her heart, queen Hera replied:  
“What a thing to say, dreaded son of Cronos.  
Do you truly desire to lie here and make love  
on the peaks of Ida for all the world to see?  
What if an immortal gods looked upon us as  
we slept and went to tell the others about it?  
I could never again rise from bed and visit  
your house, for I would be too ashamed.  
But if you truly wish it, then there is a chamber  
made by your dear son Hephaestus, with sturdy  
doors fixed to every post. Let us go there  
and lie down, since bed is clearly your desire.”

In reply, cloud-gatherer Zeus said to her:  
“Hera, fear not, for neither gods nor men  
will see. I will wrap us in a cloud of gold  
so that Helios himself will be unable to see  
us, though his sight is the sharpest of all.”

Then the son of Cronos took his wife in his arms.  
Below them, the ground opened as fresh grass,  
dewy clovers, crocus, and hyacinth grew soft  
and thick, shielding them from the earth.  
They lay there clothed in a beautiful cloud  
of gold that glistened with falling drops of dew.

As the father slept soundly in his wife’s arms  
atop Gargaron, overcome by love and fatigue,  
sweet Sleep hurried to the Achaean ships to give  
a message to the embracer and shaker of earth.  
He stood near him and addressed him, saying:  
“Poseidon, fight zealously for the Danaans,  
but only for a short time, while Zeus sleeps.

I have shrouded him in sweet slumber, and Hera has tricked him into laying with her in love.”

So saying, he went away, leaving Poseidon even more determined to defend the Danaans. At once, he leapt to the front lines and cried: “Argives, are you ready to hand victory to Hector, Priam’s son, so he may take our ships and win glory? This is what he boasts, since Achilles remains beside the hollow ships with anger in his heart. But we will not miss him if we urge each other on and fight for one another. So come, listen to my words, and do as I say: let us take the army’s best and largest shields, cover our heads with gleaming helmets, seize the longest spears, and so go out. I will lead the way, and I do not think Hector, Priam’s son, will remain for long, no matter his desire. Let the toughest fighters take the larger shields while the weaker fighters take the smaller.”

So he spoke, and all eagerly listened and obeyed, the wounded kings taking the lead: Tydeus’ son, Odysseus, and Agamemnon, son of Atreus. They roamed the ranks and ordered the strongest to take the best armor and the weakest to take the worst. Once covered in flashing bronze, they set off, and earth-shaker Poseidon led the way, holding in his strong hand a terrible sword, a weapon so lightning-sharp that no man would dare face it in dread battle, for fear would take hold.

Opposite them, famed Hector led the Trojans. Now drawn tight in the strife of dread battle were dark-haired Poseidon and radiant Hector, one for the Achaeans and the other

for the Trojans. The sea surged up to the Argive ships and tents, and a loud cry arose as the two sides clashed. Neither the ocean waves rushing onto dry land, driven from the sea by the blasting north wind, nor a blazing fire roaring in a mountain dell as it burns through a forest, nor a shrieking wind that blows over lofty tree tops in all its ferocity—none of these could match the violent cries of Trojans and Achaeans as they leapt upon one another.

First, glorious Hector cast his spear at Ajax, who was facing him, and hit him where two baldrics—one for his shield, one for his silver-studded sword—were drawn across his chest, thus protecting his soft flesh. Angry that the swift strike had done no damage, Hector shrank behind his comrades to avoid fate. But Telamonian Ajax took a large rock from under his feet, one of many used to prop the swift ships, and hurled it at Hector, hitting him in the chest, above the shield and near the neck, and he staggered and spun like a top. Like a bolt from father Zeus that fells an oak tree, root and all, creating a terrible sulphur smell that robs the courage of those near enough to see, for terrible is a blast from mighty Zeus, so Hector quickly fell to the dust and dropped his spear. Then his shield and helmet were thrown away, and his bronze armor clanged all around. With a great cry, the Achaean sons ran up, hoping to drag him away and throwing a volley of spears at him. But before they could wound the herder of men, Troy's best fighters surrounded him: Polydamas, Aeneas, noble Agenor, the Lycian leader Sarpedon, and blameless Glaucus.

The rest held their round shields in front of him as his comrades carried him from the fighting. Soon they reached the rear of the battle, where the swift horses stood with the charioteers and well-made chariots, and they then carried him back toward the city as he moaned deeply.

But when they reached the ford of the fair-flowing Xanthos, sprung from immortal Zeus, they set Hector on the ground and doused him with water. He came to, opened his eyes, raised himself to his knees, and vomited black blood. Then he fell back to the ground and shrouded his eyes in black night, for the strike still overwhelmed him.

Seeing Hector taken away, the Argives regained their battle lust and attacked the Trojans with fury. First, swift Ajax, son of Oileus, thrust his sharp spear at Satnius, wounding the son of Enops, whom a blameless [Naiad](#) bore to Enops as he tended cattle by the Satnioeis. The spear-famed son of Oileus came up to him, pierced his flank, and knocked him back as Trojans and Danaans fought fiercely all around him. Spear-wielding Polydamas, son of Panthous, stood by Satnius and struck his spear straight through the right shoulder of Prothoenor, son of [Areilycus](#), who fell to the earth clutching the dust. Then Polydamas boasted over him, crying: "Again, the sturdy hand of great-hearted Panthous' son did not send his spear in vain, for it struck an Argive's flesh. He can use it as a crutch as he heads to the house of Hades."

His boasting brought woe to the Argives but roused the rage of skilled warrior Ajax,

Telamon's son, who was nearest to the fallen man.  
He quickly shot his shining spear, but Polydamas  
darted sideways and avoided a black death.  
Instead, the spear caught the son of Antenor,  
Archelochus, for the gods chose him to die.  
He was struck where the head joins the neck,  
at the top of the spine, cutting both tendons,  
and when he fell over, his head, nose, and mouth  
reached the earth sooner than his knees and legs.  
Ajax then called out to noble Polydamas:  
"Think, Polydamas, and tell me honestly,  
is this man a worthy exchange for Prothoenor?  
He seems to me no common man of low birth  
but the brother of horse-taming Antenor  
or his son, for they share a family likeness."

He spoke knowingly, but the Trojans grieved.  
Then Acamas stood over his brother and speared  
Promachus, the Boeotian, who was trying to drag  
the body away. And Acamas derided him, shouting:  
"You Argives archers boast insatiably, but we will  
not be alone in toil and sorrow; some day soon  
you, too, will suffer and die. Look at Promachus  
resting in peace, killed by my spear so the blood-  
price for my brother will not go unpaid.  
This is why a man prays for a kinsman to stay  
behind in the large halls, to ward off disgrace."

His boasting brought woe to the Argives  
but roused the rage of skilled warrior Peneleos.  
He attacked Acamas, but Acamas fled from lord  
Peneleos' fury, so Peneleos struck Ilioneus, son  
of Phorbas, whom Hermes loved above all other  
Trojans; he was rich in flocks and wealth but had  
only one child, Ilioneus. Peneleos' spear hit the root  
of his eye, forced the eyeball out, and then drove



past the eye and through the nape of the neck. Ilioneus fell backwards, arms outstretched, but Peneleos drew his sword and sliced his neck clean through. The head and helmet hit the ground together, but the eyeball was stuck on the spear-point, so Peneleos held it up like a poppy-head, showed it to the Trojans, and said: "Trojans, tell the dear father and mother of noble Ilioneus to begin mourning rites in the great hall; for neither will the wife of Promachus, [Alegeneor](#)'s son, rejoice at her husband's return when we sons of Achaea return in our ships from Troy."

So he said, and every man's limbs began to tremble as they all searched for a way to escape death.

Tell me, Muses who live on Olympus, who was the first Achaean warrior to win blood-stained spoils once the earth-shaker turned the fortunes of war? Telamonian Ajax was the first, striking Hyrtius, son of Gyrtius, the stout-hearted Mysian leader. Then Antilochus stripped the armor from Phalces and Mermerus, Meriones killed Morys and Hippotion, and Teucer slew Prothoön and Periphetes. Then Menelaus struck the flank of Hyperenor, herder of men, the bronze releasing the entrails as it cut through; his soul quickly fled the wound, and darkness covered his eyes. But Ajax, the swift son of Oileus, slew the most men, for there was no one better at pursuing flying foes once Zeus roused them in panic.

## BOOK 15

Once the Trojans had fled past the trench  
and stakes, many having been slain by Danaan  
hands, they stopped by the chariots and remained  
there, pale with panic and terror. Then Zeus  
awoke atop mount Ida, beside golden-throned  
Hera, and sprang to his feet, for he saw the Trojans  
in flight, pursued by the Achaeans with lord  
Poseidon among them. He also saw Hector  
lying in the plain, surrounded by his comrades,  
in great pain, panting, and vomiting up blood,  
since he had been struck by a strong Achaean.  
Seeing this, the father of gods and men felt pity,  
looked scowlingly at Hera, and said to her:  
“Troublesome Hera, your evil plans made noble  
Hector stop fighting and his men flee, and you  
will be the first to reap the fruits of these wicked  
plans when I beat you with whips. Remember  
when I hung you on high, your feet tied to anvils  
and your wrists bound by an unbreakable band  
of gold? You hung in the heavens with the clouds,  
and though all the Olympian gods protested,  
they could not set you free; when they tried,  
I threw them from the threshold, and they fell  
feebly to the earth. Still, my heart continued  
to grieve for godlike Herakles, for you  
and [Boreas](#), whose hurricane you harnessed,

deliberately sent him across barren waters  
that carried him to well-peopled Cos. Though  
I rescued and returned him to the horselands  
of Argos, he suffered much. I say all this  
so you will end your deceit and find out if you  
are rescued by our lovemaking in bed after  
leaving the gods to come here and deceive me.”

So he said, and ox-eyed Hera, shuddering  
with fear, spoke to him with winged words:  
“Let [Gaia](#) bear witness, along with Ouranos  
above and the flowing waters of the Styx  
below, which is the greatest, most revered oath  
for a god, and let your sacred head be witness,  
and also our marriage bed, a thing I would never  
swear lightly, that it is not by my will that earth-  
shaker Poseidon torments the Trojans and Hector  
and aids their enemies but by his own heart’s  
will, for he saw the Achaeans in distress  
by their ships and pitied them. But I would urge  
him to follow your commands, lord of clouds.”

Saying this, the father of gods and mortals smiled  
and answered her, telling her with winged words:  
“Ox-eyed queen Hera, if you were ever inclined  
to think as I do when seated among the immortals,  
then Poseidon would quickly follow your heart  
and mine, though he would not wish to do so.  
But if what you say is right and true, then go  
now among the race of gods and summon  
Iris and Apollo, famed for his bow, to come  
here. Iris can go among the bronze-clad  
Achaean army and tell lord Poseidon to cease  
his fighting and to return home, and Phoebus  
Apollo can rouse Hector’s strength, remove  
the fear that now fills his mind, and send him

out to fight. Then he can send feeble fear to the Achaeans so they retreat to the many-benched ships of Achilles, son of Peleus. Achilles will then rouse his comrade Patroclus, who will be slain by the spear of divine Hector in front of Ilios, but not before he kills many others, including my son, noble Sarpedon. Enraged by this, great Achilles will kill Hector. From then on, I will keep the Trojans moving away from the vessels until the Achaeans take steep Ilios through Athena's counsel. But until then, my anger will not end, and I will not allow any gods to assist the Danaans until the wish of Peleus' son is fulfilled, a promise I made with a bow of my head on the day the goddess Thetis sat clutching my knee, begging me to honor Achilles, sacker of cities."

So he said, and white-armed Hera obeyed, going from the peaks of Ida to high Olympus. Just as the mind of a man who has travelled to many lands can quickly recall with astute detail the many places that he has visited, so queen Hera sped quickly and eagerly away. Reaching high Olympus, she found the immortal gods gathered in Zeus' house. Seeing her, they sprang up and lifted their cups in welcome. She passed by the others and took the cup of fair-cheeked [Themis](#), who was first to reach her and who spoke to her with winged words: "Why have you come, Hera? You look upset; your husband, Cronos' son, must have scared you."

Then the white-armed goddess Hera replied: "Goddess Themis, do not ask me about this. You know how reckless and cruel his heart is.

For now, ready an equal feast for the gods  
in the halls. You and all the immortals will  
soon hear Zeus reveal his wicked plans. Few  
hearts will rejoice at his words, either mortal  
or immortal, if some are feasting merrily now.”

So honored Hera said and then sat down,  
but the gods in the halls of Zeus were troubled.  
And though her lips smiled, Hera’s dark brows  
were unbent, and she spoke vexedly to all:  
“We are childish fools to be enraged by Zeus.  
We go to him in hopes of changing his mind  
by word or by force, but he just sits alone,  
ignoring us, saying that among the immortal  
gods his strength and might are greatest.  
So content yourself with whatever evil he sends.  
Already I think misery has fallen upon Ares,  
for his dearest son has been killed in battle:  
Ascalaphus, whom mighty Ares calls his own.”

So she said, but stout Ares struck his thighs  
with the flats of his hands and cried out in agony:  
“Gods of Olympus, do not censure me if I go  
to the Achaean ships and avenge my son’s death,  
even if it results in a bolt from Zeus that leaves  
me sitting among the blood and dead and dust.”

So saying, he ordered Terror and Fear to yoke  
his horses, and he himself put on his shining  
armor. Then anger and strife would have grown  
between the immortals and Zeus had Athena,  
deathly afraid for all the gods, not gone quickly  
from her throne, rushed through the doorway,  
seized the helmet from the head of Ares,  
the shield from his shoulders, and the bronze spear  
from his stout hand, and rebuked him, saying:

“Madman, have you lost your mind? Your ears still hear, but your mind and good sense are gone. Did you not hear the words of white-armed Hera who has just returned from Olympian Zeus? Do you wish to take your fill of misery only to be forced back to Olympus where you will sow seeds of great grief among all the others? He will leave the noble Trojans and Achaeans, come straight to Olympus, and wreak havoc on all of us, both the guilty and the innocent. I urge you to let go of your anger for your son. Men with greater strength than your son have already died or will soon die. It is difficult to save the bloodlines and offspring of all men.”

She finished and made Ares return to his seat. Then Hera called Apollo out of the house along with Iris, the messenger of the gods, and spoke to them with winged words, saying: “Zeus orders you both to head quickly to Ida. Once you have arrived and have looked Zeus in the eye, then do whatever he commands.”

Then honored Hera returned to her throne while Iris and Apollo flew swiftly away. They reached Ida of many springs, mother of beasts, and found far-seeing Zeus seated atop Gargaron, surrounded by fragrant clouds. They stood before cloud-gatherer Zeus, who was not angered by their sight since they had quickly obeyed the orders of his dear wife. First, he addressed Iris with winged words: “Go now, swift Iris, and report this message to lord Poseidon, and do not speak falsely: order him to stop warring and to return to the race of gods or to the bright sea. If he

disobeys or dismisses my words, then let him consider in his mind and heart that, strong as he is, he cannot stand against me since I am far greater than he and older by birth, though he never hesitates in his heart to declare himself equal to me, whom the other gods fear.”

So he said, and swift-footed Iris did not disobey but went straight from the hills of Ida to sacred Ilios. Just as snow and hail fly from clouds driven by the cold, bright blast of the north wind, so swift Iris flew with eager purpose until she stood beside the great earth-shaker and said: “Earth-mover, dark of hair, I come bearing a message for you from aegis-bearing Zeus. He orders you to stop warring and return to the race of gods or to the bright sea. If you disobey or dismiss his words, then he threatens to come here and face you in combat, and he warns that you keep out of reach of his hands since he is greater than you and older by birth, though you never hesitate in your heart to declare yourself equal to him, whom the other gods fear.”

Greatly angered, the revered earth-shaker replied: “Clearly, though noble, he speaks arrogantly if he thinks to restrain me, his equal, against my will. For three brothers were born of Cronos and Rhea: Zeus, myself, and Hades, lord of the underworld. All things were divided into three equal shares. By lots I was granted the grey sea as my domain, Hades the murky darkness, and Zeus the wide heavens, clouds, and air, while the earth and high Olympus are common to us all. Thus I refuse to live by the will of Zeus. No matter his strength, let him be content with his share and not use

his mighty hands to frighten me like some coward.  
It would be better for him to save these threats  
for his daughters and sons; he brought them into  
this world, so they are obligated to obey him.”

Then wind-swift Iris replied to him, saying:  
“Dark-haired earth-embracer, shall I carry  
these bold, unbending words to Zeus, or will  
you change your mind? Good minds are pliant.  
You know the Furies always serve the old man.”

In reply, earth-shaker Poseidon said to her:  
“Goddess Iris, your words are wise, and it is  
good when a messenger knows what is right.  
But dread pain overwhelms my heart and soul  
when Zeus speaks words of anger to his twin,  
whom fate has decreed an equal portion.  
Still, despite my anger, I will retire for now,  
but I will tell you this, a threat from my heart:  
if, without me, Athena driver of spoils, Hera,  
Hermes, and lord Hephaestus, he spares lofty  
Ilios and refuses to sack it or give great honor  
to the Argives, then let him know there will be  
strife between us that will never be appeased.”

So saying, Poseidon left the Achaeans and plunged  
into the sea, and the Achaean warriors felt his loss.

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus said to Apollo:  
“Go now, dear Phoebus, to bronze-clad Hector,  
for the earth-mover and earth-shaker has gone  
to the heavenly sea, thus avoiding our harsh  
wrath. True, even the gods gathered below  
with Cronos would have heard about our fight,  
but it is better for us both that he curbed  
his rage and bent to my will, for the matter  
would not have been settled without some sweat.



Now, take the tasseled aegis in your hands  
and shake it to frighten the Achaeon warriors.  
Then you, far-shooter, take care of shining Hector  
and rouse his rage until the Achaeans are fleeing  
to their ships and the Hellespont. From there,  
I will devise word and deed so the Achaeans  
might again find breathing space from war.”

So he said, and Apollo did not disobey his father  
but flew from mount Ida like a swift, dove-killing  
falcon, the fastest of winged creatures. He found  
noble Hector, son of skilled Priam, not prone  
but seated, recovering his spirit and recognizing  
his companions; and his panting and gasping  
ceased once aegis-bearing Zeus’ mind revived him.  
Then far-seeing Apollo came to him and said:  
“Hector, son of Priam, why do you sit here  
helpless and alone? Has some pain fallen on you?”

Weakly, glancing-helmed Hector replied to him:  
“What noble god are you to ask this to my face?  
Did you not see, as I killed his comrades at the stern  
of the Achaeon ships, war-crier Ajax hurl a boulder  
at my chest, forcing me to stop fighting? I thought  
the day had come for me to take my last breath  
and to look upon the dead and the house of Hades.”

Then lord Apollo, the far-worker, answered him:  
“Take heart, for Cronos has sent help down  
from Ida to stand by you and protect you: Phoebus  
Apollo of the golden sword, who in the past  
has defended both you and your steep citadel.  
But come now and urge your many charioteers  
to drive their swift horses to the hollowed ships  
while I go ahead, smoothing the chariots’ path  
and sending the Achaeon warriors into panic.”

So saying, he breathed great might into the herder of men. As when a well-fed, stabled horse breaks his bonds, darts over the plain to his regular bathing spot on the fair-flowing river, lifts his head high in exultation, lets his mane flow over his shoulders, and revels in his beauty as his legs carry him to the mares' pasture, so Hector, having heard the god's voice, swiftly moved his feet and legs and roused his charioteers. As when country men and their dogs, in pursuit of a horned deer or a wild goat, reach a steep rock or thorny brush that saves the animal and foils their hunt, for their shouting stirs a bearded lion who steps into their path and quickly forces them to flee, so the Danaans for a time moved en mass, thrusting out their swords and double-edged spears, but upon seeing Hector attack the ranks of men, they recoiled with fear as each man's heart fell to his feet.

Then Thoas spoke, Andraemon's son, the best of the Aetolians: skilled with the spear, strong in close-fighting, and an orator with few peers when young Achaeans debated in assembly. With good intentions he said to the assembled: "Alas, my eyes behold a great wonder: Hector once again on his feet, forsaking a deadly fate. Surely each man's heart had hoped that he had been killed by Telamonian Ajax. But again some god has saved Hector, who has cut down so many Danaans in the past and is set to do so again, for he stands there eagerly as the champion of loud-thundering Zeus. But, come now, and let all obey my words: order the multitudes to head for the ships while we, who claim to be the army's best,

stand firm, face him, raise our spears, and halt his progress, for I think, in spite of his rage, he is still afraid to sink into the Danaan throng.”

So he spoke, and they eagerly listened and obeyed. Ajax, lord Idomeneus, Teucer, Meriones, and Meges, equal to Ares, assembled a great fighting force that was prepared to face Hector and the Trojans while the multitudes returned to the Achaean ships.

The Trojans advanced as one, led by long-striding Hector. Before him went Phoebus Apollo, shoulders clad in clouds and wielding the terrible aegis, hairy and bright, which the smith Hephaestus gave to Zeus to carry in the rout of warriors. He held this in his hands as he led the army.

The Argives held their ground, their shrill war cries echoing around them as arrows sprang from bows, and many spears, shot by stout hands, pierced the skin of swift-fighting young men while others missed the white flesh they so eagerly sought and fixed themselves midway in the earth. So long as Phoebus Apollo held the aegis motionless in his hands, the missiles hit their marks and men fell. But when he looked directly at the Danaans, shook the aegis, and uttered a great cry, then their hearts became bewitched and they lost the will to fight. As when two wild animals suddenly appear in the black of night and attack a herd of oxen or a flock of sheep and drive them into panic, so Apollo's terror drove the Achaeans into panic and brought glory to the Trojans and Hector.

Hector struck Stichius and Arcesilaus: one a leader of the bronze-clad Boeotians, the other

a trusted friend of great-hearted Menestheus.  
And Aeneas killed Medon and Iasus. Medon  
was the bastard son of Oïleus and brother  
of Ajax, who lived in Phylace, a land far  
from his father's home because he killed  
a kinsman of Eriopis, the wife of Oïleus,  
while Iasus led the Athenians and was called  
the son of Sphelus, who was the son of Bucolus.  
And Polydamas cut down Mecisteus, Polites  
slew Echius among the foremost fighters, noble  
Agenor killed Clonius, and Paris hit Deïochus  
from behind on his lower shoulder as he fled  
the fight, and the bronze drove clean through.

As the Trojans stripped the armor, the Achaeans  
took flight, diving into the trench, pushing  
past the palisades, and falling over the wall.  
But Hector gave a great cry, telling the Trojans:  
“Leave the bloody armor and hurry to the ships.  
If I see a man heading away from the ships,  
then I will send him to his death, and his kin  
will receive no corpse to burn in offering,  
for dogs will devour him in front of the city.”

So saying, he whipped his horses and stirred  
the Trojan ranks, who shouted as one and drove  
their chariots forward with a thunderous roar.  
Ahead of them, Phoebus Apollo tore easily  
into the deep trench, his feet pushing earth  
into the pit to create a broad causeway that was  
as long as a spear cast when thrown by a man  
who seeks to measure his strength. With Apollo  
leading and holding the aegis, they poured  
over the causeway in formation and toppled  
the Achaean wall with the ease of a child who  
builds a sand-castle by the seashore and then

playfully destroys it with his hands and feet.  
Thus lord Apollo leveled the long and difficult  
labors of the Achaeans and sent them into panic.

When the Argives halted beside the ships,  
they lifted their hands to all of the gods  
and shouted in prayer, especially Nestor  
of Gerenia, guardian of the Achaeans, who  
raised his hands to the starry skies and cried:  
“Father Zeus, if any in Argos ever prayed  
to you for home by burning fat oxen or ram  
thigh pieces, and if you ever nodded assent,  
then protect us from this day of doom: do not let  
the Trojans destroy the Achaeans in this way.”

So he said, and counselor Zeus thundered loudly,  
having heard the prayer of the old son of Neleus.

The Trojans heard aegis-bearing Zeus’ thunder,  
redoubled their efforts, and leapt upon the Argives.  
Just as a rising wave on the wide sea washes over  
the side of a ship, driven by a strong blast of wind  
that strengthens the swelling waves, so the Trojans  
cried out, drove their chariots over the wall,  
and fought with leaf-shaped spears by the sterns  
of the ships, some at close quarters and others  
from chariots. But the Achaeans boarded the black  
ships and fought from on high, wielding long pikes  
with bronze points normally used for sea fighting.

While the Achaeans and Trojans fought around  
the wall and away from the swift ships, Patroclus  
was sitting in the hut of kindly Eurypylus,  
entertaining him with stories and sprinkling  
a soothing salve on his wretched black wound.  
But when he saw the Trojans scaling the wall  
and the Danaans crying out and turning to flee,

he made a painful cry, struck both of his thighs with the palms of his hands, and mournfully said: “Eurypylus, I can stay here no longer, though you are in need, for a great battle has come. Let your attendant comfort you while I hurry to Achilles and urge him to join the battle. Perhaps a god will help me stir his spirit, for a friend’s persuasion can do wonders.”

So saying, he hurried away. Meanwhile, the Achaeans held fast against the Trojans but could not drive them away from the ships, being fewer in number; nor were the Trojans able to break the Danaan battalions and fight among the tents and ships. Just as a carpenter’s line straightens a cut of ship’s timber when drawn by an able craftsman blessed by Athena’s counsel, so both sides stood equal in battle. As some fought on one ship and others fought on another, Hector went straight for glorious Ajax. Both fought for the same ship, but Hector could not drive off Ajax and burn the ship and Ajax could not force away god-aided Hector. Then Ajax struck his spear in the chest of Caletor, son of Clytius, who was carrying fire to the ship; the man fell with a thud, and the fire slipped from his hands. Seeing his cousin fall to the dust before the black ship, Hector cried out to the Trojans and Lycians: “Trojans, Lycians, and close-fighting Dardanians, do not give ground in this narrow space but save Caletor before the Achaeans strip his armor now that he has fallen beside the ships.”

So saying, he hurled his shining spear at Ajax, missing him but hitting [Lycophron](#), Mastor’s

son and Ajax's aide who lived with Ajax after killing a man in sacred Cythera. Hector's sharp sword struck the man's head above the ear as he stood beside Ajax, and he fell to the dust in front of the ship's stern, his life spent. Ajax shuddered at the sight and called to his brother: "Teucer, great-hearted Hector has killed Mastor's son, our trusted friend whom we honored like our dear parents when he came from Cythera to live in our halls. Where are your swift-killing arrows and the bow Phoebus Apollo gave you?"

Hearing this, Teucer ran and stood beside him, bent bow in hand and quiver full of arrows, and soon shot his missiles at the Trojans, hitting Cleitus, Peisenor's noble son and aide to Polydamas, son of Panthous, who was holding the reins, attending to the horses, and driving to where the battle was thickest to win the favor of Hector and the Trojans. But foul death came quickly, and no one could stop it. As the wicked arrow struck the back of his neck, he fell from the chariot, and the horses sprang back, jolting the empty carriage. Polydamas quickly saw all this, intercepted the horses, and gave them to Astynous, Protiaon's son, urging him to keep the horses nearby and to stay vigilant; then he returned to the foremost fighters.

Teucer then shot another arrow at Hector, and had the shot been true, it would have stopped him fighting by the Achaean ships and taken his life. But shrewd Zeus protected Hector and denied Telamonian Teucer glory. When he drew back the arrow, his plaited bowstring broke, the bow shattered, the heavy bronze arrow

went wide, and the bow fell from his hands.  
Teucer shuddered in fear and said to his brother:  
“Look, some god has utterly destroyed our plans,  
striking the bow out of my hands and snapping  
the bowstring I twisted and tied just this morning  
so as to withstand the many springing arrows.”

Then great Telamonian Ajax answered him:  
“Brother, leave your bow and arrows behind;  
a god who hates the Danaans destroyed them.  
So seize a long spear, put a shield on your shoulder,  
fight the Trojans, and rouse the men. Do not let  
them easily take our well-benched ships, though  
they overpower us. Remember your fighting spirit.”

So he said, and Teucer set the bow inside the hut,  
put his four-layered shield over his shoulder,  
set on his head a well-made helmet with a horse’s  
tail and a crest that bobbed fearfully, and grabbed  
a stout spear with a sharp, bronze tip. Then he  
raced off and soon came to stand beside Ajax.

When Hector saw that Teucer’s arrows had  
failed, he cried out to the Trojans and Lycians:  
“Trojans, Lycians, and close-fighting Dardanians,  
act like men and remember your fighting spirit  
among the hollow ships, for I saw with my eye  
how Zeus rendered useless a great man’s arrows.  
The help Zeus gives to men is easy to recognize,  
both when he grants the glory of victory and when  
he deprives or does not defend, just as now he  
reduced the might of the Argives and aided us.  
So fight as one by the ships, and if anyone meets  
his fate and dies by throw or thrust, then let him  
die. There is no shame in dying for your country  
if your wife and children are safe, your home



and property are unharmed, and the Achaeans return in their ships to their fatherland.”

So saying, he stirred each man’s fighting heart. On the other side, Ajax called to his comrades: “Shame, Argives, for now we must die or save ourselves and force the threat from our ships. If glancing-helmed Hector seizes our ships, do you think you will walk back home by land? Do you not hear Hector filling all his men with the fury to burn the ships? He is not ordering them to dance but to fight. For us, there is no better plan or advice than to fight them in close combat with our hands and might. It is better once and for all to either live or die than to become exhausted by an eternal battle beside the ships and against inferior men.”

So saying, he stirred each man’s fighting heart. Then Hector slew Schedius, son of Perimedes, the Phocian leader; Ajax slew Laodamas, leader of the foot soldiers and Antenor’s noble son; and Polydamas killed Otus of Cyllene, friend of Meges, Phyleus’ son and great-hearted lord of the Epeians. Seeing this, Meges sprang at him, but Polydamas moved aside and Meges missed, Apollo not wanting Panthous’ son to fall among the front fighters. But his spear hit Croesmus in the chest, and he fell with a thud. As Meges was stripping the shoulder armor, he was leapt upon by spear-famed Dolops, the fierce, brave son of Lampus, son of Laomedon, whose spear pierced the center of Meges’ shield from close range. But Meges was saved by his thick corselet with curved metal plates that Phyleus brought back from the river Seleïs in Ephyre, a gift

from a guest-friend, lord of men Euphetes, to be worn in battle as a defense against enemies. Now this gift saved his son from death. Meges then stuck his spear in the crown of Dolops' bronze helmet with a horsehair crest, ripping off the crest so that the horsehair, still shining with its fresh red dye, fell to the dust. While Meges remained fighting, hoping for victory, warlike Menelaus came to help. He stood unseen by Dolops, and cast his spear, hitting Dolops' shoulder from behind; the point drove straight through his chest, and he fell on his face. As both men began to strip the bronze armor from Dolops' shoulders, Hector called to all his kin, first scolding Hicetaon's son, mighty Melanippus. While the enemy were still far off, he tended shambling oxen in Percote, but when the Danaans' ships arrived, he returned to Ilios and became revered among the Trojans, living in Priam's house where they honored him like a prince. But Hector reproached him, saying: "Shall we slack off, Melanippus? Does your dear heart not care for your fallen cousin? Do you see them scrambling for Dolon's armor? Come on! We can no longer stand aloof, battling the Argives from afar until we either kill them or they seize steep Ilios and slay its people."

So he said, and the godlike man followed him. Then Telamonian Ajax encouraged the Argives: "My friends, be men: keep your souls humble and respect one another in this mighty conflict. When men show respect, more are saved than slain, and no glory comes from fleeing, nor any defense."

They took his words to heart and hardened

their defense by fencing in the ships with a wall of bronze, which Zeus urged the Trojans to attack. Then great-shouter Menelaus urged on Antilochus: "Antilochus, you are the youngest Achaean, the swiftest of foot, and the bravest in battle, so leap out and attack one of the Trojans."

So saying, Menelaus sped off, but a roused Antilochus glanced round and hurled his shining spear at the lead fighters. The Trojans shrank back, but his shot was not in vain, for it hit Hicetaon's son, bold Melanippus, in the chest by the nipple. He fell with a thud, and darkness covered his eyes. Then Antilochus pounced on him like a dog leaping on an injured fawn that has been hit by a hunter's arrow while fleeing its lair, sapping its strength. So staunch Antilochus pounced on Melanippus, stripping his armor. But this did not escape Hector's notice, and he raced through the battle to face him. Antilochus, though swift, did not wait but fled like a wild animal who has done wrong, such as kill a dog or a herdsman beside his cattle, and flees before a mob of men has gathered. So Nestor's son fled, and the Trojans and Hector shot groan-laden missiles that flew with a divine din. Antilochus turned and stood when he reached his comrades.

Like lions preying upon raw flesh, the Trojans rushed the ships, following the orders of Zeus who lifted their great strength, sapped Argive hearts, and took Argive glory and gave it to Troy. In his heart, Zeus willed glory upon Hector, son of Priam, so he might hurl upon the beaked ships an inhuman blaze of fire, thus fulfilling the violent prayers of Thetis. Counselor Zeus was waiting

to see the flames of a single burning ship.  
From that point on he would force the Trojans  
to flee the ships and grant the Danaans glory.  
And so Zeus roused against the hollowed ships  
the son of Priam, Hector, who was already  
as enraged as spear-wielding Ares or a deadly  
fire burning through mountains or deep woods.  
As Hector fought, his mouth foamed, his eyes  
shone beneath shaggy brows, and his helmet  
shook violently at the side of his forehead,  
for ethereal Zeus was his champion, and he  
granted Hector, alone among warriors, great  
glory and honor, since he was destined to live  
a short life, and the day was coming when Pallas  
Athena would rouse the son of Peleus' strength.  
Hector tried to tear through the ranks of soldiers,  
looking for the greatest numbers and the finest  
armor. Still, he could not break the lines, for they  
held firm like a wall or a hard, towering rockface  
lying near the grey sea that withstands the swift  
path of the shrill winds and well-fed waves  
that break against it; so the Danaans held firm,  
unflinching, against the Trojans. But Hector,  
doused in firelight, leapt and fell upon them  
like a fierce, tempest-fed wave that crashes  
against a speedy ship, drenching it in foam as  
violent hurricane winds blast the ship's sail  
and fill the minds of sailors with panic, having  
just escaped from the jaws of death. So the heart  
in each Achaean's breast was torn. Hector came  
on like a vicious lion nearing a herd of countless  
cattle grazing in a low-lying marsh-meadow  
with a herdsman clearly inept at fighting a beast  
over a heifer's sleek carcass; the herdsman follows  
the herd, first at the front, then the rear, but the lion

strikes in the middle, devouring a heifer as the rest scatter. So also did all Achaeans flee in panic, routed by Hector and father Zeus, but Hector slew only one, Periphetes of Mycenae, the dear son of [Copreus](#), who went as messenger from King Eurystheus to mighty Heracles. This unskilled father bore a son superior in every way—on foot, in fighting, and in mind—and who was among the foremost men of Mycenae. Such was the man granted to Hector for his glory. As Periphetes was turning, he tripped on the rim of the shield that reached down to his spear-defending feet and stumbled backwards, and the helmet around his forehead rang terribly as he fell. Hector quickly rushed over, stood next to him, and speared him in the chest, killing him beside his comrades who could do nothing but mourn, for they themselves greatly feared noble Hector.

The Argives retreated to the outermost ships, but the Trojans pursued, so the Argives fell back past the ships and took a stand beside their tents. They did not scatter through the camp but stayed together, ashamed, afraid, and constantly calling to one another. Loudest of all was Nestor of Gerenia, guardian of the Achaeans, who begged each man in the name of their parents: “Friends, be men, and put shame in your hearts for those around you. Remember your children, your wives, your possessions, and your parents, be they living or dead. For the sake of all those who are distant from us, I implore you to stand firm and not turn around and flee.”

So he said, stirring the hearts of every man, and Athena lifted the cloud of mist from their eyes

and light fell on them from from both sides, whether looking at the ships or at the dreaded battlefield. All could see war-crying Hector and his comrades, both those standing in the back and not fighting and those who were battling beside the swift ships.

But great-hearted Ajax's soul would not let him stand with the other sons of Achaea, so he took long strides up and down the decks of the ships, wielding in his hands a long pole for sea-fighting, twenty-two cubits long and joined with clasps. Like a skilled horseman harnessing four horses together, chosen out of many, and driving them quickly along the road from the plains to a great city where many men and women gaze at him with wonder as he, steadily and without fail, leaps from one galloping horse to another, so Ajax took long strides over the decks of many swift ships, and with his voice lifting to heaven, called out with great shouts to the Danaans to protect their ships and tents. Hector, too, did not stay with the well-armed Trojan throng, but like a shining eagle pouncing upon a flock of winged birds such as wild geese, cranes, or long-necked swans all feeding beside a river, he charged straight at a black-prowed ship, and from behind Zeus' mighty hands pushed him forward, and the whole army followed.

Once again a bitter battle among the ships ensued. You would have thought every man to be tireless and fresh, so furiously did they fight. This is what filled their minds as they fought: the Achaeans did not think they would escape this danger but would perish, while the Trojan hearts in their breasts hoped to set fire to the ships and kill the Achaean

warriors. These were their thoughts as they fought one another. But Hector took hold of the stern of a seafaring ship, one fine and swift, which had carried Protesilaus to Troy but would not return him to his fatherland. It was around this ship that Achaeans and Trojans slew each other in close combat, for they no longer awaited the rush of javelins and arrows but stood man-to-man, all with one purpose, and fought using sharp axes, hatchets, great swords, and leaf-shaped spears. Many fine swords bound with black hilts fell to the ground from hands or men's shoulders as they fought, and the black earth ran with blood. But Hector did not let go of the ship's stern but held tight to the post and called to the Trojans: "Bring fire and let all at once sound the war cry, for today Zeus has granted us all amends: to seize the ships that came here against the gods' will and brought us many miseries, due to our elders' cowardice, for when I wanted to fight by the sterns of the ships, they refused and held back the army. But if far-seeing Zeus dampened our resolve then, he now urges us and commands us onward."

So saying, they attacked the Argives more intently. Ajax could not hold his ground and, thinking he would die there, went back along the seven-foot bridge and gave up the trim ship's aft-deck. He stood ready and used his long pole to beat back any Trojans carrying unceasing fire while always calling loudly to the Danaans, urging them on: "Friends, Danaan warriors, servants of Ares, be men and remember your rushing rage. Do you think others are waiting to help us? Do you think some strong wall will protect us? We have no fortified city nearby where we may

go to protect ourselves and hold off the enemy.  
We are on the Trojan plains, far from our native  
land, and with our backs to the sea. The might  
of our hands holds victory, our slackness defeat.”

He then drove furiously at the foe with his sharp  
spear, and whenever a Trojan carried blazing fire  
to the hollow ships to please Hector, Ajax waited  
for him and struck him with his long spear. In this  
way, he wounded twelve men in front of the ships.



## BOOK 16

As they fought beside the well-benched ships,  
Patroclus came to Achilles, shepherd of men,  
shedding hot tears like a spring whose dark  
waters pour down from an impassable cliff.  
Seeing him, swift-footed, noble Achilles took  
pity and addressed him with winged words:  
“Patroclus, why do you weep like a young girl  
running to her mother and asking to be picked up  
while clutching her robe, looking at her tearfully,  
and refusing to let go until the mother relents?  
Like her, you shed round tears, Patroclus.  
Have you something to tell the Myrmidons  
and I? Have you alone heard news from Pythia?  
Does Menoetius, son of Actor, or Peleus, son  
of Aeacus, still live among the Myrmidons?  
We would grieve greatly if they were dead.  
Or do you mourn the Argives who die beside  
the hollowed ships because of their wrongdoing?  
Do not hold it in but tell me and let us both know.”

Groaning deeply, rider Patroclus answered him:  
“Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest Achaeans, do not  
reproach me, for woe has fallen upon the Achaeans.  
In fact, all the men who were bravest in battle lie  
beside the ships, wounded by arrows or spears:  
Mighty Diomedes, son of Tydeus, spear-famed

Odysseus, and Agamemnon were struck by spears,  
and Eurypylus was hit in the thigh by an arrow.  
Healers skilled in many drugs are busy mending  
their injuries, but you are unmendable, Achilles.  
May no anger take hold of me like the one that  
curses your spirit. How will those to come profit  
if you fail to halt the Argives' shameful ruin?  
Pitiless man, your father was not rider Peleus,  
nor your mother Thetis; rather, the grey sea bore  
you onto steep cliffs, for your mind is hard as rock.  
But if some prophecy holds you back, something  
your revered mother shared with you from Zeus,  
then let me set out and let the Myrmidon army  
follow, so we may act as a light for the Danaans.  
And let me cover my shoulders with your armor  
so the Trojans will take me for you and refrain  
from fighting. Then the warlike sons of Achaea  
may take a breath, for there is little rest in battle.  
We unwearied can easily drive weary men away  
from the ships and tents and towards the city."

So he said, but his prayers were foolish, for they  
were fated to lead to a foul end: his own death.  
Greatly angered, swift-footed Achilles replied to him:  
"Zeus-born Patroclus, what words you speak!  
I care about no prophecy, nor has my revered  
mother shared with me any words from Zeus.  
But a great grief has come over my heart and soul,  
for a man who is my equal is willing to deprive  
me of my prize since his authority is greater.  
I have suffered a deep pain in my heart for the girl  
that the Achaean sons granted me as a prize, won  
with my spear when I sacked a well-walled city  
but taken from my hands by the son of Atreus,  
lord Agamemnon, like I was some dishonored  
exile. But we can put these things behind us.

I never wanted my heart to be angry forever.  
Indeed, I said that I would not cease my wrath  
until the noise of battle reached my ships. So put  
my splendid armor on your shoulders and lead  
the warlike Myrmidons into battle if, indeed,  
the Trojan cloud of darkness has surrounded  
our ships and forced the Argives back against  
the beach with only a sliver of land to stand on.  
Since they do not see the front of my shining helmet  
nearby, the whole city of Troy now descends  
upon them, but they would flee and fill a gully  
with their dead if lord Agamemnon treated me  
with respect. But now they fight around the camp,  
no spear rages in the hands of Diomedes, Tydeus'  
son, that would stave off Danaan ruin, and I  
have not heard the son of Atreus' voice howling  
from his hated head. Meanwhile, man-slaying  
Hector's calls to his men echo round, and war  
cries fill the plain as Trojans best Achaeans.  
Even so, Patroclus, attack in force and defend  
our ships lest they burn them with furious fire  
and take away our desired return home.  
But obey these words I place into your mind  
so that you bring me great honor and glory  
from all the Danaans and they bring back  
the lovely girl and grant me glorious gifts as well:  
once you have driven them from the ships,  
come back, and if the loud-thundering spouse  
of Hera offers you glory, do not fight the warlike  
Trojans without me and diminish my honor.  
And as you delight in battle and slay Trojans,  
do not lead your men to Ilios or some immortal  
gods will descend from Olympus and intervene.  
After all, far-shooter Apollo loves them dearly.  
So come back once you have saved the ships

and let the others battle upon the plain.  
Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, I wish  
no Trojan could escape death, nor any  
Argive, and that we, alone, could escape  
ruin and topple the sacred towers of Troy.”

While these two were speaking, Ajax retreated,  
for he was overwhelmed by the mind of Zeus  
and by the noble Trojans whose fiery missiles  
clanged like dreadful rain on the shining helmet  
that covered his temple and on his well-bossed  
chin-straps. Though his left shoulder grew weary  
from holding steady his flashing shield, the missile  
barrage could not dislodge him. Still, he panted  
painfully, unable to catch a breath, as a steady  
stream of sweat cascaded down across his limbs  
and danger closed in on him from all sides.

Tell me, muses who have homes on Olympus,  
how was fire first flung onto the Achaean ships?

Hector stood near Ajax and slashed his ashen  
spear with his great sword, shearing away  
the spearhead's base. The bronze fell to the dust  
with a clang, leaving Ajax holding a useless stick.  
Ajax recognized the work of the gods and felt  
dread in his heart, for high-thundering Zeus  
had foiled his battle plans in favor of a Trojan  
victory. Thus he retreated from the missiles  
while the Trojans hurled an unquenchable fire  
onto the swift ship, and the flames quickly spread.

As the ship's stern was enveloped in fire,  
Achilles struck his thighs and said to Patroclus:  
“Hurry, Zeus-born Patroclus, master of horses,  
for I see a blazing fire by the ships. They must

not seize our ships or we cannot escape. So don your armor at once, and I will gather the men.”

So he said, and Patroclus armed himself in bright bronze. First, he put over his shins a pair of fine greaves fitted with silver fasteners. He next covered his chest with the well-wrought breastplate of Aeacus’ swift-footed grandson. Then he slung over his shoulders a silver-studded bronze sword and a large, sturdy shield, and he set atop his noble head a well-made helmet with a horsehair crest that bobbed fearfully. Finally, he took two strong spears that fit his grasp but left the large, heavy, and powerful spear of Aeacus’ noble grandson, for no other Achaean was skilled enough to wield it but Achilles: an ashen spear from Pelion’s peak that Chiron gave his dear father, a gift for slaying heroes. To quickly yoke the horses, he called Automedon, whom he honored most after Achilles and whom he trusted above all to stand by his side in battle. So Automedon led to the yoke the swift horses [Xanthus and Balius](#), who flew like the wind, born to Zephyrus by the harpy Podarge as she grazed on grass beside the [Oceanus](#) stream. On the side traces he put the blameless Pedasus, taken by Achilles after he sacked the city of Eëtion; being mortal, he followed the immortal steeds.

Meanwhile, Achilles went to the Myrmidons and arranged them beside the tents in full armor. Like a pack of ravenous wolves with hearts full of fury who, after slaying and devouring a horned mountain stag and coating their cheeks red with blood, descend down to a dark spring to lap up the black water with their narrow tongues

and to belch out bloody gore, their hearts sated  
and their stomachs glutted, so the Myrmidon  
lords and leaders swarmed around the noble  
attendant of Aeacus' swift-footed grandson.  
With them stood warlike Achilles urging  
on the shield-bearing men and the horses.

Achilles, dear to Zeus, led a fleet of fifty swift  
ships to Troy, and in each ship there were fifty  
men, his comrades, stationed at the oars. Five  
were made leaders and trusted to give orders,  
while he in his great might was lord over all.  
One troop was led by Menesthius of the bright  
breatplate, son of [Spercheius](#), the rain-fed river;  
fair Polydora, daughter of Peleus, bore him  
to tireless Spercheius, a woman with a god,  
but he was born in name to Borus, Perieres' son,  
who wed her after paying countless bride-prices.  
Warlike [Eudorus](#) led the second troop, born  
out of wedlock to a fine dancer, Polymele,  
daughter of Phylas. Swift-appearing Hermes fell  
in love after seeing her dance among the choir  
of Artemis of the golden bow and echoing hunt.  
Later, Hermes went to the upper chamber to lie  
with her in secret, and she bore him a noble son,  
Eudorus, a swift runner and speedy warrior.  
But after Eileithyia's sharp pains led the child  
into the light and he saw the sun's rays, then  
stout Echeclus, son of Actor, led her to his home,  
after paying the huge bride-price, and old  
Phylas raised and reared Eudorus with dear  
affection as if he were his own son. The third  
troop's leader was warlike Peisander, the son  
of Maemalus, who was the best spear fighter  
among the Myrmidons save for Peleus' son.  
Old horseman Phoenix led the fourth troop,

and Alcimedon, great son of Laerces, the fifth. Once Achilles had arranged the troops into battalions, he gave them a stern order: "Myrmidons, do not forget the threats you made at the Trojans from the swift ships as I raged, when you each accused me, saying: 'Cruel son of Peleus, your mother raised you on gall, pitiless, for you force us to stay beside the ships. Let us return home in our seafaring ships since this foul rage has filled your soul.' So you often said against me, but the great battle you longed for is now before you, so fill your hearts with might and fight the Trojans."

So he said, stirring the might in each man's soul, and the ranks drew tighter after hearing their king. Just as a man building the wall of a house fits together stones able to withstand a mighty wind, so the men were pressed together, bossed shield on bossed shield, helmet on helmet, and man on man, all standing so close that their horsehair plumes touched each time they moved their heads. Before them all stood two warriors, Patroclus and Automedon, both ready to fight in the front lines of the Myrmidons. Meanwhile, Achilles went into his tent and opened the lid of the well-made chest silver-footed Thetis had put it in his ship to take with him to Troy, filling it with tunics, cloaks, and wool blankets to keep out the wind. Inside was a fashionable goblet that no one but Achilles drank bright wine from, nor did he use it to make offerings to any god but father Zeus. He lifted the cup, purified it with sulphur, washed it in river water, and then washed his own hands before pouring bright wine into it. Then he stood in the forecourt and prayed, pouring out the wine

while looking up to heaven, and Zeus took notice:  
“Zeus, lord of Dodona, Pelasgian, living far off  
and ruling wintry Dodona with your prophets,  
the Selli, who sleep on the ground with unwashed  
feet;<sup>1</sup> just as before when you heard my prayers  
and honored me by smiting the great Achaean  
army, so now hear my prayers once again.  
I will remain beside the assembled ships, but I  
send my comrade into battle alongside many  
Myrmidons. Bring him glory, O far-seeing Zeus,  
and fill his heart with courage so that Hector  
will know whether my attendant has the skill  
to fight alone or whether his hands hold hatred  
only when I enter into the fury of Ares. But once  
he has driven the war cries from the ships, then  
let him return unhurt to the swift ships with all  
his armor and his close-fighting comrades.”

So he prayed, and counselor Zeus heard him,  
granting one wish but not the other: Patroclus  
would drive the battle from the ships, but he  
would not safely return from the fight. After  
pouring the libation and praying to father  
Zeus, Achilles returned to his tent, returned  
the goblet to the chest, and stood outside, eager  
to watch the Trojans and Achaeans in grim battle.

Those following great-hearted Patroclus marched  
confidently towards the Trojans and attacked.  
At once, they poured out like wasps at a wayside  
that young boys frequently and foolishly anger  
by irritating them in their nests beside the road,  
thereby creating a common threat for many,  
for whenever a passing traveler disturbs them

1. Pelasgian is an ancient name for the people who originally inhabited Greece, and the Selli are the priests of Dodonian Zeus.



accidentally, the insects swarm out with furious hearts and attack en masse to protect their young. With the same heart and spirit, the Myrmidons poured out of the ships and uttered violent cries. And Patroclus called out loudly to his comrades: "Myrmidons, comrades of Achilles, son of Peleus: be men and remember your rushing courage. Honor Achilles, the greatest Argive in the fleet, for we are his brave fighting force. Make sure Atreus' son, wide-ruling Agamemnon, knows that he blindly dishonored the best Achaeans."

So he said, stirring the rage in each man's heart, and they fell on the Trojans as one, and around them the ships rang with fierce Achaean roars.

But when the Trojans saw Menoetius' stout son and his attendant in their bright armor, panic filled their hearts and battle lines shook for they thought the swift-footed son of Peleus had lost his wrath and found friendship, and each man glanced around for an escape from utter death.

Patroclus was first to shoot his shining spear straight into the heart of the panic-stricken enemy by the stern of great-hearted Protesilaus' ship, striking Pyraechmes, leader of Paeonians, marshalers of horses, from Amydon by the wide-flowing Axios. The spear struck his right shoulder, and he fell on his back in the dust with a groan. The other Paeonians panicked, for Patroclus had slain their leader and foremost fighter. He drove them from the ships and put out the blazing fire. The ship was left half-burnt as the Trojans fled with a deafening noise and the Danaans poured over the hollow ships, creating an unceasing

noise. Just as Zeus, gatherer of lightning, will move a dense cloud from a mountaintop, revealing many peaks, rocky cliffs, and valleys and sending down boundless aether from heaven, so the Danaans, having quenched the fire aboard the ships, took a breath, though the war raged on; for the Achaeans had not yet driven the warlike Trojans from the black ships, but they stood firm and gave ground from the ships only when forced.

The ranks broke among the leaders as man slew man. First, Menoetius' stout son shot Areilycus in the thigh with his sharp spear as he turned to flee; the bronze drove clean through and broke the bone, and he fell face-first in the dirt. Then warlike Menelaus struck Thoas in the chest where his shield did not protect him, loosening his limbs. And the son of Phyleus saw Amphiclus charging, but Meges was quicker and struck him in the leg where the muscles are thickest. The spearpoint tore his tendon and darkness covered his eyes. Then Nestor's son Antilochus struck his sharp spear into Atymnius, driving the bronze into the flank, and he fell forward. An enraged Maris was near and lunged his spear at Antilochus who stood over his brother's body, but godlike Thrasymedes was quicker and struck Maris square in the shoulder. The spearpoint severed the base of the arm from the muscles and dashed the bone into pieces, and he fell with a thud as darkness covered his eyes. So these two, slain by two brothers, went to Erebus: two noble comrades of Sarpedon and spearmen sons of Amisodarus, who reared the monstrous Chimera, a danger to many men. Then Ajax, son of Oileus, took Cleobulus alive in the chaos of the throng and slashed him in the neck

with his hilted sword until the blade grew warm with blood; and Cleobulus' eyes clouded over with death and resistless fate. Then Peneleos and Lyco rushed each other with swords after their spears missed their marks. Lyco slashed at Peneleos' horsehair helmet, but the blade shattered around the hilt. Then Peneleos struck his neck under Lyco's ear, and the sword sliced through until only skin was left to hold it in place. His head hung down on one side and his limbs collapsed. Then Meriones chased down Acamas and struck his right shoulder as he was mounting his chariot, and darkness covered his eyes as he fell. Then Idomeneus struck his ruthless bronze in Erymas' mouth, pushed the spear clean through and under the brain, and shattered bone. His teeth were forced out, both eyes were filled with blood, he coughed up blood through his mouth and nose, and a black cloud of death enveloped him.

Thus each Danaan leader slew his man.  
Just as ravenous wolves attack lambs or kids  
scattered on a mountain by a foolish shepherd,  
picking them out of the flock and quickly  
tearing apart those whose hearts are weakest,  
so the Danaans attacked the fright-filled  
Trojans who had lost their mighty mettle.

Great Ajax tried again and again to hurl  
his spear at bronze-clad Hector, but Hector's  
warcraft and bull's-hide shield protected him  
from the darts and spears whistling past. He knew  
the battle was turning against him, but he held  
his ground and tried to save his faithful friends.

Just as a cloud leaves Olympus and moves

into the upper air when Zeus sends a storm,  
so from the ships came the terrified cries  
of a disorderly retreat. Hector's swift horses  
carried him away in his armor, abandoning  
the Trojan soldiers trapped by the well-dug  
ditch, where many swift horses broke their front  
poles and left their master's chariots behind.  
Patroclus pursued, calling eagerly to the Danaans,  
devising evil for the Trojans, who cried in fear  
as they scattered, filling the path and sending  
a dust cloud high into the air as the horses strained  
to return to the city from the ships and tents.  
When Patroclus saw men in panic, he drove  
after them with a cry, and men fell face-first under  
the axles of empty chariots as they rattled away.  
Straight over the trench and beyond leapt the swift,  
immortal horses given to Peleus as gifts by the gods,  
and Patroclus' heart yearned to reach and attack  
Hector, but Hector's horses carried him away.  
Just as on an autumn day a storm oppresses all  
the black earth once Zeus pours rain down furiously  
upon it, having grown angry at men who use  
violence to lead, who use bent judgments to foil  
justice, and who care nothing for the gods'  
wrath; and as all the rivers flood, the streams  
cut channels into many hillsides until they roar  
out of the mountains and into the gleaming  
sea, destroying the works of men, so also was  
the mighty roar of the galloping Trojan horses.

But Patroclus cut off the front lines' retreat  
and went back to pin them by the ships without  
letting them return to the city. Then he rode  
between the ships and river and high wall  
and slayed them in revenge for his fallen friends.  
First, his shining spear hit Pronous in the chest

where his shield did not protect him; his limbs went limp, and he fell with a thud. Next, he rushed Thestor, son of Enops, who sat on his well-made chariot cowering in fear, for the reins had fallen from his hands. Patroclus pierced his right jaw, drove the spear through his teeth, and dragged him over the chariot rail like a fisherman on a rock dragging a sacred fish onto land with a gleaming bronze hook. So he dragged him, bright spear in mouth, out of the chariot and threw him down face-first, and life left him as he fell. Then Patroclus stoned a charging Erylaus square in the forehead, splitting his head in two under his stout helmet, and he fell to the earth, life-destroying death spreading over him. Erymas, Amphoterus, Epaltes, Tlepolemus, son of Damastor, Echius, Pyris, Ipheus, Euippus, and Polymelus, son of Argeas—one after the other, he brought them down to the earth that feeds many.

When Sarpedon saw his beltless friends bested by the hands of Patroclus, son of Menoetius, he reproached the godlike Lycians, crying: “Shame, Lycians. Why do you flee? Now be swift, for I will face this man and find out who this is who rules the fight and has done the Trojans such harm, loosening the knees of many noble men.”

So saying, he leapt in full armor from his chariot to the ground; seeing him, Patroclus did likewise. Like two hooked-talon and curved-beak vultures uttering loud cries and fighting atop a high rock, the two men shouted and charged at one another. The son of wily Cronos looked and felt pity, and he spoke to Hera, his wife and sister, saying: “Woe is me, for Sarpedon, dearest of men to me,

is fated to be slain by Patroclus, son of Menoetius!  
My heart is torn in two as I consider whether  
to snatch him up from this woeful battle and take  
him to the rich lands of Lycia, or let him perish  
now at the hands of the son of Menoetius.”

In reply, the revered, ox-eyed Hera said to him:  
“Terrible son of Cronos, what words you say!  
If you wish to free a mortal man who was  
destined by fate to die a hateful death, then  
do it, but not all the other gods will approve.  
And I will also say this, and take it to heart:  
if you send Sarpedon home alive, then consider  
that other gods may wish to carry their dear sons  
out of dread battle, for many sons of immortals  
are fighting around Priam’s great city, and you  
would invite grave resentment among them.  
But if he is dear to you and your heart grieves,  
then allow him to perish in mighty combat  
at the hands of Patroclus, son of Menoetius;  
but when his life and soul have left his body,  
then send death and sweet sleep to carry him  
away to the land of spacious Lycia where  
his brothers and kin can bury him with barrow  
and pillar, for that is the honor of the dead.”

So she said, and the father of gods and mortals  
obeyed, but he sent bloody teardrops to the ground  
in honor of his dear son, who was set to be killed  
by Patroclus in fertile Troy, far from his father’s land.

When the two men converged on one another,  
Patroclus struck famed Thrasymelus, lord  
Sarpedon’s noble attendant, hitting him  
in the lower belly and loosening his limbs.  
Sarpedon lashed back, but his shining spear

missed and struck the horse Pedasus in the right shoulder; he shrieked, breathed his last, and fell to the dust with a cry as his spirit flew away. With the trace horse in the dust, the others split apart, and the yoke creaked, tangling the reins. But spear-famed Automedon fixed this: drawing his sharp sword from his stout thighs, he quickly cut the trace horse loose, steadying the other two, and then pulled the reins tight. Once again, the warriors resumed their heart-devouring strife.

Again Sarpedon missed with his shining spear as the point passed over Patroclus' left shoulder. Then Patroclus attacked him with his bronze, and the shot from his hand was not in vain, striking him in the chest, near his throbbing heart. Sarpedon fell like an oak tree or white poplar or tall pine that is cut down by carpenter axes and made into ship's timber. So also did Sarpedon lay in front of his horses and chariot, wailing and clawing at the blood-soaked dust. Or like a fierce bull in a herd of shambling cattle who is killed by a lion and dies groaning under the lion's jaws, so beneath Patroclus did the leader of the Lycian warriors struggle in death, calling out to his beloved comrade: "Dear Glaucus, fighter among men, go now and be a spearman and bold warrior and let bitter battle be your desire—if you are quick. First, go among the men and urge the Lycian leaders to fight for Sarpedon, and then you yourself must defend me with your bronze. For I will be a cause of shame and rebuke for you for the rest of your life if you let the Achaeans strip my armor here beside the gathered ships. So hold your ground and rouse the army."

So he said as death filled his nostrils and eyes.  
Patroclus put his foot on Sarpedon's chest and drew  
the spear from his flesh, and the diaphragm came  
with it, releasing his soul as he released the spear-  
point. And the Myrmidons kept the snorting horses  
from fleeing, for they had left their lord's chariot.

The sound of Sarpedon's voice filled Glaucus  
with terrible grief, for he was unable to defend  
him, and he squeezed his own arm, for he was  
still bothered by the wound he received when  
Teucer's arrow struck him as he scaled the high  
wall. So he prayed to free-shooter Apollo, saying:  
"Hear me, lord, be you in Lycia's rich lands  
or in Troy, for you can hear a man's troubles  
from anywhere, and trouble has now come  
to me. A sharp pain from a deep-struck wound  
pierces my arm and weighs down my shoulder,  
I cannot check the flow of blood or grip  
my spear, I am unable to fight the enemy,  
and we have lost our greatest man, Sarpedon,  
son of Zeus, who did not protect his child.  
So please, my lord, cure my deep wound,  
numb my pain, and give me strength so I can  
call my comrades, the Lycians, and urge them  
to fight while I myself protect the fallen body."

So he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him  
and at once stopped his pain, dried the deep  
wound's black blood, and put courage in his heart.  
Glaucus knew in his mind that the great god  
had quickly answered his prayer, and he rejoiced.  
First, he went around rousing the Lycian leaders  
to fight for Sarpedon. Then with great strides  
he went among the Trojans, past Polydamas, son  
of Panthous, and godlike Agenor, and came



to stand beside Aeneas and Hector, marshaller of spears, and spoke to them with winged words: “Hector, your allies are risking their lives for you far from their friends and homes, but you are wholly ignoring them and doing nothing to aid them. Sarpedon, leader of the Lycian warriors who guarded Lycia with justice and might, lies dead, slain by brash Ares and Patroclus’ mighty sword. So defend him, friend, and do not shame your soul by letting the Myrmidons strip his armor and harm his corpse as revenge for all the Danaans that we killed with our spears by the swift ships.”

So saying, the Trojans were filled with unbearable, uncontrollable grief, for though Sarpedon was a foreigner, he was the city’s buttress, a leader of many men and the finest of fighters. Enraged by Sarpedon’s death, Hector led them straight to the Danaans. But the Achaeans were urged on by savage-hearted Patroclus, son of Menoetius, who spoke first to the already battle-eager Ajaxes: “You two Ajaxes must defend against the enemy. Be the warriors you have always been—or greater. Sarpedon lies dead, the first to scale the Achaean wall, so let us seize him, mutilate his corpse, strip the armor from his shoulders, and use our pitiless bronze to kill his friends who wish to defend him.”

So he said, and they were eager to fight their foes. When both sides had marshaled their forces, the Trojans, Lycians, Myrmidons, and Achaeans came together and battled around the corpse as terrible shouts rang out and weapons clanged loudly. And Zeus placed deathly darkness around the battle, so a fierce fight would be waged over his dear son.

First, the Trojans repelled the bright-eyed Achaeans, for the man who was in no way the Myrmidon's worst was hit: the son of great-hearted Agacles, noble Epeigeus, former king of bustling Budeum, who, after slaying a noble cousin, came as a suppliant to Peleus and silver-footed Thetis, and they sent him with Achilles, breaker of ranks, to horse-famed Ilios so he might fight the Trojans. As he grabbed the corpse, shining Hector struck him in the head with a large stone, splitting his head in two inside his strong helmet. He fell face-first atop the corpse, and life-crushing death covered him. Patroclus grieved for his fallen comrade by driving through the battle like a swift hawk who sends jackdaws and starlings scattering; so you, Patroclus, sent the Lycians and Trojans scattering, your heart enraged for your friend. He struck Sthenelaus, dear son of Ithaemenes, on the neck with a boulder, tearing their tendons. And noble Hector and his finest fighters retreated as far as a man casts a long javelin when testing his strength in a contest or else in battle when he faces a dangerous enemy, so great was the distance that the Trojans retreated from the Achaeans. Glaucus, now the Lycian leader, was first to turn, and he slew great-hearted Bathycles, dear son of Chalcon, who lived in Hellas and was among the richest Myrmidons. Glaucus hit him square in the chest with his spear just before he was overtaken, and Bathycles fell with a thud. The Trojans rejoiced as they stood over him, but great grief fell over the Achaeans, though they did not forget their might and carried their rage straight at their foes. Meriones then slew the well-armed Trojan leader Laogonus,

Onetor's bold son, a priest of Idean Zeus<sup>2</sup> who was honored like a god by his people, striking him in the lower jaw and ear until his soul left his limbs and hateful darkness seized him.

Then Aeneas threw his bronze spear at Meriones, hoping to hit him as he advanced behind his shield, but Meriones kept his eyes on him and avoided the bronze spear, bending forward as the weapon fixed itself into the ground, making the butt-end quiver; only then did Ares still its mighty fury. And Aeneas' spear-point rattled in the earth after flying fruitlessly from his mighty hands. Then Aeneas, his heart full of rage, said: "Meriones, you are a fine dancer, but my spear would have ended you for good had it struck."

Spear-famed Meriones answered him, saying: "You are a strong fighter, Aeneas, but you cannot silence the rage of every man who defends himself against you, for you too are mortal. No matter the might of your hands, if my sharp spear hit you square in the middle, you would give glory to me and your soul to Hades of the famous steeds."

So he said, but mighty Patroclus rebuked him: "You are a good man, Meriones, so why say such things? Dear friend, the Trojans will be long dead before harsh words force them to give up the corpse. Our hands, not our words, will win the battle, so quit making speeches and fight."

So saying, godlike Patroclus led the way, and the rest followed. Just as the noises made

2. This refers to the Zeus of Mt. Ida. However, there are two different Idas and both are connected with Zeus. The Ida near Troy is where Zeus watches the war unfold; but the Mt. Ida in Crete is where Rhea purportedly hid Zeus from Cronos so he could not kill him. The Trojan Laogonus, however, is most certainly a priest of the Idean Zeus near Troy.

by wood-cutters in a mountain glen can be heard from afar, so the sounds of bronze, leather, and well-made shields rose from the wide earth as they struck at each other with swords and leaf-shaped spears. But no man, not even a friend, would recognize noble Sarpedon, for he was wrapped from head to foot in missiles, blood, and dust. They battled around the corpse just as in springtime, when buckets overflow with milk, farmhouse flies swarm around milk-filled pails. So, too, did they swarm around the corpse. Zeus did not turn his shining eyes from the fierce combat but kept constant watch, debating in his heart whether it was time, during this mighty battle over the body of Sarpedon, for Hector to slay Patroclus with his bronze and strip his armor from his shoulders or whether to allow him to increase his toil of war and to slay many more. Eventually, he decided it would be best for the brave attendant of Achilles, son of Peleus, to force the Trojans and bronze-clad Hector back to the city and to take many lives. First, he filled Hector's heart with cowardice, so Hector leapt on his chariot to flee and called the other Trojans to follow, for he saw the scales of Zeus had tipped. The valiant Lycians also did not wait but fled after seeing their king struck in the heart and lying in a pile of corpses, for many had fallen on him when Cronos' son drew tight the fierce combat. Then the Achaeans stripped the flashing bronze from Sarpedon's shoulders, and Menoetius' son gave it to his comrades to take to the hollow ships. But cloud-gatherer Zeus said to Apollo: "Dear Phoebus, take Sarpedon out of missile range, carry him far away, cleanse him of black

blood by washing him in a river, anoint him with ambrosia, and dress him in divine clothes. Then give him to the swift escorts, twins Sleep and Death, to quickly take him to wide Lycia's rich lands and lay him down so his brothers and kin may give him a solemn burial with barrow and gravestone, for that is the honor of the dead."

So he said, and Apollo did not disobey his father. He went from mount Ida to the dread battlefield and carried noble Sarpedon out of missile range. Then he washed him in the river, anointed him with ambrosia, dressed him in divine clothes, and gave him to the swift escorts, the twin brothers Sleep and Death, who set him down in wide Lycia's rich lands.

But Patroclus, like a reckless child, ordered his horses and Automedon to chase the Trojans and Lycians. If only he had obeyed the words of Peleus' son, he would have escaped black death. But the mind of Zeus is mightier than a mortal's, for he frightens even brave men and robs them of victory with ease by urging them to fight—just as he now stirred the soul of Patroclus.

Patroclus, who was first and who was last to be slain when the gods called you to your death? Adrastus was first, followed by Autonous, Echeclus, Perimus son of Megas, Epistor, Melanippus, Elasmus, Mulus, and Pylartes: he slew them all, and the rest turned to flee.

Then the Achaeans would have seized high-gated Troy under Patroclus' spear-raging hands had Phoebus Apollo not stood on the well-built wall with thoughts of death and of Troy's

salvation. Three times Patroclus reached the high wall, and three times Apollo beat back the shining shield with his immortal hands. But as Patroclus made his fourth godlike assault, Apollo called to him with a terrible cry: "Retreat, godlike Patroclus, for the city of proud Trojans is not fated to fall by your spear, nor by that of Achilles, who is far better than you."

So he said, and Patroclus gave ground to avoid the wrath of far-striker Apollo.

Hector held his single-hoofed horses behind the Scaean gate, unsure whether to press on or to order his army to gather inside the wall. As he considered, Phoebus Apollo came up to him in the guise of stout, strong Asius, horse-taming Hector's uncle, brother of Hecuba, and son of Dymas, who lived in Phrygia by the waters of the Sangarius. Thus disguised, Apollo, son of Zeus, said to him: "Hector, why did you stop fighting? You must not. If I were stronger than you, not weaker, then you would regret holding back from battle. So drive your chariot against Patroclus, seek to slay him, and Apollo may give you glory."

So saying, Apollo returned to the war of men, plunging the Argive throng into a grave panic and giving great glory to the Trojans and Hector. Meanwhile, shining Hector ordered skilled Cebriones to whip the horses back into battle, but he left the other Danaans alone and instead drove his solid-hoofed horses against Patroclus. Opposite him, Patroclus leapt from his chariot to the ground. Holding a spear in his left hand,

he picked up a jagged stone with his right,  
planted his feet, and hurled it, and the shot  
was not in vain, for it hit Hector's charioteer,  
Cebriones, noble Priam's bastard son,  
on the forehead as he held the horses' reins.  
The stone crushed both eyebrows and broke  
the skull-bone, his eyes fell to the dust in front  
of his feet, and he fell from the well-made  
chariot like a diver as the life left his bones.  
Then horseman Patroclus mocked him, saying:  
"Alas, how nimble he is, tumbling so easily.  
If he were in the fish-filled sea, he would satisfy  
many by diving for oysters and leaping from ships  
in stormy weather just as he now lightly tumbles  
head-first from the chariot to the ground.  
Clearly, the Trojans have acrobats too."

So saying, he sprang upon heroic Cebriones  
like a lion who is hit in the chest while laying  
waste to a farmhouse, thus curbing his courage.  
So you, Patroclus, pounced furiously on Cebriones.  
But Hector leapt from his chariot to the ground,  
and the two fought like a pair of brave, starving  
lions fighting over a slain deer atop a mountain.  
So over the body of Cebriones did these masters  
of the war cry—Patroclus, son of Menoetius,  
and glorious Hector—struggle to cut each other's  
flesh with ruthless bronze. Hector took hold  
of his head and did not let go, and Patroclus  
took hold of his feet, and all around them  
Trojans and Danaans joined in bitter battle.

Just as the East and South Winds battle each  
other in a mountain dell by shaking the deep  
forest oak, ash, and smooth-barked cornel trees,  
throwing their long, slender boughs at one another,

and creating a deafening din of breaking branches, so the Trojans and Achaeans attacked each other, neither side thinking of deadly panic. Many sharp spears were struck around Cebriones, many winged arrows leapt from bowstrings, and many boulders were hurled against shields as men fought in a cloud of dust over the body of this mighty man whose horsemanship was forgotten.

While [Helios](#) stood high in the heavens, arrows on both sides hit their targets and men fell, but when the time came for the unyoking of oxen,<sup>3</sup> then the Achaeans proved the stronger. They drew Cebriones away from the arrows and Trojan cries and stripped the armor from his shoulders. Then Patroclus leapt on the Trojans. Three times he uttered a terrible cry and sprang at them like a god, and each time he killed nine men. But when you made your fourth godlike assault, Patroclus, your life came to an end, for you were met in fierce combat by Phoebus, the terror. Patroclus did not see him in the press of battle, for Apollo was shrouded in a thick mist when he stood behind him and struck him in the back and broad shoulders with the flat of his hand, making his eyes spin. Then Phoebus Apollo knocked his hollow-eyed helmet off his head; it rattled and rolled under the horses' hooves, covering the horse-hair plumes with blood and dust. Never had the gods allowed these plumes to be sullied, for they guarded the fair head and brow of godlike Achilles. But now Zeus gave it to Hector to wear on his head, though his end was also near. Now, the long-shadowed spear in Patroclus' hands

3. This usually references evening (as in, the time when farmers removed the yoke from their oxen), but in this case it is actually early afternoon.



was broken, the fringed shield on his shoulders had dropped to the ground, and his breastplate had been unfastened by lord Apollo, son of Zeus. His mind fell into a stupor, his body went numb, and he stood stunned. Then he was hit from behind in the shoulder by the sharp spear of a Dardanian, [Euphorbus](#), Panthous' son, the best of his age with the spear, with a horse, and with his feet. In his first chariot lesson, he knocked twenty from their horses; now he was first to spear you, horseman Patroclus—but not to death. He pulled his ashen spear out of your flesh and retreated into the throng, unwilling to face even an unarmed Patroclus. Then Patroclus, broken by the god's blow and by the spear, drew back to his comrades to avoid his fate.

Seeing great-hearted Patroclus drawing back after being struck by a sharp spear, Hector came up to him through the ranks, thrust his spear into his side, and drove the bronze clean through. He fell with a thud, and the Achaeans cried out. Just as on the peak of a mountain a lion fights a tireless boar over a small spring from which both want to drink, and the lion's strength wins out once the boar starts gasping for breath, so Menoetius' noble son, having slain many, was slain by the spear of Hector, Priam's son, who then stood over him in triumph and said: "Patroclus, did you imagine that you would ravage our city, enslave the women of Troy, and take them back to your dear father's land? Fool! Before them stand Hector's swift horses, and my spear is best among the warlike Trojans, for I defend them from doomsday. But as for you, vultures will devour you here. Poor man, even

great Achilles could not save you. When you left and he remained, he must have told you: 'Horse-master Patroclus, do not return to me or the hollow ships until you have torn deadly Hector's tunic and drenched it in his blood.' So I imagine he said to your foolish heart."

With your life spent, you answered him, Patroclus: "Boast away, Hector, for Zeus, son of Cronos, and Apollo have granted you victory, besting me easily by taking the armor from my shoulders. But if twenty like you had faced me, then they would all be dead, slaughtered by my spear. Deadly fate and the son of Leto killed me, as did Euphorbus; you are merely the third. But I say this now, and hold it in your heart: you shall not live long, for death and resistless fate stand beside you, to cut you down using the hands of Achilles, Aeacus' noble grandson."

As he spoke these words, death covered him, his soul left his limbs, and he flew to Hades, mourning his fate, leaving manhood and youth behind. And though dead, Hector spoke to him: "Patroclus, why do you prophecy my death? Perhaps Achilles, child of fair-haired Thetis, will be first to fall by my spear and lose his life."

Saying this, he set his foot on the corpse, pulled the bronze spear from the wound, pushed him back, and set off after Automedon, swift-footed attendant of Aeacus' grandson, eager to strike him; but Automedon was carried off by the swift, immortal horses given to Peleus as gifts by the gods.

## BOOK 17

Patroclus' death at the hands of the Trojans did not go unnoticed by warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus, and he went through the ranks, armed in shining bronze, and stood over the dead man. Like a cow wailing over her first-born calf, so fair-haired Menelaus stood over Patroclus, his spear and well-balanced shield held in front of him as he looked to slay any man who tried to challenge him.

Panthous' son, wielder of the stout spear, also witnessed the fall of Patroclus, and he stood close to the body and said to warlike Menelaus: "Great son of Atreus, Menelaus, leader of men, give up the corpse and the blood-stained armor, for I was the first of the Trojans and their famed allies to strike Patroclus with my spear in combat. Let me gain great glory among the Trojans or I will strike you down and take your honey-sweet life."

Enraged, fair-haired Menelaus answered him: "Father Zeus, only a fool makes reckless boasts. Clearly, there is no panther or lion who is more courageous, nor any mischievous wild boar more prideful in his mighty heart than the son of Panthous, wielder of the stout spear. Even the youthful might of horse-tamer Hyperenor

was no match for me after he insulted me  
and said I was the most cowardly fighter among  
the Danaans. He will never again walk home  
to cheer up his dear wife and loving parents.  
So I will shatter your strength if you stand  
and face me, but I urge you to retreat back  
into the throng before you pay the price,  
for fools only learn once a deed is done.”

So he said, but an unswayed Euphorbus replied:  
“Now, Menelaus, blessed by Zeus, you will pay  
for killing my brother, for boasting about it,  
for making his wife a widow in her new bridal  
chamber, and for cursing his parents with misery  
and sorrow. Perhaps their mourning will stop  
if I bring your head and armor and put them  
in the hands of Panthous and divine Phrontis.  
But this battle will not take long to settle,  
so either put up a fight or take flight.”

Saying this, Euphorbus hit the well-balanced  
shield of Menelaus, but the mighty shield not only  
held but bent the spear point. Then Menelaus  
said a prayer to Zeus, drew back his bronze spear,  
and struck the base of his throat, thrusting  
with all his might and trusting his heavy hands.  
The point went clean through Euphorbus’ tender  
neck, and he fell with a thud, armor clanging  
and blood drenching his Graces-like hair that was  
braided with gold and silver. Think of a young  
olive tree grown by a man in a lonely place  
with abundant water that makes it bloom  
beautifully; when the wind makes the branches  
shake, bright blossoms rain down, but suddenly  
the wind grows into a tempest, uproots the tree,  
and lays it low. So Menelaus, son of Atreus,

slew Euphorbus, son of Panthous and wielder  
of the stout spear, and began to strip his armor.

Just as a mountain lion, sure of his strength,  
snatches the finest heifer in a grazing herd, first  
biting and breaking her neck with his sharp teeth  
and then feasting on her blood and entrails,  
while all around hounds and shepherds cry out  
in alarm but stay well back, seized as they are  
by a pallid fear and unwilling to challenge him;  
so each Trojan, in his heart, lacked the courage  
to challenge glorious Menelaus. And Atreus'  
son would have taken Euphorbus' famed armor  
had Phoebus Apollo not borne a grudge against  
him, disguised himself as Mentès, the leader  
of the Cicones, and stirred Hector, equal  
to Ares, addressing him with winged words:  
"Hector, you will never catch the horses  
of the skilled grandson of Aeacus, for no  
mortal can tame or drive them save Achilles,  
whose mother is a goddess. But Menelaus,  
great son of Atreus, stands over Patroclus,  
having slain the best of the Trojans, Euphorbus,  
son of Panthous, and stopped his fiery spirit."

So saying, the god returned to the fighting,  
but a black cloud filled Hector's mind as he  
surveyed the battlefield and saw one man  
stripping off splendid armor and another lying  
on the earth, blood gushing from his wound.  
With a sharp cry, he raced through the ranks  
armed in bronze as bright as the unquenchable  
fire of Hephaestus. Hearing the shout, Atreus' son  
was troubled, and he said to his own heroic heart:  
"Woe is me! If I leave this splendid armor behind  
with Patroclus, who fell defending my honor,

then some Danaans will see this and rebuke me.  
But if, out of shame, I fight Hector and the Trojans  
alone, I fear they will surround me, many against  
one, for shining-helmed Hector leads the Trojan  
army here. But why does my heart debate this?  
When a man fights another who is honored  
by the gods, then misery rolls quickly over him.  
As Hector fights with the aid of a god, let no  
Danaan who sees me retreat rebuke me. But if I  
can find great-shouter Ajax, then we two might  
return and think of fighting, even against a god,  
and save the corpse for Achilles, son of Peleus,  
thus making the best of a bad situation.”

As he pondered this in his mind and heart,  
the Trojan ranks advanced, led by Hector.  
So Menelaus backed away from the corpse  
but kept turning like a well-bearded lion  
chased from a farmhouse by spear-wielding  
men and barking dogs, the lion’s brave heart  
growing cold as he unwillingly leaves. So, too,  
did fair-haired Menelaus leave Patroclus.  
But when he came to stand with his comrades,  
he looked around for great Ajax, Telamon’s  
son, and found him on the battle’s left side,  
cheering his comrades and rousing them to fight,  
for Phoebus Apollo had filled them with grave  
terror. Menelaus raced over to him and said:  
“Quick, Ajax, come with me to dead Patroclus  
and help me return his naked corpse to Achilles,  
for glancing-helmed Hector has his armor.”

His words stirred Ajax’s heart, and he followed  
fair-haired Menelaus through the throng. Once  
Hector had stripped Patroclus of the famed armor,  
he started to drag the corpse away, intending

to take it back to Troy, decapitate it, and give it to the dogs. But when Ajax and his towering shield appeared, Hector fled behind his comrades, leapt on his chariot, and handed the fine armor to the Trojans to take to the city, an emblem of his glory. But Ajax and his great shield stood over the son of Menoetius like a lion who, while leading her cubs through a forest, stumbles upon hunters and faces them with her might on full display and her eyes narrowed into tight, menacing slits. So Ajax stood over heroic Patroclus, and beside him stood Menelaus, son of Atreus, a great sadness filling his chest.

Then Glaucus, son of Hippolochus and leader of the Lycians, scolded Hector with harsh words: “Good-looking Hector, your fighting falls short. You are given glory but you act like a coward. Consider now how you plan to save your citadel and your city with only those born in Ilios, for no men of Lycia will battle the Danaans for your city since we receive no thanks for our non-stop warring with the enemy. How could you save a weaker man from pitiless battle after abandoning Sarpedon, your guest and friend, to be prey and prize for the Argives? He often aided you and your city when he lived, but now you dare not defend him from dogs. Now, if any Lycian men obey me, then we will head home, and Troy will be brought to ruin. If only the Trojans had some bold, unshakable courage—the kind that comes when men struggle to defend their father’s lands from a foe—then we would quickly drag Patroclus to Ilios. And if this man, this corpse, was dragged from the battle and brought to Priam’s great city, then the Argives

would quickly give up Sarpedon's fine armor,  
and we would return his body to Ilios. For such  
a man did Patroclus serve, best of the Argives  
by the ships and leader of the fiercest fighters.  
But you lack the courage to stand against great-  
hearted Ajax, to eye him in the din of battle,  
and to fight him, for he is a better man than you."

Flashing-helmed Hector scowled and said to him:  
"Glaucus, why do you speak with such arrogance?  
My friend, I thought you were the most intelligent  
man in all of fertile Lycia, but hearing you speak  
today, I mock your mind altogether, for you say  
I did not stand up to mighty Ajax. I never shrink  
from a fight or from the sound of chariots,  
but aegis-bearing Zeus' mind is ever-powerful,  
for he forces stout men to flee, easily robbing  
them of victory, and rouses weak men to fight.  
But come, stand beside me today, and watch me  
work; find out whether I am a coward, as you say,  
or whether I stop many Danaans eager to prove  
their valor by fighting to defend dead Patroclus."

Saying this, he shouted out to the Trojans, saying:  
"Trojans, Lycians, and close-fighting Dardanians,  
be men, friends, and remember your rushing rage  
while I don the fine armor of noble Achilles that  
I stripped from mighty Patroclus after slaying him."

So saying, flashing-helmed Hector left the fury  
of battle and ran off, his swift feet soon carrying  
him to his comrades who were carrying the splendid  
armor of Peleus' son back to the city. He stopped  
and exchanged armor, giving his old to the warlike  
Trojans to carry back to Ilios and donning the divine  
armor of Achilles, son of Peleus, which the heavenly



gods gave to his dear father, who then passed  
it on to his son when he himself had grown old;  
but the son would not grow old in his father's armor.

Cloud-gatherer Zeus watched him from afar  
as he donned the armor of Peleus' godlike son,  
and he shook his head and addressed his own heart:  
"Poor man, you think nothing of death though  
your time draws near. You dress in the divine  
armor of a great man who terrifies others, and you  
have slain his kind, strong friend and indecently  
stripped the armor from his arms and shoulders.  
For now, I will grant you great strength since you  
will not return from battle, and Andromache will  
not receive from you the famous armor of Achilles."

The son of Cronos spoke and nodded his brow;  
the armor joined with Hector's skin, filling  
his limbs with the might and courage of terrible  
Ares, god of war. Then he joined his famed allies,  
gave a great cry, and displayed himself before  
them in the armor of Peleus' great-hearted son.  
He went through the ranks and inspired each  
man with his words: Mesthles, Glaucus, Medon,  
Thersilochus, Asteropaeus, Deisenor, Hippothous,  
Phorcys, Chromius, and the seer Ennomus.  
He stirred them all to action, saying to them:  
"Hear me, countless allies from neighboring  
tribes: I brought you here from your cities not  
because I desired or needed such numbers  
but because I knew you would eagerly protect  
Trojan wives and children from the battling  
Achaeans. This is why I exhaust my people  
to feed you, reward you, and bolster your hearts.  
Now, each of you, turn and fight the enemy  
and live or die, for this is the way of war.

And the man who drags Patroclus' corpse back to the Trojans and forces Ajax to give ground will be given half the spoils, and I the other half; and his glory will be equal to my own."

So saying, they raised their spears and charged at the Danaans with all their weight and with hopes of dragging the corpse away from Telamonian Ajax—but he would rob many of their lives, the fools. Then Ajax himself said to Menelaus: "Menelaus, my friend, nourished by Zeus, I no longer expect the two of us to survive this war. I fear less for this corpse of Patroclus, which will soon satisfy the birds and dogs of Troy, and more for the suffering that might fall on my own life or yours, for Hector and his cloud of war cover everything and bring destruction down upon us. Now call the Danaan leaders, if any will listen."

So he said, and war-crier Menelaus obeyed; with a piercing cry, he called to the Danaans: "Friends, leaders, and rulers of the Argives, you who drink at the table of Atreus' sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus, who command men, and who are given honor and glory by Zeus, it is hard to see each of you amidst the blazing strife of battle, but let each man burn with rage at the idea of Patroclus being made into a sport for Trojan dogs."

So he said, and swift Ajax, son of Oïleus, heard clearly and was first to run into battle, followed by Idomeneus and his companion Meriones, equal to man-slaying Enyalios. As for the rest, who could remember the names of all Achaeans who were roused for battle?

The Trojans, led by Hector, attacked as one.  
Just as a mighty wave at the mouth of a rain-fed  
river roars against the current and crashes  
into the shore as the salt sea bellows beyond,  
so the Trojans bellowed as they advanced.  
But the Achaeans stood firm around Patroclus,  
fencing him with their bronze shields, while  
Cronos' son spread a thick mist over their bright  
helmets, for he had never hated Menoetius' son  
while he lived and attended Achilles, and he  
shrank from making him a sport for Trojan  
dogs, so he urged his comrades to defend him.

First, the high-hearted Trojans drove the quick-  
glancing Achaeans from the corpse, but Trojan  
spears slew no men as they began to drag  
the corpse away. The Achaean retreat was  
short-lived, however, for they soon rallied  
behind Ajax, who in looks and in acts of war  
surpassed all other Danaans save noble Achilles.  
He charged the front lines like a fierce, wild boar  
on a mountain who chases off dogs and young  
men with ease when he turns on them in a dell;  
so noble Telamon's son, shining Ajax, charged  
and easily chased off the Trojan troops  
who stood over Patroclus and were eager  
to drag him back to the city and win glory.

Hippothous, shining son of Pelasgian Lethus,  
was dragging the body by the foot across  
the battlefield, having bound his baldric around  
the ankle tendons, pleasing Hector and the Trojans.  
But evil soon caught him, and none could help.  
Telamonian Ajax rushed through the throng  
and, with a great spear in his mighty hands, struck  
Hippothous' helmet with bronze cheek-pieces.

The spear-point split the horse-hair crest in two, and the brains and blood oozed from the wound along the spear's socket. Then Hippothous' strength left him, he dropped great-hearted Patroclus to the ground, and he himself fell forward over the corpse, far from fertile Larisa, never to repay his dear parents for raising him, his life cut short by great-hearted Ajax's spear.

Then Hector hurled his shining spear at Ajax, but Ajax was watching and just managed to dodge the bronze javelin. Instead, it struck great-hearted Iphitus' son, Schedius, best of the Phocians, who lived in famed Panopeus and ruled many men. Hector's bronze landed below the collarbone, tore through the shoulder, and came out the other side; and he fell with a thud, his armor clanging.

Ajax next struck Phorcys, skilled son of Phaenops, square in the belly as he stood over Hippothous, breaking his breastplate. His bowels gushed out from the bronze, and he fell to the dust, clutching the dirt in his hands. The Trojans and Hector retreated, and the Argives cheered, moved Phorcys and Hippothous, and started to strip their armor.

The Trojans might have again fled to Ilios, routed by fear of the Ares-blessed Achaeans, and the Argives would have won glory beyond that granted by Zeus for their might and courage, but Apollo roused Aeneas, disguised as the herald Periphas, son of Epytus, a kind old man who had long been herald in the house of Aeneas' father. In this guise, Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke to him: "Aeneas, you could not protect high Ilios against a god, though I have seen others who believed

in their strength, courage, valor, and numbers enough to hold their lands against even Zeus. But Zeus wants us, not the Danaans, to win; still, you are deathly afraid and do not fight.”

So he said, and Aeneas knew he was looking at far-shooter Apollo, so he called out to Hector: “Hector, other Trojan leaders, and their allies, it is shameful to be driven back to Ilios, routed by fear of the Ares-blessed Achaeans. But one of the gods stood beside me and declared that great counselor Zeus was our ally in the fight, so let us go straight at the Danaans and not let them easily return dead Patroclus to their ships.”

So saying, he leapt far past the front lines, and the Trojans turned to face the Achaeans. Then Aeneas drove his spear into Leocritus, son of Arisbas and good friend of Lycomedes. As he fell, warrior Lycomedes stood beside him, feeling pity, and shot his shining spear at Apisano, son of Hippiasus, leader of men, hitting him in the liver, below the chest; and he fell to his knees, this man from fertile Paeonia who was second only to Asteropaeus in fighting.

As he fell, Asteropaeus, dear to Ares, felt pity and flew forward, eager to attack the Danaans, but he could do nothing, for men with shields and outstretched spears surrounded Patroclus. Ajax roamed all around, ordering them not to retreat from the corpse or to fight alone in front of the other Achaeans but to stand strong beside the body and fight hand-to-hand. As mighty Ajax spoke, the ground grew wet with black blood and the dead fell atop one

another, both the Trojans and their mighty allies and the Danaans, whose men also bled, though fewer fell, for they remembered to stand as one and protect each other.

They fought like a flaming fire, and it seemed as if the sun and the moon had disappeared, for a dark cloud covered the great warriors who battled around the slain son of Menoetius. But the other Trojans and the well-greaved Achaeans fought in the open air with sharp sunlight all around them and not a cloud over the mountains or plains; and they fought in short bursts, avoiding each other's groaning spears and standing far apart while the great men in the middle struggled as they fought in the dark with pitiless bronze. But two men, famed heroes Thrasymedes and Antilochus, were unaware of noble Patroclus' death and thought him still alive and fighting the Trojans in the front lines. They fought apart, protecting their comrades from death and rout and following the orders given to them by Nestor back at the black ships.

For the rest of the day the terrible battle raged on, and each man's knees, legs, and feet were spattered with the sweat of toil. Their arms and eyes were also soaked as the two armies battled around the attendant of Aeacus' swift-footed grandson. Just as a man gives his servants the fat-drenched hide of a great ox for stretching, and after taking it they stand in a circle and pull it apart until the moisture goes away, the fat is absorbed, and the hide is made level, so a tight ring of enemies pulled the body this way and that. The Trojans hoped to drag him

to Ilios and the Achaeans to the hollowed ships, while all around the wild fight raged on. Neither Ares the rallier nor Athena, in all her fury, could scorn the fighting—such were the wicked deeds of men and horses that Zeus drew tight over Patroclus that day. At this point, Achilles knew nothing of Patroclus' death, for the battle was fought beneath the walls of Troy, far from the swift ships. He believed in his heart that Patroclus would return safely from the gates, never imagining that he would sack the city, either with him or without him, for often, when he was alone, his mother would bring him reports of great Zeus' plans. But she brought him no report of this grave evil, the death of his dearest companion.

All around the corpse, men with sharp spears fought without pause and slew one another; and some bronze-clad Achaean would say: "There is no honor in returning to the hollow ships, my friends, so let the black earth open to receive us all, for that would be better than letting the Trojans, tamers of horses, drag this man back to their city and gain glory."

And some great-hearted Trojan would say: "My friends, though we may all perish beside this man, let no one draw back from battle."

So they would say, rousing each man's might as they battled on, and the ceaseless sounds rose up through the brazen air to the barren heavens. But Achilles' horses, far from battle, had been weeping since they first heard that Patroclus had fallen to the dust at the hands of Hector,

slayer of men. Automedon, stout son of Diores, thrashed them with his quick whip and spoke to them, first gently, then angrily, but they refused either to return to the broad Hellespont and the ships or to go back to battle among the Achaeans. Just as stone pillars stand still atop the tombs of dead men and women, so they stood still beside the beautiful chariot, bowing their heads. And as they mourned their charioteer, hot tears fell from their eyes to the earth, staining their splendid manes that cascaded down the yoke-pads on both sides.

As they wept, Cronos watched them with pity, shook his head, and spoke to his heart, saying: "Poor wretches, why did we give you, who are ageless and immortal, to lord Peleus, a mortal? Was it so that you could share the pain of men? For no creature who lives or moves on the earth is more miserable than man. But Hector, son of Priam, will not be carried on your well-made chariot: I will not allow it. Is it not enough that he has the armor and boasts of it? I will put power in your knees and heart so you can send Automedon safely from the fight to the hollow ships, for I will give the Trojans killing glory until they arrive at the well-benched ships and the sun sets and divine darkness comes."

So he said and breathed into the horses great power. Shaking the dust from their manes, they carried the swift chariot through the Trojans and Achaeans. And Automedon, still mourning his comrade, fought behind them like a vulture swooping down on a flock of geese, easily avoiding Trojan attacks and just as easily charging back



into the throng. But he was unable to slay a single man, for he could not by himself drive the swift chariot and attack men with his spear. Soon, however, Alcimedon, Laerces' son and Haemon's grandson, saw Automedon with his eyes, came to stand behind his chariot, and said to him: "Automedon, what god gave you such useless counsel and robbed you of your good sense? You are fighting the best Trojans all alone, your companion is dead, and Hector glories in wearing Achilles' armor on his shoulders."

Then Automedon, Diores' son, answered him: "Alcimedon, what other Achaeans could control and guide the might of these immortal horses but Patroclus, peer of the gods in counsel when he lived? But now death and fate have come for him. So take the whip and glistening reins, and I will dismount from the chariot and fight."

Hearing this, Alcimedon jumped on the swift war chariot and took the whip and reins in his hands while Automedon jumped off. Meanwhile, shining Hector saw them and said to nearby Aeneas: "Aeneas, counselor to the bronze-clad Trojans, I see the horses of swift-footed Achilles have come to the battle driven by weak charioteers. I want to capture them, if you are willing in your heart to help, since they would not challenge us if we stood against them in battle."

So he said, and the noble son of Anchises obeyed. They set off, their shoulders covered by rigid, well-dried boar shields fitted with bronze. And both Chromius and godlike [Aretus](#) went with them, their hearts hoping to slay the men

and capture the horses with high-arched necks, the fools, for they would not escape Automedon without bloodshed. And Automedon prayed to father Zeus, who filled his heart with might and courage, and he said to his companion: "Alcimedon, keep the horses close enough to breathe upon my back, for I cannot hope to stop the might of Hector, son of Priam, before he kills us, mounts the fair-maned horses of Achilles, and routs the Argive ranks or is himself killed by the foremost fighters."

Then he called out to Ajax and Menelaus: "Ajax and Menelaus, leaders of the Argives, leave the finest fighters behind to stand around the corpse and drive off the enemy, and come protect my life on this ruthless day, for Hector and Aeneas, best of the Trojans, are heading this way across the tearful battle. But these things lie on the knees of gods, so I will hurl my spear, and leave it with Zeus."

So saying, he poised his long-shadowed spear, hurled it, and struck the well-balanced shield of Arteus; the spear tore past the bronze, through his belt, and into his lower belly. Just as a strong man with a sharp axe strikes behind the horns of an ox in a field, severing the tendons and making the ox flinch and fall forward, so Arteus flinched and fell on his back, the sharp spear shaking his bowels and loosing his limbs. Then Hector shot at Automedon with his shining spear, but the latter was watching and ducked to avoid the bronze; the spear hit the ground behind him, its butt-end quivering, and only then did mighty Ares cool the weapon's

fury. Now the two would have fought with swords had both Ajaxes not intervened, charging through the throng in aid of their comrade. Fearing them, Hector, Aeneas, and godlike Chromius retreated once again, leaving Arteus lying there, bleeding to death. Automedon, equal to Ares, stripped him of his armor and spoke words of triumph: "Now, in a small way, I have sated my heart over Patroclus' death, though this is a lesser man."

So saying, he set the gory armor in the chariot and boarded the vehicle himself, his hands and feet as bloody as a lion after eating a bull.

Once more the mighty battle was drawn over Patroclus, its pain and tears magnified by Athena, who came down from heaven by order of Zeus to aid the Danaans, for he had changed his mind. Just as Zeus stretches a gleaming rainbow across the heavens as a sign for mortals of either war or a cold storm, forcing men to quit their work on the earth and distressing the sheep, so Athena, shrouded in a gleaming cloud, mingled with the Achaean troops and stirred each man. She first inspired the son of Atreus, mighty Menelaus, taking the form and voice of Phoenix and saying to him: "Menelaus, it will be a source of shame for you if the trusted comrade of noble Achilles is torn apart by dogs beneath the Trojan wall. So have courage and inspire your men."

War-crier Menelaus answered her, saying: "Phoenix, my father of old, if Athena grants me courage and wards off onrushing missiles,

then I will take a stand and protect Patroclus,  
for his death has greatly touched my heart.  
But Hector has the might of fire and never stops  
slaying with bronze, for Zeus grants him glory.”

So he said, pleasing gleaming-eyed Athena,  
since he prayed to her before all other gods.  
She put strength into his shoulders and knees,  
and sent to his chest the courage of a fly who,  
though swatted away repeatedly, continues to bite  
a man’s flesh to get to his sweet-tasting blood;  
so she filled his black heart with courage, and he  
stood over Patroclus and hurled his shining spear.  
Among the Trojans was [Podes](#), son of Eëtion,  
a rich and noble man honored by Hector above  
all others, for he had a seat at his table. Fair-haired  
Menelaus took his spear and shot a fleeing Podes  
in the belt, and the bronze went clean through.  
He fell with a thud, and Menelaus dragged  
the corpse past the Trojans to his comrades.

Then Apollo came near Hector to inspire him,  
disguised as Phaenops, son of Asius, who was  
his dearest guest-friend and lived in Abydus.  
In this form, Apollo addressed Hector, saying:  
“What other Achaean will scare you, Hector?  
You have fled from Menelaus, who used to be  
considered a soft fighter; now alone he has slain  
your trusted friend and fighter Podes, Eëtion’s  
son, and taken his corpse away from the Trojans.”

Hearing this, a black cloud of grief shrouded Hector,  
and he entered the fight armed with gleaming  
bronze. Then Cronos’ son shook his tasseled aegis,  
covered Ida in clouds, and sent down a bolt

of lightning and a crash of thunder, giving victory to the Trojans and forcing the Achaeans to flee.

The first to panic was the Boeotian, Peneleos. As he turned towards the enemy, he was struck in the shoulder by nearby Polydamas—a glancing blow, but the spear point tore through the bone. Then Hector wounded the wrist of Leïtus, great-hearted Alectryon's son, who looked around and fled, for he knew his wounded hand could no longer hold a spear and fight the Trojans. As Hector pursued Leïtus, he was hit in the chest, near the nipple, by Idomeneus, but the long spear's shaft shattered and the Trojans cheered. Then Hector threw at Idomeneus, Deucalion's son, who was standing in his chariot; it missed him by a fraction, but hit Coeranus, charioteer and friend of Meriones, who came with him from well-built Lyctus. Idomeneus left the ships on foot, and he would have given the Trojans great glory had Coeranus and his swift horses not come like a light of hope to ward off his day of doom; but Coeranus lost his own life when man-slaying Hector struck him with his spear below his jaw and ear, tearing out his teeth and slicing his tongue. He fell from the chariot and dropped the reins, but Meriones gathered them up from the plain and said to Idomeneus: "Whip the horses until you reach the swift ships; you know the Achaeans have lost their might."

So saying, a terrified Idomeneus whipped the fair-maned horses back to the hollow ships.

Ajax and Menelaus saw that Zeus was turning the tide of battle and giving the Trojans victory;

of the two, Telamonian Ajax was first to speak:  
“Now, even a fool can see that father Zeus  
himself is helping the Trojans. Their missiles  
all hit their targets, no matter who throws them,  
be they weak or strong, for Zeus directs them  
while ours all fall fruitlessly to the ground.  
But come, let us devise the best plan of action,  
so we can drag this corpse away, return home,  
and bring joy to our dear comrades who grieve  
when they see us, believing that man-slaying  
Hector’s fury and untouchable hands cannot  
be stopped until they reach the black ships.  
I wish someone would quickly go to Achilles  
and tell him of his dear friend’s death, for I  
do not think he has heard the mournful news.  
But I see no such man among the Achaeans,  
for they and their horses are shrouded in mist.  
Father Zeus, lift the mist from the Achaean sons,  
brighten the sky, and let us see them with our eyes.  
Then, if it pleases you, destroy us in the daylight.”

So he said, and as he wept, Zeus took pity on him  
and quickly scattered the darkness and pushed away  
the mist. At once, the sun appeared and the battle  
was plain to see, and Ajax said to war-crier Menelaus:  
“Menelaus, nourished by Zeus, look now and see  
if Antilochus, great-hearted Nestor’s son, is alive,  
and urge him to go quickly to warlike Achilles  
and tell him that his dearest friend is dead.”

So he said, and war-crier Menelaus obeyed,  
setting off like a lion who leaves a cattle pen  
after growing tired of provoking dogs and men  
who stay awake all night long to prevent  
the beast from taking the fattest ox; in his lust  
for flesh, the lion charges forward all the same

only to meet javelins shot from brave hands  
and torches that force him to flee, and despite  
his desire, he leaves at dawn with a sullen heart.  
So, against his will, great-shouter Menelaus  
left Patroclus, fearing that the Achaeans would  
leave him to become a prize for the enemy.  
He implored the Ajaxes and Meriones, saying:  
“Ajaxes, leaders of the Argives, and Meriones,  
let each of you remember the kindness of poor  
Patroclus, a man who was gentle to all while  
he lived, but now fated death has come for him.”

So saying, fair-haired Menelaus went away,  
looking around like an eagle, which men say  
has the sharpest eyes of all birds under heaven,  
for when he hovers high over a swift-footed  
hare hiding in a thick-leafed bush, he swoops  
down, seizes it, and takes away its life;  
so also did the eyes of Menelaus, cherished  
by Zeus, scan the throng, searching for Nestor’s  
son and hoping to find him still alive.  
He soon saw him on the left side of the wide  
battle, urging his comrades on in the fight.  
And Menelaus went up to him and said:  
“Antilochus, dear to Zeus, come and hear  
the sorrowful news I wish had never happened.  
By now, you have seen that a god has brought  
the Danaans misery and the Trojans victory;  
The best of the Achaeans, Patroclus, has been  
slain, bringing the Danaans great sadness.  
Now hurry to the Achaean ships and tell Achilles,  
so he can bring back his corpse, which is naked,  
for flashing-helmed Hector has taken his armor.”

His words horrified, Antilochus and left him  
speechless, his eyes filled with tears and his rich

voice silenced. Still, he did not forget the charge given him by Menelaus, so he prepared to run, giving his armor to blameless Laodocus, who was nearby, wheeling the single-hoofed horses.

He wept as his feet took him away from battle to bring the terrible news to Achilles, son of Peleus. Nor were you, Menelaus, blessed by Zeus, willing to aid his weary comrades after Antilochus left them, though the men of Pylos felt his absence deeply. Instead, he sent noble Thrasmedes to them, while he returned to protect the hero Patroclus. When he stood beside the Ajaxes, he quickly told them: "I sent Antilochus to the swift ships to speak to swift-footed Achilles, but I do not think he will come, though noble Hector has angered him, for he would not fight the Trojans unarmed. But let us devise a strategy that will allow us to drag the corpse away, to escape a deadly fate, and to flee the battle cries of the Trojans."

Then great Telamonian Ajax replied to him: "All you say is right and true, famed Menelaus. You and Meriones should swiftly lift the corpse and carry it away from battle while we two stay behind and battle the Trojans and godlike Hector, for we have the same name and the same spirit and have often stood together in bitter battle."

Saying this, they took Patroclus in their arms and lifted him high above the earth. The Trojans cried out when they saw them lifting the corpse and charged at them like dogs attacking a wild boar that a young hunter has shot and wounded; for a time, they rush on, eager to rip him to pieces, but then the boar turns and faces them, trusting



his might, and the dogs retreat, scattering in all directions. So, for a time, did the Trojans charge as one, wielding swords and double-edged spears, but whenever the Ajaxes turned to face them, the color drained from their faces and none dared to rush out and fight them over the body.

So they carried the corpse away from battle and to the hollow ships, and the fighting around them was fierce. Like a wind-assisted fire that rushes on a city, sets it alight, and turns houses into flaming embers, so the incessant roar of chariots and spearmen chased after them as they hurried away. Just as mules combine their strength to drag a tree or beam for a great ship down a rugged mountain path, their hearts strained by sweat and toil as they hurry along, so these two hurried to carry their corpse. Behind them, the Ajaxes held back the enemy like a wooded ridge holding back a flood along a flat plain that tempers the powerful streams of a mighty river and displaces the currents so the flood waters never break through. So, in this way, did the two Ajaxes beat back the battling Trojans. Still, the Trojans fought on, especially Aeneas, son of Anchises, and glorious Hector. Just as a flying cloud of starlings or jackdaws utter death-shrieks when they see before them a hawk that brings destruction to small birds, so the young Achaeans uttered shrieks and took flight when they beheld Aeneas and Hector. Many pieces of armor fell around the trench as the Danaans fled, but the war never stopped.

## BOOK 18

As they fought like flaming fire, swift-footed Antilochus delivered his message to Achilles, who was in front of the high-sterned ships wondering to himself what had come to pass. In agitation, he addressed his own heart, saying: “Alas, why are the long-haired Achaeans again retreating over the plain and back to the ships? I hope the gods have not brought to my heart the foul pain my mother once foretold: that while I lived the best of the Myrmidons would leave the sun’s light by Trojan hands. Menoetius’ strong son must surely be dead, the fool. I told him to return to the ships once the fire was out and not to battle mighty Hector.”

As he pondered all this in his mind and heart, Nestor’s noble son approached him, shedding hot tears, and delivered the terrible tidings: “Son of skilled Peleus, I bring dreadful news that you must hear, though I wish it were not so. Patroclus is dead, a battle rages around his naked corpse, and flashing-helmed Hector has his armor.”

A black cloud of sorrow immediately enveloped Achilles. He lifted dark soot in both hands and poured it over his head, debasing his fair

face and his fragrant clothes with black ash.  
Then he stretched out his mighty body in the dust  
and ripped out chunks of hair with his hands.  
And the slave women who were taken by Achilles  
and Patroclus cried out in grief and rushed  
to surround skilled Achilles, beating their breasts  
with their hands and falling to their knees. Facing  
them was Antilochus, crying and shedding tears  
with them as he held the hand of a groaning  
Achilles, afraid that the prince would cut  
his own throat with iron. The piercing wails  
of Achilles were heard by his revered mother,  
who sat deep under the sea beside the old man,  
her father. Then she cried out, and the goddesses  
converged upon her, all the daughters of Nereus  
in the depths of the sea: Glauce, Thaleia,  
Cymodoce, Nesaea, Speio, Thoë, ox-eyed  
Hailë, Cymothoë, Actaeë, Limnoreia, Melite,  
Iaera, Amphitoeë, Agave, Doto, Proto, [Pherusa](#),  
[Dynamene](#), Dexamene, Amphinome,  
Callianeira, [Doris](#), Panope, glorious [Galatea](#),  
Nemertes, Apseudes, Callianassa, Clymene,  
Ianeira, Ianassa, Maera, Oreithyia,  
fair-haired Amatheia, and many other  
[Nereids](#) who lived deep beneath the sea.  
When the bright cave was full, they all beat  
their breasts, and Thetis led their laments:  
“Listen, Nereid sisters, so you may know all  
of the troubles that are in my heart. Woe is  
me, unfortunate mother of a hero, for I bore  
a noble and strong son, the best of men.  
He shot up like a sapling, and I reared him well,  
like a tree in a rich orchard. Then I sent him  
in the curved ships to Ilios to battle the Trojans,  
but I will never again welcome him home

to the house of Peleus. Though he still lives and looks upon the light of the sun, he grieves, and I cannot help him. Still, I will go to him, look upon my child, and find out why grief has come to him though he refrains from fighting.”

So saying, she left the cave, her weeping sisters following. The ocean waves parted around them, and when they came to fertile Troy, they stepped, one by one, onto the beach where the Myrmidon swift ships were set close together around Achilles. His revered mother came to stand beside him as he groaned deeply. With a sharp cry, she took her child’s head in her arms and mournfully said to him: “Why do you cry, my son? What woe has filled your heart? Tell me; do not hold back. Your wish, your prayer, has been fulfilled by Zeus: that all the sons of Achaea should be trapped by the sterns of their ships, having suffered terribly.”

Sighing deeply, swift-footed Achilles replied to her: “Mother, the Olympian answered my prayers, but what good is that when Patroclus lies dead, my dear friend whom I honored above all others, equal to myself? I lost him, and when Hector killed him, he stripped his fine armor, a wonder to behold, a splendid gift from the gods to Peleus on the day they put you in a mortal’s bed. I wish you had stayed in the sea with the other immortals and Peleus had taken a mortal bride. But now, you will suffer infinite grief in your heart for your dead son, whom you will never again welcome into your home, for my heart commands me not to live on among men unless Hector is slain by my spear and loses his life as payment for spoiling Patroclus, son of Menoetius.”

Then a tearful Thetis answered him, saying:  
“If you speak truth, my child, then you will soon  
die, for your death will swiftly follow Hector’s.”

A distressed Achilles, swift of foot, answered her:  
“Then I will die soon, for I could not protect  
my friend from death, and he fell far from home  
because I failed to save him from ruin. Therefore,  
since I am not returning to my dear father’s land,  
since I was not a light for Patroclus or others who  
were overpowered by godlike Hector, and since  
I sat beside the ships like a useless lump of soil—  
I who in war am the best of all bronze-clad  
Achaeans, though others are better in council—  
then let strife among gods and men cease along  
with the rage that turns a sensible man violent  
and grows like smoke in men’s hearts until it  
becomes sweeter than dripping honey, as it did  
when Agamemnon, lord of men, enraged me.  
But let us set aside thoughts of grief and stifle  
the pain that fills our hearts, for now I must go  
after Hector, who killed my dear friend. I will  
then accept my death when Zeus and the other  
immortals will it to come to pass. Not even mighty  
Heracles escaped death, though he was the favorite  
of Zeus, son of Cronos, for he could not conquer  
fate or Hera’s anger. And if I meet a similar fate,  
then I, too, will lie down and die. But now I must  
win great glory so some Trojan or Dardanian  
women with deep-folded dresses should wipe tears  
from their soft cheeks with both hands, send out  
wailing groans, and learn that I stayed away  
from war too long. Though you love me, do not  
hold me back from battle, for I will not obey.”

Then silver-footed Thetis answered him:

“All you say is true, my child; it is right to protect your weary friends from a foul fate. But your beautiful bronze armor is in Trojan hands, and flashing-helmed Hector delights in wearing it on his shoulders. But his joy will be short-lived, for his death is near at hand. Therefore do not plunge into the toil of Ares until your eyes witness my return to this place, for when the sun rises at dawn, I will be back bearing beautiful armor from lord Hephaestus.”

So saying, she turned away from her son and spoke to her sisters of the sea, saying: “Plunge into the bosom of the sea, visit the old man of the sea in our father’s house, and tell him everything. I will go to high Olympus and to ask famed craftsman Hephaestus if he would give my son brilliant, shining armor.”

So saying, her sisters plunged into the sea, and silver-footed Thetis went to Olympus to bring brilliant armor back for her son.

As she set off for Olympus, the Achaeans cried out in panic as they fled man-slaying Hector and returned to their ships and the Hellespont. But the men and horses of Troy and the flaming fury of Priam’s son, Hector, reached the Achaeans before they could drag the corpse of Patroclus, Achilles’ friend, away from the missiles. Three times shining Hector grabbed his feet and tried to drag him off, calling on the Trojans for help, and three times the furious Ajaxes drove him away. But Hector, trusting his strength, kept either charging into the fray or standing firm and crying out, never once giving ground.

Just as shepherds in a field cannot drive a lion away from a carcass when his hunger is great, so the two Ajaxes, leaders of men, could not scare Hector away from the corpse. He would have dragged Patroclus away and won great glory had wind-swift Iris not come from Olympus, sent by Hera without the knowledge of Zeus and the other gods, to tell the son of Peleus to prepare for battle. She came to him and said: "Achilles, fiercest of all men, rise and protect Patroclus, for whose sake a brutal battle is being waged by the ships. Men are killing each other: the Achaeans to defend the corpse, the Trojans to drag it back to windy Ilios. Great Hector is especially eager to drag it away, for his heart hopes to cut the head from the tender neck and fix it to the palisades. So stand and fill your heart with shame that Patroclus should become a sport for Trojan dogs. You will be the one dishonored if his corpse is mutilated."

Swift-footed, godlike Achilles replied to her: "Goddess Iris, which god sent you to me?"

Then wind-swift Iris answered him, saying: "Hera sent me, noble wife of Zeus; the son of Cronos and the other immortals living on snow-clad Olympus know nothing of this."

In reply, swift-footed Achilles said to her: "But how will I fight? They have my armor, and my dear mother told me not to arm myself until my eyes witness her return, for she vowed to bring back beautiful armor made by Hephaestus. I know no other armor I could wear save for the shield of Telamonian Ajax.

But I expect he is among the foremost fighters  
wielding his spear in defense of dead Patroclus.”

Then wind-swift Iris answered him, saying:  
“We know that they have your famous armor,  
but go to the trench and show yourself as you  
are to the Trojans so that they may panic, flee  
the fight, and give the worn-out Achaean sons  
some rest, for there is little time for rest in war.”

So wind-swift Iris said and departed, and Achilles,  
blessed by Zeus, sprang up. Athena draped  
the tasseled aegis around his strong shoulders  
and covered his head in a golden mist so he  
glowed like a blazing fire. Imagine smoke rising  
into the aether over a besieged city on a distant  
island where men have battled in hated war all  
day long, but at sunset they light signal fires one  
after another, their glare rising high enough  
for their neighbors to see, and hope rises that  
some will come in their ships and save them  
from ruin. So also did the glow from Achilles’  
head rise into the aether when he left the wall  
to stand in the trench away from the Achaeans,  
obeying his mother. He stood there and shouted,  
and from afar Pallas Athena amplified his cry,  
and the Trojans were terrified. Like a trumpet’s  
piercing wail when a city is attacked by deadly  
enemies, so were the cries of Aeacus’ grandson.  
Hearing Achilles’ brazen voice, all Trojans  
lost heart, and the fair-maned horses turned  
their chariots around, sensing the coming grief.  
Their drivers also panicked at the sight of steady  
flames blazing above the head of Peleus’ great-  
hearted son, set alight by gleaming-eyed Athena.  
Three times Achilles cried out over the trench,



and each time the Trojans and their allies were filled with fear, and in the confusion of chariots and spears, twelve of the best Trojans died. But the Achaeans gladly pulled Patroclus away from the missiles and placed him on a litter, and his friends stood around him and grieved, including swift-footed Achilles, who cried hot tears at the sight of his trusted friend lying on a bier, torn apart by sharp bronze: the man he sent to war with horses and chariot but will never again be welcomed home.

Then ox-eyed queen Hera ordered tireless Helios to return unwillingly to Ocean's streams, and as the sun set, the noble Achaeans put a halt to the great battle and terrible war.

After the Trojans withdrew from mighty combat, they unyoked their swift horses from the chariots and gathered together before arranging dinner. All in the assembly stood straight and none sat, for they trembled with fear at the thought of Achilles returning to battle after a long absence. Polydamas, Panthous' son, was first to speak, for he alone could see future and past. He was Hector's friend, born on the same night, but one was better in words, the other with a spear. With good intent, he addressed the assembly: "Think carefully, my friends. I urge you to return to the city and not wait for dawn on the plain beside the ships, for we are far from the wall. While this man quarreled with noble Agamemnon, the Achaeans were a much easier foe to fight, and I eagerly stayed the night beside the swift ships, for I hoped to take those well-made ships. But now I am terrified of swift-footed Peleus' son,

for his heart is headstrong and he will not want to stay on the plain where Trojans and Achaeans have fought together under the fury of Ares, but will take the fight to our city and our wives. I urge you, go to the city; it is just common sense. For now, ambrosial night has stopped swift-footed Achilles, but if he comes in his armor tomorrow and catches us here, then many men will know who he is and will gladly retreat to sacred Ilios, but others will be devoured by vultures and dogs. I hope that tale is far from my hearing. If we obey my words, though it pains us to do so, then tonight we will keep our forces in the marketplace, and the city will be guarded by walls, towers, gates, and well-polished, well-bolted doors. Then, at dawn, we will arm ourselves and take our places on the walls, and this will frustrate him when he leaves his ships to fight us, for after exhausting his high-necked horses by driving them around the city, he will return to his ships. His pride will not let him force his way inside or sack us, and soon swift dogs will devour him.”

With an angry glance, Hector answered him: “Polydamas, I despise your plan to retreat to the city and hide there together. Have you not had your fill of hiding behind walls? In the past, all mortal men told stories about the wealth of gold and bronze in Priam’s city; now Troy’s homes are empty, its treasures sold to Phrygia and fair Maeonia after great Zeus grew angry. But wily Cronos’ son has promised that I would win glory at the ships and trap the Achaeans by the sea, so do not share these thoughts among our men, for no Trojan will obey you—I will make sure of it. But come

now, listen to my words, and obey: dine with your troops, remember your guard duty, and let each man stay alert, and if any Trojan cares for his possessions, then let him gather them and give them to the people; better they enjoy them than the Achaeans. Then, at dawn, we will arm ourselves and bring fierce battle to the hollow ships. If noble Achilles has stirred himself to action beside the ships, then it will be at his peril, for I will not flee from him in woeful battle but stand and face him, be it for his glory or my own. The god of war is impartial: he kills the man who kill."

So Hector said, and the Trojans rejoiced, the fools, for Pallas Athena had stripped them of their senses, and all praise went to Hector's deadly plan and none to Polydamas' wise one. So the Trojans dined in their camp. But all night long, the Achaeans mourned Patroclus, led by the son of Peleus who laid his friend's man-slaying hands across his chest and groaned like a well-maned lion whose cubs had been taken by a hunter and carried away in a thick forest; later, the lion returns, grieves, and then sets off to track the man's footprints through many glens in hopes of finding him, for he is filled with rage. So, with a heavy groan, Achilles told the Myrmidons: "Friends, I spoke empty words on the day I tried to comfort heroic Menoetius in our palace, saying that I would bring his famous son back to Opoeis with his share of the spoils after I sack Ilios. But Zeus does not grant all wishes to all men, and we are both fated to stain the Trojan earth red with blood, for I, too, will die here and never again be welcomed home by old horseman Peleus

or by Thetis, my mother. But since I will join you in the earth later, I will not perform funeral rites for you until after I have brought back the armor and head of your killer, noble Hector, and have cut the throats of twelve Trojan children before your pyre as payment for your death. Until then, you will lie by the curved ships as Trojan or Dardanian women with deep-folded dresses shed tears and mourn for you all day and night, women we won with our strength and long spears when we raided the rich cities of men.”

So saying, godlike Achilles urged his comrades to set a great cauldron around the fire so that he could quickly wash Patroclus’ blood-stained body. So they set on the fire a bath-water cauldron, filled it with water, and set kindling beneath it. After the fire spread around the cauldron’s belly and the water was boiling in the glittering bronze, they washed him and anointed his wounds with nine-year old oils; then they laid him on a bier, covered him from head to toe with a soft linen cloth, and covered that cloth with a white cloak. And all night long, Myrmidons gathered around swift-footed Achilles and mourned Patroclus. And Zeus said to his sister and wife, Hera: “Your got your way, ox-eyed queen Hera. Swift-footed Achilles has been roused. The long-haired Achaeans must surely be your children.”

Then, in reply, ox-eyed queen Hera said: “What a thing to say, feared son of Cronos. Even mortals who lack my wisdom are expected to carry out their will for another. So how can I—who is the greatest of all goddesses, for I am eldest and am married

to you, lord of all immortals—not plot against the Trojans, since I bear them such a grudge?”

As they spoke to one another, silver-footed Thetis arrived at the house of Hephaestus—the immortal, imperishable house of stars and bronze forged by the crooked-footed god. She found him sweating as he quickly worked the bellows while fashioning twenty tripods to stand around the wall of his well-built palace. Golden wheels were fixed to each leg, so each tripod could roll into a divine gathering and return on its own—a true wonder.

These were nearly done, but the handles were not yet attached, and he was forging the rivets for them with craftsmanship and cunning when the silver-footed goddess Thetis approached. Beautiful [Charis](#) of the bright head-dress, wife of famed crooked-limbed Hephaestus, saw her, took her by the hand, and said to her: “Long-robed Thetis, honored guest, why have you come to our home? You do not come often. But follow me, so I may welcome you properly.”

So saying, Charis led her in and set her down on a fine, well-crafted, silver-studded chair with a footstool beneath it. Then she called to her famed craftsman husband, saying: “Hephaestus, come here. Thetis needs you.”

The famed crooked-limbed god replied to her: “Here in my house is the revered, honored goddess who saved me after I came to harm when my mother shamelessly threw me away, hoping to hide my lameness. I would have suffered had Thetis and [Eurynome](#), daughter

of ever-circling Oceanus, not rescued me.  
I was with them for nine years, crafting fine  
objects—brooches, spiral bracelets, necklaces,  
and pins—in their hollow cave as the foaming,  
rushing waters of Oceanus flowing around us;  
and no other gods or mortals knew except  
for Thetis and Eurynome, who saved me.  
Now she has come to my house, and it is time  
for me to repay fair-haired Thetis for saving  
my life. So set before her many good things  
while I put away my bellows and my tools.”

So saying, the mighty god rose from the anvil  
and limped away, though his thin legs moved  
nimble. He set the bellows away from the fire,  
gathered his tools, and placed them in a silver  
chest; then he wiped his face, hands, strong  
neck, and hairy chest with a sponge, dressed  
in a tunic, took up a stout staff, and limped  
out the door. Golden attendants resembling  
young girls quickly came out to aid their lord.  
The immortal gods granted them intelligence,  
speech, strength, and knowledge of handiwork.  
They hurried to support him as he limped  
over to Thetis, sat on a splendid seat, took  
her hand in his, and addressed her, saying:  
“Long-robed Thetis, beloved guest, why have  
you come to our home? You do not come often.  
Tell me what you need, and if it is in my power  
to fulfill your request, then fulfill it I will.”

With tears in her eyes, Thetis answered him:  
“Hephaestus, has any Olympian goddess ever  
suffered as many painful woes in her heart as  
those Zeus, son of Cronos, has sent to me?  
Of all the sea goddesses, he forced me against

my will to marry and lay in bed with a mortal,  
Peleus, son of Aeacus, who now sits in his palace  
suffering from old age, but I have other worries.  
He gave me a son to bear, greatest of warriors.  
He shot up like a sapling, and I raised him  
well, like a tree in a rich orchard. Then I  
sent him in the curved ships to Ilios to battle  
the Trojans, but I will never again welcome  
him home to the house of Peleus. Though he  
still lives and still sees the sun's rays, he grieves,  
and I cannot help him. The maiden given  
to him as a prize by the sons of Achaea was  
taken from his arms by lord Agamemnon.  
Grief over her broke his heart, but the Trojans  
held the Achaean at the sterns of their ships  
and did not let them escape. The Achaean elders  
begged for his help, offering him many gifts,  
but he refused to save them from ruin. Still,  
he allowed Patroclus to don his armor and sent  
him into war along with many of his men. All day  
long they fought by the Scaean gates, the stout son  
of Menoetius killing many; and they would have  
sacked the city had Apollo not slain him there  
in the front lines, giving glory to Hector. Now I  
come to you on my knees to ask that you give  
my short-lived son a shield, a helmet, fine greaves  
with ankle-clasps, and a breastplate. The Trojans  
took his armor when they slew his comrade,  
and now my son lies grieving on the ground."

The famed crooked-limbed god replied to her:  
"Take heart, and do not worry about these things.  
I only wish I could hide him from foul death's  
grasp when fate reaches him. But I will give him  
armor so beautiful that in future any mortals  
who look upon it will marvel at the sight."

So saying, he left her, went to his bellows, turned them towards the fire, and ordered them to work. Then all twenty bellows blew on the crucible and sent a blast of air that fanned the flames so wherever Hephaestus moved, his work would continue. He threw on the fire impermeable bronze along with tin, precious gold, and silver. Then he set the great anvil on the block and took his mighty hammer in one hand and tongs in the other.

First he made a strong, sturdy shield covered in cunning adornments. A triple-banded rim glittered around it, and a silver baldric was fastened to it. The shield had five metal layers, and on it he crafted many curious designs.

He forged upon it the earth, the heavens, the sea, the tireless sun, the full moon, and all the constellations found in the heavens: the [Pleiades](#), the [Hyades](#), fierce [Orion](#), and the [Great Bear](#), also called the Wain, that spins in place and watches Orion but is alone in never entering the baths of Oceanus.

Then he made two fair cities of mortal men. In one, there were wedding feasts and festivals: brides were being led from their chambers across the city under torchlight as wedding songs played, and young men were whirling and dancing to the sounds of flutes and lyres as women stood at their doors in wonder. A crowd filled the marketplace, for a quarrel had arisen between two men over the blood-price for a slain man: one vowed to paid the price in full, the other refused to accept the price,



and both wanted an arbitrator to decide. The crowd cheered both sides, aiding each man in turn, and heralds restrained the people as the elders, sitting on polished stones in a sacred circle, held in their hands the scepters of loud-crying heralds and stood in turn to pass judgment. And two talents of gold sat between them to be given to the judge whose verdict was straightest.

In the other city, there were two armies of men in shining armor. One side wished to destroy the city while the other wished to divide in two all of the city's fine possessions. But the city, undaunted, was arming for an ambush. Their dear wives and young children stood guard on the wall with the older men; the rest went out, led by Ares and Pallas Athena, whose bodies and tunics glowed gold. They were fair and tall in their armor, like the gods they are, and they towered over the mortals. When they reached a riverbed with a watering hole for all herds—a spot suitable for an ambush—they sat there, wrapped in their fiery bronze. Then two lookouts were set apart from the army to wait until they saw sheep and sleek cattle. These came quickly, followed by sheepherders playing their pipes, unaware of the ambush to come. Seeing them approach, the ambushers quickly cut off the cattle herds and flocks of white sheep and killed the herdsmen. When the other army, sitting in assembly, heard the cattle noises, they quickly mounted behind their high-stepping horses, rode off, and soon reached them. The two sides stood and fought beside the river, hurling bronze-tipped spears at each other. Strife was there with [Tumult](#) and deadly [Doom](#), who was holding

one freshly-hurt man and another unhurt one  
and was dragging a dead man by his feet through  
the battle; and the clothing on her shoulders was  
red with blood. They joined and fought alongside  
mortal men, and each side carried away their dead.

Then he made a wide field with rich, soft soil,  
thrice-plowed, and in the field were many  
plowmen driving their oxen this way and that.  
When they reached the field's end and turned,  
a man would come and give them each a cup  
of honey-sweet wine; then they turned again  
to the furrows, eager to reach the deep soil's edge.  
The field was black as if it had been plowed,  
though it was gold: such was the shield's wonder.

Then he made a king's domain where laborers  
held sharp sickles in their hands and reaped.  
Some grain fell in armfuls along the furrows  
while binders bound others with rope. Three  
binders stood ready, and behind them boys  
gathered grains by the armfuls and carried  
them to the binders. The king, staff in hand,  
stood silently by the furrow, his heart pleased.  
Far away, heralds sat under a tree and prepared  
a slaughtered ox for a feast while the women  
scattered white barley for the worker's meal.

Then he made a beautiful golden vineyard  
overflowing with bunches of black grapes  
set on silver poles throughout the yard.  
Around it he put a blue ditch alongside a tin  
fence with a single path leading to it that was  
used by grape harvesters on their way to strip  
the vines. Girls and boys, full of childish  
glee, carried the honey-sweet fruit in wicker

baskets. And a child played a sweet-toned lyre and softly sang the beautiful [Linos](#) song while the others all sang along as their feet skipped and danced in rhythm to the music.

Then he forged from gold and tin a herd of straight-horned cattle who lowed as they hurried out of the dung towards a farm-yard beside a murmuring river with wavering reeds. The herdsmen, also golden, led the cattle, four in all, followed by nine swift-footed dogs. But two fearsome lions near the foremost cattle held a bull, who gave a loud roar as he was dragged away, pursued by dogs and young men. The lions tore the great bull's hide, devouring its innards and black blood as the herdsmen let the swift dogs loose in hopes of scaring them. But the dogs avoided biting the lions, drawing near them and barking but staying well clear.

Then the famed, crooked-limbed god made a pasture in a fair dell filled with flocks of white sheep, farm-houses, roofed huts, and pens.

Then the famed, crooked-limbed god fashioned a dancing floor like the one [Daedalus](#) made in broad Cnossos for fair-haired [Ariadne](#). There, young men and maidens whose beauty was worth many oxen danced with each other and held hands at the wrist. The maidens wore finely woven linens and elegant coronets, and the men wore well-spun tunics glowing softly with oil and golden daggers held in silver baldrics. They would move their skillful feet in circles with the ease of a potter fitting his hands close to his wheel to test how it

runs. Then they would run in lines towards each other as an assembly of people stood around celebrating the delightful dance, and among them two acrobats whirled up and down, leading the singing and dancing.

Then, around the rim of the well-made shield, he formed the great and mighty river Oceanus.

After making the great and sturdy shield, he forged a breastplate brighter than a blazing fire, a snug-fitting, stout helmet, cunningly crafted and topped with a golden crest, and a pair of greaves made from supple tin.

When the crooked-limbed god finished making all the armor, he set it before Achilles' mother, and she flew like a hawk down snowy Olympus carrying the sparkling armor from Hephaestus

## BOOK 19

As saffron-robed Dawn rose out of the Oceanic streams, bringing light to mortals and immortals alike, Thetis came to the ships carrying gifts from the gods. She found her dear son clutching Patroclus and crying aloud as his comrades stood around him and wept. Divine Thetis went to his side, took her son's hand, and said to him: "Child, for all our grief, we must let this man be, since his death was the will of the gods. But take this fine, wondrous armor made by Hephaestus; truly, no man has ever shouldered its like."

So saying, the goddess set the armor down before Achilles, the metal making a rattling sound. Then all Myrmidons trembled in fear, none daring to look at the armor. But when Achilles saw the arms, his rage intensified, and his eyes burned with a fearsome fire under his eyelids. As his mind looked with delight at the splendid armor, he spoke winged words to his mother: "Mother, these arms are truly the work of a god, for no mortal could hope to forge their like. Now I can start arming for battle. All the same, I worry flies will enter the body of Menoetius' stout son, and worms will begin breeding in his bronze-made wounds, and he will

become befouled. After all, life has been stripped from him, so his flesh will start to rot.”

Then silver-footed Thetis replied to him:  
“Child, do not cloud your mind with such fears. I will protect this man from the tribe of savage flies who devour men slain in battle; even if he lies there for a whole cycle of seasons, his flesh will remain firm—or even stronger. But you must assemble the Achaean warriors, end your feud with Agamemnon, shepherd of men, arm yourself for war, and ready your spirit.”

So saying, she sent her son steadfast courage and dropped into Patroclus’ nose ambrosia and red nectar, so his flesh would remain firm.

Then godlike Achilles went to the seashore, gave a fearsome cry, and roused the Achaean warriors. And even those who usually stayed by the ships and avoided gatherings—like captains, oarsmen, or ship stewards who dispense food—answered the call to assembly when Achilles appeared, for he had long avoided grievous battle. Two servants of Ares came limping, the steadfast son of Tydeus and noble Odysseus, each using spears as crutches, their wounds still sore; they came and sat in the front of the assembly. Last came Agamemnon, ruler of men, who was nursing a wound he received after being struck by the bronze spear of Coön, son of Antenor. When all the Achaeans had gathered together, swift-footed Achilles stood and addressed them: “Son of Atreus, do you think that we two are better off after filling our hearts with grief and fighting in savage fury over a girl?

If only Artemis had killed her with an arrow on the day I sacked Lyrnessus and took her, then fewer Achaeans would have been driven into the dust by enemy hands while I raged. Hector and the Trojans profited, but the Achaeans will long remember this feud between you and I. But as painful as it may be, we must let the past be the past and set aside the anger in our hearts; Now I end my rage, for unrelenting anger does me no good. So come, let us quickly rouse the long-haired Achaeans to war, so I may battle the Trojans and find out if they still wish to sleep by our ships. Many, I think, will gladly rest their limbs should they survive the furies of war and the storm of our spears.”

So he spoke, and the well-greaved Achaeans cheered the great-hearted son of Peleus for ending his wrath. Then Agamemnon, lord of men, spoke from his seat, without standing: “Warriors and friends, Danaan, servants of Ares, it is wise to listen to the speaker and unwise to interrupt one so skilled. And given the crowd, how could anyone else be heard? This would make any speaker struggle. Now, son of Peleus, I declare my mind to you, and the rest of you should listen carefully to these words. Many times have the Achaeans spoken these words to me, reproaching me, but I am not at fault—Zeus is, as are the [Moirai](#) and the dark-stepping Erinyes who filled my heart with reckless rage on that day in assembly when I stripped Achilles of his prize. But what could I do? It was the will of the gods. Zeus’ oldest daughter is cursed Atë, deceiver of all, whose soft feet step not on the ground but over the heads of men, bringing them

to ruin; she has shackled many besides myself. Once, she even deceived Zeus, though he is the greatest among men and gods. On the day when Alcmene was ready to bear Heracles in well-crowned Thebes, Hera, who is only a woman, deceived him with her wiles. Zeus boasted to all the gods, telling them: 'All you gods and goddesses, listen to me as I speak the words my heart commands. Today, Eileithyia who soothes childbirth will bring to light a ruler for all those who live around him, a man who is of my own blood.' Then queen Hera cunningly replied to him: 'You will be made a liar, your words rendered moot. But come, lord of Olympus, and swear to me a mighty oath that whoever falls between a woman's feet today and is of your blood will rule all living near him.' So she said, and Zeus swore a mighty oath, blinded as he was by her trickery. Hera flew down the Olympian peaks and soon came to Achaean Argos, where she found the wife of Sthenelus, son of Perseus, who was seven months pregnant with her son. Hera brought the child into the light two months early and held off Eileithyia so Alcmene would not deliver. Then she addressed the son of Cronos, saying: 'Father Zeus, lord of lightning, hear my words. A man has been born who will rule the Argives: Eurystheus, son of Sthenelus, who is Perseus' son. He will not disgrace the Argives as their king.' So she said, and sharp pain and anger struck deep within Zeus' mind; at once, he grabbed Atë by her golden-haired head and swore a mighty oath that Atë, deceiver of all, would never return



to Olympus or the starry heavens. Then he whirled her round and threw her from the starry heavens, and she soon landed in a tilled field. Zeus would wail and think of her when he saw his dear son undertake one of Eurysthesus' shameful labors. Thus, when flashing-helmed Hector was killing Argives back at the ships' sterns, I too could not forget Atë, who first blinded me. And since I was blinded and stripped by Zeus of my senses, I wish to make amends and offer countless ransoms. So rise for battle, and ready the rest of your men. I offer you all the gifts that Odysseus promised you yesterday when he visited your tents. Or, if you prefer, wait here and my attendants will go to my ships and return with your gifts, so you will know if my gifts satisfy your spirit."

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him:  
"Son of Atreus, Agamemnon, great ruler of men, you can give me the gifts, as is proper, or keep them for yourself. But now let us quickly focus on the fight ahead; there is no need to prattle on or waste time, for great work is left undone. As you again see Achilles among the foremost fighters, killing Trojan battalions with his bronze spear, so remember this as you fight your foes."

But Odysseus of many counsels replied to him:  
"As great a warrior as you are, godlike Achilles, do not send the Achaean sons to Ilios to fight the Trojans on empty stomachs, for the battle will not be a short one once the fighting forces meet and the gods breathe fury into both armies. Order the Achaeans by the swift ships to take food and wine and so gain strength and courage. No man is capable of fighting the foe all day

long, from sunup to sunset, while starving;  
for even though his heart may wish to wage war,  
when thirst and hunger hit him, his limbs will  
gradually grow heavy and his knees will weaken.  
But when a man has had his fill of food and wine,  
he can fight the enemy all day long, for the heart  
in his chest is full of courage and his limbs stay  
strong until all fighting has come to an end.  
So order your army to disperse and prepare  
their meals, and let Agamemnon, lord of men,  
bring the gifts to the middle of the assembly  
so all Achaeans can see them, and so your heart  
is satisfied. And let him stand before all Argives  
and swear to you that he never went to Briseïs'  
bed or slept with her, as is natural for men  
and women, and let your heart be gracious.  
Then let him make amends to you with a fat feast  
in his tent, so you may have your due. And you,  
son of Atreus, will be more honorable to others  
in the future, for it is no disgrace for one king  
to appease another when he is first to grow angry.”

Then Agamemnon, lord of men, answered him:  
“Son of Laertes, your words please me, for you  
have recounted the events fairly and accurately.  
My heart urges me to swear this oath, and I will  
not perjure myself before the gods. Let Achilles  
remain here, though Ares hastens him on, and let  
all the others remain here as well until the gifts  
from my tent arrive and we swear solemn oaths.  
And I order you to select men—the best from all  
the Achaeans—to bring from my ships the gifts  
that we promised to give Achilles yesterday  
along with the women. And tell Talthybius  
to prepare a boar in the middle of the wide  
camp for me to sacrifice to Zeus and Helios.”

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him:

“Great son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, worry about these things later on, when there is a break in the battle and the rage in my chest is not so strong. Right now, men lie butchered, killed by Hector, son of Priam, to whom Zeus grants glory, yet you want us to eat? I would command the sons of Achaea to go into battle without breaking their fast, and then, after sunset, prepare a great feast once vengeance has been served. Before then, neither drink nor food will go down my throat, for my dearest friend lies dead in my tent, his flesh torn apart by a sharp spear, his feet turned towards the front door, and his comrades around him weeping. The only things I care about are murder, blood, and the tears of men.”

Then wily Odysseus answered him, saying:

“Achilles, son of Peleus, mightiest Achaean, you are stronger than me and better by far with the spear, but I surpass you in wisdom since I am older than you and have learned more. So let your ego listen to my words. Men quickly reach their fill of battle. Even when bronze fills the ground like scattered straw, the harvests are slim once Zeus, who controls the wars of men, balances his scales. We cannot mourn the dead with our bellies, for we would never take a break from fasting since men fall one after another, day after day. No, we must bury the dead and then steel our hearts after a single day of grieving. Then those of us who are left in this hateful war must remember to eat and drink so we can continue to battle the enemy non-stop,

clad in indestructible bronze. And let no man hold back and await some other summons, for this is the call: any who remain beside the Achaean ships will regret it. So let us go as one and battle the horse-taming Trojans.”

So saying, he set off for Agamemnon’s tent, taking with him Nestor’s glorious sons, along with Meges, son of Phyleus, Thoas, Meriones, Lycomedes, son of Creon, and Melanippus. He gave the order, and they soon went to work carrying from the tent all that was promised: seven tripods, twenty fiery cauldrons, twelve horses, and seven women skilled in handiwork, along with the eighth, fair-cheeked Briseïs. Odysseus then weighed out ten talents of gold and led the young, gift-towing Achaeans back to the assembly, where they set down the gifts. Then Agamemnon rose, and beside him stood Talthybius, with a voice like a god’s, holding a boar. Atreus’ son grabbed the knife that always hung beside his great sword’s scabbard, cut the boar’s bristles, lifted his hands to Zeus, and prayed, and all the Argives sat in silence, as is proper, and listened to their king, who looked upon the spacious heavens and said: “Let Zeus, greatest of the gods, be my witness, along with Gaia, Helios, and the Furies, who torment men below earth when they perjure themselves, that I never laid a hand on the girl, Briseïs, either to embrace her in bed or in any other way, but kept her in my tents, untouched. If I am lying, then let the gods send me great grief, the kind they inflict on those who swear falsely.”

So saying, he cut the boar’s throat with ruthless

bronze; then Talthybius turned and threw the animal into the grey sea to be food for fish. But Achilles stood and addressed the Achaeans: "Father Zeus, great deceiver of men's minds, the son of Atreus would never have roused the fury within my breast or arrogantly led the girl away against my will if Zeus had not desired many Achaeans to die. But, for now, let us eat dinner so we may join the battle."

So he said, and the assembly broke up, each man scattering to his own ship. But the great-hearted Myrmidons carried the gifts back to godlike Achilles' ship. They placed the gifts in the tents and left the women to settle while noble attendants drove the horses to the herd.

But when Briseïs, looking like golden Aphrodite, saw Patroclus' body torn apart by a sharp spear, she threw herself upon him, wailed, and tore at her breast, neck, and fair face with her nails. And as she mourned, she spoke like a goddess: "Patroclus, most dear to my aching heart, when I was taken from the tent, you were alive, but now that I return, leader of men, you are dead, yet another tragedy forced upon my life. I saw the man to whom I was given in marriage by my father and mother torn apart by a sharp spear in our city, and my three dear brothers, born to the same mother, were also killed that day. But you did not let me weep when swift Achilles killed my husband and sacked the city of godlike Mynes. You vowed to make me Achilles' wedded wife, lead me to Phthia, and give me a wedding feast with the Myrmidons. So I mourn your death with endless tears, for you were always kind."

So she said, crying, and the women joined her,  
each weeping for Patroclus and her own sorrows.  
But the Achaean leaders surrounded Achilles,  
begging him to eat; still, he refused, saying:  
“My dear comrades, if any of you will hear me,  
then please stop asking me to sate my heart  
with food and drink, for grief consumes me,  
and I will continue fasting until the sun sets.”

So he said, and the other kings departed save  
for the sons of Atreus, godlike Odysseus, Nestor,  
Idomeneus, and old Phoenix, driver of horses.  
They tried to comfort Achilles, but his soul would  
not be stilled until he joined the bloody battle.  
He sighed, remembering Patroclus, and said:  
“My dearest, most ill-fated friend, you used  
to quickly and deftly set out delicious dinners  
for us in our tent, when the Achaeans joined  
in woeful war against the horse-taming Trojans.  
But now you lie there, cut down, but my heart  
refuses the food and drink before me in longing  
for you. No greater grief could I suffer, not even  
if I learned of the death of my own father,  
who is probably in Phthia crying round tears  
in longing for his son in a far off foreign land  
fighting Trojans for the sake of horrible Helen;  
or of my dear son, godlike [Neoptolemus](#), who  
is being raised for me on Scyros, if he still lives.  
Before, the heart in my chest hoped only that  
I would die here in Troy, far from the horse  
pastures of Argos, and you would go back  
to Phthia, take my son away from Scyros  
in the swift, black ships, and share with him  
my possessions, my slaves, and my lofty home.  
For I fear that Peleus has either altogether  
died or has been worn thin by miserable

old age and by waiting for a message  
to arrive announcing that I am dead.”

So he said, crying, and the elders joined him,  
each man remembering those he left behind.  
Seeing them mourn, the son of Cronos felt  
pity and quickly called Athena, saying to her:  
“My child, you have foresaken your warrior.  
Is there no place in your mind for Achilles?  
He sits there in front of his high-sterned ships  
mourning for his dear friend; while others  
eat their dinners, he fasts and refuses food.  
Go and fill his chest with nectar and divine  
ambrosia, so he will not grow hungry.”

His words roused an already-eager Athena,  
who flew through the sky like a wide-winged,  
shrieking hawk. And as the Achaeans quickly  
armed for battle, she poured nectar and divine  
ambrosia over Achilles’ chest so painful hunger  
would not reach his limbs. Then she returned  
to her mighty father’s well-built home while  
the Achaeans rushed out of their swift ships.  
Just as snowflakes from Zeus fly thick and fast  
when sent by the North Wind’s blasting cold,  
so the bright, shining helmets, bossed shields,  
solid-plated breastplates, and ashen spears flew  
thick and fast from the ships. The gleam rose  
to the heavens, and the whole earth laughed  
at the flashing of bronze and crashing of men’s  
feet, and among them, godlike Achilles armed  
for war. With a heart filled with unbearable  
grief and eyes that burned with a fiery hatred  
for Troy, he gnashed his teeth and put on  
the gifts forged by the labors of Hephaestus.  
First he fixed to his calves the beautiful greaves

with silver ankle fasteners. Then he put the breastplate on his chest, slung his silver-studded bronze sword over his shoulders, and grabbed his huge, sturdy shield that even from a distance glowed like the moon. Like sailors who see across the waves a bright flame burning alone atop an island hill after a storm has carried them against their will over the fish-filled sea, away from their friends, so Achilles' fine, well-made shield sent a flash of fire up to the heavens. He lifted and set on his head a stout helmet with a horsehair crest that shone like a star and a thick, golden plume that Hephaestus had set waving along the ridge. Then godlike Achilles tested how well the armor fit and how well he moved within it, and he found that armor felt like wings lifting him up. Then he picked from its socket his father's heavy, long, and strong spear that no other Achaean but Achilles was skilled enough to wield: an ashen spear from Pelion's peak that Chiron gave his dear father, a gift for slaying heroes. Automedon and Alcinous yoked his horses, set the fine breast strap around them, placed the bridles in their jaws, and stretched the reins behind the chariot. Then Automedon took the whip in his hands and leapt upon the chariot while Achilles took his place behind him, shining in his armor like bright Hyperion, and called with a terrible voice to his father's horses, saying: "Xanthus and Balius, far-famed sons of Podarge, be sure to bring your charioteer back safely to the Danaan army when fighting is finished, and do not leave him to die as you did Patroclus."

Under the yoke, swift-moving Xanthus suddenly



answered him, for white-armed Hera gave him the power of speech; bowing his head so his mane fell past the yoke and touching the ground, he said: "Yes, mighty Achilles, we will save you this time, but your day of doom is near, and the great gods and dreadful fate will be the cause, not us. It was not because we were slow or lazy that the Trojans stripped Patroclus of his armor; it was because Apollo, the son of fair-haired Leto, killed him among the front fighters, granting Hector glory. We two could run as fast as the blasting West Wind, which men say is the swiftest, but you are fated to be killed in mighty combat by a mortal and a god."

When finished, the Furies took his voice away. Then swift-footed Achilles, greatly vexed, replied: "Xanthus, why prophecy my death? There is no need, for I know it is my fate to die here, far from my dear father and mother; still, I will not stop until I give the Trojans their fill of war."

Then he cried out and led his horses to the front.

## BOOK 20

As the Achaeans surrounded Peleus' insatiable son by the beaked ships and armed for battle, and as the Trojans waited on the rising plain, Zeus ordered Themis to call the gods to assembly atop many-ridged Olympus, so she went all over, summoning them to the house of Zeus. Every river save for Oceanus answered the call, as did the nymphs living in beautiful groves, river-feeding springs, and grassy meadows. Assembling at the cloud-gatherer's home, they sat in the polished portico that Hephaestus built for father Zeus with his ingenious skill.

All assembled at Zeus' home, including the earth-shaker, who answered Themis' call, left the sea, joined the gathering, and asked counselor Zeus: "Wielder of the bright thunderbolt, why did you call this assembly? Does it concern the Trojans and Achaeans? For their fighting is set to ignite."

Then cloud-gathering Zeus answered him: "Earth-shaker, you know full well why I called this assembly; though they are dying, I still care. I will remain seated here in a cleft on Olympus, looking down and entertaining my mind, but the rest of you should go to the Trojans

and Achaeans and aid one side or the other.  
If we let Achilles fight the Trojans alone, then  
Peleus' swift-footed son will be unstoppable.  
They used to tremble at the mere sight of him,  
but now that his heart burns in rage for his friend,  
I fear he will destroy Troy beyond what is fated."

So Cronos' son spoke, rousing unceasing war,  
and the gods went into battle, hearts divided.  
Hera went to the ships with Pallas Athena,  
earth-embracing Poseidon, the helper Hermes  
who surpassed all in cleverness, and powerful  
Hephaestus who walked with a limp though  
his slender legs moved nimbly. To the Trojans  
went glancing-helmed Ares, flowing-haired  
Phoebus, shedder of arrows Artemis, Leto,  
Xanthos, and laughter-loving Aphrodite.

Now, so long as the gods were far from men,  
the Achaeans triumphed, for Achilles, long  
absent from terrible war, was among them,  
and Trojan limbs shook with terror when they  
saw the shining armor of the swift-footed son  
of Peleus, equal to Ares. But once the gods  
reached the battle, Strife, rouser of armies,  
rose up, and Athena cried out, standing first  
by the trench outside the wall, then on the loud-  
thundering sea shores. Opposite them, Ares,  
like a black cloud, roused the Trojans, roused  
the Trojans, first from the topmost citadel,  
then along the Simoïs' banks to the Callicolone.<sup>1</sup>

So the blessed gods roused both armies to war,  
their deadly strife bursting across the battlefield.

1. It is not clear exactly where this is in relation to Troy, but the name Callicolone in Greek roughly translates to "Beauty Hill," and some have speculated that this is the location of the Judgment of Paris.

From on high, the father of gods and men sent terrible thunder, and from below Poseidon shook the vast earth and the high mountains peaks, shaking the feet and peaks of many-fountained Ida, the city of Troy, and the Achaean ships. This terrified Aïdoneus, lord of the underworld, who leapt from his throne and cried out, fearing that earth-shaker Poseidon would rip the earth wide open, revealing to mortals and immortals his dank, dark home that even the gods loathed. Such was the crash of the gods when they came together in strife: lord Poseidon standing against Phoebus Apollo and his winged arrows, Enyalios against the gleaming-eyed goddess Athena, Hera against Artemis, archer of the golden bow and echoing hunt and sister of the far-shooter, Leto against the mighty helper Hermes, and Hephaestus against the deep-eddying river the gods call Xanthos and men Scamander.

So gods fought gods, but Achilles was intent on facing Hector, son of Priam, above all others, for the anger in his heart compelled him to sate sturdy-shielded Ares with Hector's blood. But Apollo, rouser of armies, urged Aeneas to face the son of Peleus, filling him with great courage. The son of Zeus, Apollo, took the form and voice of Lycaon, Priam's son, and said to Aeneas: "Aeneas, counselor of Troy, did you not vow to the Trojan princes over wine that you would fight Achilles, son of Peleus, one-on-one?"

Then again Aeneas answered him, saying: "Son of Priam, why do you urge me to face and fight the high-minded son of Peleus? I stood and fought swift-footed Achilles before,

when he forced me at spearpoint to flee Ida after attacking our cattle and sacking Lyrnessus and Pedasus; but Zeus protected me, stirring my might and lightening my limbs. I would have died by Achilles' hands and by Athena's, for she led the way and urged him to slay Leleges and other Trojans with his bronze spear. Thus no man can fight Achilles since he always has a god to keep him from ruin. Plus, his spear shoots straight and does not stop until it pierces flesh. But if a god could even the battle odds, then I would not be easily beaten, though he claims to be made of bronze."

Then Apollo, son of lord Zeus, answered him: "Come and pray to the immortal gods, for they say you were born to Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, while he was born to a lesser god. Zeus is your grandfather; his is the old man of the sea. So go straight at him with your sturdy bronze and do not let him stop you with abusive words and threats."

So saying, he breathed greatness into the shepherd of men, and Aeneas joined the front lines armed in fiery bronze. White-armed Hera noticed the son of Anchises as he set off through the throng to fight the son of Peleus, and she said to the other gods: "Poseidon and Athena, consider these things in your minds and decide what should be done. Phoebus Apollo has sent Aeneas, armed in fiery bronze, to fight the son of Peleus. So come, let us either go and turn him back at once or let one of us stand beside Achilles and give him even greater might, so his heart is full and he knows that the best of the immortals love him, while those who defend and fight for the Trojans are

as useless as the wind. We all left Olympus and joined the battle so Achilles would not be harmed by the Trojans today; later, he will suffer whatever Fate spun for him with her thread on the day his mother bore him.<sup>2</sup> But if Achilles does not hear all this from a god, he will panic when a god faces him in battle, for it is dangerous when gods appear in their true form.”

Then earth-shaker Poseidon replied to her:  
 “There is no reason to be angry, Hera.  
 I do not wish to see the gods fighting each other, since we are far more powerful.  
 Let us go, then, to a place off the beaten track where we can sit and watch the men do battle. But if Ares or Phoebus Apollo begin fighting or keep Achilles away from battle, then we can quickly sound the cry of war.  
 Soon after, I think, they will leave the fight and return to Olympus and the assembly of gods, overpowered by our mighty hands.”

So saying, the dark-haired god led the others to the high, earth-covered wall of godlike Heracles, built by the Trojans and Pallas Athena as a refuge for the hero when the sea monster drove him from the seashore to the plain.<sup>3</sup>  
 There Poseidon and the other gods sat, covering themselves in an impenetrable cloud, while

2. According to Hesiod, there are three Fates, or Moirai (Μοῖραι), and their task is to measure a person's life. Each Fate has her own task in this process: Clotho (Κλωθώ) spins the thread of life from her spindle; Lachesis (Λάχεσις) measures the thread, determining the length of a person's life; and Atropos (Ἀτροπος) cuts the thread and determines the manner of a person's death.
3. The monster was sent by Poseidon when the Trojan king Laomedon (Priam's father) refused to give a reward to the king for building the Trojan wall. Laomedon asked Heracles to kill the monster, promising him immortal horses in return. The wall here, then, was built to help shield Heracles during the fight.

across from them, on the ridge of the Callicolone,  
sat Phoebus Apollo and Ares, sacker of cities.

Thus each side sat and discussed their options,  
both reluctant to begin the bitter battle, though  
Zeus, seated on high, urged them to do just that.

But the entire plain was filled with men, horses,  
and blazing bronze, and the earth quaked under  
their feet when they clashed. The two finest  
warriors came together between the two armies:  
Aeneas, son of Anchises, and godlike Achilles.  
Aeneas emerged first, uttering threats, tilting  
his strong helmet, holding his furious shield  
against his chest, and wielding his bronze spear.  
Opposite him, the son of Peleus charged like  
a ravenous lion that a community eagerly  
comes together to kill. At first, the lion ignores  
them, but when a swift-fighting youth hurls  
his spear and strikes him, the lion's mouth  
opens and begins to foam, his heart groans,  
his tail whips around his ribs and hip-joints  
on both sides, and he readies himself for attack,  
his eyes glaring brightly as he dashes forward  
with a frenzied rage either to kill or be killed.  
So, too, was Achilles roused by the rage  
in his heroic heart to face great-hearted  
Aeneas, and as they came near one another,  
noble Achilles, swift of foot, addressed him:  
"Aeneas, why do you stand against me so far  
from the throng? Does your heart order you  
to fight in hopes of gaining Priam's honor  
among the horse-taming Trojans? But if you  
slay me, Priam will not hand you this honor,  
for he has sons, and his mind is steady, not weak.  
Or have the Trojans offered you a splendid

estate with beautiful orchards and fields if you kill me? But this will be no easy task. Do you remember fleeing from my spear once before, when you were alone and I forced you to run away from your cattle and down Mount Ida's slopes, never once turning back? You ran all the way to Lyrnessus, but I followed and sacked the city with the help of Athena and father Zeus, capturing many women, taking their freedom. Zeus and the other gods protected you then, but they will not protect you now, though you believe they will. So go now and retreat into the throng before you pay the price, for fools only learn once a deed is done."

Then, in reply, Aeneas said to him:

"Son of Peleus, do not try to frighten me like a child, for I know how to make threats and hurl insults just as well as you. We each know about the other's birth and family for we have heard the tales from mortal men, but I have never seen your parents nor you mine. People say your father is noble Peleus and your mother is the fair-haired sea goddess Thetis, while I am proud to say my father is great-hearted Anchises and my mother is Aphrodite.

Now, one set of parents will mourn their dear child's loss today, for I do not expect us to utter childish words, separate, and return from battle. Still, if you want to learn about my lineage, then I will tell you, for many men know it: cloud-gatherer Zeus first fathered Dardanus, who founded Dardania, for divine Ilios had not yet been built on the plain, but men still lived on many-fountained Ida's foothills. Then Dardanus sired a son, King [Erichthonius](#),



who became the wealthiest of mortal men,  
with three thousand horses grazing in marsh  
meadows, mares caring for their young foals.  
Now the North Wind fell in love with the grazing  
mares, disguised himself as a black-maned stallion,  
and covered them; and they conceived and bore  
twelve foals who could frolic over the grain-giving  
earth without breaking the tips of the corn stalks  
and could run over the wide surface of the sea  
touching only the crests of the grey waves.  
And Erichthonius begot [Tros](#), who would rule  
the Trojans, and from Tros were born three noble  
sons: Ilus, [Assaracus](#), and godlike Ganymede,  
who was born the most beautiful of mortal men;  
so great was his beauty that the gods snatched  
him up, and he became the cup bearer for Zeus.  
Ilus then had a son, noble Laomedon, who  
begot Tithonus, Priam, Lampus, Clytius,  
and Hicetaon, child of Ares. And Assaracus  
begot [Capys](#), Capys begot Anchises, Anchises  
begot me, and Priam begot noble Hector.  
This is my lineage and my proud bloodline.  
But Zeus decides when to give a man honor  
or when to take it away, for he is strongest of all,  
so come, let us stop talking like little children  
as we stand here in the middle of the battlefield.  
We could hurl so much abuse at one another  
that a hundred-benched ship could not hold it.  
The tongues of mortals are loose and dripping  
with words—words for any and all occasions.  
Whatever you say will be thrown back at you.  
But there is no need for the two of us to bicker  
and quarrel with each other like women who,  
angry at each other in soul-sucking strife,  
head into the street and argue with words

both true and false, driven on by their rage.  
Your words will not divert me from fighting  
you face-to-face with bronze; so come, let us  
battle one another with bronze-tipped spears.”

So saying, he drove his stout spear against  
Achilles’ fearsome shield, and a loud clang  
rang out, startling Peleus’ son, whose strong  
hands held the shield away from him, for he  
thought that Aeneas’ long spear would pierce  
his shield—the fool, for his mind and heart  
did not know that gifts from the gods are not  
easily broken by mortals. Though the mighty  
spear of great-hearted Aeneas pierced two  
layers, the shield held firm, for three layers  
remained. In all, the crooked-footed god had  
forged five layers: two of bronze, two inside  
of tin, and one of gold, and it was this  
golden layer that stopped the ashen spear.

Then Achilles hurled his long-shadowed spear  
and hit the edge of Aeneas’ well-balanced shield  
where the bronze and the bull’s hide both ran  
thinnest; and the ashen spear of Peleus’ son shot  
through, making the shield clang. A frightened  
Aeneas crouched down and held his shield away  
from him as the spear sailed over his back and hit  
the dirt, after taking two of the shield’s circles  
with it. Having escaped the long spear, he stood,  
great fear filling his eyes, for he was shocked at how  
close the spear had come. Then Achilles drew  
his sharp sword and, with a terrible cry, eagerly  
charged; at the same time, Aeneas grabbed a huge  
stone that two men (as they are now) could not  
lift but that he easily lifted all by himself. And he  
would have hurled the stone, hitting Achilles

on his helm or on the shield that warded death,  
and Achilles would have used his sword to strip  
Aeneas of his soul, had earth-shaker Poseidon not  
quickly seen all this and said to the other gods:  
“Alas, I pity great-hearted Aeneas, for Peleus’  
son will soon send him to the house of Hades,  
for the fool listened to the words of far-shooter  
Apollo, who will do nothing to prevent his death.  
But why should a man so blameless, one who  
always offers gifts to the gods who rule wide  
heaven, suffer because of someone else’s pain?  
Come now, let us lead him away from death  
so we may avoid the wrath of Zeus should  
Achilles slay him. Aeneas is fated to survive  
so that the Dardanian race should not cease,  
for Cronos’ son loved Dardanus above all  
his children born to mortal women. And since  
the son of Cronos has come to hate the race  
of Priam, surely Aeneas will rule Troy, as will  
the sons of his sons who are not yet born.”

Then revered, ox-eyed Hera answered him:  
“Earth-shaker, do with Aeneas what your mind  
thinks best; protect this brave man or let him  
be slaughtered by Achilles, son of Peleus.  
But we two, Pallas Athena and I, have sworn  
many oaths before the immortals that we will  
not ward off the Trojan day of doom, not even  
when all of Troy is devoured by a blazing fire,  
set alight by the warlike Achaeans.”

Hearing this, earth-shaker Poseidon set out  
across the spear-strewn battlefield until he  
came to Aeneas and mighty Achilles.  
He quickly spread a mist over Achilles’ eyes,  
drew the sharp-pointed ashen spear out

of great-hearted Aeneas' shield, and set it down by Achilles' feet. Then Poseidon's hands lifted Aeneas off the ground, swung him high in the air, and sent him soaring over many ranks of men and lines of chariots until he reached the outer edge of the furious battle where the Caucones were arming for war. There earth-shaker Poseidon came near him and spoke to him with winged words, saying: "Aeneas, which foolish god ordered you to fight proud-hearted Peleus' son, who is stronger than you and loved by the immortals? No, draw back when you meet him or you will be sent to the house of Hades before your fated time. But when Achilles meets his fate and dies, then be brave and fight among the front lines, for no other Achaeans will be able to slay you."

Poseidon finished speaking and left to remove the divine mist that had clouded Achilles' eyes. When Achilles' vision was suddenly cleared, he became angry and said to his agitated heart: "What is this wondrous thing my eyes now see? My spear lies on the ground, but the man who was its target, who I was eager to slay, is gone. Clearly Aeneas' words were no idle boasts, and he is indeed beloved by the immortal gods. So be it. He will not have the heart to fight me again, for now he knows he is lucky to have escaped death. So I will call the war-loving Danaans and go out to face the other Trojans."

So he ran along the ranks, saying to each man: "Noble Achaeans, do not stand far away from the Trojans but face them man-to-man and fight them with passion! Although I am

strong, I cannot fight so many men alone.  
Not even Ares, an immortal god, or Athena  
could deal with such a mass of fighting foes.  
But I will do all that my hands, feet, and might  
will allow, and I swear I will not slacken, not one  
bit, but will drive through their ranks and bring  
fear to any Trojan who comes near my spear.”

As he urged them on, shining Hector called  
to the Trojans, declaring he would face Achilles:  
“Great-hearted Trojans, do not fear Peleus’ son.  
I would fight the immortals with words, but not  
with spears, for they are far mightier. In the same  
way, not all the words of Achilles will come true:  
some will be fulfilled, others will come to nothing.  
But I will face him even if his hands are like fire,  
his hands like fire, and his heart like blazing iron.”

So he urged them on; and the Trojans lifted  
their spears and, with a great shout, charged  
into battle. Then Phoebus Apollo said to Hector:  
“Hector, do not fight in front of Achilles; wait  
for him in the noisy throng or he will hit you  
with his spear or strike you with his sword.”

Hearing these words from the god’s own voice,  
a frightened Hector retreated back into the ranks.

But Achilles, his heart full of fury, cried out  
and attacked the Trojans. First, he slew Iphition,  
Otrynteus’ skilled son and leader of men, whom  
a Naiad bore to Otrynteus, sacker of cities, under  
snowy Tmolus in the rich lands of Hyde. Noble  
Achilles hurled his spear straight at him, hitting  
him square in the head, splitting it in two. As he  
fell with a thud, Achilles derided him, saying:  
“Lie there, son of Otrynteus, most feared of men.

This is where you die, though your birth was by Gygaean lake, in the land of your father, near fish-filled [Hyllus](#) and whirling [Hermus](#).”

So he boasted as darkness covered the other's eyes and the Achaean chariot wheels ripped the man apart. Then Achilles struck the great defender [Demoleon](#), Antenor's son, in the temple, driving his spear straight through the bronze cheek-pieces of his helmet, tearing his skull apart, scattering his brains all over, and ending his life in a furious flash. Next he speared Hippodamas in the back as he leapt from his chariot and tried to escape. As he breathed his last, he roared the way a bull bellows when dragged by young men to the altar of Poseidon on Helice, pleasing the earth-shaker; so bellowed Hippodamas as his soul left his bones. Then Achilles took his spear and went after godlike Polydorus, Priam's son. His father had refused to let his youngest and dearest child fight, but Polydorus surpassed others in quickness, and in order to show off his speed, he ran foolishly through the front-lines until his life came to an end. As he shot past, swift-footed Achilles speared him in the back where the breastplate overlapped with the gold clasps of his belt. The spearpoint then drove straight through and came out by the navel, and as a dark cloud enveloped him, he held his intestines in his hands and sank to the earth.

When Hector saw his brother Polydorus holding his intestines in his hands and sinking to the earth, a mist of tears filled his eyes. No longer able to hold back, he went and faced Achilles, wielding his sharp spear like a flame. But when Achilles

saw him, he sprang up and mocked him, saying:  
“Nearby is the man who poisoned my heart,  
striking down my honored friend; no longer  
will we avoid each other across the battle-lines.”

Then he glared angrily at noble Hector and said:  
“Come closer and you will soon meet your end.”

Flashing-helmed Hector fearlessly replied to him:  
“Son of Peleus, quit trying to frighten me like  
a child, for I know how to make threats and hurl  
insults just as well as you. I know you are a great  
warrior, much greater than I am; but it now lies  
on the knees of the gods to determine whether  
I, your inferior, should slay you with my spear,  
since my weapon has been proven sharp before.”

He finished, poised his spear, and threw it,  
but Athena turned it away from glorious Achilles  
with a light breath, and the missile came back  
and fell at noble Hector’s feet, Achilles then cried  
out furiously and rushed him, eager to slay him,  
but Apollo snatched Hector away with ease,  
shrouding him in a thick mist. Three times noble  
Achilles rushed at Hector with his bronze spear,  
and three times he struck only the thick mist.  
But on the fourth try, he charged like a god,  
uttered a terrible cry, and said to Hector:  
“Again, dog, you have barely escaped a foul  
death, saved by Phoebus Apollo, to whom you  
must pray before entering the chaos of spears.  
But I will kill you when we next face each  
other, if I too can get help from a divine ally.  
For now, I will attack whoever I can reach.”

So saying, he speared Dryops square in the neck,  
and the man fell at his feet. Achilles then left

him and hit Demuchus, Philetor's son, in the knee with a spear and then stabbed him with a sword, robbing him of life. Then he attacked Laogonus and Dardanus, both sons of Bias, hurling them from their chariot to the ground, hitting one with his spear and the other with his sword. Then Tros, Alastor's son, fell to Achilles' knees, begging him to take pity on one so young, to be spared from death, to be taken and released—the fool. There was no persuading Achilles, for his mind was not sweet or gentle but fierce and savage. Tros tried to wrap his hands around the man's knees, begging him, but Achilles stuck his sword in his liver; the liver fell out, black blood poured into his chest, darkness covered his eyes, and his soul left him. Then Achilles stuck his spear in Mulius' ear, the bronze point passing through and out the other ear. Then his handled sword hit Echeclus, Agenor's son, square in the head; his blood warmed the blade, and dark death and mighty fate covered his eyes. Then he pierced Deucalion in the arm, where the tendon meets his elbow, and the spearpoint made his arm go limp. As he waited for death, Achilles then sliced his neck with his sword; his helm and head went flying, marrow gushed from his neck, and the corpse fell to the ground. Then he went after Rhigmus, Peires' noble son who came from fertile Thrace. Achilles speared him in the gut, and he fell from his chariot. Then, as Rhigmus' attendant Areïthous turned the horses away, he was speared in the back and thrown from the chariot, and the horses fled.

As when a savage fire rages through a dry mountain valley, winds driving the flames far



and wide and burning the thick forests down,  
so Achilles rushed all over like a god, killing  
men and covering the earth in black blood.  
Or as when a man yokes broad-fronted bulls  
to tread white barley on a threshing-floor,  
and in no time the bellowing bulls' feet thin  
out the grain, so under his single-hoofed  
horses did Achilles trample men and shields  
alike. And the chariot's axle and rims were  
splattered with blood from the horses' hooves  
and wheels, and the hands of Peleus' son were  
thick with gore, for he sought eternal glory.

## BOOK 21

When they came to a ford on the Xanthos,  
the fair-flowing river son of immortal Zeus,  
Achilles split the Trojans in half. He drove some  
over the plain to the city, where the Achaeans had  
fled from Hector's fury the day before, and Hera  
covered them in a thick mist to slow their retreat.  
But the others raced into the deep, silvery waters  
of the river, making a great splash and forcing  
the banks to cry out. When the men attempted  
to swim, they became caught in the eddies  
and uttered terrible cries. Just as locusts fly  
to a river to escape a rushing fire, but the fire  
draws near and forces them to cower against  
the water to avoid being burnt, so the deep-  
eddying Xanthos was filled with fleeing men  
and chariots, all seeking to escape Achilles.

Zeus-sprung Achilles left his spear on the bank  
against a tamarisk and, with only his sword, leapt  
into the river like a god, intent on fearsome acts.  
He struck in all directions, shameful groans rising  
with each strike, and the water turned blood-red.  
Just as other fish flee from a mighty-mawed  
dolphin, filling the recesses of a safe harbor  
for fear of the beast who devours whatever it can,  
so the Trojans cowered in the river's streams

and banks. When Achilles' hands grew tired, he took twelve living youths out of the river as blood-price for the slain Patroclus, Menoetius' son. He led them out of the river like stunned fawns, tied their hands behind them with the artful belts they wore around their tunics, ordered his men to take them to the hollow ships, and then returned to battle, eager to kill.

Then he came upon a son of Dardanian Priam coming out of the river—[Lycaon](#), whom Achilles once caught in his father's orchard in the dead of night. As he was cutting a branch from a fig tree with sharp bronze to use as a chariot's rail, godlike Achilles appeared, an unwanted danger. Achilles took him in his ships to well-built Lemnos and sold him, and the son of Jason gave a good price for him; but a guest-friend, Eëtion of Imbros, paid his ransom and sent him to divine Arisbe, and from there Lycaon fled back home in secret. He enjoyed eleven days with friends and family after leaving Lemnos, but on the twelfth a god threw him again into the hands of Achilles, who was set to send him to Hades, where he did not wish to go. When Achilles saw him, Lycaon was unarmed—no helmet, shield, or spear, having thrown them aside as he fled into the river, for he was tired and sweating and his knees had given out. And Achilles said to his own heroic heart: "I am amazed at what my eyes behold. Perhaps the great-hearted Trojans that I killed will rise again from the gloomy netherworld, for he has escaped his day of doom and returned home after being sold in Lemnos; not even the grey sea that captures many could hold him back. But now he will taste the point of our spear,

so I may witness for myself whether he will return from that place or whether the life-giving earth will hold him like it holds even the strong.”

So he thought, waiting, while the other came near him in a daze, ready to clasp his knees in hopes of escaping a foul death and a black fate. When noble Achilles raised his large spear, eager to hit him, Lycaon dropped down and grabbed his knees, and the flesh-craving spear passed over him and lodged in the earth. Lycaon then begged Achilles, holding his knees with one hand, the spear with the other hand, and refusing to let go of either, saying to him: “Zeus-blessed Achilles, I beg you on my knees to respect and pity me. I am your honored suppliant, for I ate Demeter’s bread at your table on the day you took me from the well-tended orchard and sent me to Lemnos, far from friends and family, for the price of a hecatomb of oxen. I paid three times as much to gain my freedom, and it has been twelve days since I returned to Ilios after suffering much. But now, my fate is again in your hands, and father Zeus must surely hate me for again handing me over to you and making my mother bear such a short-lived son: Laothoe, daughter of old Altes, who rules the warlike Leleges and holds steep Pegasus on the Satnioeis. Priam took his daughter as wife, one of many; she bore two of us, and soon we will both be dead. You have already killed godlike Polydorus with your sharp spear as he charged with the front-fighters, and now this doom falls on me. I know I cannot escape your hands—some god has seen to that. But I beg you now, and take it to heart:

do not kill me. I was not born in the same womb as Hector, who killed your kind, powerful friend.”

Such were the pleading words of Priam’s shining son, but there was no pity in Achilles’ reply:

“Fool, make no speeches or requests for ransom.

Before Patroclus met his day of doom, I was inclined in my mind to offer the Trojans mercy, and I captured many and sold them. But now no one will escape death if the gods deliver them to my hands before the walls of Ilios—especially the sons of Priam. So you, too, will die, my friend. Why bother crying? Patroclus died, and he was greater than you. Do you not see the kind of man I am, how fair and strong? My father is noble and my mother a goddess, yet relentless death looms over me as well. One day soon, at dawn, midday, or evening, someone will slay me in battle, with either a spear-cast or an arrow from a bowstring.”

Hearing this, Lycaon’s knees and heart gave out; he let go of the spear, sank down, and stretched out his arms. Achilles drew his sharp sword and sliced his collar-bone near the neck until the whole blade sank in. Lycaon fell to the earth, and black blood gushed out and drenched the dirt. Achilles then grabbed his foot and threw him in the river to float away, and mocked him saying: “Now lie with the fish. They will lick your bloody wound without thought. Your mother will not place you on a bier and mourn you, but the whirling Scamander will carry you into the sea’s wide folds, and a fish will leap up out of the black, rippling waters and feast upon Lycaon’s white, fat flesh. Death to you all until we reach sacred Ilios:

you running away, me slaying you from behind.  
 The fine-flowing river with its silver eddies will  
 not stop me, though you no doubt sacrificed many  
 bulls to him and cast many horses into his depths.<sup>1</sup>  
 But all of you will die a foul death as punishment  
 for killing Patroclus and destroying the Achaeans,  
 whom you killed by the swift ships while I was away.”

So he said, but the river's rage increased, and he  
 debated in his heart how to stop godlike Achilles'  
 assault and ward off disaster for the Trojans.  
 Meanwhile, the son of Peleus wielded his long-  
 shadowed spear and sought to slay Asteropaeus,  
 the son of Pelegon and grandson of the broad-  
 channeled river Axius who lay with Periboea,  
[Acessamenus](#)' oldest daughter. Achilles attacked  
 Asteropaeus, who left the river to face him and held  
 two spears. Courage filled his heart, granted him  
 by Xanthos, who was enraged over the deaths  
 of the youths that Achilles killed without pity  
 by the river. When they came together, swift-  
 footed and godlike Achilles was first to speak:  
 “Who are you who challenges me? Where are you  
 from? Unhappy are the parents of my enemies.”

Then the shining son of Pelegon answered him:  
 “Great-hearted son of Peleus, why ask about  
 my family? I am from the fertile fields of far away  
 Paeonia, and I lead the long-speared Paeonians.  
 This is the eleventh dawn since my arrival in Ilios,  
 but I am grandson of wide-flowing Axius,  
 whose waters are the fairest on earth and who

1. Rivers were often associated with bulls, so sacrificing bulls to Scamander is not surprising; the idea of sacrificing live horses to river gods, however, is unusual. A few Greek writers mention this practice in relation to other cultures (Herodotus, for example, cites a Persian tradition of offering white horses to the Strymon river [7.113]), but it was likely either a non-Greek custom or a custom from a much earlier period of Greek civilization.

sired spear-famed Pelegon, whom men say is my father. Now let us battle, brilliant Achilles.”

So he said, menacingly, and as godlike Achilles was lifting his Pelian ash spear, heroic Asteropaeus threw both of his spears at once, for he was ambidextrous. One spear hit the shield but did not pass through, for the gold stopped it, a gift from the gods. The other grazed Achilles’ right elbow; black blood oozed out, but the flesh-craving spear shot past and struck the earth. Then Achilles threw his straight-flying ash spear at Asteropaeus, eager to slay him, but the spear missed, hit the high bank, and lodged itself halfway into the bank. Peleus’ son drew his sharp sword and leapt eagerly upon him, but the other could not pull Achilles’ stout spear from the bank. Three times he tried to loosen the ashen spear of Aeacus’ grandson, and three times he failed. On the fourth attempt, he bent the spear, trying to break it, but before he could finish, Achilles slew him with his sword, striking his belly near the navel. His guts spewed onto the ground and darkness covered his eyes as he lay there, gasping for breath. Then Achilles leapt on him, stripped his armor, and mocked him, saying: “Lie there, for it is hard even for a river’s son to beat the children of mighty Cronos’ son. You say your father is a fair-flowing river, but I say I am descended from great Zeus. My honored father rules the Myrmidons, Peleus, son of Aeacus, who was son of Zeus. Just as Zeus is mightier than a sea-flowing river, so Zeus’ son is mightier than a river’s. A great river flows beside you, if he were able to help; but no one can fight against

Zeus, son of Cronos. Even great [Achelous](#) is no match, nor the might of deep-flowing Oceanus, which all rivers, seas, springs, and deep wells empty into; even he fears the lightning of great Zeus and his terrible thunderbolt when it crashes into heaven.”

So saying, he took from the bank his bronze spear and left the body he had robbed of life to lie in the sand and soak in the black water. The eels and fish then made a meal of him, nibbling and gnawing at the fat on his kidneys. But Achilles went after the Paeonians, lords of chariots, who had fled into the whirling river after seeing their finest slain in mighty combat by the sword and hands of Peleus’ sons. He slew Thersilochus, Mydon, Astypylus, Mnesus, Thrasius, Aenius, and Ophelestes. And swift Achilles would have killed more Paeonians, but the deep-eddying river, enraged, spoke to him with a mortal’s voice from the whirling depths: “Achilles, you are the mightiest and most wicked of men, for the gods always protect you. If Cronos’ son orders you to slay all Trojans, then at least drive them out of my waters and kill them on the plain, for my fair streams are clogged with corpses, and my currents cannot pour into the divine sea while you continue to kill. So ease up, leader of men, for I am amazed.”

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him, saying: “Zeus-nourished Scamander, I will do as you say. But I will not stop slaying the arrogant Trojans until I drive them to the city and fight Hector one-on-one, and either he slays me or I him.”



So saying, godlike Achilles attacked the Trojans.  
Then the deep-flowing river called out to Apollo:  
“Son of Zeus, lord of the silver bow, you have not  
obeyed the will of Cronos’ son, who ordered  
you to stand by the Trojans and protect them  
until evening comes and darkness covers the earth.”

As spear-famed Achilles sprang from the bank  
and leapt into the currents, the river formed  
a furious flood that swept the crowd of Achilles’  
corpses out of the river’s depths. Then, bellowing  
like a bull, he pushed them onto dry land while  
also saving the living under the fair waters,  
hiding them in whirlpools both deep and wide.  
A fierce wave rose up around Achilles, slamming  
into his shield and pushing him back. He lost  
his footing and grabbed a tall, well-grown elm,  
but the tree was ripped out by the roots along  
with the bank, and it fell fully into the water,  
its thick branches damning the river himself.  
Achilles, now frightened, leapt out of the eddy  
and flew as fast as he could over the plain.  
But without pause the great god chased after  
him with a dark wave, desperate to stop noble  
Achilles and ward off disaster for the Trojans.  
The son of Peleus darted away like a spear  
with the swoop of a black eagle, the strongest  
and swiftest of winged predators. So he flew  
away, his bronze breastplate clanging terribly  
as he swerved to avoid the flood as the raging  
river followed close behind. Imagine a man who  
has dug ditches to irrigate his trees and garden  
with dark river water; then he uses a pick-axe  
to knock out the dams, but when the currents  
are unleashed, all the pebbles are carried away,  
the land is saturated with water, and the man

is left far behind. So, in this way, did the flood overtake Achilles' swift feet, for gods are greater than men. Each time Achilles tried to stand against the river and find out if the gods who hold broad heaven were against him, the divine river would send a flood down upon his shoulders, and he would be forced to leap out of the way. And every time the river swiped his knees and seized the ground under his feet, his spirit would grow more distressed. Soon Peleus' son cried out to broad heaven: "Father Zeus, will no god save me from the river, pitiful as I am? After that, I would meet my fate. But the other heavenly gods are not to blame, only my dear mother, who filled me with lies, saying that I would die by Apollo's swift arrows under the wall of the well-armed Trojans. If only I had been killed by Hector, the best of the men here, then one brave man would have slain another. Now a wretched death awaits me: to be trapped in this river like a pigkeeper's son swept away while trying to cross a river in winter."

So he said, and Poseidon and Athena quickly came and stood near him, in mortal forms. Taking his hands in theirs, they reassured him, and earth-shaker Poseidon was first to speak: "Son of Peleus, do not panic or flee, for two gods, Pallas Athena and I, are here to help you, with Zeus' blessing. Since you are not fated to be killed by the river, his battle will soon end, as you will see. But now we offer wise advice, if you will listen: do not let your hands cease fighting until you have trapped the remaining Trojans inside the famous walls

of Ilios; and when you have killed Hector,  
return to the ships. We grant you this glory.”

So saying, they returned to the immortals  
while Achilles went out to the plain, the gods  
having roused his heart. The plain was flooded,  
and young men’s corpses and fine weapons floated  
in the water, but Achilles’ knees leapt high as he  
shot straight at the flood, the river unable to hold  
him back, Athena having increased his strength.  
Scamander’s fury still held and his anger against  
Peleus’ son had only grown, so he gathered his waters  
into a huge, cresting wave and shouted to Simoïs:  
“Brother, let us use our strength to hold back  
this man, or else he will soon destroy Priam’s great  
city, for the Trojans cannot defeat him in battle.  
So quickly come and help me: fill your streams  
with spring water, rouse your torrents, unleash  
a great wave, and stir up the crashing chaos  
of logs and stones so we can stop this wild  
man who thinks himself an equal to the gods.  
I say his might will not save him, nor his beauty,  
nor his fine armor, which will soon be under  
the water, covered in mud; and I will bury  
his body in sand and pour countless pebbles  
over him, and the Achaeans will never find  
his bones under all that rubbish. This will be  
his barrow, and he will need no grave-mound  
when the Achaeans perform the death rites.”

So saying, he rushed Achilles, seething with rage  
and boiling over with foam, blood, and corpses.  
The gleaming wave from the rain-fed river  
towered over Peleus’ son, ready to envelop him,  
but Hera cried out, fearful that the deep-flowing  
river would carry Achilles away, and quickly

called to her dear son Hephaestus, saying to him:  
“Get up, crook-footed child, for we think eddying  
Xanthos is a worthy foe for you in battle. Now go  
quickly to Achilles’ aid and unleash your fire  
while I go to the sea and call the West Wind  
and the white South Wind to rouse a tempest  
that will spread your foul flames and burn  
the Trojan dead and their armor, the trees  
on the banks, and Xanthos himself. But do not  
let him turn you away with kind words or threats  
and do not hold back your rage until I call  
to you with a shout; then you can still your fire.”

So she said, and Hephaestus readied his god-forged  
fire. After kindling the fire on the plain, he burnt  
the many corpses strewn about—Achilles’ kills—  
until the plain was dry and the bright water stilled.  
As in late summer when the North Wind quickly  
dries up a freshly-watered garden, pleasing  
the gardener, so Hephaestus dried the plain  
and burnt the corpses before turning the flames  
on the river. Elms, willows, and tamarisk were all  
burnt, as were the lotus, rushes, and galingale  
that grew in abundance around the fair streams.  
The eels and fish in the eddies, too, were tossed  
this way and that by the river’s currents thanks  
to the fires of wily Hephaestus. As the river  
burned away, Scamander called to the god:  
“Hephaestus, no other god can challenge you,  
nor will I try to fight your flaming fire. So stop  
your assault. Let noble Achilles quickly drive  
the Trojans out of their city. What do I care?”

So he said amidst the raging fire and seething  
waters. Just as a cauldron boils and bubbles  
over when flames melt the fat from a well-fed

swine after dry kindling is placed below it,  
so the streams blazed and the waters boiled,  
and he could not escape, for he was held back  
by the mighty blasts of clever Hephaestus.  
Then the river pleaded with Hera, saying:  
“Hera, why does your son attack my streams  
and mine alone? Surely you cannot fault me  
more than all the others who aid the Trojans.  
But truly I will quit if you order it, if he also  
quits. I also swear that I will not lift my hands  
to ward off the Trojan day of doom, even  
when the warlike Achaean sons burn Troy,  
engulfing the city in an all-consuming fire.”

Hearing this, white-armed goddess Hera  
quickly called to her dear son Hephaestus:  
“Hephaestus, glorious son, hold back, for it  
is not right to strike a god for a mortal’s sake.”

Hearing this, Hephaestus doused the divine fire,  
and the fair waters returned to the streams.

Once Xanthus’ rage waned, the two ceased  
fighting, for Hera, though angry, restrained them.  
But painful strife fell hard upon the other gods,  
their fury blowing about like two crossed winds.  
They collided with a violent crash, making  
the earth ring and heavens squeal like a trumpet,  
and when Zeus heard it on Olympus, his heart  
laughed with joy to see the gods in battle.  
Shield-piercer Ares started the conflict, first  
charging Athena, a bronze spear in his hand,  
and then reviling her with words, saying:  
“Why, dog-fly, does your furious heart again  
force the gods to fight each other? Do you  
remember when you sent Diomedes, Tydeus’

son, to wound me, and you yourself grabbed the spear and drove it into me, tearing my fine flesh? Now I will pay you back for that outrage.”

So saying, blood-stained Ares hurled his large spear at Athena’s tasseled aegis, which even Zeus’ thunderbolts could not pierce. She drew back and, with her strong hand, picked up a black stone lying on the plain, a jagged rock that men once used to mark a field’s boundary; she threw it and hit furious Ares in the neck. His limbs went slack, and he fell backwards seven plethra<sup>2</sup> until his hair was covered in dust and his armor clanged.

Pallas Athena laughed and mocked him, saying: “Fool, you still do not see that I am stronger than you for you still try to match your rage with mine. This must be your mother’s doing, for she angrily called foul curses down upon you for abandoning the Achaeans and aiding the arrogant Trojans.”

So saying, she turned her bright eyes away from Ares, but Zeus’ daughter, Aphrodite, took his hand and led him away as he groaned and tried to recover his breath. Seeing her, white-armed Hera quickly said to Athena: “Well, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, Atrytone, once again that pest leads Ares, bane of men, away from the chaos of battle. Go after her.”

Athena gleefully pursued Aphrodite and struck her on the chest with her fist, making the knees and heart of the goddess grow slack. As two gods were sprawled upon the bountiful earth, Athena stood over them and mocked them, saying: “This is what comes to those aiding the Trojans

2. One plethra is approximately 30 meters (97-100 feet).

when they battle the breastplate-armed Argives.  
If they were all as bold and as stout-hearted  
as Aphrodite, who came to Ares' aid and faced  
my might, then we would have ended the war  
long ago, having sacked the well-built city of Ilios."

So she said, and white-armed Hera smiled.  
Then the great earth-shaker said to Apollo:  
"Phoebus, why do we stand apart? The others  
have begun. It would be a shame to return  
and cross the bronze threshold of Zeus' house  
on Olympus without fighting. But you go first,  
for you are younger while I am older and wiser.  
Does your foolish heart not remember all the ills  
that we, alone among the gods, suffered when  
we came to Ilios at Zeus' command to serve  
arrogant Laomedon for a year at a fixed wage,  
and he oversaw our work and ordered us about?  
I built city walls for the Trojans that were both  
beautiful and wide, so the city might never be  
taken; and you, Phoebus, herded his shambling  
oxen around the many spurs and forests of Ida.  
But when this happy season ended and we  
were set to be paid, headstrong Laomedon  
robbed us of all our pay, dismissed us,  
and threatened to bind our feet, tie our hands,  
sell us to some faraway island, and cut off  
both of our ears with his bronze. So we went  
home with resentful hearts, angry over  
the pay that was promised but never delivered.  
Now you favor his people and do not seek  
to join us and destroy the arrogant Trojans  
and bring ruin to their wives and children."

Then lord Apollo, the far-seer, answered him:  
"Earth-shaker, you would not call me smart

if I battled you for the sake of some cowardly mortals who are like leaves: at first full of life, eating the fruits of the land, but soon after wasting away and dying. So let us quickly quit fighting and leave them to battle on their own.”

So saying, he turned his back, unwilling to clench his fists and fight his father’s brother. But his sister, the goddess Artemis, the huntress, reproached him with harsh words, telling him: “Far-shooter, by running away, you are giving Poseidon all the victory and all the glory. Why even bother bringing your useless bow, you fool? I do not want to hear you in our father’s halls, bragging yet again to the immortal gods about fighting Poseidon face-to-face.”

So she said, but far-shooter Apollo did not reply. Then the honored wife of Zeus, angry at the shedder of arrows, reproached her, saying: “So, bold bitch, now you want to stand against me? It will be not be easy for you to challenge me, even with your bow, since Zeus made you a lion against women, able to kill any of them you wished. Surely it is better to kill mountain beasts and wild deer than to battle those stronger than you. But if you wish to learn how much greater I am than you in battle, then let us fight one another.”

So saying, Hera grabbed both of Artemis’ wrists with her left hand, and with the right she took the bow and arrows from her shoulders and used them to box her ears, smiling smugly. As Artemis tried to free herself, arrows fell from the quiver, but then she escaped and ran away in tears. Like a pigeon who flies into a cave to escape a falcon,



so Artemis tearfully fled, leaving her weapons behind. Then the messenger Hermes said to Leto: “Leto, I will not fight you, for it is hard to trade blows with the wives of cloud-gatherer Zeus; but feel free to boast to the other immortal gods that you defeated me with your mighty strength.”

So he said, and Leto picked the curved bow and arrow out of the swirling dust and went back to her daughter. But Artemis was on Olympus, in Zeus’ house with bronze threshold, where she sat at her father’s knee and cried, her ambrosial robes quivering around her. Her father, Cronos’ son, drew her near and, laughing gently, asked her: “Dear child, which son of heaven has done this to you, as if you had openly been making mischief?”

And Artemis of the echoing hunt answered him: “Your wife, white-armed Hera, struck me, father, for she has stirred strife among the immortals.”

As they spoke to one another, Phoebus Apollo made his way to sacred Ilios, worried that the Danaans would exceed what was fated and raze the city’s well-made walls on that day. The other gods returned to Olympus, some angry and others pleased, and all sat by their father, lord of the black cloud. But Achilles continued to slay both Trojans and their single-hoofed horses. Just as smoke rises to the wide heavens from a city on fire, sent by the rage of gods that brings toil to all and tears to many, so Achilles brought both toil and tears to the Trojans.

Now, old Priam stood atop the god-built wall and saw wondrous Achilles quickly sending the Trojans into panicked flight, their strength

spent. Groaning, he descended to the ground and roused the famed gatekeepers, saying:  
“Open the gates wide with your hands until the retreating men reach the city, for Achilles is driving them away, and all seems lost. But once they reach safety behind the wall, then shut the double-gates again, for I fear this dangerous man may leap inside the wall.”

Hearing this, they loosened the bar, opened the gates, and let in daylight. But Apollo leapt down to face Achilles and protect the Trojans who were racing to the city’s high walls, throats parched with thirst and bodies covered in dust. And Achilles chased them with his furious spear, his rage-filled heart eager to win glory.

Then the Achaean sons would have taken high-gated Troy had Phoebus Apollo not roused Agenor, Antenor’s mighty son. He filled his heart with the courage to ward off death’s heavy hands and then leaned against the nearby oak tree, shrouding himself in mist. When Agenor saw Achilles, sacker of cities, he stood to face him; many thoughts stirred his troubled heart, and he said to himself:  
“If I run away from mighty Achilles like the others who are fleeing in panic, then he will catch me and cut my cowardly throat. But if I let Achilles, son of Peleus, chase after the rest, then I can run away from the wall, over the plain of Ilion, to the spurs of Ida, where I can hide in the brush. In the evening, after bathing in the river and washing away the sweat from my body, I can return to Ilios. But why does my heart debate these things

with me? If he sees me as I turn from the city and head to the plain, then his swift feet will catch me and I will never escape my deadly fate, for he is the mightiest of men. Perhaps if I go to the front of the city and face him, then a sharp blade could cut his flesh. Men say that he is mortal and has only one soul. Still, Zeus, son of Cronos, grants him glory.”

So saying, he crouched down and waited for Achilles, his stout heart eager to fight. Think of a panther emerging from a thick woods to face a hunter, taking no thought of fear or flight, even after hearing the barking dogs; and even when the man strikes first, piercing her with his spear, she continues to fight until she either strikes him or is struck down. So, in this way, did Agenor, Antenor’s noble son, refuse to flee until he fought Achilles. He held his balanced shield in front of him, pointed his spear at Achilles, and shouted: “Famous Achilles, you hope in your heart to sack the city of noble Trojans today. Fool! There will be much suffering before it is won, for many stout men wait inside, standing in front of our dear parents, wives, and sons, ready to guard Ilios. It is you who will meet your fate, though you are a fierce, bold warrior.”

So saying, his heavy hand hurled his sharp spear and struck Achilles on the shin, below the knee, making his well-made tin greave clang terribly; but the bronze sprang back after hitting the greave, having failed to pierce this gift from the gods. Then the son of Peleus tried to attack godlike Agenor, but Apollo

refused to grant him glory, shrouding the man in a mist and sending him safely away from the battle. Then Apollo disguised himself as Agenor, stood in Achilles' way, and kept him away from the army. Achilles chased him across wheat-bearing fields and along the deep-eddying Scamander, Apollo always just ahead and Achilles always just behind but certain that his swift feet will catch him. All the while, the rest of the fleeing Trojans gladly returned to the city and filled the town. They did not wait for each other outside the city walls to find out who had escaped and who had died in battle; instead, those whose feet and knees had been saved poured quickly into the city.

## BOOK 22

After fleeing into the city like fawns, the Trojans quenched their thirst and dried their sweat as they sat beside the battlements. Meanwhile, the Achaeans approached the wall with shields on shoulders. But deadly fate forced Hector to remain in front of Ilios by the Scaean gates. Then Phoebus Apollo called to Peleus' son: "Son of Peleus, your feet are fast, but a mortal like yourself could never catch a god. Or are you too filled with rage to realize I am a god? Do you not care about fighting the Trojans? You forced them back into the city only to follow me here. But you cannot kill me, for I cannot die."

Then swift-footed Achilles angrily replied to him: "You tricked me, far-shooter, deadliest of all gods, by leading me away from the wall. I could have sent many to the dust before they reached Ilios, but now you have taken my glory and blithely saved them, for you have no fear of retribution. I would surely punish you—if only I could."

So saying, Achilles hurried back to the city, moving his feet and knees as swiftly as a prize-winning chariot horse who runs effortlessly across the plain at full stride.

Old Priam was first to catch sight of shining Achilles as he raced over the plain. Just as the star that rises in harvest time, called Orion's Dog, is both the brightest star, outshining all others in the dead of night, and a sign of ill fortune that brings many fevers to wretched mortals, so also shone the bronze chest of Achilles as he ran.

At the sight, the old man groaned in grief, beat his head with his hands, and cried out to his dearest son who stood before the gates, eager to battle Achilles. With outstretched arms and a pitiful voice, Priam said to him:

"Hector, dear child, do not fight this man alone, without aid, or you will quickly meet your fate, slain by the mighty son of Peleus, cruel as he is. If only the gods hated him like I do, then he would lie dead, a feast for dogs and vultures, and grief would leave my heart, for he has taken so many of my noble sons, killing them or selling them to distant lands.

Even now, I do not see two of my sons among the Trojans in the city: Lycaon and Polydorus, whose mother is Laothoe, pearl of a woman.

If they still live in the enemy camp, then we can free them with some of the gold or bronze gifts that old [Altes](#) gave to his daughter.

But if they are dead and in the house of Hades, then I and their mother will be filled with grief, though the grief of others will be shorter—unless you, too, are killed by Achilles. So come inside the walls, my child. Save the Trojan men and women, and do not give great glory to Peleus' son and deprive yourself of dear life. And take pity on your wretched father before

Zeus, son of Cronos, kills me in my old age, long after I have witnessed many woes: sons killed, daughters captured, treasures plundered, infants taken and hurled to the ground in grim combat, and daughters-in-law dragged away by the deadly hands of the Achaeans. Then, after all this, a man will come to my door, strike me down with his sharp spear, and strip my limbs of life; then my own guard dogs, who I fed at my table, will drag me out, rip my body to pieces, and drink my blood with savage fury until they fall asleep in the doorway. A young man killed in battle and lying dead on the field, his body torn by bronze, is a fine and noble sight, but nothing is more shameful than seeing dogs mutilate a dead old man's grizzled face, grey beard, and naked corpse."

So the old man said, ripping the grey hair from his head, but Hector could not be swayed. Then his mother, crying and shedding tears, opened her robe with one hand, held a breast out with the other, and tearfully said to her son: "Hector, my child, look at these. If I ever gave you my breast to ease your pain, then pity me. Remember this, dear child, and fight the foe from inside the wall; do not be a fool and face him. If he kills you, then I will never mourn you on a bier, dear branch whom I bore, nor will your bountiful bride, for swift dogs will devour you by the Argive ships, far from us."

So they spoke, tearfully begging their dearest son, but Hector was unswayed as he awaited mighty Achilles' approach. Just as a mountain serpent in his lair waits for a man while eating

poison herbs that fuel his rage and glaring menacingly as he coils inside his hole, so Hector, with steadfast courage, stood firm and leaned his shining shield against the wall. But he was troubled, telling his heroic heart: “Woe is me! If I go inside the gates and walls, then Polydamas will be the first to shame me, for he urged me to return the Trojans to the city on the deadly night that godlike Achilles was roused. But I ignored him—a grave mistake. Now, since my folly brought the army to ruin, I fear facing the Trojans and their long-robed wives and hearing some lesser man tell me: ‘Hector’s arrogance has destroyed the army.’ So they will say. Frankly, I would rather face Achilles one-on-one, kill him, and return home or else die gloriously before the city. Or perhaps I will set down my bossed shield and stout helm, lean the spear against the wall, go alone to noble Achilles, and promise him that Helen and all the prizes that Alexander brought in his hollow ships back to Troy—and thus started this strife—will be given to Atreus’ sons to take away. Then I will divide among the Achaeans all the city’s hidden riches and make the Trojan elders swear an oath that they will hide nothing and divide in two all treasures to be found in this fair city. But why does my heart debate such things? If I approach him as a suppliant, stripped of armor like a woman, then he will not pity me or respect me but will kill me. There is no way now from tree or rock to chat with him in the same way a girl and a boy—girl and boy!—chat idly with each other.



Better, then, to fight him at once and find out which of us is granted glory by the Olympian.”

So he thought as he waited, but soon Achilles, equal to the glancing-helmed warrior Enyalios, drew near, his dreaded Pelian ash spear shaking over his right shoulder and his bronze armor shining like a flaming fire or a rising sun.

When Hector saw him, he fled in panic, leaving the gates behind, but the son of Peleus pursued, trusting his swift feet. Just as a mountain hawk, swiftest of birds, swoops down on a wild dove, and though the dove flees, the hawk, crying sharply, draws ever closer, intent on seizing her, so also did Achilles fly straight at him. But Hector fled from the Trojan walls in fear, moving as fast as his limbs allowed.

They ran past the lookout point and the wind-swept fig tree, followed the carriage road under the wall, and came to two fair-flowing springs whose waters feed the swirling Scamander. Warm water flows in one, steam rising all around like a blazing fire, while even in summer the water in the other flows as cold as hail or snow or ice that forms in water. Beside the springs are fine washing basins of stone, where Trojan wives and fair daughters cleaned their clothes back in more peaceful times, before the arrival of the Achaean sons. They ran past: one fleeing, the other chasing. A good man was in front, but a better man pursued him quickly, for they raced not to win a prize, like a sacrificial animal or an ox-hide, but for the life of horse-taming Hector. Just as champion single-hoofed horses gallop swiftly at the turn when a great prize like a tripod

or woman is at stake in a funeral games,  
so the swift feet of these two circled the city  
of Priam three times as the gods looked on.  
First to speak was the father of gods and men:  
“Alas, I see a dear man being chased around  
the walls, and my heart grieves for Hector, who  
has burnt many thigh pieces in offering to me  
on many-ridged Ida’s peaks or on the city’s  
rooftops. But now noble Achilles pursues  
Priam’s son around the city with his swift feet.  
So come, immortals, and give counsel. Should  
we save Hector from death or allow this good  
man to be slain by Achilles, son of Peleus?”

Then the bright-eyed goddess Athena replied:  
“Father, lord of thunderbolts and black clouds,  
what are you saying? Do you want to free  
from death a mortal long fated to die? Do it,  
but do not expect the other gods to approve.”

And cloud-gatherer Zeus replied to her:  
“Tritogeneia, dear child, relax; my words  
are not in earnest, and I want to please you.  
So do what you must; I will not get in the way.”

Hearing this, an already-eager Athena  
quickly darted down the peaks of Olympus.

Meanwhile, swift Achilles chased Hector like  
a dog chasing a fawn out of its mountain lair  
and over valleys and dells, and though the fawn  
hides in a bush for a while, the dog soon finds  
its scent and runs it down. So also was Hector  
unable to escape the swift son of Peleus. Each  
time he headed for the Dardanian gates, where  
the well-built walls offered safety and archers  
could rain down missiles, Achilles forced him

back to the plain and kept himself between Hector and the city. Just as a dreamer cannot chase one who flees, for one cannot overtake and the other cannot pursue, so Achilles could not catch Hector, nor could Hector escape. But Hector could never have escaped fated death had Apollo not come near him one last time to stir his strength and quicken his knees. Noble Achilles motioned to his men not to shoot their sharp missiles at Hector in case one hit him and took the glory, leaving Achilles second. But when they reached the springs a fourth time, father Zeus set two deadly fates on his golden scales: one for Achilles and one for horse-taming Hector. When he lifted the middle of the scales, the weight dropped for Hector's deadly day of doom, and so Phoebus Apollo left him. Then the bright-eyed goddess Athena came near the son of Peleus and said to him: "Now, glorious Achilles, dear to Zeus, I hope we can bring glory back to the Achaean ships after slaying Hector, though he is unrelenting in battle. Now he cannot flee from us, even if far-shooter Apollo grovels before the face of aegis-bearing father Zeus. For now, stand here and take a breath while I go to Hector and persuade him to fight you man-to-man."

So Athena said, and Achilles eagerly obeyed, stopping and leaning against his bronze-tipped ashen spear. And Athena, taking the form and voice of Deïophobus, approached noble Hector and said to him with winged words: "Dear brother, swift Achilles is wearing you down by chasing you around Priam's city. So let us stand together and defend our home."

Then glancing-helmed Hector answered her:  
“Deiphobus, in the past you were the dearest  
of my brothers born to Priam and Hecabe,  
but now my heart will honor you even more,  
for when you saw me, you dared to come out  
beyond the walls while the others stayed inside.”

Then again bright-eyed goddess Athena replied:  
“Dear brother, father and my revered mother  
begged me, along with my comrades, to stay  
back, for they fear Achilles, but my heart was  
worn down by painful grief for you. Now, let  
us charge him and fight—and spare no spears  
so we may learn whether Achilles will kill us  
and drag our bloody armor back to the hollow  
ships or whether he will die by our spears.”

So Athena said, cunningly deceiving Hector.  
When they closed on one another, glancing-  
helmed Hector spoke first, telling Achilles:  
“Son of Peleus, I am done running away.  
I circled Priam’s great city three times because  
I could not stay and fight, but now my heart  
compels me to face you and either kill or be  
killed. But let us swear an oath to the gods,  
who will bear witness and guard our pact:  
if Zeus grants me victory, I will not mutilate  
your corpse, for once I strip your glorious  
armor, Achilles, I will give your body back  
to the Achaeans—if you will do the same.”

With a scowl, swift-footed Achilles replied:  
“Wretched Hector, do not speak to me of pacts.  
No oaths of trust exist between lions and men,  
nor do wolves and lambs seek common ground,  
for their hearts are full of hatred for each other.

So it is between you and I, and there will be no oaths between us until one of us falls and sates steady-shielded Ares with his blood. Remember all your valor: you must be a great spearman and a bold warrior, for there is no escape for you. Soon Pallas Athena will slay you with my spear, and you will repay me for all my sorrows after you killed my friends in a rage with your spear.”

So saying, he poised his long-shadowed spear and hurled it, but famed Hector saw it coming and ducked, and the bronze flew over his shoulder and fell to the earth. But Pallas Athena snatched it up and gave it back to Achilles without Hector noticing. And Hector told noble Peleus’ son: “You missed, godlike Achilles, so it seems you do not know my fate from Zeus as you claimed. You thought that glib and wily words would make me cower in fear and rob me of might and courage, but you will not spear me in the back as I flee, though you may drive it into my chest as I charge you—if the gods allow it. For now, avoid my bronze spear, which I hope to bury deep in your flesh. War would be easier for the Trojans if you perished, for you are their fiercest foe.”

So saying, he poised and hurled his long spear, but it landed in the center of Achilles’ shield before glancing aside. Angry that his weapon was cast in vain, Hector stood there, crushed, and without a second ashen spear. He then called to bright-shielded Deïphobus, asking for another long spear, but he was not there. Then Hector realized the truth, and exclaimed: “Alas, the gods have surely called for my death, for I thought heroic Deïphobus was beside me,

but he is behind the wall, and Athena has tricked me. Now bitter death is near, and I cannot escape. Surely, this has long been the will of Zeus and his far-shooting son, who once guarded me gladly. Now fate has come for me, but I will not die shamefully, without a fight, but will do some great deed that future men will hear about.”

Saying this, he drew from its sheath a sharp sword, strong and sturdy; then he collected himself and attacked. Just as an eagle swoops down from the murky clouds to snatch a tender lamb or cowering hare, so Hector swooped, wielding his sharp sword. Achilles also charged, savage fury filling his heart, his well-made shield protecting his chest, his four-crested helmet bobbing up and down, and a thick golden plume waving along the crest, set there by Hephaestus. Just as the evening star,<sup>1</sup> the brightest star in the heavens, shines in the gloom of night, so shone the sharp spear that Achilles held in his right hand and aimed at noble Hector with murderous intent while scanning his fair flesh to find a weak spot. Hector’s body was covered in the bronze armor he had stripped from Patroclus after killing him, but there was a gap where the collar-bone and shoulders joined the neck: the gullet, a deadly spot. This is where noble Achilles shot his spear as Hector charged. The heavy bronze point passed clean through the soft neck but did not cut his wind-pipe, so he could still speak. Then Hector fell to the dust, and Achilles derided him, saying: “Hector, you thought you would be safe when you stripped Patroclus, but you forgot about me,

1. The planet Venus, which the Greeks called Hesper.

you fool—an avenger, greater than he, far away by the hollow ships. Now I have dropped you to your knees, and dogs and birds will tear you apart horribly while the Achaeans bury Patroclus.”

A weakened Hector of the flashing helm replied:  
“I beg you on the knees and souls of your parents: do not let dogs devour me by the Achaean ships. My father and mother will give you endless gifts of gold and bronze if you let my body be taken home so the Trojan men and Trojan wives may offer death rites by funeral pyre.”

With a scowl, swift-footed Achilles said to him:  
“Do not beg me on your knees or by my parents, dog. I only wish my might and rage would let me cut your flesh and eat it raw for all you did to me. Nothing will keep the dogs from your head, not even if they weigh out ten or twenty times the normal ransom and promise even more or if Priam, son of Dardanus, offers your weight in gold. Your revered mother will never place you on a death bed and mourn the son she bore, for dogs and birds will tear you apart.”

As he lay dying, flashing-helmed Hector said:  
“I know you well, and I know nothing could persuade you, for you have a heart of iron. But beware, or I will be the cause of the gods’ wrath against you when Paris and Phoebus Apollo slay you, great hero, by the Scaean gates.”

As he spoke, death’s shroud enveloped him, and his soul left his limbs and headed to Hades with a wailing cry, leaving youth and manhood behind. To the dead man, noble Achilles said:

“Die now, and I will accept my fate when Zeus and the other gods bring it to pass.”

So saying, he pulled the bronze spear out of Hector’s corpse, set it aside, and stripped the blood-soaked armor from his shoulders. Then the Achaean sons surrounded Hector, admiring his glorious body while stabbing it. Then they turned to each other and said: “Well, Hector is now much easier to handle than when he was setting fire to our ships.”

So they said as they prodded the body. But once Achilles had stripped the armor, he stood among the Achaeans and said: “Friends, leaders, and rulers of the Argives, since the gods have allowed us to slay this man who has brought us misery beyond all others, let us go, fully-armed, to the city to find out what the Trojans have in mind: will they abandon the high city now that Hector has fallen or remain in spite of the loss? But why does my heart debate such things? A corpse lies by the ships, unmourned and unburied: Patroclus, whom I will never forget so long as I live and my knees are limber. And if in Hades the dead forget the dead, I will still remember my dear comrade. Now, let us sing a victory song, Achaean sons, and go back to the hollow ships with him in tow. Great glory is ours! We killed heroic Hector, whom the Trojans in the city worshipped like a god!”

So he said, and devised cruel plans for noble Hector. He pierced the tendons in both feet between ankles and heels, drew ox-hide straps



through them, and tied them to the chariot, leaving the head to drag behind. He leapt on the chariot, set the armor down, whipped the horses, and set off. Dust rose up and spread over Hector's dark hair, his once-fair head lying deep in the dust. This is how Zeus delivered him to his enemies to be abused in his father's land.

As Hector's head was dragged through the dust, his mother was tearing out her hair, flinging off her shining veil, and loudly wailing at the sight of her son. His father also groaned in grief, and people across the city mourned as if all of hill-top Ilios were burning in a blazing fire. His people were barely able to stop the frenzied old man from rushing out the Dardanian gates, and he pleaded with them all as he wallowed in the dung,<sup>2</sup> calling on each man by name and saying: "Stop fretting, my friends, and help me leave the city by myself and go to the Achaean ships. I will beg this reckless, violent man and see if he respects his elders and takes pity on an old man. His own father is my age: Peleus, who gave him life and raised him to be the bane of Troy—but especially me, for he killed my many sons, all in their youthful prime. Still, though I mourn them all, it is my sharp grief for Hector that will drag me down to Hades. If only he had died in my arms! Then we could have our fill of weeping and wailing: the mother who bore him and I."

2. Animal dung was regularly collected and set beside a city's gates so it could be transported to the fields and used to fertilize the crops. A similar reference to a dung-pile can be found in book 17 of the *Odyssey* when Odysseus sees his old dog Argos for the first time sitting on a pile of dung by the gates to his palace in Ithaca (17.296-300).

So he said, weeping, and the city cried with him.  
And Hecuba led the Trojan women in mourning:  
“My child, how wretched am I! How shall I  
live now that you are dead? You were my glory  
every day and night in the city, and you aided  
all Trojan men and women, who treated you  
like a god. You were their great glory too,  
but now death and fate have come for you.”

So she said, weeping, but Hector’s wife knew  
none of this, for no messenger had come to tell  
her that her husband was still outside the gates.  
She was at her loom deep inside the high house,  
inserting colorful flowers into a purple cloak.  
She told her fair-haired attendants to set a tripod  
on the fire so a hot bath would be ready when  
Hector returned from battle—the poor thing.  
She was unaware that, far from all baths, bright-  
eyed Athena had slain him by Achilles’ hands.  
Then from the wall she heard the wailing cries,  
and her knees buckled; she dropped the rod  
and called again to her fair-haired attendants:  
“You two, follow me. I must see what has  
happened. I heard Hecuba’s voice, and now  
my heart is in my throat and my knees are stiff;  
surely some evil has come to a child of Priam.  
May the word stay far from my ear, but I fear  
noble Achilles has cut off bold Hector  
from the city, driven him onto the plain,  
and put an end to his fatal courage, for Hector  
would never remain in a crowd but charge  
to the front, his fury yielding to no man.”

So saying, Andromache ran from the hall like  
a madwoman, heart racing and attendants  
following. When she reached the wall, she pushed

through the crowd, looked down, and saw swift horses dragging Hector ruthlessly before the city and then away to the hollow Achaean ships. At once, a dark cloud covered her eyes and she fell back, gasping. Her bright head-dress flew off, diadem and cap and plaited head-band along with the veil that golden Aphrodite had given her on the day flashing-helmed Hector took her from Eëtion's house after bringing countless gifts as bride-price. Then she was circled by her husband's sisters and brother's wives who held her as she wailed for death. When she had revived and her spirit had returned, she lifted her voice and said to the women of Troy: "Hector, I am lost. We were born to one fate, you and I: you in Troy in Priam's house and I in Thebes under wooded Placus in the house of Eëtion, who raised me, the father of a cursed child. I wish he had never given me life. Now you go to the home of Hades deep under the earth, leaving me in dreadful grief, a widow in your halls with an infant child, the son born to you and I, both of us cursed. You are dead, Hector, and so cannot help him, nor he you. For if he escapes the tearful Achaean war, his life will be full of hard work and sorrow, for others will take his lands. Orphanhood robs a child of his friends: his head hangs low, his cheeks are wet with tears, and when he must, he visits his father's friends, tugging at one's cloak or another's tunic, and they pity him, and one offers him a small sip from his cup, which wets his lips but does not quench his thirst. Then one whose parents still live strikes him, throws him from the feast, and reproaches him, saying,

‘Get out! Your father does not share our feast.’  
Tearfully, he returns to his widowed mother,  
the child Astyanax, who once sat on his father’s  
knees eating only marrow and rich sheep fat,  
and when sleep came and he finished playing,  
he slept in a soft bed in his nurse’s arms,  
his heart filled with happy thoughts. But now  
that he has lost his father, he will suffer terribly,  
the boy the Trojans call Astyanax because you  
alone, Hector, saved their gates and high walls.  
Now, by the curved ships, far from your parents,  
wriggling worms will eat your naked corpse once  
the dogs have had their fill, though in your halls  
lie fine clothes made by women’s hands. But I will  
burn them all in a blazing fire; you do not need  
them, since you will never lie in them, but by doing  
this the men and women of Troy will honor you.”

So she said, weeping, and the women cried with her.

## BOOK 23

As the Trojans mourned, the Achaeans went to their ships on the Hellespont, each man scattering to his own ship. But Achilles did not allow the Myrmidons to scatter and addressed his warlike comrades, saying: “Swift-riding Myrmidons, my faithful friends, before we loosen our single-hoofed horses from their chariots, let us first go to Patroclus and mourn him, for it is right to honor the dead. After we have mourned, we will unyoke our horses and eat as one.”

When he finished, he led them in mourning. They drove their fine horses around the corpse three times, joined by Thetis, who lifted their cries. The sands and their armor were wet with tears, for they yearned for this man who filled enemies with fear. Peleus’ son led the cries and put his hands on Patroclus’ chest and said: “Hail, Patroclus, even in the home of Hades, for I am fulfilling my vow to avenge your death by dragging Hector here and feeding him to the dogs and beheading twelve noble Trojan sons in front of your funeral pyre.”

So saying, he devised shameful acts for Hector

and set him face-down in the dust by Patroclus' bier. Then the men stripped off their bronze armor, unyoked their neighing horses, and sat beside Aeacus' swift-footed grandson's ship as he prepared a funeral feast to sate their stomachs. Many bright oxen were killed with a knife, as were many sheep, bleating goats, and fat, white-tusked swine—all laid out and roasted on the flames of Hephaestus. And blood was collected in cups and set around the dead man.

Then, after much coaxing, for his heart still raged, the Achaean leaders led the swift-footed son of Peleus to noble Agamemnon. When they arrived at Agamemnon's tent, they quickly ordered the clear-voiced heralds to light a fire under a great cauldron, hoping to persuade Achilles to wash off the blood and gore. But he sternly refused, telling them: "No, by Zeus, the highest and greatest of gods, for I must not let water wash my head until I can put Patroclus on the fire, pile earth upon him, and cut my hair, for I will never be seized by a greater grief while I still live. For now let us attend this wretched feast, but at dawn, lord Agamemnon, have your men gather firewood, place it near the corpse, and prepare a fitting passing for one heading into darkness so steady fire will consume him quickly and the army can return to its tasks."

So he said, and all listened and obeyed. After quickly preparing the meals, each man feasted, and no one's heart was left wanting. When the meal ended and all were satisfied, each man went to his tent to rest, but Peleus'

son sat with the Myrmidons in an open space by the shore of the loud-roaring sea, groaning deeply as the waves crashed onto the shore. When sweet sleep took hold, lifting the grief from his heart and resting his weary limbs after chasing Hector around windy Ilios, the spirit of poor Patroclus appeared to him, looking just as he always had: same size, same eyes, same voice, and same clothes. And he stood over Achilles' head and said to him: "You sleep and have forgotten me, Achilles. You cared when I was alive but not now that I am dead. So bury me so I can pass through the gates of Hades. The shades bar my way, refusing to let me join them in the wide-gated house beyond the river, so I wander aimlessly. Now, I beg you, take my hand, for I will never leave Hades once you have given me my fire. We will never again in life sit apart from others and devise plans, for the dreadful fate I was assigned at birth has swallowed me whole. But it is also your fate, godlike Achilles, to die under the walls of the wealthy Trojans. And I ask one more thing, if you will obey: let our bones lie together in death, Achilles, like when we were children living in your house after Menoetius brought me, still just a lad, to your land from Opoeis because I had killed Amphidamus' son in a fit of rage over dice—a foolish accident. Horseman Peleus took me into his home, raising me kindly and appointing me your attendant. So let our bones be joined in a single golden urn, the one your revered mother gave to you."

Then swift-footed Achilles replied to him:

“Why have you come here, my loyal friend, and charged me with these tasks? Still, I will do all these things and obey your commands. Now stand closer so we can hold each other and find comfort from our deadly sorrows.”

So saying, he reached for his friend, but found only air, for the spirit had disappeared like smoke into the earth. An astonished Achilles sprang up, clapped his hands, and exclaimed: “Alas, something—a soul or shade—lives on in the house of Hades, even if the mind is gone, for all night long the lifelike spirit of poor Patroclus stood over me, weeping and wailing and telling me what to do.”

So he said, his words stirring sorrow in all, and they cried around the corpse until rosy-fingered dawn appeared. Then Agamemnon ordered noble Meriones, attendant of brave Idomeneus, to lead out men and mules from all over camp to collect wood. Carrying axes and well-twisted ropes in their hands and leading their mules, they traveled up, down, and all around many hills until they reached the steps of many-fountained Ida where they set to work with fine-edged bronze felling oak trees that came crashing down. Then the Achaeans split the trunks and tied them behind the mules, whose hooves tore into the earth as they pulled over the brush to the plain. And Meriones, kind Idomeneus’ attendant, ordered all woodcutters to carry logs. They piled these on the shore where Achilles planned a great barrow for Patroclus.



After throwing down the boundless wood,  
they sat and waited. Achilles then ordered  
the warlike Myrmidons to put on their bronze  
belts and yoke their horses to chariots; so they rose,  
donned their armor, and mounted their chariots,  
warriors and charioteers alike. The chariots led,  
countless foot soldiers followed, and in the middle  
they carried Patroclus, his body covered in hair  
they had cut and thrown over him. Behind  
them noble Achilles held his head and wept,  
for he was sending his noble friend to Hades.

When they reached Achilles' chosen spot,  
they set Patroclus down and laid wood over  
him. Then swift-footed Achilles, on impulse,  
stood away from the pyre and cut the blonde  
hair he had grown long for the river Spercheus.  
Looking sadly out at the wine-dark sea, he said:  
"Spercheus, Peleus vowed that after I returned  
home to my dear father's land, I would honor  
you by cutting my hair, offering a holy hecatomb,  
and slaying fifty uncastrated rams in your waters,  
at the site of your smoking altar. So he vowed,  
but you did not fulfill his request. Since I will  
never return to my dear father's land, I offer  
my hair to Patroclus to carry with him."

So saying, he put the hair in his dear friend's  
hands, thus rousing in all the desire to mourn.  
Then the sun would have set on their tears had  
Achilles not approached Agamemnon and said:  
"Son of Atreus, the Achaeans obey your words  
above all others. The time for mourning is past,  
so send them away from the fire and order them  
to cook their meals. Those closest to the dead will  
see to the rest, and let the leaders stay as well."

Hearing this, the lord of men, Agamemnon,  
sent the men back to their well-balanced ships,  
while those closest to the dead stayed, piled  
wood to make a hundred square foot pyre,  
and set Patroclus on top, their hearts breaking.  
Then they flayed and prepared many fat sheep  
and sleek, shambling oxen; and noble Achilles  
took all the fat, covered the body from head  
to toe, and piled the animals around him.  
He leaned two double-handled jars of honey  
and oil against the bier and threw four strong-  
necked horses onto the fire as they wailed.  
Of the nine dogs Patroclus had under his table,  
Achilles slayed two and added them to the fire.  
And with his bronze he killed twelve noble sons  
of great-hearted Trojans, rage burning his soul.  
Then he lit the relentless fire until it spread  
and, with a wail, called his dear friend's name:  
"Hail, my Patroclus, even in the home of Hades,  
for I have now fulfilled my promise to you:  
twelve noble sons of great-hearted Trojans  
burn together with you; but Hector, Priam's  
son, will not be devoured by fire but by dogs."

So he vowed, but no dogs came near Hector,  
for Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter, kept the dogs  
away both day and night and anointed him  
with rose-scented ambrosia so his skin would not  
be torn as Achilles dragged him. And Phoebus  
Apollo sent a dark cloud down from heaven  
to cover the area around the body so the sun's  
fury would not cook his tendon and limbs.

But Patroclus' pyre failed to kindle, so again  
swift-footed, noble Achilles devised a plan.  
Away from the fire, he prayed to the North

and West Winds, promising great offerings,  
pouring libations from a golden chalice,  
and asking them to come quickly so the wood  
would kindle and the corpse burn. Iris heard  
his prayer and hurried to the winds, who were  
together in stormy West Wind's house enjoying  
a feast. Iris halted at the stone threshold,  
and when the winds saw her, they rose quickly,  
each man calling her over to sit beside him.  
But she refused to sit, saying to them:  
"I cannot sit, for I must return to the streams  
of Oceanus and to Ethiopia, where they are  
sacrificing hecatombs to the gods, and I must  
share in the feast. But Achilles prays to the North  
and blustering West Winds, promising great  
offerings if you would stir the flames on the pyre  
where Patroclus lies, grieved by all Achaeans."

So saying, she left, and they rose with a rushing  
cry and drove the clouds before them. Blowing  
over the sea, their whistling blasts stirring  
the waves, they soon reached fertile Troy and fell  
on the pyre, and an inhuman flame arose.  
All night long winds beat the flaming pyre,  
and all night long swift-footed Achilles used  
a two-handled cup to take wine from a golden  
bowl and pour it out, wetting the earth as he  
called to the spirit of poor Patroclus. Just as  
a father cries over his son's burning bones, a son  
newly-wed whose death devastated his parents,  
so Achilles cried ceaselessly over his friend's  
burning bones as he moved around the pyre.

When the morning star lit the earth and sky  
and saffron-robed dawn spread over the sea,  
the funeral pyre died and its flames ceased.

The winds returned once again to their homes over the Thracian sea, which swelled as they passed. Then the son of Peleus left the pyre and laid down, exhausted, yearning for sweet sleep; but the son of Atreus and his men gathered together, and their noisy arrival woke him, so he sat up and addressed them: "Son of Atreus and other Achaean leaders, first quench with your bright wine the last of the flames. Then let us separate the bones of Patroclus, Menoetius' son, from the rest; they should be easy to spot for he was placed in the middle of the pyre while the rest burned on the edges, horses mixed with men. Then let us wrap them in a double layer of fat and put them in a golden urn until I, too, am hidden in Hades. And do not build for him a great barrow, just a suitable one; later, when I am gone, you Achaeans who are left by the benched ships can build a barrow both high and wide."

All obeyed the words of Peleus' swift-footed son. First, they quenched the pyre with bright wine wherever the fire burned and the ash was thick. Then they tearfully gathered their kind friend's white bones, wrapped them in a double layer of fat, put them in a golden urn, set the urn in his tent, and covered it with fine linen cloth. Next they marked out a circle, laid a foundation around the pyre, piled earth over it to form a barrow, and started to leave. But Achilles had them stay and sit in assembly. Then he carried prizes out from his ships: cauldrons, tripods, horses, mules, cattle, well-girdled women, and grey iron.

First he set out fine prizes for the swift-footed

charioteers: a woman skilled in noble craftwork to take away and a handled tripod holding twenty-two measures for the victor; for second place, a six-year-old, unbroken mare, pregnant with a mule foal; for third place, a new, unfired cauldron, still shining bright and holding four measures; for fourth place, two talents of gold; and for fifth place, a new, two-handled jar. Then he stood up and addressed the Argives: "Son of Atreus and other well-greaved Argives, these are the prizes that await the charioteers. If this contest were held in honor of some other Achaean, then I would take first prize back to my tent, for you know my horses surpass all others, being immortal, given by Poseidon to my father Peleus, who gave them to me. But I will stay here with my single-hoofed horses, who have lost their famed charioteer, a kind man who would often pour soft olive oil on their manes after washing them in bright water. So they will stand there, mourning him, their manes resting on the ground, their hearts torn. But those Achaeans who trust their horses and their joined chariots should get ready."

So said Peleus' son, and the charioteers quickly rose. By far the first to stir was the lord of men, Eumelus, Admetus' son and a skilled horseman. Then came mighty Diomedes, Tydeus' son, who led by the yoke the Trojan horses he took from Aeneas, though Apollo saved Aeneas himself. Next to rise was fair-haired Menelaus, Atreus' son, Zeus-born, leading his swift horses, Agamemnon's mare Aethe and his own Podargus. Echepolus, Anchises' son, had given Agamemnon the mare as a gift so he would not have to go to Ilios but stay

behind and enjoy himself, for Zeus had given him great wealth and he lived in spacious Sicyon; now Menelaus led out this eager-to-race mare. The fourth to yoke his fair-maned horses was Antilochus, noble son of high-hearted King Nestor, Neleus' son; swift, Pylos-bred horses drew his chariot. His father stood near him, offering words of advice to a son who already understood: "Antilochus, you are young but loved by Zeus and Poseidon, who taught you all about horses; there is no need to teach you more, for you know how to turn at the post. But you have the slowest horses in the race, so I fear it will be difficult for you. The other men's horses are faster, but the men are no better at strategy than you. So come, dear boy, fill your mind with cunning plans and do not let those prizes slip past you. Just as skill is better than might for a wood-cutter, and just as skill helps a pilot guide his swift ship safely through rough winds on the wine-dark sea, so skill will help one charioteer beat the rest. A man who trusts only in his horses and chariot will turn recklessly this way and that, his horses running all over the course and out of control. But a clever man driving inferior horses keeps his eye on the post and turns sharply, holds his oxhide reins taut at the start, maintains a steady pace, and watches the leader closely. Now here is a sure sign that will not go unnoticed: there is a dry stump, an oak or pine about six feet high that rain has not rotted away; two white stones are fixed against it on either side, and the ground around it is smooth for driving. This was once a grave marker for a man long dead or the goal in some ancient race, but swift-

footed Achilles has made it his turning post.  
Drive your horses and chariot right up to it  
while you lean to the left of your well-plaited  
chariot and call out to the horse on the right,  
goading him on as you loosen the reins.  
But drive your left horse so close to the post  
that the nave of the well-made wheel nearly  
hits it—but do not touch the stone or you  
will harm the horse and break the chariot,  
and the others will cheer and you will be  
disgraced. So be smart, son, and stay alert,  
for if you pass the rest at the turning point,  
then no man will catch you or burst past you,  
not even the swift horse of Adrastus, [Arion](#),  
who comes from immortal stock, or one  
of Laomedon's wonderful local horses.”

So saying, Nestor, son of Neleus, sat down,  
having explained every last thing to his son.

And Meriones was fifth to yoke his fair-maned  
horses. They mounted their chariots and threw  
down lots. Achilles cast them, and out fell  
the lot of Nestor's son, Antilochus, followed  
in turn by the lots of lord Eumelus, spear-famed  
Menelaus, Meriones, and finally Diomedes,  
who drove the best horses by far. They then  
lined up in rows, and Achilles pointed out  
the turning post on the smooth plain and set  
there as look-out godlike Phoenix, his father's  
follower, to watch the race and report the truth.

Holding their whips high over the horses, they  
lashed at them and shouted their names as  
they sped swiftly away from the ships and over  
the plain. The dust rose up under the horses'

breasts like clouds in a violent storm, their manes streaming against the rushing wind. The chariots were pressed into the fertile land one minute and tossed airborne the next, and the drivers stood in the chariots with their hearts throbbing as they yearned for victory and called out to their horses flying over the dusty plain.

When the swift horses were in the final stretch, returning to the grey sea, each man's true merit was revealed as the horses quickened their pace. The swift mares of Pheres' grandson, Eumelus, were in the lead, just ahead of the Trojan stallions of Diomedes, which were so close they seemed ready to mount Eumelus' chariot, their breath warming his back and shoulders and their heads hovering just behind as they ran. And Diomedes would have drawn even or driven past had Phoebus Apollo not held a grudge against him and knocked the shining whip out of his hands. Angry tears poured out as he watched the mares pull away and his own horses slow, for they ran without a goad. But Athena knew Apollo had cheated Tydeus' son, so she hurried to the leader of men, returned his whip, and gave his horses strength. Then, in revenge, she went after the son of Admetus and broke his horses' yoke, and they scattered over the course. The chariot pole hit the ground, and Eumelus flew from the chariot and landed near a wheel; his elbows, mouth, and nose were stripped of skin, his forehead was bruised above the eyebrows, his eyes were filled with tears, and his rich voice was silenced. Tydeus' son turned his single-hoofed horses aside and moved into the lead, for Athena had strengthened his horses and given him glory.



Behind him was fair-haired Menelaus, Atreus' son, but Antilochus called to his father's horses:  
"Hurry, you two, and run as fast as you can.

I do not order you to match the stallions of skilled Diomedes, for Athena has made his horses swift and has given him glory. But catch Menelaus' horses and do not let them escape, or you will be shamed, for Aethe is a mare. Why is she leaving you behind? I tell you now, and it will come to pass: Nestor, shepherd of the people, will show no mercy but kill you with a sharp sword if we win a lesser prize through your lack of effort. So hurry up and run as fast as you can, and I will devise a plan to slip past them on the narrow road—this I promise."

The horses, hearing their master's rebuke, trembled and sped up for a while, and soon Antilochus found a narrow gap in the road: a hollow dip where winter rains had broken away part of the road. Menelaus drove at the dip, hoping others would hold back, but Antilochus turned his single-hoofed horses to the side of the road and pursued him. Frightened, Atreus' son said to Antilochus: "Antilochus, hold your horses and stop driving recklessly. The road is narrow here but widens soon. Do not hit my chariot and harm us both."

So he said, but Antilochus whipped his horses and drove even harder—as if he had not heard. They ran as far as a discus can be thrown from the shoulder of a young man testing his strength, but then the mares of Atreus' son backed off, for Menelaus chose to slow down

and not risk the single-hoofed horses colliding  
in the track, upturning the chariots, and hurling  
the men into the dust—all in the rush for victory.  
And fair-haired Menelaus scolded Antilochus:  
“Antilochus, most malicious of men, be off!  
We Achaeans were fools to think you wise.  
Still, you will not win the prize without an oath.”

So he said and then called out to his horses:  
“Do not hold back and stand around grieving  
in your hearts. Their feet and knees will tire  
before yours do, for they have lost their youth.”

The horses cowered with fear at their master’s  
rebuke, ran faster, and soon caught the others.

The Argives sat in assembly and watched  
the horses as they flew over the dusty plain.  
Idomeneus, the Cretan leader, was first to spot  
them, for he sat apart from the others, high up  
in a lookout spot. When he heard a man’s  
distant shouts, he quickly recognized the voice.  
Soon after, he saw a horse in the lead, a bay  
with a white, moon-like spot on his forehead.  
He then stood and said to the other Achaeans:  
“Friends, leaders, and rulers of the Achaeans,  
am I alone or can you also see the horses?  
A different charioteer and horses now seem  
to be in the lead; the mares must have fallen  
in the plain. They were the best off the line  
and I saw them go first around the turning  
point, but now I cannot to see them though  
my eyes can see the entire Trojan plain.  
Perhaps the driver lost his reins or lost control  
and missed the mark when he made the turn,  
or perhaps he was thrown to the earth,

breaking the chariot and sending the mares bolting away in a frenzy. But stand up and see for yourselves, for I think the man in front is an Aetolian and an Argive king: mighty Diomedes, the son of horse-tamer Tydeus.”

Then Ajax, son of Oïleus, scornfully replied: “Idomeneus, why must you brag? The swift horses are far from us, rushing over the plain. You are not the youngest among the Argives nor are your eyes the sharpest, so why do you talk so rashly? There are better men than you here, so do not be such a braggart. Eumelus’ mares still lead, as they did before, and he stands behind them, holding the reins.”

This angered the Cretan lord, who replied: “Ajax, great at insults but witless and cruel and worst among the Argives: come, let us wager a tripod or a cauldron on which horses lead, and let Agamemnon, son of Atreus, judge. Then you will learn by paying up.”

So he said, enraging swift Ajax, son of Oïleus, who stood quickly, ready to respond with harsh words; and the fight between them would have escalated had Achilles not stepped in and said: “Ajax and Idomeneus, end this rage-filled argument. It is not proper, and you would censure others who acted in this way. Now sit and wait for the horses, for they are quickly coming closer, aiming for victory. Then you will all see which Argive horses are in the lead and which are in second.”

So saying, Tydeus’ son approached them, driving hard and lashing his whip as the high-

stepping horses sped along. Dust spattered the driver as his gold and tin-covered chariot followed closely behind the swift-footed horses; and as they sped along, the chariot's wheel tracks were hidden from sight by the powdery dust. Diomedes stopped in front of the assembly, sweat oozing down his horses' necks and chests. He then leapt down from the bright chariot onto the earth and set the whip near the yoke. Noble Sthenelus wasted no time, taking the prizes and giving the woman and handled tripod to his great-hearted comrades to carry away before unyoking the horses himself.

The next to drive his horses in was Antilochus, Nestor's son, who beat Menelaus not by speed but by cunning; even so, Menelaus' swift horses were close behind. Just as a horse who struggles to draw his lord over a plain can run so close to the wheels of a chariot that the outmost hairs on his tail touch the rims, so close was Menelaus to noble Antilochus at the end. At first, he was as far behind him as a man can cast a discus, but he soon closed the gap thanks to the might of Aethe, Agamemnon's fair-maned mare. If the race had lasted any longer, he would have passed Antilochus with ease. Meriones, the mighty attendant of Idomeneus, finished a spear-cast behind noble Menelaus, for his fair-maned horses were slowest of all and he was the weakest driver in the race. But the son of Admetus came dead last, dragging his fine chariot and driving his horses before him. When he saw Eumelus, swift-footed Achilles felt pity, so he stood among the Argives and said:

“The single-hoofed horses of the best driver finished last; come, let us give him a second-place prize, but let Tydeus’ son take first.”

All Achaeans agreed with his words, and he would have given Eumelus the horse had Antilochus, great-hearted Nestor’s son, not stood and pled his case to Peleus’ son, Achilles:

“I will be angry with you, Achilles, if you do as you say, for you plan to take my prize away because this good man’s chariot and horses came to harm. But if he had simply prayed to the gods, then he would not have finished last. But if you pity him and care for him, then there is, in your tent, ample gold, bronze, sheep, handmaids, and single-hoofed horses; pick one of these and give it to him as a prize, either now or later, so the Achaeans will praise you. But I will not give up the mare, and any man who tries will have to face me in combat.”

Hearing this, swift-footed noble Achilles smiled, pleased with Antilochus, who was his dear comrade. Then he replied to him, saying:

“Antilochus, if you want me to give Eumelus some other prize from my tent, then I will give him the breastplate I took from Asteropaeus, which is bronze with a thin, circular plating of shimmering tin. It is a very worthy prize.”

So saying, he told Automedon to fetch it from the tent; he did so, and upon his return, gave it to Eumelus, who accepted it happily.

Suddenly, Menelaus stood, his broken-heart furious at Antilochus. A herald placed a scepter in his hands and called for the Argives to be

silent, and then godlike Menelaus said to them:

“Antilochus, once so wise, look what you have done. You have shamed my skills and harmed my horses by throwing your lesser mounts in the way. Come, Argive leaders and rulers, and judge between us, impartially, or else some future bronze-clad Achaean will say: ‘Menelaus cheated Antilochus; his horses were weaker, but he went away with the mare because he himself was more powerful.’ But I will speak the truth, and I think no other Danaan will counter me, for it will be right. Come here, Zeus-blessed Antilochus. Stand and take in your hands the pliant whip you used to drive your horses and chariot and swear to the earth-shaker that you did not, of your own free will, hinder my chariot by trickery.”

Antilochus then shrewdly replied to him:

“Hold on now. I am younger than you, lord Menelaus, and you are older and worthier. You know young men readily cause offense, their minds impatient but their wisdom slight. So be patient; I will give you the mare I won. And if you desire another prize from my house, I will give it to you, Zeus-nourished one, for I do not wish to lose your respect for the rest of my days and speak falsely before the gods.”

So saying, Nestor’s great-hearted son handed the mare to Menelaus, warming his heart. Just as dew on ears of corn warms a standing crop, allowing the bristling fields to grow, so also was your heart warmed, Menelaus. Then he spoke winged words to Antilochus: “Antilochus, I will end my anger against you

for you were never before foolish or unstable,  
even if youthful passion ruled you today.  
In future, do not cheat those better than you.  
No other Achaean would have persuaded me  
so quickly, but you and your father and brother  
have struggled and suffered much for my sake.  
So I will yield to your prayer and give you  
the mare, though she is mine, so all may know  
that my heart is neither arrogant nor cruel.”

Then he gave the mare to Noëmon, comrade  
of Antilochus, and took the shining cauldron  
for himself. Meriones took the fourth prize, two  
talents of gold, but the fifth prize, a two-handled  
jar, was not claimed, so Achilles carried it through  
the assembly and gave it to Nestor, telling him:  
“Take this treasure, old man, as your memento  
of Patroclus’ funeral, for you will never again  
see him among the Argives. I give to you  
this prize uncontested for you will never again  
box or wrestle or hurl spears or run a race,  
for old age weighs heavily upon you.”

So saying, he gave the jar to Nestor, who took  
it gladly and replied to him with winged words:  
“All that you say is true, my son; my limbs are  
no longer firm, nor my feet, and my arms do  
not move so swiftly from my shoulders. If only  
I were as young and as strong as I was on the day  
the Epians buried lord Amarynceus at Buprasium,  
and his sons set out prizes to honor the king.  
I had no equal back then, not among the Epeians  
or Pylians or great-hearted Aetolians. In boxing,  
I beat Clytomedes, Enops’ son; in wrestling,  
I beat Ancaeus of Pleuron, who faced me;  
I outran Iphiclus, a good man; and outthrew

Phyleus and Polydorus with the javelin.  
Only in the chariot race did Actor's two sons  
outrance me, ganging up to prevent my victory,  
for the best prizes were saved for this race.  
They were twins: one held the horses, held  
the horses, and the other worked the whip.  
That was then, but now let younger men do  
this work. I must give in to wretched old age,  
though I was once the greatest of warriors.  
So go and honor your friend with contests.  
I accept this gratefully, and it warms my heart  
that you consider me a friend and did not  
forget to honor me among the Achaeans.  
May the gods grant you great favors in return."

After hearing the words of Neleus' son, the son  
of Peleus went through the large Achaean  
crowd and set out prizes for the boxing match.  
He led into the assembly and tethered a sturdy,  
six-year-old, unbroken mule, toughest to tame,  
and for the loser he set out a two-handled cup.  
Then he stood among the Argives and spoke:  
"Son of Atreus and other well-greaved Argives,  
I call on the two best men to raise their fists  
and fight for these prizes. For the man whom  
Apollo grants endurance before all Achaeans,  
let him lead this sturdy mule back to his tent;  
and let the loser take this two-handled cup."

Achilles' words roused [Epeius](#), son of Panopeus,  
a large, powerful man well-skilled in boxing,  
who rose, took hold of the sturdy mule, and said:  
"Whoever wants the two-handled cup, let him  
come and claim it, for no Achaean will outbox  
me and lead away this mule. I am the best.  
Does it matter that I fall short in battle?



A man cannot be skilled in all things. But I tell you now, and surely it will come to pass: I will rip that man's flesh and break his bones. Make sure his kin are in the crowd, for they will have to carry him out after I pummel him."

Hearing this, the crowd fell silent. Only Euryalus stood to face him: a godlike man whose father, King Mecisteus, Talaus' son, once went to Thebes for the funeral of [Oedipus](#) and outboxed all of Cadmus' sons. Spear-famed Diomedes was eager for Euryalus to win, so encouraged him and acted as his second. First, he put a belt around him and then gave him fine leather thongs for his hands. Once girded, the two went to the center of the ring, stood face-to-face, raised their sturdy hands, and fell on each other, their fists firing fierce blows, their teeth grinding terribly, and their limbs covered in sweat. But just as Euryalus spotted an opening, noble Epeius struck him in the cheek, and Euryalus' glistening legs collapsed under him. As when a fish leaps out of waters roughened by the North Wind and onto a seaweed-strewn shore until a black wave covers it, so fell Euryalus. But a gracious Epeius helped him up, and his friends came and led him away, his feet dragging behind him, his head leaning to one side, and his mouth spitting thick blood. They soon set him down, still dazed, and went to fetch the two-handled cup.

Soon after, Peleus' son set out for the Danaans the prizes for the third event, arduous wrestling: a tripod made to stand on a fire for the winner, which the Achaeans valued at twelve oxen, and a woman skilled in handiwork for the loser,

which the Achaeans valued at four oxen.  
Then he stood and addressed the Achaeans:  
“Who will rise up and wrestle for this prize?”  
At these words, great Telamonian Ajax stood,  
as did wise and cunning Odysseus. They girded  
themselves, went to the center of the assembly,  
and gripped each other with their stout arms  
like gable roof rafters joined together in a high  
house by a famed craftsman to keep out heavy  
winds. Their backs creaked under the tangled  
strain of strong hands, sweat poured down  
in waves, and blood-red bruises shot up around  
their ribs and shoulders as both men battled  
for victory and for the prized tripod. Odysseus  
could not trip or throw Ajax, nor could Ajax  
move Odysseus, whose great strength held firm.  
Soon the well-greaved Achaeans grew bored,  
and great Telamonian Ajax said to Odysseus:  
“Son of Laertes, wily Odysseus, either you  
lift me or I you, and let Zeus decide the rest.”

Then Ajax tried to lift him, but Odysseus used  
his cunning and struck the hollow of his knee,  
throwing Ajax backwards, and Odysseus fell  
on his chest as the astonished crowd looked on.  
Stout Odysseus tried to lift Ajax, moving him  
a little off the ground but no higher; then he  
crooked his knee into Ajax's, and they fell down  
next to one another and were covered in dust.  
And they would have risen and wrestled a third  
time had Achilles not stopped them and said:  
“Enough! Do not wear yourselves out or do  
harm. You are both winners, so split the prizes  
equally and go, so other Achaeans can compete.”

Hearing this, they eagerly obeyed, wiped away the dust, and put on their tunics.

Peleus' son quickly set out prizes for the foot-race: a well-made silver mixing bowl that held six units and was the most beautiful on earth, since it was made by [Sidonians](#), expert crafters, brought over the misty waters by [Phoenicians](#), and given as a gift to Thoas. It was then given to the hero Patroclus by Euneos, Jason's son, as ransom for Lycaon, son of Priam. Now, in honor of his friend, Achilles set it out as prize for whomever won the foot race. For second, he set out a great ox, rich in fat, and for third he set out a half talent of gold. Then he stood and addressed the Achaeans: "Rise, those who wish to race for this prize." So he said, and up rose swift Ajax, Oïleus' son, wily Odysseus, and Antilochus, Nestor's son, who was the fastest of all the youths. They lined up, Achilles showed them the goal, and the race was off. Oïleus' son quickly took the lead, but noble Odysseus was as close to him as a well-girdled woman's breast is to a weaving rod when she carefully draws it to her chest while pulling the spool past the warp—so close was Odysseus. His feet struck Ajax's footprints before the dust had settled, his breath blew on Ajax's head as he sped along, and all the Achaeans cheered him on as he struggled for victory. But when they neared the end of the race, Odysseus prayed in his heart to bright-eyed Athena: "Hear me, goddess: do not let my feet fail." So he prayed, and Pallas Athena heard him and lightened his limbs, both feet and hands.

But when they reached the finish and the prize was in sight, Athena hindered Ajax and made him slip and fall in the dung of the bellowing bulls that swift Achilles slew in Patroclus' honor, and Ajax fell face-first into the dung. Thus wily Odysseus won the race and took the bowl, and noble Ajax finished second and took the ox; and as he held the ox's horn and spat out the dung, he said to the Argives: "Well, the goddess made me slip; she stands by Odysseus like a mother and helps him."

So he said, and all laughed merrily at him. Then Antilochus smiled as he carried away the final prize, and he said to the Argives: "Friends, you know it is true when I say that the gods always honor older men. Ajax is only slightly older than I am, but Odysseus is from an earlier generation of men—a green old age, men say. Other Achaeans struggle to compete with him, save Achilles."

So he said, honoring the swift-footed son of Peleus. Then Achilles answered him: "Antilochus, your praise is not in vain, so I will add a half-talent of gold to your prize."

He put the gold in the hands of a pleased Antilochus and then brought to the assembly a long-shadowed spear, helmet, and shield: Sarpedon's battle gear, which Patroclus had stripped from him. And he said to the Argives: "For these prizes, we need two men, the best warriors, to put on their armor and fight before the assembly with flesh-cutting bronze. The first man to cut the other's armor, pierce

his flesh, and draw his dark blood will get a beautiful silver Thracian sword, which I took from Asteropaeus. Let both men carry off this armor and share it, and we will set out a fine banquet for them in our tents.”

So he said, and Telamonian Ajax rose, as did Tydeus’ son, mighty Diomedes. They armed on opposite ends of the crowd and then came together, eager for battle and glaring harshly; and wonder filled all Achaeans. Three times they charged each other, and three times they clashed. Then Ajax struck the well-balanced shield of Diomedes but did not pierce his skin, for the breastplate protected him from the spear. Soon after, Tydeus’ son sought to strike over Ajax’s shield and sink the spear into his neck. This so frightened the Achaeans that they called for the fight to end and the prizes to be split. But Achilles gave Diomedes the great sword along with its scabbard and fine baldric.

Then the son of Peleus set out a lump of iron once thrown by mighty Eëtion before swift-footed Achilles killed him and carried the iron away on his ships with his other possessions. And Achilles stood and addressed the Argives: “Rise up, whoever wants to win this prize. Though his rich fields are far away, the victor will have this iron to use for five full years, fully supplying his shepherds and plowmen so they will need no more iron from the city.”

So he said, and up rose staunch Polypoetes, strong and godlike Leonteus, Telamonian Ajax, and noble Epeius. As they lined up

in a row, noble Epeius took the mass,  
whirled, and hurled it, and all the Achaeans  
laughed. Next up was Leonteus, son of Ares;  
then Telamonian Ajax hurled the mass  
with his massive hands and sent it farther  
than the others. But when staunch Polypoetes  
took the iron, he threw it as far as a herdsman  
throws his staff over a herd of cattle: so far  
was his throw past all the others. The crowd  
cheered, and Polypoetes' comrades carried  
their mighty king's prize to the hollow ships.

Achilles next set down dark iron as the prize  
for archery: ten double axes and ten half-axes.  
He placed a ship's mast with a cobalt prow  
far off in the sands, tied a thin string around  
a wild dove's foot, and ordered the men  
to shoot at it: "Whoever hits the wild dove  
will lift and carry home all the double axes,  
but whoever hits the cord but misses the bird,  
a lesser shot, will take the half-axes as prizes."

So he said, and up sprang mighty lord Teucer  
and Meriones, Idomeneus' noble attendant.  
They cast their lots into a bronze helmet,  
and Teucer drew first shot. He quickly fired  
his arrow, but he did not vow to sacrifice  
to Apollo a hecatomb of first-born lambs,  
so he missed the bird, due to Apollo's grudge,  
but his sharp arrow hit the string tied to the bird's  
foot, cutting clean through it. The dove flew  
into the sky, the string hung down to the earth,  
and the crowd cheered aloud. Then Meriones  
took the bow from Teucer's hands, joined it  
with the arrow he was holding while Teucer  
shot, and vowed to far-shooter Apollo

to sacrifice a hecatomb of first-born lambs.  
He saw the wild dove fly into the clouds, and as  
she circled he shot her square beneath the wing,  
the arrow passing clean through and dropping  
down at Meriones' feet. Meanwhile, the bird  
fell atop the mast of a cobalt-prowed ship,  
her head hanging low and her feathers drooping;  
life soon left the bird, and she fell from the mast  
while the army looked on in amazement.  
Meriones took all ten double axes, and Teucer  
took the half-axes back to the hollow ships.

Then Peleus' son brought out a long-shadowed  
spear and unfired cauldron adorned with flowers  
that was worth an oxen, and the javelin hurlers  
stood up: Agamemnon, the wide-ruling son  
of Atreus, and Meriones, the noble attendant  
of Idomeneus. To them noble Achilles said:  
"Son of Atreus, we know you surpass all  
others in the casting of spears; therefore, take  
this prize back to your ship, but let us give  
the spear to the warrior Meriones, should  
your heart allow it. I myself desire this."

So he said, and Agamemnon, lord of men,  
agreed. He gave the bronze spear to Meriones  
and handed his own prize to his herald Talthymbius.

## BOOK 24

When the games were over, the men scattered to their ships, their thoughts on food and sweet sleep, but all-consuming sleep could not hold a tearful Achilles, who yearned for his dearest companion, the brave and bold Patroclus. He tossed and turned as he thought of all they had achieved and all they had endured, both the battles and the deadly waves. He would remember all this while shedding large tears and lying first on his ribs, then on his back, and then on his face; then he would stand up and wander sadly along the shore until Dawn rose brightly over the sea and beaches. Then he would yoke his swift horses, tie Hector to the chariot, and drag him around Patroclus' barrow three times before returning to his hut to rest, leaving Hector stretched out and face-down in the dust. But Apollo pitied Hector even in death, protecting his flesh with his golden aegis so his body would not be torn as he was dragged along.

As Achilles sought to deface noble Hector, the blessed gods looked on with pity and urged sharp-sighted Hermes to steal the corpse. This idea pleased all the gods save for Hera,



Poseidon, and the bright-eyed maiden whose hatred for Ilios, Priam, and his people was as strong as it had been on the day they went to Alexander's courtyard and he insulted them by praising she who fed his deadly lust.<sup>1</sup> But at dawn on the twelfth day after Hector's death, Phoebus Apollo addressed the immortals: "Cruel, malicious gods, did Hector not burn the thigh bones of perfect oxen and goats for you? Now you refuse to save his corpse for his wife to look upon as well as his mother, his child, his father Priam, and his people, who would swiftly burn him and perform the funeral rites. No, you gods would prefer to aid deadly Achilles whose heart is broken and whose mind cannot be bent. He is like a savage lion whose great strength and courageous spirit compel him to attack flocks of men to win himself a feast. Achilles has lost both his pity and his shame, which can greatly harm men but also help them. Even when a man loses one dearer to him than this man has—a brother from the same mother or a son—he will mourn and then move on, for the Fates have given men enduring hearts. But after robbing Hector of life, Achilles ties him to his chariot and drags him around his friend's barrow. There is no honor or profit in this. As mighty as he is, he should fear our wrath, for his rage defiles the senseless earth."

Then, in anger, white-armed Hera replied to him: "You would be right, lord of the silver bow, if Achilles and Hector deserved equal honor. But Hector was a mortal who suckled his mother's breast while Achilles is the son of a goddess,

1. This is the only reference in the *Iliad* to the Judgment of Paris.

one I nurtured and raised and gave in marriage to Peleus, a man dear to the gods. All the gods went to the wedding, and you also sat at the feast, lyre in your lap, you faithless friend of misery.”

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus replied to her: “Hera, do not be angry at the gods. True, their honor will not be the same, but of all mortals in Ilios, Hector was dearest to the gods, myself included. He never failed in his gifts to me, for my altar never lacked offerings of wine and burnt flesh, those gifts that are rightly ours. But let us hear no more talk of stealing brave Hector without Achilles knowing it; his mother visits him day and night, after all. Perhaps one of the gods would summon Thetis to me, so I may speak to her, for Achilles must accept Priam’s ransom and return Hector to him.”

At once, storm-footed Iris sped off bearing his message, and between Samos and rocky Imbros she dove into the dark sea with a loud splash and sank to the sea bottom like a lead weight fixed to a field oxen’s horn that plunges down and brings death to the flesh-eating fish. She found Thetis in a hollow cave surrounded by her sister sea-goddesses, mourning the fate of her noble son who would soon perish in deep-soiled Troy, far from his father’s land. Swift-footed Iris came up to her and said: “Rise, Thetis. Eternally wise Zeus calls you.”

In reply, silver-footed goddess Thetis said: “Why does Zeus call me? I am ashamed to mix with the gods since I am filled with sadness. Still, I will go, for his words will not be in vain.”

So saying, the goddess took a dark veil,  
blacker than any other covering, and set off;  
swift-footed Iris led the way, and the swelling  
sea parted on either side as they passed.  
When they reached the sea shore, they flew  
to heaven and found Cronos' far-seeing son  
along with all the other blessed immortals.  
Athena made room, and Thetis sat by Zeus.  
Hera welcomed her and handed her a fine  
golden cup, which she sipped and returned.  
Then the father of gods and men told her:  
"You have come to Olympus, goddess Thetis,  
in spite of all your grief—I know it well.  
But I will tell you why I have summoned you  
here. For nine days, the gods have quarreled  
over Hector's corpse and over Achilles. They  
urge sharp-sighted Hermes to steal the body,  
but I grant Achilles his honor in this in order  
to preserve your love and respect for me.  
So go and speak to your son. Tell him the gods  
are angry—and I, above all others, am furious  
that he continues to hold Hector by the beaked  
ships, refusing to let him go. Perhaps fear of me  
will compel him to return Hector. Then I will  
send Iris to great-hearted Priam to tell him  
to go to the Achaean ships and ransom his son,  
bringing with him gifts to soothe Achilles' heart."

So he said, and silver-footed Thetis obeyed.  
She flew down the Olympian peaks and soon  
arrived at her son's tent. She found him lost  
in mourning surrounded by his faithful  
comrades who were busy slaughtering a large,  
shaggy ram and preparing the morning meal.  
His honored mother sat down close to him,  
caressed him with her hands, and said to him:

“My child, how long will you let your heart  
be eaten away by grief, taking no thought  
of food or rest or making love to a woman?  
I say to you: you will not live much longer,  
for death and resistless fate stand ever closer.  
Now listen, for I am a messenger from Zeus.  
The gods are angry at you, and Zeus, above  
all others, is furious that you continue to hold  
Hector by the beaked ships, refusing to let him go.  
So release him and accept ransom for the body.”

In reply, swift-footed Achilles said to her:  
“If the Olympian commands it, I will obey.  
Let he who brings ransom take the body.”

So mother and son spoke many winged words  
to one another beside the gathered ships.  
But Cronos’ son ordered divine Iris to Ilios:  
“Iris, go quickly from Olympus to Ilios and tell  
great-hearted King Priam that he must go  
to the Achaean ships and ransom his son,  
bringing with him gifts to soothe Achilles’  
heart. Tell him to do this alone, with no other  
Trojan save an old herald to drive the mule  
and well-wheeled cart that will carry the body  
killed by noble Achilles back to the city.  
Let Priam have no fear and think nothing  
of death, for he will be guided by Hermes  
who will lead him until he reaches Achilles.  
And after he has arrived in Achilles’ tent,  
neither Achilles nor anyone else will kill him,  
for the man is not foolish, impulsive, or sinful  
and will kindly protect a suppliant man.”

So saying, swift Iris left to deliver the message  
and soon arrived at Priam’s palace to find

a mournful scene. Sons sat around their father, their clothes covered in tears, while the old man sat in the middle clutching his cloak tightly, his head and neck covered in dung, for he had been wallowing in it and gathering it in his hands. His daughters and daughters-in-law filled the house with wails, remembering the noble warriors who lay dead, killed by Argive hands. But Zeus' messenger came near Priam, took his trembling hand, and spoke softly to him: "Have courage, Priam, son of Dardanos, and do not fear, for I have come not with evil intent but good. I am a messenger from Zeus, who cares for you and pities you from afar. The Olympian orders you to ransom noble Hector's body by bringing gifts to soothe Achilles' heart. Do this alone, with no other Trojan save an old herald to drive the mule and well-wheeled cart that will carry the corpse killed by noble Achilles back to the city. You must have no fear and think nothing of death, for you will be guided by Hermes who will lead you until you reach Achilles. And after you have arrived in Achilles' tent, neither Achilles nor anyone else will kill you, for the man is not foolish, impulsive, or sinful and will kindly protect a suppliant man."

So saying, swift-footed Iris left, and Priam ordered his sons to prepare a mule and well-wheeled cart with a wicker basket fixed to it. He then went into the high-roofed storeroom that smelled of sweet junipers and was filled with treasure, and he said to his wife Hecabe: "Wife! A messenger from Zeus came and told me to go to the Achaean ships and ransom

my son by bringing gifts to soothe Achilles' heart. Tell me, what am I to do? As for me, my heart desperately desires that I go at once to the great camp of the Achaean ships."

Hearing this, his wife shrieked and said:  
"Where is that wisdom of yours that was once so revered by foreigners and subjects alike? How can you think to go to the Achaean ships alone and face the man who killed your many noble sons? Yours must surely be an iron heart. If this savage and untrustworthy man captures you and looks you in the eyes, he will show you no respect or pity. No, we must mourn from afar, in this room. This was the thread spun for him by resistless Fate on the day I bore him, that he would sate the hunger of swift dogs far away from his parents, killed by a powerful man whose liver I long to devour in vengeance for what he did to my child who was no coward but died defending the men and deep-girdled women of Troy with no thoughts of fear or of flight."

In reply, the old man, godlike Priam, said to her:  
"Do not stop me going where I must, and do not act like a bird of doom in my halls; you will not persuade me. If some other mortal had told me this—a seer, soothsayer, or priest—then I would call it a lie and dismiss it. But just now I heard the god's voice and looked upon her, so I must trust her word and go. If I am fated to die by the bronze-clad Achaean ships, then so be it. Let Achilles slay me after I have held my son in my arms and have mourned him."

So saying, he opened the lids of fine chests

and took out twelve beautiful robes, twelve cloaks to be worn single, as many blankets, as many linen mantles, and as many tunics. He weighed and carried out ten talents of gold, three tripods, four cauldrons, and an exquisite cup that the Thracians gave to him during an embassy visit—the old man did not spare even this, so desperate was he to ransom his dear son. Then he drove all the Trojans from the portico and scolded them, saying: “Get out, wretched fools! Can you not mourn at home instead of bringing your sorrow to me? Is it not enough that Zeus, son of Cronos, gave me grief when I lost my son? You will feel this loss soon, for it will be easier for the Achaeans to kill us now he is gone. But I hope to be in the house of Hades before my eyes must see the city destroyed and its people slain.”

So saying, he chased the men with his staff, and they fled from the old man. Then he called to his sons and reproached them: Helenos, Paris, noble [Agathon](#), [Pammon](#), [Antiphonus](#), war crier Polites, Deiphobus, Hippothous, and godlike Dius. To these nine Priam said: “Hurry, foul children, disgraces! I wish you had all died by the swift ships instead of Hector. Alas, I am cursed! I had the finest sons in wide Troy, but none of them are left: not noble Meriones or [Troilus](#) the charioteer or Hector, a god among men, who seemed more like a god’s son than a man’s. Ares killed them all and left behind the wretches: the liars and dancers, dancing heroes, who rob their own people of lambs and kids.

Now, will you quickly ready my cart and fill it with these things so we can be on our way?"

So he said, and they, dreading their father's rebuke, prepared a mule and well-wheeled cart with a wicker basket fixed to it. They took from its peg a boxwood mule yoke with a boss and guiding rings, a yoke-band nine cubits long, and the yoke itself. They set the yoke at the upper end of the polished pole, put the ring over the peg, bound it to the boss three times on either side, tied it to the post, and tucked the tongue under it. After this, they took the countless treasures for Hector's ransom out of the storeroom, put them in the polished cart, and yoked the strong-hoofed mules who work the harness, fine gifts given to Priam by the Mysians. For Priam, they yoked horses the old man himself had reared in his stable.

The herald and Priam, deep in thought, were waiting in the palace for their teams to be yoked when a mournful Hecuba approached, her right hand holding honey wine in a golden goblet so they might make a libation before they went. And she stood in front of the horses and said: "Pour a libation for father Zeus and pray you return home from the enemy since you insist on going to the ships against my wishes. Pray to Cronos' son, lord of black clouds who rules from Ida and looks down on all Troy, and ask him for a bird omen, one that is dearest to him, is the strongest of birds, and is on the right side so that, when you see it with your own eyes, you can trust it and go to the swift Danaan ships. But if far-seeing Zeus does not send a bird,



then I would urge you not to go to the Argive ships, though you seem determined to do so.”

Then godlike Priam answered her, saying:  
“Wife, I will not disobey your request. It is wise to lift up hands to Zeus and ask for mercy.”

So saying, he told the housekeeper to pour clean water over his hands, so she stood beside them with a water jar and basin in her hands. After washing his hands, he took the cup from his wife, stood in the center of the room, poured out the wine, looked up to heaven, and prayed:  
“Father Zeus who rules on Ida, great and glorious, send me to Achilles, welcomed and pitied, but first send a bird, one that is dearest to you, is the strongest of birds, and is on the right side so that, when I see it with my own eyes, I can trust it and go to the swift Danaan ships.”

Hearing his prayer, counselor Zeus sent down the greatest of birds, the dark hunter that men call the black eagle, a bird which has a wingspan as wide as the well-bolted doors on a rich man’s high-roofed treasure chamber. He flew over the city and appeared to them on their right side, and the hearts of all who saw him were delighted and comforted.

At once, the old man mounted his chariot and drove out the door and across the echoing portico. The mule was in front, pulling the four-wheeled cart driven by skilled Idaeus; the old man was behind, whipping his horses and urging them speedily through the city; and his loved ones followed, mourning him as they would the dead. When the two left the city and came to the plain,

the sons and sons-in law stopped and returned to Ilios, but far-seeing Zeus kept watch as they streaked across the plain, and he felt pity for Priam, so he called his dear son Hermes and said to him: “Hermes, you enjoy the company of men more than the other gods and will to listen to anyone, so go—lead Priam to the Achaean hollow ships and make sure none of the Danaans recognize him before he reaches the son of Peleus.”

So he said, and Hermes did not disobey. He tied to his feet the golden, immortal sandals that carried him over the waters and the boundless lands like a blast of wind. Then he took the wand he used to enchant mortals’ eyes, to make them sleep or to rouse them awake, and held onto this as he quickly flew to the Trojan plain and the Hellespont. He then disguised himself as a young prince, newly bearded and in the prime of youth.

After driving past the great barrow of Ilus, the men stopped by the river to let the mules and horses drink, for darkness had covered the earth. There the herald spotted Hermes, who was close at hand, and he said to Priam: “Think quickly, son of Dardanos, for we have a problem. I see a man who will, I fear, tear us to pieces. Let us either flee in the chariot or fall on his knees and beg for our lives.”

Hearing this, Priam’s mind clouded with fear, the hairs on his crooked body stood straight up, and he froze in place. But helper Hermes came closer, took the old man’s hand, and asked him: “Father, where are you driving these horses

and mules at this late hour while other men sleep? Do you not fear the nearby Achaeans, your enemies who breathe hostile fury? If one of them saw you transporting these treasures in the black of night, what then would you do? You are not young, and your companion is too old to defend you against any man who attacks. But I will not harm you, and I will defend you against others, for you remind me of my father.”

Then the old man, godlike Priam, answered him: “All that you say is true, dear child, but some god must be protecting me, for he brought me into contact with you, a traveler, a truly blessed sight, for you are a man of admirable form and sensible mind. Your parents must be proud.”

Then the messenger Hermes replied to him: “Indeed, old man, all you say is right and true. But come, explain this to me, and be honest: are you taking these many fine treasures to foreign men in order to keep them safe, or are you fleeing in fear from wondrous Ilios now that your son has died, the finest warrior, a man who never stopped fighting the Achaeans.”

Then the old man, godlike Priam, answered him: “Friend, you speak well of my ill-fated son, so tell me: who are you and who is your father?”

Then the messenger Hermes replied to him: “You test me by asking about noble Hector, but I often saw him in glorious battle, driving the Argives to their ships and slaying them with his sharp blade. We stood amazed, for we were not allowed to fight due to Achilles’ anger at Atreus’ son. I am Achilles’ attendant, brought

here on the same well-made ship; and I am a Myrmidon, son of Polyctor, a wealthy man and as old as you. He has six sons, and I am the seventh; after we cast lots, I was chosen to come here. Now I have come to the plain, away from the ships, for at dawn the quick-glancing Achaeans will assault the city. They are too impatient to sit idle, and the Achaean kings cannot stop them from charging into battle.”

Then the old man, godlike Priam, answered him: “If you are the attendant of Achilles, son of Peleus, then tell me the truth: is my son still beside the ships, or has Achilles cut him limb from limb and thrown him to the dogs?”

Then the messenger Hermes replied to him: “Old man, no dogs or birds have eaten him. He still lies beside Achilles’ ships, near the tents. For twelve days he has lain there, but his flesh has not rotted nor have worms feasted upon him as they often do to slain warriors. And though, at each dawn, Achilles drags Hector ruthlessly around his dear friend’s barrow, his body is unmarred. You would be amazed if you saw him lying there fresh as dew, cleansed of blood or other stains, and all wounds closed, wounds which had been driven into him by bronze. Thus, even in death, the blessed gods care for your son, for they loved him in their hearts.”

Hearing this, the old man rejoiced and said: “Child, truly it is good to give proper gifts to the immortals, for my son above all others in my halls honored the Olympian gods, and they have remembered him even in death.

So come, accept this fine goblet from me  
and protect me and guide me with the gods'  
blessing until I reach the tent of Peleus' son."

Then the messenger Hermes replied to him:  
"You test me, old man, for I am young, but I  
cannot take your gift behind Achilles' back.  
I respect and fear him too much to wrong  
him, for a terrible punishment would result.  
But I would guide you and care for you, either  
in a swift ship or on foot, all the way to famed  
Argos, and no one would dare challenge you."

At once, the helper leapt on the chariot, took  
the whip and reins in his hands, and breathed  
life into the horses and mules. When they  
reached the ramparts and ditch that guarded  
the ships, the messenger Hermes poured sleep  
over the guards who were busy making dinner.  
He then drew back the bar, opened the gate,  
and led in Priam and his wagon full of gifts.  
Soon they reached the son of Peleus' tent,  
which the Myrmidons had built for him using  
tall fir-wood walls, a thatched roof made  
of shaggy grass gathered from the meadows,  
a great courtyard with close-set stakes around  
it, and a gate held in place by a single wooden  
bar that took three Achaeans to close and three  
to open—though Achilles could open and close  
it on his own. The helper Hermes opened  
this gate for the old man, brought in the great  
gifts for the swift-footed son of Peleus, leapt  
from the chariot to the ground, and said to him:  
"Old man, in truth I am the immortal god  
Hermes; my father sent me to guide you here.  
But now I am returning home before Achilles

sees me, for it would cause offense for a god to be entertained by mortal men. But you must go to the son of Peleus on your knees and beg him in the name of his father, his fair-haired mother, and his child, and so stir his heart.”

So saying, Hermes returned to high Olympus. Then Priam leapt from his chariot, left Idæus to mind the horses and mules, and went straight to the tent where Zeus-blessed Achilles waited. He found him apart from his comrades as two warriors, Automedon and Alcimus, busily served him; he had just finished his dinner, and the table was still near him. Unseen by others, great Priam entered and stood beside Achilles, clutched his knees, and kissed those terrible, murderous hands—the hands that killed his sons. Like a man blinded by rage who kills another in his hometown and escapes to a rich man’s house in a foreign land where they look upon him with wonder, so Achilles looked with wonder on godlike Priam, and the others were equally baffled. But Priam spoke to him, begging for mercy: “Godlike Achilles, think of your father, a man like myself, on the edge of old age. No doubt those living nearby bring him distress, yet no one remains to hold them off. But when he hears of you, that you are alive, his heart surely rejoices, and he is ever hopeful that one day he will see his dear son return from Troy. But I am cursed. I had the finest sons in Troy, yet none remain. When the Achaeans arrived, I had fifty sons; nineteen were born of the same womb, and other palace women bore the rest. Furious Ares sent most to their knees, but one

remained to protect the city and its people. That was Hector, the man you killed as he fought for his country. It is for his sake that I come to the Achaean ships, to ransom his body back from you with countless gifts. Respect the gods, Achilles, and pity me, a man like your father, a man who has endured more than any other mortal on earth and who now kisses the hand of the man who slew his sons.”

Priam’s words filled Achilles with a longing for his own father. Taking hold of his hand, he pushed the old man back, and the two remembered. Priam crouched at Achilles’ feet and wept loudly for man-slaying Hector, and Achilles wept for his father and Patroclus. Together their cries filled the tent. But when his heart and limbs had had their fill of tears, noble Achilles sprang from his seat, lifted the old man up, pitying his grey head and beard, and said to him with winged words: “Poor man, you have indeed endured many woes. How could you bear to come to the Achaean ships alone and look into the eyes of the man who slew your many noble sons? Yours must be a heart of iron. But come, sit down, and let our sorrows rest for a while in our hearts, for no profit comes from icy grief. The gods have granted to wretched mortals lives filled with misery while their own are free of care. Two jars sit on Zeus’ floor filled with gifts: one with joy, the other with sorrow. A man given a mixture of these jars by Zeus will face ill fortune one day and good the next, but a man given only sorrow is consumed by that sorrow, cursed to wander the earth,

dishonored by gods and men. From birth,  
the gods blessed Peleus with splendid gifts:  
he surpassed others in wealth and prosperity,  
ruled the Myrmidons, and though mortal,  
was given an immortal wife by the gods.  
But the gods sent sorrow even to Peleus: he  
will have no heir to succeed him, for his only  
son is destined to die young, nor can I comfort  
him in his old age since I sit here in Troy, far  
from home, bringing pain to you and your sons.  
But you, sir, were once happy, so we hear:  
from Lesbos, [Macar](#)'s home, to the uplands  
of Phrygia to the boundless Hellespont,  
you were preeminent in wealth and in sons.  
Then the gods brought this misery upon you:  
a city consumed by fighting and death.  
Endure it, and do not grieve forever, for no  
amount of grief will bring back your noble  
son; before that, you will surely suffer again."

Then the old man, godlike Priam, answered him:  
"Lord, do not offer me a chair while Hector  
lies dishonored in your tent. Free him quickly  
so my eyes may look upon him, and accept  
this great ransom we have brought so you may  
enjoy it and return to your native land, for you  
have spared me so I may see another day."

With a scowl, swift-footed Achilles replied:  
"Do not anger me, old man. I will give Hector  
back to you, for a messenger came from Zeus:  
my mother, daughter of the old man of the sea.  
And I know in my heart, Priam, that some  
god led you to the swift Achaean ships, for no  
mortal, not even a young and strong one,  
would dare come to our camp or sneak past



the watch or easily lift the bar that seals  
our doors. So do not agitate me further  
or I will defy the very laws of Zeus  
and strike you down, a suppliant in my tent.”

Terrified by his words, the old man complied.  
Then, like a lion, Peleus’ son ran out of the tent  
followed by his two servants, the warrior  
Automedon and Alcimus, Achilles’ dearest  
comrades after the slain Patroclus. They  
unyoked Priam’s horses and mules and led  
in the herald, the old man’s crier, and gave him  
a seat; then they took the ransoms for Hector’s  
head out of the well-made wagon but left two  
cloaks and a finely-spun tunic behind to cover  
the corpse on its journey home. Next Achilles  
ordered the slave women to wash and oil  
Hector’s body, moving it away from Priam  
so he would not lash out in anger at the sight  
of his son, thus enraging Achilles into slaying  
the old man in defiance of Zeus’ laws. Once  
the women had washed and anointed the body,  
they laid the cloaks and tunic over it, and Achilles  
lifted it up, laid it on a bier, and placed it  
in the wagon with help from his comrades.  
Then, with a groan, he said to his dearest friend:  
“Do not be angry with me, Patroclus, when even  
Hades learns that I have returned noble Hector  
to his dear father, for the ransom he gave me was  
honorable, and I will give you your proper share.”

So saying, noble Achilles returned to the tent  
and to the well-wrought chair across the room  
from Priam, and addressed the old man, saying:  
“I have released your son, sir, just as you asked;  
he is lying in the wagon. At dawn, you can look

upon him and carry him away, but now let us eat. Even fair-haired [Niobe](#) remembered to eat when her twelve children died in her halls: six daughters and six sons all in their prime. Apollo killed the sons with his silver bow and the archer Artemis killed the daughters in anger over Niobe comparing herself to fair Leto, who had only two children while she had many more; so those two destroyed all of hers. For nine days, they lay in their blood, unburied, for the son of Cronos had turned the people to stone, but on the tenth day, the heavenly gods buried them, and Niobe, wearied by her constant tears, thought of food. Now, among the rocks on lonely mount [Sipylos](#), a place where they say goddess nymphs live and dance along the Achelous, there is a stone that mourns the losses sent to her by the gods. So come, good sir, let us think of food; you can mourn your dear son when you return him to Ilios, where he will be met with many tears.”

At once, swift Achilles rose and slew a silver sheep, which his comrades flayed and prepared, cutting it carefully into slices, roasting the slices on a spit until cooked, and drawing them off. Automedon then set bread on the table in fine baskets while Achilles served the meat, and they proceeded to enjoy the feast. Once they had sated their desire for food and drink, Priam, son of Dardanus, looked upon Achilles, awed by his godlike height and beauty; and Achilles looked upon Priam, son of Dardanus, awed by his noble bearing and his wise words. When they had admired one another long enough, godlike Priam was first to speak: “Now lead me to a bed, prince, so I may soon

have my fill of sweet sleep and be restored.  
My eyes have not closed since my son lost  
his life by your hands. I have done nothing  
but groan and grieve over my countless sorrows  
as I wallowed in filth in the open courtyard.  
Now I have eaten food and sent bright wine  
down my throat; before, I had eaten nothing.”

So he said, and Achilles ordered his comrades  
and handmaids to prepare a bed on the portico,  
cover it with fine purple rugs, and spread  
blankets and fleece cloaks on top. With torches  
in their hands, the handmaids left the room  
and hastily prepared two beds. Then, with wry  
humor, swift-footed Achilles said to Priam:  
“Sleep outside, dear old man, for Achaeans  
often come to me to make plans or take counsel,  
as is only proper. If one of them were to see  
you this swift black night, he would quickly tell  
Agamemnon, shepherd of men, and this would  
delay my return of the body to you. But come,  
tell me this, and be honest: how many days  
do you need for Hector’s funeral? I will wait  
as long as you need and hold back the army.”

Then the old man, godlike Priam, replied:  
“If you wish me to carry out Hector’s funeral,  
you would be doing me a great service, Achilles.  
We are trapped in the city, far from the mountains  
and trees, and the Trojans are afraid. For nine  
days, we will mourn him in the halls; the funeral  
will be on the tenth, and the people will feast;  
on the eleventh, we will build a barrow for him;  
and on the twelfth, we will fight—if we must.”

Then swift-footed, noble Achilles answered him:

"All will be as you say, aged Priam; I will hold back the battle for as long as you command."

So he said, seizing the old man's right hand by the wrist, so his heart would be free of fear. The herald and Priam then fell asleep on the portico, their minds filled with heavy thoughts, while Achilles slept in the innermost part of the well-made tent beside fair Briseïs.

And so the gods and men, lords of chariots, slept sweetly through the whole black night. But sleep could not catch the helper Hermes, for his heart struggled over how to lead king Priam past the ships unnoticed by the noble gatekeepers. So he stood over Priam and said: "So, old man, you sleep beside your enemies with no fear of danger now that Achilles has spared you. You have ransomed your son, but at what cost? Your remaining sons will pay three times the ransom if Agamemnon, son of Atreus, or the Achaean army learn of you."

Hearing this, a panicked Priam made his herald get up. Then Hermes yoked the mules and horses and drove them through the camp unnoticed.

When they reached the ford of the fair-flowing river Xanthos, child of immortal Zeus, Hermes returned to high Olympus, and as saffron-robed Dawn spread over the land, the two men drove their horses to the city, wailing and moaning, while the mules carried the dead. Neither men nor fair-girdled women knew of their arrival save for Cassandra, equal to golden Aphrodite, who stood atop the Pergamus and saw her dear father in his chariot with the herald, the city's crier.

When she saw the body lying in the mule-drawn wagon, she cried out so the whole town could hear:  
“Men and women of Troy, look upon Hector,  
if you ever rejoiced when he returned from battle,  
for he was a great joy to his city and its people.”

So she said, and no man or woman remained  
in the city, for everyone, each grieving soul,  
rushed to the gates as Priam led Hector home.  
First, Hector’s wife and revered mother flew  
to the well-made cart, tore their hair in sorrow,  
and touched his head while all those around them  
wept. And for the rest of the day until the setting  
of the sun they would have shed tears and cried  
had Priam not said to them from his chariot:  
“Make way so the mules can pass; when I have  
taken him home, you can have your fill of grief.”

Hearing this, they stood aside and let the wagon  
pass. When they led him into the famed house,  
they set him on a perforated bed; then singers  
came and stood beside him and sang the death  
song, and the women added their lamentations.  
White-armed Andromache led the mourning,  
holding man-slaying Hector’s head in her hands:  
“Husband, your life ended far too early, leaving  
me a widow in our halls and leaving our infant  
child to a miserable fate. He will never reach  
manhood; before that happens, the city will be  
destroyed, for you are dead—you, our guardian,  
protector of loving wives and young children.  
Soon they will sail away in hollow ships, and I  
with them; and you, my child, will follow me  
to a place where you will perform disgraceful  
deeds for a relentless lord or else some Achaean  
will take your arm and hurl you off the tower

to a horrible death, perhaps angry that Hector killed his brother or father or son, since many Achaeans fell to the dust by Hector's hands, for your father was not gentle in wretched war. Thus the whole city mourns for you, Hector, and you have brought your parents unspeakable grief, but I above others will be left with endless pain, for when you died, you did not stretch out your hand to me in our bed or speak words to me that I could recall night and day as I shed tears."

So she said tearfully, and the women wailed, and from their wails rose the cries of Hecuba: "Hector, dearest to my heart of all my children, you were beloved of the gods when you lived, and even now, in fated death, they care for you. Other sons of mine were taken by swift-footed Achilles and sold beyond the barren sea, in Samos or Imbros or smoky Lemnos; but when he took your life with his fine-edged spear, he dragged you around the barrow of his friend Patroclus, whom you killed, though it did not bring him back. But now you lie in my halls as fresh as dew, like someone silver-bowed Apollo attacked and slayed with his gentle arrows."

So she said tearfully, rousing unabated wails. Then Helen was the third to lead the wailing: "Hector, you were dearest of all my brothers-in-law. True, godlike Alexander is my husband, and he brought me to Troy—if only I had died before that! Now twenty years have passed since I came here from my native land, and in that time I never heard a single harsh word from you. If anyone in the halls spoke abuse to me—your brothers or their fair-robed wives

or your sisters or your mother, though your father is as kind as my own—you would stop them and win them over with a gentle touch or word. So this unlucky soul also grieves for you, for now there is no one left in wide Troy who is kind to me or a friend, for all shudder at my sight.”

So she said tearfully as the countless crowd cried. Then old Priam addressed his people: “Trojan men, fetch wood from beyond the city and do not fear an Argive ambush, for as Achilles sent me from the black ships, he promised no attacks would come until the twelfth day dawns.”

Hearing this, the men yoked oxen and mules to wagons, and soon were gathered outside the city. For nine days they gathered wood in endless amounts; as dawn rose on the tenth day, they tearfully carried out bold Hector, set him atop the funeral pyre, and lit the fire.

When Dawn’s rosy fingers again appeared, the people gathered around noble Hector’s pyre. When all had assembled, they quickly quenched the pyre with bright wine, wherever the furious fire still burned. Then his brothers and comrades mournfully collected the white bones while tears fell down from their cheeks. They took the bones, covered them with a soft purple cloth, placed the cloth in a golden urn, placed the urn in a hollow grave, and covered the grave with large, thick-set stones. They soon piled up the barrow and set guards around it in case the well-greaved Achaeans attacked. When the barrow was complete, they returned

to Troy and gathered for a glorious feast  
in the halls of Priam, the Zeus-nourished king.

So went the funeral of horse-tamer Hector.





# GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND PLACES

**Abantes:** Ionian tribe from Euboea, a large island off the north-eastern coast of modern-day Greece, 2.536

**Abarbarea:** Naiad nymph of the meadows of the river Aesepus, the wife of Bucolion, son of Trojan king Laomedon, and mother to Aesepus and Pedasus, both killed by Euryalus in the Trojan War, 6.22

**Abii:** An uncertain ancient nomadic tribe that might have inhabited the steppes north of the Black Sea, 13.6

**Ablerus:** Trojan soldier killed by Nestor's son Antilochus, 6.33

**Abydus:** Ancient Mysian city on the south coast of the Hellespont, across from Sestus, 2.836

**Acamas (2):** Dardanian, son of Antenor and Theano, and aide to Aeneas during Trojan War, 2.823; Son of Eussorus and, with Peiros, led the Thracians in the Trojan War; he was killed by Ajax, 2.844

**Acessamenus:** King of Pieria, father of Periboea, who had a son, Pelagon, by the river Axios, 21.143

**Achaean:** Primary name used by Homer for the Greek forces, 1.2

**Achilles:** Son of Peleus, leader of Myrmidons, greatest of the Achaean warriors, 1.1

**Achelous:** Largest river in Greece, son of Oceanus and Tethys, 21.194

**Actor:** Son of Azeus, ruler of Minyans of Orchomenus;

purported father of the Molionides (the twins Eurytus and Cteatus, whose father was Poseidon); his grandsons, Ascalaphus and Thalpius, led the Minyan tribe in the Trojan War, 2.515

**Acrisius:** King of Argos, husband of Eurydice, father of Danaë, and grandfather of Perseus, 4.319

**Adametus:** King of Pherae in Thessaly and son of Eumelus, leader of the Pherae contingent in the Trojan War, 2.714

**Adrasteia:** Area in the Troyad near the Granicus River, 2.828

**Adrastus:** Son of Merops, king of Percote; with his brother, Amphius, led the Adrasteian forces in the Trojan War; was slain by Diomedes, 2.830

**Aeacus:** King of the island of Aegina, father of Peleus and Telamon, and grandfather of Achilles and Ajax; after his death, he became one of three in Hades who judged the newly-arrived shades, 9.184

**Aegae (2):** Ancient city of Achaea, Peloponnese, 8.203; legendary town along the eastern coast of Euboea, near modern Kymi, which Homer says is the location of Poseidon's palace, 13.21

**Aegaeon:** Also known as Briareus, a mythological monster with fifty heads and 100 arms; it helped Zeus and the other Olympian gods overthrow the Titans, 1.404

**Aegeus:** Early king of Athens, father of Theseus; Aegean Sea is named after him, 1.265

**Aegialus (2):** Region in the northernmost part of the Peloponnese, 2.575; town in ancient Paphlagonia, Anatolia, 2.855

**Aegilips:** Island in the Ionian Sea near Ithaca, 2.634

**Aegialeia:** Wife of Diomedes, king of Argos, and daughter of Adrastus and Amphithea, 5.412

**Aegina:** Island near Athens, named after Aegina, mother of Aeacus, 2.562

**Aegium:** A city-state of Achaea in northern Peloponnese, 2.575

**Aeneas:** Son of Anchises and the goddess Aphrodite, cousin to Hector, and leader of the Dardanian forces, 2.819

**Aereia:** Town in ancient Messenia, Peloponnese, 9.152

**Aepy:** City in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.592

**Aerytus:** Mythical king of Arcadia, son of Elatus, 2.604

**Aesepus (2):** Divine personification of the river Aesepus (known today as the river Gönen in Turkey), 2.826; son of the water nymph Abarbarea and the human Bucolion, 6.21

**Aesyetes:** Trojan hero and father of Alcathous, 2.793

**Aesyne:** A town purportedly in ancient Thrace, home of Castianeira, who bore Gorgythion, son of Priam, 8.304

**Aethices:** Tribe of robbers who lived in Thessaly and who gave the centaurs sanctuary after they were run out of the area around Mt. Pelion, 2.745

**Aethra:** Achaean daughter of king Pittheus of Troezen and mother of Clymene and Theseus, who long before the Trojan War kidnapped Helen and left her in Aethra's charge until Helen's brothers took Helen back; in revenge for the kidnapping, Aethra was taken and made to serve Helen until after the Trojan War when she was freed by her grandson Demophon, 3.144

**Aetolia:** Mountainous region of western Greece located north of the Gulf of Corinth, 2.638

**Agamemnon:** King of Mycenae, son of Atreus, husband of Clytemnestra, brother of Menelaus, and leader of the Achaean forces in the Trojan War, 1.7

**Agapenor:** Leader of the Arcadians, son of Ancaeus, and grandfather of Lycurgus, 2.609

**Agasthenes:** King of Elis, son of Augeias, and father of Polyxeinus, 2.624

**Agathon:** Trojan prince, one of the last remaining sons of King Priam at the end of the *Iliad*, 24.250

**Agenor:** Son of Antenor and Theano and Trojan hero, saved from death by Apollo during Achilles' rampage after Patroclus' death, 4.467

**Agrius:** Son of King Portheus of Calydon and Euryte, brother of Oeneus, and father of six sons, including Thersites and Prothous, who overthrew his brother Oeneus to become king only to later be overthrown himself, 14.116

**Aïdoneus:** see Hades

**Ainos:** Ancient Thracian city located north of the Hellespont that is now called Enez, 4.520

**Ajax (Telamonian):** Son of king Telamon, grandson of Aeacus, and cousin of Achilles; was considered the second strongest Achaean (after Achilles); and leader of the force from Salamis (who were stationed with their Athenian neighbors), 1.138

**Ajax (Little):** Son of Oileus, leader of the Locrians, who angered the gods during the sack of Troy and was punished when Athena hit his ship with a thunderbolt, 2.528

**Althaea:** Queen of Calydon, wife of Oeneus, and mother of Meleager, 9.555

**Alcomenae (Boeotia):** Town in Boeotia (northwest of Athens) that was supposed to be the birthplace of the goddess Athena, 4.8

**Alcestis:** Daughter of Pelias, king of Iolcus, wife of Admetus, mother of Eumelus, known for her beauty who was rescued from the underworld by Heracles; her story is told in Euripides' play *Alcestis*, 2.715

**Alcmene:** Wife of Amphitryon, lover of Zeus, and mother of Heracles, 14.323

**Aleion plain:** Large plain in southern Anatolia (modern day Turkey) now called Çukurova, 6.201

**Alegenor:** Boeotian son of Itonus, brother to Hippalcimus, Electryon, and Archilycus, and father of Clonius and Promachus, 14.503

**Alexander (Paris):** Trojan son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba whose abduction of Helen of Sparta instigated the Trojan War, 3.16

**Alesium:** Town in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, situated on the road between Olympia and Elis, 2.617

**Aloeus:** Son of Poseidon and Canace, husband of Iphimedeia and Eriboea, and father of Salmoneus, Otos, and Ephialtes, who fought the gods and captured Ares, 5.385

**Alope:** Town in ancient Thessaly, 2.682

**Alpheius:** River god of the Alpheius river (the modern river Alfeios), the longest river in the Peloponnese, 2.592

**Altes:** King of the Leleges, father to Laothoe, one of Priam's daughters, 22.51

**Althaea:** Queen of Calydon, daughter of King Thestius and Eurythemis, wife of Oeneus, and mother of Meleager, Toxeus, Thyreus, and many others, 9.555

**Alus (Halos):** Town in ancient Thessaly, 2.682

**Amarynceus:** Chief of the Eleans, father of Diores; the games that took place during his funeral are recounted by Nestor, 2.622

**Amazons:** Legendary tribe of warrior women who were believed to inhabit a region in northern Anatolia, along the Black Sea; they were allies of the Trojans during the Trojan War, 3.189

**Amphimachus:** Son of Cteatus, grandson of Poseidon, and one of the leaders of the Elean forces in Troy, 2.620; son of Nomion and leader (with his brother Nastes) of the Carian forces, allied to Troy, 2.870

**Amphius:** Son of Merops of Percote who, along with his brother Adrastus, led the Adrasteian forces against his father's advice, was killed by Diomedes, 2.830

**Amyclae:** City in ancient Laconia, Peloponnese, south of Sparta, which was the home of Castor and Pollux, 2.584

**Amydon:** Town in ancient Macedonia inhabited by the Paeonians, who were allies of the Trojans, 2.849

**Amyntor:** King of Eleon or Hellas, son of Ormenus, and father of Phoenix and Crantor, 9.448

**Ancaeus:** Son of King Lycurgus of Arcadia, father of King Agapenor, an Argonaut and participant in the Caledonian Boar hunt, where he was killed, 2.609

**Anchises:** Son of Capys, lover of Aphrodite, who bore him a son, Aeneas, 2.820

**Andromache:** Wife of Hector, mother of Astyanax, and daughter of Eëtion, 6.371

**Anemoi (the winds):** The collective name for the wind gods, including Boreas (North Wind), Zephyrus (West Wind), Notus (South Wind), and Eurus (East Wind), 2.145

**Anemoreia:** Town in ancient Phocis, near the border between Phocis and Delphi, 2.521

**Anteia:** Wife of Proteus and daughter of Iobates, king of Lycia, 6.160

**Antenor:** Dardanian noble, husband of Theano, father to many including Archelochus, Acamas, Glaucus, Helicaon, Iphidamas, and Crino, and counselor to King Priam, 2.822

**Antheia:** Town in ancient Messenia, Peloponnese, 9.151

**Anthedon:** City in ancient Boeotia, on the coast of the Gulf of Euboea, west of Chalcis, at the foot of Mt. Messapius, 2.508

**Antilochus:** Son of King Nestor of Pylos, known for his looks, his speed, and his horsemanship, and was tasked with delivering the news of Patroclus' death to Achilles, and later died trying to protect his father from the Ethiopian King Memnon, 4.457

**Antiphonus:** Trojan prince, son of King Priam, was killed (in later accounts) by Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, during the siege of Troy, 24.250

**Antiphus:** Son of Thessalus, grandson of Heracles, and co-leader (with his brother Phiedippus) of the forces from Nisyrus, Carpathus, Casus, and Cos, 2.678

**Antron:** City-state in ancient Thessaly, located at the entrance to the Maliac Gulf, across from Oreus, Euboea, 2.697

**Apasus:** Town on coast of ancient Troad, at the entrance of the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), 2.828

**Aphrodite:** Goddess of love, beauty, passion, and procreation, daughter of Zeus and Dione, wife of Ares, sister of Apollo, Artemis, Athena, Hermes, Hephaestus, and many others, and

supporter of Troy during the Trojan War, 2.820

**Apollo:** God of archery, music, dance, sun, light, healing, prophecy, and more, son of Zeus and Leto, and supporter of Troy during the Trojan War, 1.9

**Araethyrea:** City in ancient Argolis, Peloponnese, named after its legendary founder, Aras, 2.571

**Arcadia:** Region in the central Peloponnese, named after the hunter Arcas and the home to the god Pan, 2.603

**Arcesilaus:** One of the leaders of the Boeotians who was killed by Hector, 2.495

**Archelochus:** Dardanian, son of Antenor and Theano, and aide to Aeneas during Trojan War, 2.822

**Areilycus:** Boeotian son of Itonus, and father of Prothenor and Archesilaus, 14.451

**Ares:** God of war, son of Zeus and Hera and husband of Aphrodite, 2.479

**Aretus:** Son of Priam who was known for his protection of horses, killed by Automedon, 17.494

**Argissa:** Town in ancient Pelasgiotis, Thessaly, on the Peneius River near Larissa, 2.738

**Argos:** City in Argolis, a region in the Peloponnese and the birthplace of Diomedes, 1.30

**Ariadne:** Cretan princess who helped Theseus kill the Minotaur and escape the Labyrinth in Cnossos, became immortal after Dionysus rescued her from Hades, 18.592

**Arimoi:** Region where the monster Typhoneus dwelt, though the actual location is never stated in ancient works, 2.783

**Arion:** Divine horse, driven by Adrastus, king of Argos, 23.346

**Arisbe:** Town in Mysia in northwest Anatolia, 2.837

**Arne:** Town in ancient Boeotia, 2.507

**Artemis:** Goddess of the hunt, the wilderness, wild animals, the moon, and chastity, daughter of Zeus and Leto, and twin sister of Apollo, 5.51

**Ascalaphus:** King of Orchomenus, son of Ares and Astyoche, twin brother of Ialmenus, and member of the Argonauts, 2.512



**Asclepius:** Greek hero and god of medicine, son of Apollo and Coronis, father of Hygeia, Iaso, Aceso, Aegle, Panacea, Podaleirius, and Machon; his symbol—a rod with a snake wrapped around it—is still used as a symbol of medicine today, 2.731

**Asine:** Ancient city on the coast of Argolis, Peloponnese, and located near the modern city of Tolon, 2.560

**Asius:** Son of Hyrtacus and Arisbe, leader of the forces the Hellespont region, who fought on the Trojan side of the war, 2.837

**Asopus:** A river in Boeotia that formed the border between Thebes and Plataea, 4.383

**Aspledon:** City in ancient Boeotia, near the modern city of Pirgos, 2.511

**Assaracus:** Son of Tros, brother of Ilus, Ganymede, and Laomedon, 20.232

**Asterium:** City in ancient Thessaly, 2.735

**Asteropaeus:** Leader of the Paeonians, son of Pelagon, and grandson of river god Axios, 12.103

**Astyanax:** Son of Hector and Andromache of Troy, killed during the siege of Troy; his name means “high king” or “overlord of the city,” in reference to his father, the defender of the city and heir to the throne of Troy, 6.403

**Atë:** see Mischief

**Athena:** Goddess of wisdom, handicrafts, and warfare, daughter of Zeus, and supporter of the Achaeans in the Trojan War, 1.195

**Athens:** Major city-state in ancient Greece and capital of modern Greece, 2.549

**Athos:** Mountain and peninsula in northeastern Greece, 14.229

**Atreus:** King of Mycenae and father of Agamemnon and Menelaus, 1.11

**Augeiae (2):** Town in ancient Locria, in central Greece near Scarpheia, 2.532; town in ancient Laconia, Peloponnese 2.583

**Augeias:** King of Elis, father of Agasthenes, and grandfather of Polyxeinus, 2.624

**Aulis:** Greek city on the coast of Boeotia in central Greece that was the staging ground for the Achaean journey to Troy, 2.304

**Autolykus:** Famed Ancient Greek robber, possibly the son of Hermes, who resided in the area around Mt. Parnassus in central Greece, 10.266

**Automedon:** Son of Dioreas and charioteer for Achilles, 9.209

**Axius:** river in Macedonia, now called the Vardar, 2.849

**Balius:** see Xanthus and Balius

**Batieia:** Daughter of King Teucer, founder of Troy, and wife of King Dardanus, father of Priam, 2.813

**Bellerophon:** Grandfather of Glaucus and Sarpedon, was known in his generation (long before the Trojan War) as a great hero who tamed Pegasus and slew the Chimera, 6.155

**Bessa:** Town in ancient Locria, 2.532

**Boagrius:** Largest river in Locria, flowing from Mt. Cnemis to the sea between Scarphe and Thronium, 2.533

**Boebe:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly on the eastern shore of Lake Boebeis, near the modern town of Kanalia, 2.712

**Boebeis:** Lake in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, named after the town Boebe on its eastern shore, 2.712

**Boeotia:** Region in central Greece, north and west of Athens; the region included Thebes and Argos, 2.494

**Boreas:** see North Wind

**Briareus:** See Aegaeon

**Briseis:** Daughter of Briseus of Pedasus, wife of Mynes, prince of Lyrnessus, and concubine of Achilles until taken from him by Agamemnon at the start of the *Iliad*, 1.185

**Bryseae:** Town in ancient Laconia, Peloponnese, at the foot of Mt. Taygetus, 2.583

**Bucolion:** Eldest (but illegitimate) son of Trojan King Laomedon and the nymph Calybe whose wife was the nymph Abarbarea and whose twin sons were Aespus and Pedasus, 6.22

**Buprasium:** Town in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.615

**Cadmus:** Legendary founder and first king of ancient Thebes. The people of Thebes were called Cadmeians in his honor, 4.388

**Caeneus:** Lapith hero of Thessaly and father of Coronus; Ovid notes that Caeneus was originally born a woman but was transformed into a man by Poseidon, 1.264

**Calchas:** Principal seer for the Achaeans during the Trojan War, 1.69

**Calchis:** Capital and largest city on the island of Euboia, 2.537

**Calliarus:** Town in eastern Locria, in central Greece, 2.531

**Calydnian Islands:** Island in the Dodecanese, near Kos, 2.677

**Calydon:** City in ancient Aetolia on the banks of the Evenus River, 2.639

**Cameirus:** City on the northwest coast of Rhodes, 2.656

**Capaneus:** Father of Sthenelus and member of the Seven Against Thebes who was known for his arrogance against the gods, which led Zeus to kill him with a thunderbolt, 2.564

**Capys:** King of Dardania, son of Assaracus, father of Anchises, and grandfather of Aeneas, 20.239

**Cardamlye:** Town in ancient Messenia, Peloponnese, 9.150

**Caresus:** River in ancient Troyad that flows into the Aesepus River, 12.20

**Carians:** People of the Caria region in southwest Anatolia, 2.867

**Carystus:** City-state in ancient Euboia, at the foot of Mt. Oche, 2.539

**Cassandra:** Trojan princess, daughter of Priam and Hecuba, priestess at the temple of Apollo, was cursed by Apollo to see the future but never to be believed, 13.365

**Castor & Polydeuces (Pollux):** Helen's twin brothers who shared the same mother but had different fathers (Castor was the mortal son of King Tyndareus of Sparta and Polydeuces the divine son of Zeus); they appear in many myths, including the story of Jason and the Argonauts, and they now are the personification of the constellation Gemini, 3.236-7

**Casus:** Island in the Dodecanese between Crete and Carpathus in the southern Aegean Sea, 2.676

**Caucones:** Tribe from northern Anatolia (and possibly the Caucasus mountain), 10.429

**Cayster:** River in the western part of Anatolia, south of Troy, 2.461

**Cebriones:** Illegitimate son of Priam, a slave, and Hector's charioteer, 8.318

**Celadon:** Mythological river in Arcadia, Peloponnese, 7.134

**Centaur:** Creatures with the upper bodies of human beings and the lower body and legs of horses who inhabited a region of Thessaly near Mt. Pelion, the Foloi oak forest in Elis, and the Malean peninsula in Laconia, 2.744

**Cephalenians:** People of the Ionian islands off the coast of western Greece, 2.631

**Cephisus:** River in central Greece, flowing through Boeotia and Phocis and draining into Lake Copias, 2.522

**Cerinthus:** Town on northeastern coast of Euboia, on the site of the modern village of Kria Vrissi, 2.537

**Chalcis:** Town on the coast of ancient Aetolia near the mouth of the Evenus River, 2.639

**Charis:** One of the Charities (Graces), goddess of charm, beauty, nature, human creativity, and fertility, and wife of Hephaestus, 18.382

**Charities:** see Graces

**Chimera:** Monstrous hybrid creature (lion, serpent, goat) who inhabited Lycia and was killed by Bellerophon with the aid of Pegasus, 6.179

**Chiron:** Centaur who was skilled in medicine, warfare, and music; he trained numerous famed warriors, including Priam and his son Achilles; he is traditionally depicted with two human torso and legs on the front of his body, making him far more civilized than the other, wilder centaurs, 4.219

**Chromis:** Son of Arsinoos, leader (with Ennomus) of the Mysian forces, 2.858

**Chryses:** The Trojan priest of Apollo whose request for the return of his daughter initiates the events in the Iliad, 1.12

**Chryseis:** Daughter of Chryses who was captured as a war prize and given to Agamemnon, 1.13

**Chrysothemis:** Daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who supported her mother after she killed her father; she is a character in Sophocles' *Elektra*, 9.145

**Ciconians:** A Thracian tribe who fought on the side of the Trojans, 2.847

**Cilicians:** Cilician Thebes, or Thebe Hypoplakia, was a city in ancient Anatolia at the foot of Mt. Placus; it was ruled by Eëtion, father of Andromache, 6.397

**Cilla:** A city in the Aeolian region of northwest Anatolia, 1.38

**Cinyras:** Ancient king of Cyprus, 11.20

**Cleonae:** Ancient Greek city-state located in the Peloponnese on the road between Corinth and Artos, 2.570

**Cleopatra:** Daughter of Idas and Marpessa and wife of Meleager, 9.556

**Clymene:** Daughter of Aethra and half-sister of Theseus who was forced, with her mother, to serve Helen until after the Trojan War, 3.145

**Clytemnestra:** Queen of Mycenae, wife of Agamemnon and sister of Helen, 1.112

**Cnossos:** Capital of ancient Minoan civilization, located on the island of Crete, 2.646

**Coön:** Dardanian, eldest son of Antenor and brother of Iphidamas, 11.248

**Copae:** City in ancient Boeotia on the northern shore of Lake Copais, 2.501

**Copreus:** Herald for King Eurystheus of Tiryns, son of Pelops and Hippodameia, and known best as the herald who announced Heracles' twelve labors, 15.640

**Corinth:** City-state in ancient Greece on the Isthmus of Corinth, which separates mainland Greece from the Peloponnese, 2.570

**Coroneia:** City in ancient Boeotia and member of the Boeotian League, 2.502

**Coronus:** King of the Lapiths, son of Caeneus, father of Leonetus and Lysidice, and an Argonaut, 2.746

**Cos:** Island in the Dodecanese just off the coast of mainland Anatolia in the southern Aegean Sea, 2.677

**Cranae:** Island off the coast of ancient Gytheio in southern Peloponnese, 3.445

**Carpathus:** Island in the Dodecanese, east of Crete in the southern Aegean Sea, 2.676

**Creon:** Regent of Thebes, brother of Jocasta (wife/mother of Oedipus), husband of Eurydice, father of Lycomedes, Henioche, Pyrrha, Megareus, and Haimon, 9.84

**Crete:** Largest of the Greek island, located in the Mediterranean Sea southeast of mainland Greece, 2.645

**Crisa:** Ancient city in Phocis, near Delphi, 2.520

**Crocyleia:** Island on the Ionian Sea near Ithaca, 2.633

**Cromna:** Town in ancient Paphlagonia, Anatolia, 2.855

**Cronos:** Leader of the Titans and father of Zeus and the other Olympian gods, 1.398

**Cteatus:** Son of Poseidon but raised by Actor, twin brother of Eurytus, and father of Amphimachus, 2.621

**Curetes:** Legendary tribe of uncertain origin who participated in the hunt for the Calydonian Boar, 9.529

**Cyllene:** Mountain in Arcadia, Peloponnese, that is known as the birthplace of the god Hermes, 2.603

**Cynus:** Principal port of the Locrians at the northernmost part of the Opuntian Gulf, 2.531

**Cyparissus:** City in ancient Phocis near Delphi, 2.519

**Cyphus:** Town in Perrhaebia, Thessaly, near Mt. Olympus, 2.748

**Cyprus:** Island in the eastern Mediterranean, south of Anatolia and west of modern-day Syria and Lebanon, 11.21

**Cythera:** Island in the Mediterranean off the southern tip of

the Peloponnese, northwest of Crete, 10.268

**Cytorus:** City on the Black Sea, in Paphlagonia, Anatolia, 2.853

**Daedalus:** Famed architect and inventor of the Labyrinth on Crete, 18.591

**Danaë:** Daughter of King Acrisus of Argos and Eurydice, consort of Zeus, and mother of Perseus, 14.319

**Dardanelles:** see Hellespont

**Dardanians:** People closely related to the Trojans and Troy's closest ally who inhabited the region around the city of Dardanus, 2.819

**Dardanus:** Son of Zeus and Electra, founder of Dardanus, father of Erichthonius, 7.366

**Dares:** Trojan priest of Hephaestus, father of Phegeus and Idaeus, was supposed to have written an eyewitness account of the fall of Troy (from the Trojan point of view); the original was said to have been lost, but a Latin translation was widely available in the west, and from the end of the Roman empire to the Renaissance, it was the main source for the Trojan War since Homer at that time was not widely available, 5.9

**Daulis:** City in ancient Phocis, near the frontiers of Boeotia, 2.520

**Daughter of Phoenix:** see Europa

**Dawn:** Greek personification of the dawn, daughter of Hyperion and Theia, 1.477

**Death (Thanatos):** Personification of death, son of Nyx and Erebus and brother of Sleep (Hypnos), 14.231

**Deimos:** see Terror

**Deiphobus:** Son of Priam and Hecuba, brother of Hector and Paris, and considered the greatest of Priam's sons after Hector, 12.94

**Demeter:** Goddess of the harvest, agriculture, and fertility, daughter of Cronos and Rhea, mother of Aphrodite and Dionysus, 2.696

**Demoleon:** Son of Antenor and Theano, brother of Archelochus, Acamas, Glaucus, Helicaon (among others),

Trojan warrior killed by Achilles, 20.396

**Deucalion:** King of Crete, son of Minos, member of the Argonauts, and father of Idomeneus, 12.117

**Diomedes:** King of Argos, son of Tydeus and Deipyle, leader of the forces from Argos, and one of the principal leaders for the Argives in the Trojan War, 2.563

**Dion:** Town in the northwest of ancient Euboia, 2.538

**Dione:** Titan mother of Aphrodite, possibly a female version of Zeus, but this is uncertain since Homer is the only place in ancient writings where she appears, 5.370

**Dionysus:** Son of Zeus and mortal Semele, the god of wine, fertility, ritual madness, and theater, 6.132

**Dodona:** City in ancient Perrhaebia, Thessaly, near Mt. Olympus, 2.750

**Dolon:** Trojan son of Eumedes, killed in a night raid by Odysseus and Diomedes, 10.314

**Dolopia:** Mountainous region in Greece, north of Aetolia, 9.484

**Doom (Keres):** Female death spirit who personifies violent death, 18.535

**Doris:** a Nereid, or sea nymph, daughter of Oceanus and Tethys and wife of Nereus, 18.45

**Dorium:** City in ancient Messenia, Peloponnese, 2.594

**Dream (Oneiros):** The Greek personification of dreams; according to Hesiod, Dream was the child of Night (Nix), 2.7

**Dulichium:** Either a city on the coast of the Ionian Sea, west of Acarnania, or one of the Echiniae islands in the Ionian Sea; its actual location is still disputed, 2.625

**Dynamene:** a Nereid, or sea nymph, who was the daughter of Nereus and Doris; she and her sister Pherusa were associated with great ocean swells, 18.44

**Earth:** see Gaia

**East Wind (Eurus):** Greek god of the east wind who is often associated with violent storms, 2.145

**Echiniae:** Islands off the coast of Acarnania west of Aetolia,



2.626

**Eëtion:** King of Anatolian Thebes and father of Andromache, Hector's wife, 1.366

**Eileithyiae:** Greek goddess of childbirth, daughter of Zeus and Hera, 11.270

**Eilesium:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.499

**Eionae:** Town in ancient Argolis, Peloponnese, on the Argolic peninsula, 2.561

**Electra:** Daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, sister of Orestes, Iphigeneia, and Chrysothemis, and well-known as the central figure in many plays from Ancient Greece, 9.145

**Eleon:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.500

**Elephenor:** King of the Abantes on the island of Euboia, son of Chalcodon, a suitor of Helen, and leader of the Euboian force during the Trojan War, 2.540

**Elis:** Region on the western coast of the Peloponnese, 2.616

**Elone:** Town in ancient Perrhaebia, Thessaly, 2.739

**Emathia:** Region in northern Greece near Pieria, between the rivers Aliakmon and Loudias, 14.226

**Eneti:** Inhabitants of the Paphlagonian region of north-central Anatolia, 2.852

**Enienes:** People from the Ainis region of central Greece, in the upper Spercheios valley, east of Dolopia, 2.749

**Enispe:** City in ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese 2.607

**Ennomus:** Son of Arsinoos, leader (with Chromis) of the Mysian forces, 2.859

**Enope:** Town in ancient Messenia, Peloponnese, 9.150

**Enyalios:** see Ares

**Enyeus:** King of Scyros and said to be the son of Dionysus and Ariadne, 9.668

**Enyo:** Greek goddess of war, destruction, conquest, and bloodlust, who often accompanies Ares in battle, 5.333

**Eos:** see Dawn

**Epeius of Phocis:** Achaean warrior from the Cyclades islands, won the boxing match against Euryalus in book 23; in other

accounts, he is the architect who constructed the Trojan horse and was one of the men hiding inside, 23.664

**Ephialtes:** Giant, son of Aloeus and Iphimedia, brother of Otos, who fought the gods and captured Ares 5.386

**Ephyra:** Capital of ancient Thesprotia in northwest Greece, 2.659

**Epidarus:** Ancient Greek city on the Argolic peninsula at the Saronic Gulf, 2.561

**Erebus:** Ancient Greek embodiment of primordial darkness, 8.368

**Erichthonius:** Son of Dardanus, king of Dardania, brother of Ilus, and father of Tros, 20.219

**Epistrophus:** Son of Iphitus, leader (with his brother Schedius) of the Phocians, and one of Helen's suitors, 2.518; Leader (with Odios) of the Halizone forces, allied to Troy, 2.856

**Erechtheus:** Legendary early ruler of Athens who was said to have been raised by Athena herself; the temple of Erechtheum on the Acropolis, dedicated to Athena and Poseidon, is named after him, 2.547

**Eretria:** City on the western side of Euboia, facing Attica, 2.537

**Erinyes:** see Furies

**Eris:** see Strife

**Erythini:** Town in ancient Paphlagonia, Anatolia, 2.855

**Erythrae:** City in ancient Boeotia, at the foot of Mt. Cithaeron, 2.499

**Eteocles:** Son of Oedipus and Jocasta, brother of Polynices and Antigone, and co-ruler (with Polynices) of Thebes until they were both killed in battle against one another, 4.386

**Eteonus:** A city in ancient Boeotia that, according to legend, is where Oedipus was buried, 2.497

**Ethiopia:** General term Homer uses for the lands of the upper Nile region and areas south of the Sahara Desert, thought to be the extreme ends of the earth, 1.424

**Euaemon:** Son of King Ormenus of Ormenium, and father of Euryplyus, 2.736

**Eubolia:** Large island on the eastern coast of northern Greece, separated from mainland Greece by the Euripus Strait, 2.536

**Euchenor:** Corinthian son of Polydius, the seer, who (with his brother, Cleitus) participated in the Epigoni campaign before sailing for Troy, 8.663

**Eudorus:** The second of Achilles' five commanders of the Myrmidons, son of Hermes and Polymele, raised by Phylas, 16.179

**Eumelus:** Leader of the forces from Pherae and Ioclus, son of Admetus and Alcestis, husband of Iphthime, father of Zeuxippus, and one of Helen's suitors, 2.714

**Euneus:** King of Lemnos, son of Jason and Hypsipyle, 7.468

**Euphorbus:** Trojan son of Panthous and Phrontis, brother of Polydamas and Hyperenor, who wounded Patroclus before Achilles killed him, 16.808

**Europa:** Son of either King Agenor of Tyre or his son Phoenix, mother of King Minos of Crete, abducted by Zeus; Europe is named after her, 14.321

**Eurus:** see East Wind

**Euryalus:** One of the leaders of the Argive forces, member of the Argonauts and one of the Epigoni, 2.565

**Eurybates:** Herald to Agamemnon who, along with Talthybius, took Briseis from Achilles 1.320

**Eurynome:** An Oceanid, daughter of Oceanus and Tethys, mother of the Graces, and along with Thetis nursed Hephaestus back to health after being thrown from Olympus, 18.398

**Eurypylus (2):** King of Cos, son of Poseidon and Astypalaea, 2.677; Thessalonian king, son of Euaemon, one of Helen's suitors, and leader of the forces from Ormenius and Asterium, 2.736

**Eurystheus:** King of Tirys or Argos who charged Heracles to perform the famed twelve labors, 8.363

**Eurytus (2):** King of Oechalia and skilled bowman, 2.596; son of Actor or Poseidon, twin brother of Cteatus, and father of

Thalpius, 2.621

**Eussorus:** Thracian father of Acamas and Anete, 6.7

**Eutresis:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.501

**Fates (Moirai):** Incarnations of destiny often portrayed as a trio: Clotho spins the thread of life, Lachesis measures the thread, and Atropos cuts the thread, 19.87

**Fear (Phobos):** Greek god of fear, son of Ares and Aphrodite, and twin brother of Terror (Deimos), 4.441

**Furies (Erinyes):** Female deities of vengeance, often portrayed as a trio: Alecto ("endless anger"), Megaera ("jealous rage"), and Tisiphone ("vengeful destruction"), 9.455

**Gaia (Earth):** Greek primordial deity personifying Earth, mother and wife of Ouranos, mother of the Titans, the Cyclopes, the Giants, and many more, 15.36

**Galatea:** A Nereid, or sea nymph, who (according to Hesiod) was considered the most beautiful of the daughters of Nereus and Doris, 18.45

**Ganymede:** Son of Tros, brother of Ilus, abducted by Zeus, granted immortality, and made Zeus' cupbearer, 5.266

**Gargaron:** One of the three peaks of Mt. Ida, south of Troy, in Anatolia, 8.47

**Gerenia:** Town in ancient Messenia that was the original home of Nestor, 2.336

**Glaphyrae:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, 2.712

**Glaucus (2):** Son of Hippolochus, grandson of Bellerophon, and Captain of Lycian forces under his cousin Sarpedon, 2.876; king of Corinth, son of Sisypheus, father of Bellerophon, great-grandfather of Glaucus, 6.154

**Glisas:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.504

**Gonoessa:** Town in ancient Greece on the coast of Achaea, 2.573

**Gorgon:** Creatures with living snakes for hair who can petrify anyone who looked into her eyes, 5.741

**Gorgythion:** Son of Priam and Castianeira, known for his good

looks but killed by Teucer, 8.303

**Gortyn:** City in ancient Crete, 2.646

**Gouneus:** Leader of the Aenian and Perrhaebian forces, 2.748

**Graces (Charities):** Greek goddesses of charm, beauty, nature, creativity, goodwill, and fertility; in book 5, Homer associates them with Aphrodite, but in book 18, Charis (the youngest of the Graces) is depicted as Hephaestus' wife, 5.337

**Graea:** A city on the coast of ancient Boeotia, 2.498

**Granicus:** Small river in the northwest part of Anatolia (it is now called the Biga River), 12.20

**Great Bear:** Constellation (also called Wain) found year-round in northern hemisphere (so it never drops below horizon or joins with Oceanus), 18.487

**Gygaean Lake:** Lake in western Anatolia, south of Troy, now called Lake Marmara, 2.866

**Gyrtone:** Town in ancient Pelasgiotis, Thessaly, between the Titaresius and Peneius rivers, 2.738

**Hades:** God of the dead, king of the underworld, brother of Zeus and Poseidon, 1.3

**Haemon:** Son of Creon and Eurydice and father of Maeon and a figure in Sophocles' play *Antigone*, 4.394

**Haliartus:** City of Boeotia and member of the Boeotian League, 2.503

**Halizones:** Trojan allies from an unknown region, possibly in eastern Anatolia near the Black Sea, 2.856

**Harma:** City in ancient Boeotia, situated on the road between Thebes and Chalcis, 2.499

**Hebe:** Goddess of youth and cupbearer for the gods, 4.2

**Hecamede:** Daughter of Arsinous, captured on the island of Tendeos and given as prize to Nestor, 11.624

**Hector:** Son of Priam and Hecuba, brother of Paris and Cassandra, and leader of the Trojan forces during the Trojan War, 1.242

**Hecuba:** Wife of Priam, king of Troy, and mother of Hector, Paris, Cassandra, Troilus, and and fifteen others, 6.253

**Helen:** Considered the most beautiful woman in the world, daughter of Zeus and Leda, and wife of Menelaus until she was taken by Paris to Troy, thus starting the Trojan War. After the war, she returned to Sparta and resumed her role as Menelaus' wife, 2.161

**Helenus:** Soothsayer and son of Trojan King Priam and Hecuba and twin brother of Cassandra, 6.75

**Helicaon:** Trojan warrior, son of Antenor and husband of Laodice, daughter of Priam and Hecuba, 3.123

**Helice:** City in ancient Achaea in northern Peloponnese whose temple to Helikonian Poseidon was a major religious center in ancient Greece, 2.575

**Helios:** The personification of the sun, depicted with a golden crown and a horse-drawn chariot as he streaks across the sky, 3.277

**Hellas:** Town in ancient Thessaly, on the west side of the Pagasetic Gulf, 2.683

**Hellespont:** Narrow strait in northwestern Anatolia, near Troy, that separates the Aegean Sea from the Black Sea (as well as separating Europe from Asia); today, it is called the Dardanelles, 2.845

**Helos (2):** City on the ancient coast of Laconia, Peloponnese, east of the mouth of the Eurotas river, 2.583; city in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.594

**Hephaestus:** God of craftsmen, artisans, fire, and volcanoes who was lame in one foot, son of Zeus and Hera (or Hera alone) and husband of Aphrodite, 1.571

**Hera (2):** Goddess of women, family, marriage, and childbirth, one of the Twelve Olympians, and sister/wife to Zeus, 1.55; Heraion of Argos is an ancient temple in Argos, part of the Argolid, a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Hera, 4.8

**Heracles:** Great Greek hero, born in Thebes, son of Zeus and Alcmene, and father of Tlepolemus, 2.653

**Heraion of Argos:** see Hera

**Hermes:** Herald, or messenger, of the gods, and protector of

heralds, thieves, travelers, merchants, and orators, 2.104

**Hermione:** Ancient port town in Argolis, Peloponnese, 2.560

**Hermus:** Ancient Anatolian name for the Gediz river in modern-day Turkey, 20.392

**Hippemolgi:** A group of people in ancient Thrace that avoided consuming living things and lived on things like milk and honey—hence their name, which literally means “mare-milkers,” 13.5

**Hippodameia:** Wife of Peirithous, mother of Polypoetes, who was abducted by centaurs on her wedding day but rescued by Theseus and Peirithous, 2.742

**Hippolochus:** Father of Glaucus and son of Bellerophon, 6.119

**Hippothous:** Son of Lethus, grandson of Teutamus, and leader (with his brother Pylaeus) of the Pelasgi forces from Larisa, 2.841

**Hire:** Town in ancient Messenia, Peloponnese, near the Neda River, 9.150

**Histiaea:** Town on the northern coast of ancient Euboea, now called Oreus, 2.537

**Hours:** Goddesses of the seasons, the passage of time, and guardians of the gates of Olympus, 5.749

**Hyades:** Sisterhood of nymphs who bring rain, 18.486

**Hyampolis:** Town in ancient Phocis, also known as Hya, 2.521

**Hyle:** City in ancient Boeotia on the shore of Lake Hylica, 2.500

**Hyllus:** River in Lydia, south of Troy, 20.392

**Hyperion:** Titan, son of Gaia and Uranus and father of Helios, Moon, and Dawn, 8.480

**Hyperesia:** Ancient Greek city on the northwest coast of Achaea, west of Corinth, 2.573

**Hypnos:** see Sleep

**Hypoplakia:** see Cilicians

**Hypsipyle:** Queen of Lemnos, daughter of King Thoas of Lemnos, granddaughter of Dionysus and Ariadne, who was later sold as a slave to Lycurgus, king of Nemea, but later freed by her sons, 7.469

**Hyria:** Region in ancient Boeotia, 2.496

**Hyrmine:** Town on the coast of ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.616

**Hyrtacus:** Comrade of Priam, husband of Arisbe, and father to Asius, leader of the forces from the Hellespont, 2.837

**Ialmenus:** Son of Ares and Astyoche, twin brother of Aspledon, member of the Argonauts, and one of the suitors for Helen, 2.512

**Ialysus:** Town on the northwestern corner of Rhodes, 2.656

**Iardanus:** Small river in Elis, Peloponnese, 7.135

**Iapetus:** Titan, son of Uranus and Gaia, father of Atlas, Prometheus, Epimetheus, and Menoetius, 8.478

**Icarian:** Part of the Achaean sea that lies between the Cyclades islands and the southwestern part of Anatolia, 2.145

**Ida:** Mountain in Anatolia, south of Troy where the gods, particularly Zeus, often gathered to watch the war, 2.821

**Idas:** Prince of Messenia, member of the argonauts, husband of Marpessa, and father of Cleopatra, 9.558

**Idomeneus:** Son of Deucalion and Cleopatra, half-brother of Meriones, leader (with Meriones) of the Cretan forces, and a trusted advisor to Agamemnon, 1.145

**Ilus:** Founder of Ilios or Troy, son and heir of King Tros of Dardania and Callirhoe, father of Laomedon, 10.415

**Imbrius:** Son of Mentor, Trojan soldier, originally from Pedaeum, and married to Priam's daughter Medesicaste, 13.171

**Imbros:** Large island in the far north of the Aegean Sea, just northwest of the entrance to the Hellespont, 13.33

**Iolcus:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, north of the Pagasitic Gulf, 2.713

**Ionians:** Greek tribe associated with Athens and the areas around Boeotia, 13.685

**Iphianassa:** Daughter of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra who is otherwise unknown, though some suggest her to be identical to Iphigeneia, the daughter of Agamemnon who was sacrificed



at the start of the Trojan campaign, though this seems unlikely given that Agamemnon describes her as still living, 9.145

**Iphiclus:** Husband of Diomedea, father of Protesilaus and Podarces, an Argonaut, known for his speed, 2.705

**Iphitus:** Father of Schedius, king of Phocia, and member of the Argonauts, 2.518

**Iris:** Goddess of rainbows and messenger of the gods, daughter of Thaumas and Electra, 2.786

**Isus:** Son of Priam and Hecuba, killed by Agamemnon, 11.101

**Ithaca:** Island on the Ionian Sea in western Greece, home of Odysseus, 2.632

**Ithome:** Town in ancient Histiaeotis, Thessaly, near the modern town of Fanari, 2.729

**Iton:** Town in ancient Thessaly, on the river Cuarius, 2.697

**Ixion:** King of the Lapiths of Thessaly, husband of Dia, and father of Peirithous, 14.317

**Jason:** Great Greek hero, leader of the Argonauts, who captured the Golden Fleece, son of Aeson, husband of Medea, father of Euneus and many more (many of which were killed by Medea), 7.468

**Kydoimos:** see Tumult

**Keres:** see Doom

**Kypros:** see Aphrodite

**Laas:** City in ancient Laconia, Peloponnese, on the western coast of the Laconian Gulf, 2.585

**Lacedaemon:** Original name for the region around Sparta in southern Peloponnese, 2.581

**Laertes:** King of the Cephallenians (which included Ithaca), father of Odysseus, and member of the Argonauts, 2.173

**Laodice:** Daughter of Priam and Hecuba, wife of Helicaon, and considered the most beautiful of Priam's daughters, 3.122; for Laodice mentioned in book 9, see Electra

**Laomedon:** Trojan king, son of Ilus, and father of Priam, 5.269

**Lapiths:** Legendary tribe from Thessaly, near Mt. Pelion, led by Polypoetes and Leonteus, 12.141

**Larisa:** Ancient city southwest of Troy inhabited by the Pelasgi tribes, 2.841

**Leitus:** One of the leaders of the Boeotian forces, he sailed with the Argos and was one of Helen's suitors, 2.494

**Leleges:** People of the Mysia region of northwest Anatolia, allies of Troy, 10.428

**Lemnos:** Island in the north-east Aegean, near the Hellespont; was home to the Sintians, a Thracian people who worshiped Hephaestus, 1.593

**Lesbos:** Island in the northeast Aegean Sea, near the coast of Anatolia, 9.128

**Leto:** Daughter of the Titans Coeus and Phoebe and the mother of Apollo and Artemis, 1.9

**Licymnius:** Friend of Heracles and illegitimate son of Electryon, King of Tiryns and Mycenae, 2.662

**Lilaea:** Nymph of the spring of Lilaea, daughter of Cephissus, 2.523

**Litae:** see Prayers

**Little Ajax:** See Ajax (Little)

**Lindos:** City on the eastern coast of Rhodes, 2.656

**Linos:** The son of Apollo who invented rhythm and melody and taught these skills to his brother Orpheus before being killed by a young Heracles; the Linos song, a lament, is sung in honor of him, 18.570

**Locrians:** Tribe in ancient Greece, inhabiting the area around Parnassus, 2.527

**Lycaon:** Son of Priam and Laothe, half brother of Hector and Paris, who was captured by Achilles and sold as a slave Euenus but freed later, only to meet Achilles in battle and die, 21.35

**Lycastus:** Town in ancient Crete, 2.647

**Lycia:** Region of southern Anatolia whose forces was commanded by the cousins Sarpedon and Glaucus, 2.876

**Lycomedes:** Son of Creon of Thebes and one of the sentries for

the Achaeans, 9.84

**Lycophron:** Son of Mastor and aide to Telamonian Ajax, 15.429

**Lyctus:** City in ancient Crete and site where Rhea gave birth to Zeus and then hid him in a cave of Mt. Aegaeon, 2.647

**Lycurgus:** Thracian king who imprisoned members of the cult of Dionysus—including the god's mother, Ambrosia. As a result, Zeus either blinded Lycurgus or drove him mad, 6.130

**Lyrnessus:** Town in ancient Dardania, Anatolia, closely associated with the Cicilian Thebe (Thebe Hypoplakia), 2.690

**Macar:** Legendary founder of Lesbos, 24.544

**Machaon:** Skilled healer, son of the god of medicine, Asclepius, and leader (with his brother Podaleirius) of the forces from Tricca, Ithome, and Oechalia, 2.732

**Maeander:** River in southwestern Anatolia, 2.869

**Maeon:** Son of Haemon who had prophetic abilities and was the only man spared when fifty Thebans tried to ambush Tydeus, 4.394

**Maeonian:** Inhabitants of Lydia in western Anatolia, allies of Troy, 2.864

**Magnetes:** Ancient Greek tribe who inhabited Magnesia, Thessaly, near Mt. Pelion, 2.757

**Mantineia:** City in ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, that was the site of two significant battles during the Peloponnesian War, 2.607

**Mases:** City on the Argolic peninsula in ancient Argos, 2.562

**Mecisteus:** Father of Euryalus and, with his brother Adrastus, was one of the Seven Against Thebes, 2.566

**Medeon:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.501

**Medon:** Son of Oileus and Rhene, half-brother of Ajax the Lesser, who fled to Phylace from his father's house after killing a relative of his stepmother Eriopis, who led the Meliboean forces after Philoctetes was abandoned on Lemnos due to a snake bite, 2.727

**Meges:** Commander of the Dulichians forces, son of Phyleus of Elis, one of Helen's suitors, 2.627

**Meleager:** Legendary Calydonian hero who led the Calydonian boar hunt and was a member of the Argonauts, 2.642

**Meliboea:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, that was famous for its purple dye, 2.717

**Menelaus:** King of Lacedaemon (Sparta), brother of Agamemnon, and husband to Helen of Sparta until Paris of Troy took her away, thus starting the Trojan War, 1.159

**Menestheus:** King of Athens, son of Orneus, great-grandson of Erechtheus, and leader of the Athenian force in Troy, 2.552

**Menoetius:** Son of Actor and Aegina, father of Patroclus, and member of the Argonauts, 1.307

**Meriones:** Son of Molus, half-brother of Idomeneus, and leader (with Idomeneus) of the Cretan forces, 2.651

**Merops:** King of Percote, father of Adrastus and Amphius; he possessed prophetic abilities and foresaw the deaths of his sons and urged them not to fight in the Trojan War; they ignored him and were later killed by Diomedes, 2.832

**Messe:** City in ancient Laconia, Peloponnese, 2.582

**Methone:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, on the Pagasetic Gulf, 2.716

**Mideia:** Town in ancient Boeotia near Lebadeia and Lake Copias, 2.507

**Miletus (2):** Town on the north coast of Crete, 2.647; town on the western coast of Anatolia, near the mouth of the Maeander River, 2.868

**Minos:** King of Crete, son of Zeus and Europa, and became judge of the dead in the underworld, 14.322

**Minyan:** Group of people in the Aegean who trace their ancestry back to legendary Minyas, 2.512

**Mischief (Atë):** Ancient Greek personification of mischief, delusion, ruin, and folly, 9.504

**Moirai:** see Fates

**Molus:** Illegitimate son of Deucalion of Minos, king of Crete, and the father of Meriones, 10.270

**Mount Ida:** see Ida

**Muses:** Goddesses (usually nine in total) of inspiration in science and the arts, daughters of Zeus, 1.1

**Mycale:** Mountain near the west coast of Anatolia, near the Maeander River, now called Samsun Dağı, 2.870

**Mycalessus:** City in ancient Boeotia that no longer exists; in 413, the entire population was slaughtered in a raid by Thracians, 2.498

**Mycenae:** Largest and most powerful region of ancient Greece, located in the northwest part of the Peloponnese, southwest of Athens, 2.569

**Mygdon:** King of Phrygia, located on the west coast of Anatolia, who fought with Priam against the Amazons, 3.186

**Myrmidons:** Pythian army under the leadership of Achilles; the name translates as “ant-men,” 1.180

**Myrsinus:** Town in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.616

**Mysians:** People from the region of Mysia, in northwest Anatolia, on the south coast of the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), 2.858

**Naiad:** Female spirit who guard fountains, wells, springs, streams, brooks, and other bodies of fresh water, 14.444

**Neleus:** King of Pylos, son of Poseidon, and father of Nestor, 2.20

**Neoptolemus:** Son of Achilles, born on Scyros; in other accounts, he joined the Achaean forces at the end of the Trojan War, slew King Priam, took Hector’s wife Andromache as concubine, and became the mythic king of the Molossians in Epirus, 19.326

**Nereids:** Sea nymphs and daughters of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea; Thetis, mother of Achilles, is one of them, 18.49

**Nereus:** see Old Man of the Sea

**Neritum:** Island on the Ionian Sea near Ithaca, 2.632

**Nestor:** Son of Neleus, king of Pylos, a member of the Argonauts, and primary counselor for Agamemnon during Trojan War, 1.248

**Night (Nyx):** Greek goddess personifying night and darkness

who is feared by all, including Zeus, 7.282

**Niobe:** Daughter of Tantalus, king of Siplyus, and wife of King Amphion of Thebes; after boasting that her twelve children surpassed the Titan Leto, who only had two, the gods punished her by killing all of her children (Apollo killed the sons, Artemis the daughters). In the traditional version of the story, Niobe was later turned to a crying stone on Mt. Sipylus (Spil Dağı in modern-day Turkey); the stone is said to cry when snow melts on it. However, in Homer's version, the people of her town are also turned to stone by Zeus, and the gods have to bury the children, 24.602

**Nireus:** King of Syme, leader of Syme's forces, and one of Helen's suitors, 2.671

**Nisa:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.508

**Nisyros:** Volcanic island in the Dodecanese between Kos and Tilos, 2.676

**North Wind (Boreas):** Greek god of the North Wind, which is associated with winter and cold weather, 15.26

**Notus:** see South Wind

**Nysa:** Legendary place where the Hyades (water nymphs) raised young Dionysus; the actual location of Nysa is unknown, though many ancients (including Alexander the Great) located it in northwestern India (a city called Nagara), 6.133

**Nyx:** see Night

**Ocalea:** City in ancient Boeotia, south of Lake Copias, 2.500

**Oceanus:** River that circles the world, son of Gaia and Uranus, husband and brother of Tethys, and father to the river gods and Oceanids, 1.423

**Odysseus:** King of Ithaca, husband of Penelope, father of Telemachus, one of Agamemnon's most trusted, and main character in Homer's *Odyssey*, 1.138

**Oechalia:** Town in ancient Histiaeotis, Thessaly, on the river Peneius, 2.730

**Oedipus:** Mythical king of Thebes who was cursed to kill his father and marry his mother, 23.679

**Oeneus:** Legendary Calydonian king, father of Tydeus and many others, who introduced wine-making to Aetolia, 2.641

**Oetylus:** City in ancient Laconia, Peloponnese, on the eastern side of the Messenian Gulf, near the modern city of Oitylo, 2.585

**Oileus:** King of Locris, an Argonaut, and father of Ajax the Lesser and Medon, 2.728

**Old Man of the Sea:** Oldest son of Gaia (Earth) and Pontus (Sea), father of 50 daughters including Thetis, mother of Achilles, 1.359

**Olenus:** Town in ancient Aetolia between the Achelous River and the Evenus River, 2.638

**Olizon:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, 2.717

**Oloösson:** Town in ancient Perrhaebia, Thessaly, 2.739

**Olympus:** Highest mountain in Greece and home of Zeus and the other Olympian gods (Hera, Athena, Apollo, Poseidon, Ares, Artemis, Demeter), 1.18

**Onchestus:** City in ancient Boeotia, northwest of Thebes that is often associated with Poseidon, 2.506

**Oneiros:** see Dream

**Opoeis:** Town in ancient Locria, located on the coast of central Greece, 2.531

**Orchomenus (2):** City in ancient Boeotia, also referred to as Minyeian Orchomenus because it was founded by the legendary Minyas, 2.511; City in Arcadia, in northern Peloponnese, also referred to as Arcadian Orchomenus to distinguish it from the other Orchomenus, 2.605

**Orestes:** Prince of Mycenae, son of Agamemnon and Clytemenstra; he is the subject of numerous Greek dramas, 9.142

**Orion:** Giant hunter turned into a constellation by Zeus after being killed by Artemis, 18.486

**Ormenius:** Town in ancient Thessaly and the birthplace of Phoenix, 2.734

**Orneae:** City in ancient Argolis, Peloponnese, 2.571

**Orthe:** Town in ancient Perrhaebia, Thessaly, 2.739

**Othryoneus:** Trojan soldier from Cabeus, suitor of Cassandra of Troy, killed by Idomeneus, 13.363

**Otos:** Giant, son of Aloeus and Iphimedia, brother of Ephialtes, who fought the gods and captured Ares, 5.385

**Ouranos:** Greek god personifying the sky or heavens, son and husband of Gaia, father of the Titans, the Cyclopes, the Meliae, the Furies, the Giants, the Hekatonkheires, and Aphrodite, 1.404

**Paenonia:** Region north of Greece, in modern-day Macedonia, who were allied with the Trojans, 2.848

**Paesus:** See Apaesus

**Paean:** Physician of the gods; based on Mycenaean Greek writings, Paean might be another name for Apollo, who is also a healer, 5.401

**Pammon:** Trojan prince, son of Priam and Hecuba, who was one of the leaders the Trojan forces after Hector's death; in other accounts, he was killed by Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, 24.250

**Pandarus:** Trojan who led the forces from Zeleia, son of Lycaon, well-known for his archery, who is tricked by Athena to shoot Menelaus during a truce, 2.827

**Panopeus:** City in ancient Phocis, home of Schedius, king of Phocia and leader of Phocian contingent in Troy, 2.520

**Panthous:** Trojan elder, priest of Apollo, and father of Euphorbus, Polydamas, and Hyperenor, 147.

**Paphlagonia:** Region in the north-central region of Anatolia, bordering the Black Sea, 2.851

**Parrhasia:** City in ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, 2.608

**Parthenius:** River in northern Anatolia that empties into the Black Sea, 2.854

**Pasithea:** One of the Graces, daughter of Zeus and Eurynome, the personification of relaxation, meditation, and hallucination, 14.269

**Patroclus:** son of Menoetius, grandson of King Actor of Opus,



and close companion to Achilles, 1.337

**Pedasus:** Son of the water nymph Abarbarea and the human Bucolion, 6.21

**Peirithous:** King of the Laphtis of Larissa in Thessaly, friend of Theseus, father of Polypoetes, 2.741

**Peirous:** Son of Imbrasmus, leader (with Acamas) of the Thracian forces who fought for Troy, 2.844

**Pelasgi:** Tribes from Larisa, southwest of Troy, and supporters of the Trojans, 2.840

**Pelasgian Argos:** Region on Greece's eastern coast also known as Thessaly, 2.681

**Peleus:** King of Phthia, father of Achilles, husband of sea-nymph Thetis, brother of Telamon, 1.1

**Pelion:** Mountain in southeastern Thessaly that was home to the centaurs, including Chiron, 2.758

**Pellene:** Most easterly city in ancient Achaea, bordering Sicyon on the east and Hyperesia on the west, 2.574

**Pelops:** King of Pisa in the Peloponnese (which were named after him) and mythical founder of the Olympic games, 2.104

**Peneius:** River in Thessaly that flows from the Pindus mountains to the Aegean Sea and is named after the river god Peneus, 2.752

**Peneleos:** One of the leaders of the Boeotian forces, he sailed with the Argos and was one of Helen's suitors, 2.494

**Peraebi:** Ancient Greek people who lived on the slopes of Mt. Olympus between Thessaly and Macedonia, 2.749

**Percote:** Town in ancient Mysia on the southern side of the Hellespont, northeast of Troy, 2.832

**Pergamus:** The name of the citadel of Troy, 4.507

**Persephone:** Daughter of Zeus and Demeter, mother of Dionysus, queen of the underworld, and goddess of growth and fertility, 9.457

**Perseus:** Great hero, founder of Mycenae, slayer of Medusa, saved Andromeda from the sea monster Cetus, son of Zeus and Danaë, 14.320

**Peteon:** City in ancient Boeotia, 2.500

**Phaistos:** City on ancient Crete, 2.648

**Pharis:** Town in ancient Laconia on the Spartan plain, 2.582

**Pheidippus:** Son of Thessalus, grandson of Heracles, and co-leader (with his brother Antiphus) of the forces from Nisyros, Carpathus, Casus, and Cos, 2.678

**Pheneos:** Town in northeast ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, 2.605

**Pherae:** City-state in ancient Thessaly, near Lake Boebeïs and the modern city of Velestino, 2.711

**Phereclus:** Trojan shipbuilder, son of Harmon, who built the ship that Paris used to abduct Helen from Sparta; he was killed by Meriones, 5.59

**Pheres:** Founder of Pherae, Thessaly, son of Cretheus and Tyro, half-brother of Pelias, father of Admetus, and grandfather of Eumelus, 2.764

**Pherusa:** a Nereid, or sea nymph, who was the daughter of Nereus and Doris; she and her sister Dynamene were associated with great ocean swells, 18.43

**Pheia:** City in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, near the modern-day Cape of Katakolo, 7.135

**Philoctetes:** Famed archer, son of Poeas, king of Meliboea, leader of the Meliboean forces who was famed for his archery, and the subject of many Greek tragedies due to his being abandoned on the island of Lemnos at the start of the war after a deadly snake bite, 2.718

**Phobos:** see Fear

**Phocians:** People from the area of Phocis in central Greece that included Delphi, 2.517

**Phoenicians:** Seafaring people who lived in modern-day Lebanon but traded throughout the Mediterranean, 23.744

**Phoenix (2):** Son of King Amyntor of Elon who fled his home when young and was taken in by Peleus, king of Phthia, and charged with raising Achilles, 9.168; son of Agenor, brother of Cadmus and Cilix, and either the brother or father of Europa

(Homer is the only source that calls him her father), and was charged with rescuing Europa from Crete after she was abducted by Zeus, 14.321

**Phorcys:** Son of Phaenops, leader (with Ascanius) of the Phrygian forces, 2.863

**Phrygians:** Allies of the Trojans from the Phrygia region of central Anatolia, 2.862

**Phthia:** An area in Thessaly that is home to the Myrmidons, their ruler King Peleus, and his son Achilles, 1.155

**Phthires:** Mountain in southwestern Anatolia, now called Mt Latmus, 2.869

**Phylace:** Town in ancient Thessaly, founded by Phylacus, 2.695

**Phyleus:** Elean prince, father of Meges, and one of the participants in the Calydonian boar hunt, 2.628

**Pieria:** Region in northern Greece where Mt. Olympus is located, 14.226

**Pittheus:** King of Troezen, father of Aethra, and grandfather of Theseus, 3.144

**Pityea:** Town in ancient Mysia, on the coast near the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), 2.829

**Plataea:** City in ancient Boeotia, south of Thebes, 2.504

**Pleiades:** Seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione, turned into star cluster by Zeus, associated with winters and with rain, 18.486

**Podaleirius:** Skilled healer, son of the god of medicine, Asclepius, and leader (with his brother Machaon) of the forces from Tricca, Ithome, and Oechalia, 2.732

**Podarces:** Son of Iphiclus, one of Helen's suitors, and the leader of the Phylacean forces after his brother Protesilaus was killed, 2.704

**Podes:** Son of Eëtion, close friend to Hector, killed by Menelaus, 17.575

**Polites:** Prince of Troy, son of Priam and Hecuba, brother of Hector, Paris, Cassandra, and many others, 2.791

**Polybus:** Trojan son of Antenor and Theano, 11.59

**Polydamas:** Trojan lieutenant, one of Hector's soldiers, son of Panthous and Phrontis, 12.60

**Polydeuces:** see Castor & Polydeuces (Pollux)

**Polydorus:** Youngest son of King Priam of Troy who was killed by Achilles but subsequently figures (as a supernatural figure) in other ancient works like Euripides' *Hecuba* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, 20.407

**Polynices:** Son of Oedipus and Jocasta, brother of Antigone, who fought his brother Eteocles for rule of Thebes as one of the "Seven Against Thebes," 4.378

**Polyphemus:** Son of Elatus and Hippea, Achaean hero and member of the Argonauts, 1.264

**Polypoetes:** Theban warrior, son of Peirithous and Hippodameia, leader (with Leonteus) of the Lapith forces, 2.740

**Polyxeinus:** Son of King Agasthenes of Elis, and one of Helen's suitors, 2.623

**Portheus:** More commonly known as Porthaon, he was king of Calydon, son of Agenor or Ares, brother of Demonice and Thestius, husband of Euryte, 14.115

**Poseidon:** God of the sea, storms, earthquakes, and horses, son of Cronos and Rhea, brother of Zeus, Hera, and Hades, 2.506

**Priam:** Son of Laomedon, king of Troy, husband of Hecuba, father to Hector, Paris, Cassandra, and fifty more, 1.255

**Prayers:** Ancient Greek personification of prayer and supplication who appear only in the *Iliad*, 9.502

**Proetus:** Son of Abas and king of Argos and Tiryns, 6.157

**Protesilaus:** Son of Iphiclus, brother of Podarces, one of Helen's suitors, leader of the Phylacean forces, and first man to leap ashore in Troy and the first man to be killed, 2.698

**Prothoenor:** One of the leaders of the Boeotians who was killed by Polydamas, 2.495

**Prothous:** Son of Tenthredon and either Eurymache or Cleobule, and leader of the Magnetes forces, 2.756

**Pteleos (2):** City in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.593; town in

ancient Thessaly, near Antron at the entrance to the Pagasetic Gulf, 2.698

**Pygmies:** Race of small people who lived on the shores of the earth-circling river Oceanus and were involved in frequent wars with the cranes, 3.6

**Pylaemenes:** King of the Eneti tribe who led the Paphlagonian forces, 2.852

**Pylaeus:** Son of Lethus, grandson of Teutamus, and leader (with his brother Hippothous) of the Pelasgi forces from Larisa, 2.842

**Pyrene:** Town in ancient Aetolia between the Achelous and Evenus Rivers, 3.639

**Pylos:** City on the western coast of the Peloponnese, 1.248

**Pyraechmes:** Leader of the Paeonian forces, killed by Patroclus, 2.848

**Pyraus:** Town in ancient Thessaly, on the Papasaean Gulf, 2.695

**Pytho:** Ancient name for Delphi, the sanctuary for Apollo that was home to the Oracle of Delphi, 2.520

**Rhadamanthys:** King of Crete, son of Zeus and Europa, and after death became one of the judges of the dead in the underworld, 14.322

**Rhea:** Titan, daughter of Gaia and Ouranos, sister of Cronus, and mother of Zeus, Hera, Hestia, Demeter, Poseidon, and Hades, 14.203

**Rhene:** Nymph who was mother of Medon, whose father was Oileus, 2.728

**Rhesus:** Thracian king who arrived late to the war and was killed by Odysseus and Diomedes before engaging in battle, 10.453

**Rhipe:** City in ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, 2.606

**Rhodes:** Largest of the Dodecanese islands, off the coast of Anatolia and northeast of Crete, 2.654

**Rhodium:** River in ancient Troyad that flowed from Mt. Ida to the Hellespont, 12.20

**Rhytium:** Town on ancient Crete that was home to the Gortynians, 2.648

**Rumor (Pheme):** The Greek personification of fame, glory, and scandalous rumors, 2.94

**Salamis:** Island off the coast of Attica, near Athens, 2.557

**Samos:** Island on the Ionian Sea near Ithaca, 2.635

**Samothrace:** Island in the northern Aegean Sea, northwest of the Hellespont, 13.12

**Sangarius:** River that runs through ancient Phrygia in western Anatolia; today, the river is called Sakarya, 3.187

**Sarpedon:** Son of Zeus, grandson of Bellerophon, and leader (with his cousin Glaucus) of the Lycian forces, 2.876

**Scamander:** The river that surrounded Troy personified by the river god of the same name, 2.465

**Scandeira:** Town on the island of Cytheria, off the southern coast of the Peloponnese, 10.269

**Scarphe:** Town in ancient Locria, in central Greece, 2.532

**Schedius:** Son of Iphitus, king of Phocis, leader of the Phocians, and one of the suitors of Helen, 2.517

**Schoenus:** A city in ancient Boeotia located east of Thebes, 2.497

**Scolus:** Town in ancient Boeotia, 2.497

**Scyros:** Island in the Aegean Sea where Achilles lived and where Neoptolemus was born, 9.668

**Semele:** Mother of Dionysus by Zeus, later became goddess Thyone who presided over the rites inspired by her son, 14.323

**Sesamus:** City in ancient Paphlagonia, Anatolia, near the modern-day city of Amasra, 2.853

**Sestus:** City in ancient Thrace, on the north coast of the Hellespont in the Thracian Chersonese region (now called Gallipoli), 2.836

**Sidon:** Ancient Phoenician city located about 30 miles (48 km) south of Beirut in modern-day Lebanon, 23.743

**Sicyon:** Ancient Greek city located in the northern part of the Peloponnese, west of Corinth, 2.572

**Simois:** River and god who flowed from Mount Ida to the Trojan plain (joining with the Scamander), now called Dümruk Su, 4.475

**Sintians:** A Thracian people who inhabited the area of Sintice and the island of Lemnos and worshiped Hephaestus, 1.594

**Sipylos:** Mountain in Anatolia, home of the “weeping rock” that is said to be Niobe, mourning the deaths of her children at the hands of Apollo and Artemis, 24.614

**Sisyphus:** King of Ephyra who was punished by the gods to forever roll a giant boulder up a hill over and over again, 6.154

**Sleep (Hypnos):** Personification of sleep, son of Nyx and Erebus and brother of Death (Thanatos), 14.231

**Solymoi:** The people of a mountainous region in southwest Anatolia now called Milyas, 6.184

**South Wind (Notus):** Greek god of the south wind, associated with summer and heat and was said to bring the storms of late summer and autumn, 2.145

**Sparta:** Major ancient Greek city in Laconia near the Eurotas River, 2.582

**Spercheus:** A god and river in Phthiotis in central Greece, father of Menesthius, 16.174

**Stentor:** Herald of the Argives, 5.785

**Sthenelus:** Son of Capaneus, leader (with Diomedes) of the Argive forces, a member of the Epigoni, and suitor for Helen, 2.564

**Stratia:** City in ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, 2.606

**Strife (Eris):** Greek goddess of strife and discord, 4.441

**Stymphalus:** City in northeast ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, 2.608

**Styra:** Town on the west coast of ancient Euboia, north of Carystus, 2.539

**Styx:** One of the rivers that marked the boundary between Earth and the underworld of Hades, 2.755

**Sun:** see Helios

**Syme:** Island off the coast of southeastern Anatolia that is best known as the birthplace of the Graces (Charities), 2.671

**Talaus:** King of Argos, member of the Argonauts, son of Bias and Pero, father of Mecisteus and Adrastus and grandfather of Euryalus, 2.566

**Talthybius:** Herald to Agamemnon who, along with Eurybates, took Briseïs from Achilles, 1.320

**Tarphe:** Town in ancient Locria on the Boagrius River that had a temple to Hera, 2.532

**Tartarus:** Deep abyss far below the surface of the Earth where Zeus hurled the Titans after their battle and where he keeps them prisoner, 8.13

**Tegae:** City in ancient Arcadia, Peloponnese, 2.607

**Telamon:** Father of Ajax the Greater, member of the Argonauts, and king of Salamis, 7.234

**Telemachus:** Son of Odysseus of Ithaca who, in some stories, later marries the goddess Circe, 2.260

**Tenedos:** An island in the northeastern part of the Aegean, near the Hellespont, 1.38

**Terror (Deimos):** The Greek god of dread and terror, son of Ares and Aphrodite, and twin brother of Fear (Phobos), 4.440

**Tethys:** a Titan, daughter of Uranus and Gaia, sister and wife to Oceanus, and mother to all river gods and the Nereids, 14.201

**Teucer:** son of King Telamon of Salamis and Hesione, daughter of King Laomedon of Troy, brother of King Priam of Troy, and cousin of Telamonian Ajax, 6.31

**Teutamius:** King of Larisa, son of Amyntor, father of Nanas and Lethus, and grandfather of Hippothous and Pylaeus, 2.843

**Thamyris:** Thracian singer, son of Philammon and the nymph Argiope, who lost his ability to sing and play the lyre after boasting that he could sing better than the Muses, 2.595

**Thanatos:** see Death

**Thaumacia:** Town in ancient Magnesia, Thessaly, 2.716

**Theano:** Priestess of Athena in Troy, daughter of King Cisseus of Thrace and Telecleia, sister of Hecuba, wife of Antenor, and



mother of Glaucus, Acamas, and many more, 5.70

**Thebes (2):** City in ancient Anatolia, at the foot of Mt. Placus, the home of Hector's wife Andromache and one of the towns raided by the Argives during the Trojan War, 1.366; famous city in ancient Boeotia, home of Heracles, Oedipus, and the wars of the Seven Against Thebes, 2.505

**Themis:** Greek Titan goddess personifying divine order, fairness, law, and custom, whose symbol is the scales of justice, mother of the Hours (Horae) and the Moirai (Fates), 15.88

**Thersites:** Soldier in the Achaean forces who insults Agamemnon and questions the validity of the war, 2.212

**Theseus:** Greek hero who defeated the Minotaur, was founding father of Athens, and unified all Attica, 1.265

**Thespeia:** A city in ancient Boeotia located near modern Thespies, 2.497

**Thetis:** A sea nymph, daughter of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea, who married the mortal Peleus and became mother of Achilles, 1.357

**Thisbe:** City in ancient Boeotia, south of Mt. Helicon and near the sea, 2.501

**Thoas:** King of Aetolia, leader of the Aetolian forces, son of Andraemon and Gorge, and one of Helen's suitors, 2.640

**Thracians:** Inhabitants of the European areas north of the Hellespont; the name is also used as a general term to describe many tribes of people who inhabited the Balkans and other areas of southeastern Europe, 2.844

**Thrasymedes:** Son of Nestor, prince of Pylos, and one of the lead sentries for the Achaean army, 9.81

**Thronium:** Town in ancient Locria on the river Boagrius 2.533

**Thryum:** City in ancient Elis, Peloponnese, 2.592

**Thyestes:** King of Olympia and Mycenae, son of Pelops, brother of Atreus, who exiled his nephews, Agamemnon and Menelaus, and was himself later exiled by them, 2.106

**Thymbra:** Town near Troy, close to the Thymbrios (now Kemer) River, 10.432

**Thymoetes:** Trojan elder, son of Laomedon, and soothsayer who prophesied the destruction of Troy, 3.148

**Tiryns:** City in ancient Argolis, Peloponnese, and the location for the twelve labors of Heracles, 2.559

**Titanus:** Mountain in Thessaly, near Asterium, 2.735

**Titaressu:** River in Thessaly, a tributary of the Peneius, which flows south from Mt. Olympus, though according to Homer the Titaressu's waters do not mix with the Peneius because it is a branch of the river Styx, 2.751

**Tithonus:** Son of Laomedon, brother of Priam, and lover of Dawn (Eos), 11.1

**Tlepolemus:** Leader of the Rhodian forces, son of Heracles and Astyocheia, 2.653

**Tmolus:** Mountain in Lydia, Anatolia, near Sardis, that was named after King Tmolus of Lydia, 2.864

**Trachis:** City-state in ancient Thessaly, south of the Spercheios River, 2.682

**Tricca:** Town in ancient Histiaeotis, Thessaly, on the left bank of the Peneius River, 2.729

**Tritogeneia:** see Athena

**Troad:** Name for the larger region around Troy in northwestern Anatolia, 6.315

**Troezen:** Ancient town on the Argolian peninsula in the Peloponnese, southwest of Athens, 2.561

**Troilus:** Trojan prince, son of Priam, whose death is described in the now-lost *Cypria*, 24.257

**Tros:** Founder of Troy, son of Erichthonius, and father of Ilus, Assaracus, and Ganymede, 20.230

**Tumult (Cydoemus):** Personification of the din and confusion of battle, 18.535

**Tydeus:** An Aeolian hero in the generation before the Trojan War who was a member of the Seven Against Thebes and later fathered Diomedes, 2.406

**Typhoneus:** Monstrous giant serpent, son of Gaia and Tartarus, 2.783

**Ucalegon:** Trojan elder whose hose is set on fire during the sacking of Troy, 3.149

**Uranus:** Primal sky god, son and husband of Gaia, father of the first Titans and of Aegaeon, 1.404.

**West Wind (Zephyrus):** Greek god of the west wind, considered the gentlest of the Anemoi, associated with spring, and husband of Iris, 4.276

**Xanthos:** see Scamander

**Xanthus and Balius:** immortal horses, children of the harpy Podarge, given to Peleus by Poseidon, who passed them on to Achilles, 16.149

**Zacynthus:** Island on the Ionian Sea near Ithaca, 2.634

**Zelea:** Town in ancient Troad, at the foot of Mt. Ida, that participated on the Trojan side in the Trojan War, 2.824

**Zephyrus:** see West Wind

**Zeus:** God of the sky, lightning, and thunder and ruler over all gods on Olympus, 1.5

**Zeus of Dodona (Dodonian Zeus):** A particular aspect of Zeus that was worshipped at Dodona in Epirus in northwest Greece, 16.233

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